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(Information)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of 27 June 2002

on lifelong learning

(2002/C 163/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Whereas

- (1) Education and training are an indispensable means for promoting social cohesion, active citizenship, personal and professional fulfilment, adaptability and employability. Lifelong learning facilitates free mobility for European citizens and allows the achievement of the goals and aspirations of European Union countries (i.e. to become more prosperous, competitive, tolerant and democratic). It should enable all persons to acquire the necessary knowledge to take part as active citizens in the knowledge society and the labour market.
- (2) The action set out in this resolution respects the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular its Article 14, which declares that everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training.
- (3) At the end of the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996, the Council adopted Conclusions on a strategy for lifelong learning, specifying a number of key principles for a lifelong learning strategy ⁽¹⁾.
- (4) The November 1997 extraordinary Luxembourg European Council introduced increased employability and ability for adaptation through training, as priority issues within its employment guidelines and lifelong learning has since then become a horizontal objective of the European employment strategy.
- (5) The March 2000 Lisbon European Council set the strategic objective for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy, which includes key elements such as the development of lifelong learning for everyone.
- (6) The June 2000 Feira European Council invited the Member States, the Council and the Commission, to identify coherent strategies and practical measures to promote lifelong learning, and to make it accessible to all. This was reaffirmed by the March 2001 Stockholm European Council. At the same occasion the Feira European Council reiterated the need to promote the involvement of social partners and to harness the full potential of public and private financing.
- (7) The Council (Education) gave its opinion on the employment package at its meeting of 29 November 2001, stressing the role of lifelong learning as a clear priority in national employment policies.
- (8) A report on lifelong learning was presented to the Ministers for Education of the Union and the candidate countries at their conference in Riga in June 2001. At this meeting, Ministers gave a mandate for a follow-up report on 'Quality indicators of lifelong learning', which will be presented at the meeting of Education Ministers in Bratislava in June 2002.
- (9) The adoption in February 2001 of the Council Report 'Objectives of the education and training systems' and the adoption in February 2002 of the work programme for this decade on the follow-up of this report constitute an important step in taking on the commitment to modernise and improve the quality of the education and training systems of the Member States.
- (10) The conclusions ⁽²⁾ approved by the Council (Education/Youth) of 14 February 2002 positively received the proposals in the Commission's White Paper 'A new impetus for European youth' for taking more account of specific aspects of youth in other Community actions such as lifelong learning.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 7, 10.1.1997, p. 6.⁽²⁾ OJ C 119, 22.5.2002, p. 6.

- (11) The March 2002 Barcelona European Council, as a result of its conviction that lifelong learning constitutes a priority domain of the Lisbon strategy, requested that a Resolution concerning lifelong learning be adopted before the Seville European Council, taking into account the European employment strategy,

NOTES that, although Europe is a point of reference in many fields, and has the proven ability to convert ideas into innovative products and services, access to lifelong learning is still not a reality for many citizens.

STRESSES that lifelong learning must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. Finally, the principles in this context should be: the individual as the subject of learning, highlighting the importance of an authentic equality of opportunities, and quality in learning.

STRESSES the importance of the contribution of the youth sector towards defining global and coherent strategies on lifelong learning by highlighting the value of non-formal and informal learning in the youth field and by defining the priorities for lifelong learning in this context.

WELCOMES the Commission's Communication of November 2001 entitled 'Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality', which is based on the Memorandum of lifelong learning of November 2000 and the feedback from the wide consultation throughout Europe on this document. Furthermore, welcomes the fact that this Communication established lifelong learning as one of the guiding principles for education and training, and recognises the relevance of the building blocks for lifelong learning strategies and the priorities for action identified in the Communication.

REAFFIRMS:

1. that convergence of the Commission's Communication entitled 'Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality' with the work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of the education and training systems is to be promoted, in order to achieve a comprehensive and coherent strategy for education and training;
2. that lifelong learning should be enhanced by the actions and policies developed within the framework of the European employment strategy, the action plan for skills and mobility, the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth Community programmes, the e-Learning initiative, and in the research and innovation actions, among others.

ACKNOWLEDGES that priority should be given to the following:

- providing access to lifelong learning opportunities for all, regardless of age, including specific actions aimed at the most disadvantaged persons, those not participating in education and training, as well as migrants, as a means of facilitating their social integration,
- providing opportunities to acquire and/or update basic skills, including the new basic skills, such as IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills,
- the training, recruitment and updating of teachers and trainers for the development of lifelong learning,
- the effective validation and recognition of formal qualifications as well as non-formal and informal learning, across countries and educational sectors through increased transparency and better quality assurance,
- the high quality and broad accessibility of target group specific information, guidance and counselling concerning lifelong learning opportunities and their benefits,
- encouraging the representation of relevant sectors, including the youth sector, in existing or future networks and structures, working in this area;

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. to develop and implement comprehensive and coherent strategies reflecting the principles and building blocks identified in the Commission's Communication and involving all relevant players, in particular the social partners, civil society, local and regional authorities;
2. in conjunction with the European employment strategy, to mobilise the resources for such strategies and to promote lifelong learning for all, by:
 - setting targets for an increase in investment in human resources, including lifelong learning, and optimising use of available resources,
 - developing initiatives to stimulate private investment in learning,

— considering a more targeted use of Community funding resources, including the European Investment Bank;

3. to promote learning at the workplace, in cooperation with education and training establishments and the social partners;
4. to improve the education and training of teachers and trainers involved in lifelong learning so that they acquire the necessary teaching skills for the knowledge society, thus promoting among other aims general access to language learning, access for all to ICTs, and increased participation in scientific and technical studies;
5. to encourage cooperation and effective measures to validate learning outcomes, crucial for building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning and thus a prerequisite for the creation of a European area of lifelong learning;
6. to develop target group specific information, guidance and advice including the provision of appropriate tools for making available information on education and training and job opportunities;
7. to develop strategies for identifying and increasing the participation of groups excluded from the knowledge society as a result of low basic skill levels;
8. to improve active participation in lifelong learning, including young people;

INVITES THE COMMISSION:

1. to promote and coordinate, in close cooperation with the Council and in an integrated and convergent manner, the actions resulting from the Commission's Communication entitled 'Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality', through the work programme for the follow-up of the objectives of the education and training systems, other

Community education and training instruments and the European employment strategy;

2. to stimulate quality incentives and the exchange of good practices to foster efficient performance in all sectors involved in formal, non-formal and informal learning including by setting up a European database on good practices in the field of lifelong learning;
3. to promote, in close cooperation with the Council and the Member States, increased cooperation in education and training based on the issues of transparency and quality assurance, in order to develop a framework for recognition of qualifications, building on the achievements of the Bologna process and promoting similar action in the area of vocational training. Such cooperation should ensure the active involvement of the social partners, vocational and educational training institutions and the other relevant stakeholders;
4. to promote target group specific information and guidance actions that favour improved awareness of opportunities for learning and working throughout Europe;
5. to promote the participation of candidate countries in the development of lifelong learning strategies;
6. to enhance cooperation with relevant international organisations, e.g. the Council of Europe, the OECD and Unesco, in the development of lifelong learning policies and concrete actions;
7. to prepare, in cooperation with the Member States, a progress report on the follow-up to its Communications and to this Resolution before the spring European Council of 2004.

INVITES the Member States and the Commission to suggest concrete actions to implement the content of this Resolution, by promoting cooperation between all key actors, and within the scope of the Treaty.