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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council
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Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on the global dimension of European higher education - *Adoption*

In the course of several meetings, the Education Committee has prepared the above conclusions with a view to their adoption at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 25-26 November 2013.

The text now meets with the agreement of all delegations, subject only to any linguistic reservations.

The Permanent Representatives Committee is accordingly invited to confirm the agreement reached in the Education Committee and to forward the text to the Council for adoption and subsequent publication in the Official Journal.

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Draft

Council conclusions on the global dimension of European higher education

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

WHEREAS:

1. The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 established an intergovernmental process aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) which is actively supported by the European Union, and the Ministers responsible for higher education in the participating countries, meeting in Bucharest in April 2012, adopted the *Mobility for Better Learning strategy 2020* for the EHEA as an integral part of efforts to promote the internationalisation of higher education[1].

2. Council Directive 2004/114/EC[2] of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service recognises that one of the objectives of Community action in the field of education is to promote Europe as a whole as a world centre of excellence for studies and vocational training.

3. Council Directive 2005/71/EC[3] of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research has a similar aim, that of making the Community more attractive to researchers from around the world and boosting the EU's position as an international centre for research.

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[1] Bucharest communiqué, 27 April 2012, p. 3.
[2] OJ L 375, 23.12.2004, pp. 12-18.
[3] OJ L 289, 3.11.2005, pp. 15-22.

4.   The international strategy adopted at the May 2007 meeting of Bologna ministers in London[4] highlighted the need for the European Higher Education Area to be open and attractive to other parts of the world, and to strengthen higher education cooperation and policy dialogue with countries outside Europe.

5.   The Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training stressed the importance of supporting Member States' efforts to modernise higher education through close synergy will the Bologna process, in particular with regard to quality assurance, recognition, mobility and transparency instruments.

6.   The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth adopted in June 2010[5] set the specific objective of improving education levels, in particular by increasing the share of young people having successfully completed tertiary, or equivalent, education to at least 40% by 2020.

7.   The Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education[6] emphasised that international cooperation programmes and policy dialogues with third countries in the field of higher education not only enable knowledge to flow more freely, but also contribute to enhancing the quality and international standing of European higher education, boosting research and innovation, fostering mobility and intercultural dialogue, and promoting international development in accordance with the EU's external policy objectives.

8.   The Council conclusions of 28-29 November 2011 on a benchmark for learning mobility[7] established a benchmark whereby an EU average of at least 20 % of higher education graduates should, by 2020, have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad.

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[4]   *The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting*
[5]   EUCO 13/10.
[6]   OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, pp.12-14.
[7]   OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, pp. 31-35.

9.	The Council conclusions of 28-29 November 2011 on the modernisation of higher education welcomed the Commission's intention to develop an EU international higher education strategy aimed at increasing international outreach and visibility, and to engage with partners with a view to strengthening relationships and enhancing capacity-building in the higher education sector.

AND IN THE LIGHT OF

The Presidency conference on the *European Higher Education in the World* held in Vilnius on 5-6 September 2013, which underlined the need for Member States and higher education institutions to develop comprehensive internationalisation strategies that:
-	enhance the quality and competitiveness of European higher education;
-	go beyond mobility and take increasing account of the global dimension in the design and content of curricula and teaching and learning processes (often referred to as "internationalisation at home");
-	address a more diverse range and greater number of students by combining new digital resources with more traditional forms of teaching and learning, whilst ensuring high quality;
-	strengthen development cooperation through strategic partnerships and capacity-building.

NOTES WITH INTEREST

-	The communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled *European higher education in the world*[8]; and

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[8]	12453/13.

-       The communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled *Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new technologies and Open Educational Resources[9]*.

ACKNOWLEDGES that

1.   Higher education has a key role to play in the development of engaged, fulfilled and articulate citizens and is a powerful driver of smart, sustainable and inclusive societies, individual prosperity and economic growth. The international mobility of individuals and inclusion of a global perspective in higher education programmes can further contribute to this development.

2.   The strength of Europe's higher education systems lies in the provision of high quality education and research, in the diversity of its institutions, and in its support for cooperation in areas where this provides added value, such as joint and double degree programmes, doctoral schools and studies, and international partnerships.

3.   In the current economic climate higher education, as well as tertiary vocational education and training, have a crucial role to play in strengthening Europe's capacity for research and innovation and providing it with the highly skilled human resources it needs in order to secure jobs, economic growth and prosperity.

4.   Graduate competences do not always match the evolving needs of the labour market and society, and public and private employers report mismatches and difficulties in finding suitable candidates to meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy.

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[9]   14116/13 + ADD 1

5.   Demographic ageing within the EU is likely to have a major impact in the coming decades, as consistently low birth rates risk aggravating the problem of graduate skills shortages for European employers.

6.   As sources of knowledge and innovation, higher education institutions also have a social responsibility to contribute to human development and the common good, both within the national context and in the wider world.

CONSIDERS THAT

1.   The active engagement of international staff, researchers and students in European higher education institutions, the provision of financial and organisational support for the international mobility of both students and staff, and increased efforts to internationalise curricula can help students to acquire competences relevant to the global labour market.

2.   Member States and European higher education institutions have - with EU support - made significant progress in developing mechanisms for cross-border quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications within the Bologna Process, through networks such as the ENIC/NARIC as well as through actions such as the *Erasmus Mundus* and *Tempus* programmes.

3.   The global rise of Open Educational Resources, Open Courseware and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is an international development that may have important implications for higher education systems and open up opportunities for innovative forms of global cross-border cooperation.

ACCORDINGLY INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, AS APPROPRIATE, TO COOPERATE WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, WHILST PAYING DUE REGARD TO THEIR AUTONOMY, IN ORDER TO:

1. Pursue comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation, in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, which cover three main areas:
   (a) student and staff mobility;
   (b) the internationalisation of curricula and digital learning;
   (c) strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity-building.

2. Promote two-way international degree and credit mobility for students, as well as provide opportunities for staff mobility between Europe and third countries, including by:

   i) ensuring that internationalisation strategies contain a strong student, researcher and staff mobility component, supported by a quality framework that can include *inter alia* guidance and counselling services;

   ii) setting up two-way mobility schemes of mutual interest with third countries, which strike a reasonable balance between physical and virtual mobility, as well as between inward and outward mobility, which embrace a wide variety of subjects and, where appropriate, which target fields with skills shortages;

   iii) supporting the recognition of credits, degrees, qualifications and competences gained abroad by internationally mobile students, researchers and staff, in accordance with national legislation and practice;

   iv) strengthening the focus on learning outcomes, as well as coherence with European transparency tools such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System , the Diploma Supplement and the European Qualifications Framework, and with quality assurance mechanisms; and

   v) accelerating progress on the proposed recast of the directives on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research and studies.

3. Promote internationalisation at home and digital learning to ensure that the large majority of European students who do not participate in physical mobility actions are also able to develop international skills, including by:

    i)   ensuring the provision of high quality facilities and student services in tertiary education which are relevant to students' needs;

    ii) making effective use of the international experience and competences held by the staff of higher education institutions (HEIs) and encourage them to contribute to the development of high quality internationally-oriented curricula for the benefit of both non-mobile and mobile learners;

    iii) providing increased opportunities for students, researchers and staff to develop their language competences, particularly by means of tuition in the host language for individuals following courses which are not in their mother tongue, with a view to maximising the benefits of European linguistic diversity and the social integration of students, researchers and staff in their host country;

    iv) offering expanded opportunities for international collaborative online learning and explore the use of Information and Communication Technologies and Open Educational Resources for new delivery modes with a view to widening access, internationalising curricula and paving the way for new forms of partnerships.

4. Promote the creation of partnerships both within and outside Europe, in order to reinforce institutional capacity in education, research and innovation, including by:

    i)   providing curricula that stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation**,** as well as promote the development of transferable skills, and creating international training opportunities through close collaboration with employers from inside and outside the EU;

    ii) promoting a focus on the particular strengths and priorities of each HEI as a means of ensuring the efficient and effective use of public investment;

iii) tackling remaining obstacles which stand in the way of developing and implementing joint, double and multiple degree programmes, and improving provisions for quality assurance and cross-border recognition;

iv) encouraging coherence between Member States' internationalisation strategies and EU development cooperation policies, by taking account of the principles of equity and partner country ownership, as well as the needs of HEIs;

v) drawing on the experiences of students, researchers and staff from third countries as ambassadors of cooperation with HEIs in these countries;

vi) encouraging HEIs to develop their own comprehensive internationalisation strategies, recognising the cross-cutting nature of internationalisation, which affects all areas of university life, including research, teaching, management, administration and services, and support them in their efforts.

WELCOMES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO

1. Support Member States' and higher education institutions' efforts to pursue comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation, and exploit the opportunities for international higher education cooperation within the Commission's *Erasmus+* and *Horizon 2020* programmes, including by:

   i) providing increased financial support through *Erasmus+* for learners and staff mobility to and from third countries, and through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under *Horizon 2020* for the mobility of researchers to and from third countries;

   ii) supporting international HEI consortia to develop Joint Master and Doctoral degrees respectively through *Erasmus+* and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, and providing opportunities for students and doctoral candidates to benefit from high-level scholarships and fellowships;

iii)   supporting strategic partnerships for cooperation and innovation in higher education, including capacity-building partnerships between EU and third-country HEIs.

2.   In cooperation with Member States, make efforts to increase the attractiveness and promote the diversity of European higher education around the world, including by:

i)   improving quality and transparency, promoting cross - border quality assurance mechanisms, and fostering the comparability of qualifications, credits and recognition systems through international cooperation and dialogue;

ii)   enhancing the quality of academic mobility through a reinforced Erasmus Charter for Higher Education including through guidelines for HEIs on self-assessment and monitoring;

iii)   promoting, where relevant and whilst respecting the autonomy of higher education institutions, the implementation of *U-Multirank,* the new multi-dimensional, international transparency tool aimed at enhancing comparability between HEIs;

iv)   supporting cooperation between Member States and among national promotion agencies and alumni associations by sharing information, launching and coordinating joint actions in order to market Europe as a high-quality study and research destination, for instance at student fairs and through the design of joint promotion tools.

3.   Promote higher education cooperation for innovation and development between the EU and its global partners, including by:

i)   undertaking bilateral and multilateral policy dialogues with key international partners, in accordance with the EU's external policies;

ii)   promoting the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities as gateways for international cooperation in innovation, research and higher education to address societal challenges;

iii)   supporting and improving evidence-based policymaking in the field of international education, through research, the collection and analysis of statistics, and dialogue with experts.

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