



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **High level group to focus on quality and excellence in teaching**

Higher education is crucial for developing the knowledge and skills that Europe needs to compete in the world economy, but Member States are not investing enough to modernise their higher education systems. A new High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, launched by the European Commission today, will address this issue as part of a comprehensive three-year review of the sector across the European Union. The group, chaired by Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland, will focus this year on how best to achieve quality and excellence in teaching and learning; then, next year, it will discuss how to adapt learning in the digital age. The Group will identify best practices and creative solutions, as well as making recommendations to national and European policy makers, universities and colleges. It will report for the first time in 2013 and has a mandate until 2015.

Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said: *"Everybody remembers a teacher who inspired or motivated them. With the help of the high level group I want to ensure that every student, regardless of where they live or study in Europe, will benefit from quality teaching. This is a pre-condition for innovation, jobs and growth. Teaching excellence is also a fundamental requirement for identifying and supporting sustainable pathways out of the current crisis."*

Mary McAleese added: *"I am very honoured to chair this group. I care deeply about Europe and its young generation, which has been struck so hard by the crisis. Our group will examine how to nurture excellent teaching in our universities so that our young people receive the best education and the best possible employment prospects."*

During the next three years the group will consult experts from higher education, government and businesses, as well as students and teachers.

The launch of this group is a part of a broader strategy to modernise the higher education sector in Member States. The Commission has already made considerable progress in this area. [The Bologna Process](#) has made it easier for students to study abroad and have their qualifications recognised throughout Europe. The European multidimensional [university ranking system](#), due to be published for the first time in 2013, will also facilitate comparisons between universities so that students will be able to make a more informed choice about where to study. It will also enable the Commission to track the progress of universities in a range of different the areas which will be the basis for the new ranking: quality of teaching and learning, research, knowledge transfer, international outreach strategies, and the role of universities in regional development.

## **Background**

[The European Agenda for the modernisation of higher education](#), which was [endorsed](#) by Ministers at the Education Council on 28-29 November 2011, identifies priority areas where EU countries need to do more to achieve their shared objectives and sets out how the European Union can support their modernisation policies. Priorities include improving the quality and relevance of higher education, so curricula meet the needs of students, employers and the careers of the future, as well as increasing the number of students. It promotes stronger cooperation between universities, businesses and research centres. The Agenda is a part of the Commission's wider strategy to promote growth and jobs in Europe, in which education plays a key role.

## **For more information**

[The agenda for modernisation of higher education](#)

European Commission: [Education and training](#)

[Androulla Vassiliou's website](#)

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## **Annex:**

### **Members of the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education**

#### **Mary McAleese (Chair)**



Mary McAleese was President of Ireland from 1997-2011. She graduated in law from Queen's University, Belfast, in 1973 and was called to the Northern Ireland Bar in 1974. In 1975, she was appointed Reid Professor of criminal law, criminology and penology at Trinity College Dublin and in 1987, she returned to Queen's to become director of the institute of professional legal studies. In 1994, she became the first female pro-vice chancellor of the Queen's University.

#### **Agneta Bladh**



Dr Bladh chairs the governing board of the Jönköping School of Health Sciences and Stockholm University library board. She is also a member of Uppsala University governing board, the board of Oslo and Akershus College of Applied Science (Norway) and a board preparing the merger between two universities in Norway. Dr Bladh is a member of the Danish Accreditation Council and the administrative board of International Association of Universities. Dr Bladh was rector of the University of Kalmar, Sweden, from February 2004 to December 2009. From 1998 to 2004, she served as state secretary at the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, responsible for higher education and research, and from 1995 to 1998, was director general at the National Agency for Higher Education. Agneta Bladh holds a PhD in political science from Stockholm University (1988).

#### **Vincent Berger**



Vincent Berger is president of the University Paris Diderot. From 1990 to 2001 he worked at the Laboratoire Central de Recherches for aerospace multinational Thales (ex Thomson CSF). In 2001 he joined the University Paris Diderot - Paris 7 as professor, and until 2006 was head of the quantum phenomena and materials laboratory. He received the Fabry-De Gramont award and the MIT Young Innovator award in 2002. He has published around 150 papers in international journals, and holds 16 patents. In 2012 he was nominated general rapporteur of the national assizes on higher education and research in France by Education Minister Genevieve Fioraso.

## **Christian Bode**



Christian Bode was secretary general of the German Academic Exchange Service for 20 years (1990-2010). Christian Bode was educated in law and received his PhD from the University of Bonn in 1971. Between 1972 and 1982 he held different senior positions in the federal Ministry of Education and Science. From 1982 to 1990 he was secretary general of the German Rectors' Conference. He was one of the founders of the Academic Cooperation Association in Brussels and served as its vice president several times.

Christian Bode has published widely on all aspects of higher education policy, with a focus on international cooperation between universities. He is a member of several administrative boards of universities in Germany and abroad (Munich, Berlin, Muscat, Shanghai) and professional societies.

## **Jan Muehlfeit**



Jan Muehlfeit is chairman of Microsoft Corporation in Europe. Over nearly 20 years with Microsoft, he has served in various positions, in its Czech/Slovak subsidiary from 1993 to 2000 and responsible for central and eastern Europe in 2000-05. He served as vice president of Microsoft's public sector team in 2005 and vice president of Corporate & Government Strategy in 2006, for Europe, Middle East and Africa. Mr Muehlfeit is a vice-chair of the Academy of Business in Society, board member of Junior Achievement, co-chairman of the European e-Skills Association and a member of the board of the student organisation AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences

Economiques et Commerciales) and the advisory body of Ovum, a company that specialises in analysis and consulting on technology. He has served on various advisory boards for several European governments on information technology, national competitiveness and education. He also represents Microsoft on the Transatlantic Business Dialogue and is an advisor on different projects for the World Economic Forum, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European Policy Centre. He is also a board member of the Czech National Museum and member of the Leaders' Council of the International Business Leaders Forum. He graduated from the Czech Technical University and later completed executive development programs at Wharton, the London School of Economics and Harvard.

## **Tea Petrin**



Tea Petrin is professor in the faculty of economics at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she is also the head of the entrepreneurship academic unit. She is a member of the university senate. Ms Petrin was a visiting professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and at the Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley. She was also a Fulbright professor at the Institute of International Studies at UC Berkeley and at the Centre for Industrial Competitiveness in the University of Massachusetts Lowell. She is a renowned expert in entrepreneurship and innovation policies, and regional development programmes. From 1999-2004, she was Slovenia's Minister of Economy. From 2004-2008, she was Slovenian ambassador to the Netherlands, and has been her country's representative on the European Small Business Council and a member of the International Small Business Council. She is vice-president of the board of advisors of the Competitiveness Institute, a member of the academic advisory board of the European Forum of Entrepreneurship Research and a member of the board of the Academic Research Network. She chaired the cluster policy group at the European Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry (2009-2010), was a member of the synergies expert group at the European Commission's Directorate General for Research (2010-2011) and of the United Nations' committee for development policy for the period January 2013 – December 2015.

## **Alessandro Schiesaro**



Alessandro Schiesaro is professor of Latin literature at the University of Rome-Sapienza and director of the Sapienza School of Advanced Studies. After studying in Pisa, Berkeley and Oxford, Alessandro Schiesaro lectured in the United States, including as professor of classics in Princeton, and in the United Kingdom as professor of Latin at King's College London. Since 2008 he has chaired the technical secretariat of the Italian Ministry for Universities and Research.

## **Loukas Tsoukalis**



Loukas Tsoukalis is Jean Monnet Professor of European integration at the University of Athens and visiting professor at the College of Europe in Bruges. He is president of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, and has been special adviser to the President of the European Commission. He has taught at the University of Oxford, London School of Economics, Sciences Po in Paris, and the European University Institute of Florence. He has written many books and articles on European integration and international political economy, translated into several languages.