

Education and training in a period of economic crisis.

Day 2 (1 June 2010; 10.30 – 11.00 h): Input from education councils.

Input from the Vlor (Mia Douterlungne) : Savings in education in Flanders.

When the new Flemish government in June 2009 was composed, the majority parties agreed to save in all policy areas. In proportion to its share in the total Flemish budget, education has to save, in percentage, less than other departments. For 2010 we are talking about 72 million Euros, which represents 0.8% of the total education budget of EUR 9.3 MIA. For 2011, it is about 142 million Euro or 1.5% of the total education budget. By limiting the relative education savings compared to savings in other policy areas, the share of the education budget in the total budget increases from 36.9% to 39%.

At first, the Minister of Education wanted linear savings of 1% on all salaries of teachers but, as there has been opposition from the unions, this has not been realised. Decisions on the savings have been taken in consultation with the teachers' unions and had an important motto: save above classes and not in classes.

For civil servants in education, a linear saving has been decided: 5% on working costs and 2.5% on salaries in 2010. This will be pursued in 2011: again 2.5% on working costs and 1.5% on salaries. There is also a cut of 20% in the area of communication. And 20% savings on the budgets for professional training.

The biggest savings are situated in the operational resources of primary and secondary schools (no indexation, no increases: 31.5 MIO). A second important item are the savings in innovative projects (14 MIO). A third measure cuts in the **framework (omkadering)** of primary and secondary schools: no more teacher replacements for short periods, no mentor - or coaching hours for new teachers, no hours for pedagogical coordination, no extra-framework of pilot projects, no premium for internships of teachers in companies (11 MIO). And in **higher education** there are savings in financing envelopes (reduction of 1.27%) and the postponing of a new education level between secondary and higher education (HBO).

Education is strongly marked by these savings: there is no real room for the implementation of new education policy. Many innovations that have been initialised by the previous Minister cannot develop and are on hold: the introduction of a new education level (HBO), the innovation in the field of cooperation of regular and special needs education, a stronger pupil guidance...

At the moment, priority goes to school building construction, because there is a capacity problem in pre-primary and primary schools, especially in urban areas.