



27 May 2016

Progress report of FICIL's recommendations on Education System

1. Assessment of the current situation and retrospect to the progress achieved

The government has initiated reforms in most of the areas we have included in our position papers of 2009, 2010 and 2015. We appreciate the number of activities, projects and programs, which have been designed and launched all across the educational system during the last 20 years. However, we perceive flaws in the strategic direction, quality of implementation, effective monitoring and objective assessment of these initiatives. As visible outcomes of these flaws we can mention: the mismatch between educational infrastructure and demand, the emigration of talent, the atomisation of resources, the lack of advancement in the quality of higher education and research.

As a result, we understand that the government should run in cooperation with the private sector a transparent and complete audit of the management of the sector (Ministry and educational institutions) in order to have a legitimate assessment of the unresolved reforms.

2. Matters than need immediate attention

The priorities of the current government are generally aligned with our perspectives though we perceive substantial challenges in the timing and scope of the reforms. We suggest to clearly define three major long-term goals for the modernisation of the educational system with respective and realistic milestones and KPIs:

- a) Leverage the quality level from good to excellent all across the system.
- b) Focus on the introduction of competency-based education in all levels.
- c) Equal opportunities in the context of the optimisation of school network and concentration of resources.

3. Recommendations

Taking into account the above-mentioned priorities, we outline below what we consider as mid-term outstanding reforms in order to complete the modernisation of the educational system:

- *General and Vocational Education*
 - a) Clear formulation of educational objectives and redefinition of educational content according to the current needs of the labour market. Completion of the incorporation of learning content and assessment of the so called "21st century competences and transferable skills". In this sense, we suggest to closely cooperate in the overseeing of

the implementation of the new project of introduction of competency-based education (project code VSS-651 / TA-2577)

- b) Restating and making more actionable the newly sanctioned “virtuous-based legislation”. We suggest using a more modern and internationally accepted terminology: character-based education. In this way, it could be harmonised with the actions related to competency-based education. A good benchmark in terms of content and experience is the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham (UK).
 - c) Elaboration and implementation of an effective and sustainable lifelong career development plan and training for teachers and headmasters in alignment with the above-mentioned competency-based education project.
 - d) Improve the system of education of teachers and the prestige of the profession in the society.
 - e) Encourage the incorporation of the best graduates from university to the profession of teacher and the implementation of new and well-proven educational methodologies as, i.e., *school-wide positive behaviour support* (atbalsts pozitīvai uzvedībai).
 - f) Develop lifelong learning paths for key industrial and service areas with capacity for reaction and change with the shifts of labour market.
- *Higher Education*
- a) Optimisation of the funding system of higher educational institutions (HEIs). We suggest to complete the implementation of the new funding model and to introduce competition in the funding of the so-called 1st pillar.
 - b) Liberalise the accreditation procedures of HEIs granting them the possibility to seek accreditation in international agencies. This would be extremely important to foster internationalisation and raise the level of competition among HEIs.
 - c) Reinforce the quality assurance system of HEIs in order that they can achieve better positioning in the international landscape. According to QS World University Rankings, University of Latvia holds position #734 and RTU #873. According to the same ranking, both universities hold the lowest employer reputation performance among Baltic state-run universities.
- *Institutional Development*
- a) Encourage educational institutions at all levels to seek excellence in their service to the society.
 - b) Run an independent and comprehensive assessment on retention and completion in all levels of the educational system.
 - a) Establish development programs for the future management leaders of educational institutions.