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NOTE

from : Presidency

to : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)

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Subject : Modernising Higher Education in Europe
– Exchange of views

Delegations will find attached a Presidency question paper on the above subject with a view to an exchange of views in the Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting on 13-14 November 2006.

Council (Education, Youth and Culture)

13-14 November 2006

QUESTION PAPER

Giving impetus to the European innovation system: modernising European universities

Modernisation of Europe's universities, involving their interlinked roles of education, research and innovation, has been acknowledged as a core condition for the success of the Lisbon Strategy and as a part of the move towards an increasingly global and knowledge-based economy.

The main items on the agenda for change have been identified and given added momentum by the European Council. At the informal meeting at Hampton Court in October 2005, universities were acknowledged, together with research and development, as foundations of European competitiveness. The 2006 Spring European Council agreed on stronger action at European level to drive forward this agenda on universities and research, which is due to be implemented by the end of 2007 in the context of the renewed partnership for growth and employment.

On 10 May 2006 the European Commission adopted a Communication entitled "*Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: Education, Research and Innovation*". The Commission Communication lists the challenges which universities and the Ministries responsible for them should address, and there has been a wide consensus on the identified challenges.

The proposal to establish a European Institute of Technology was first made in 2005 during the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy.

On 18 October the Commission adopted its proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a European Institute of Technology. Under the proposal the purpose of the Institute is to improve Europe's competitiveness and attractiveness in higher education, research and innovation, as well as to serve as a flagship and a driving force for change when modernising national higher education systems. The focus is clearly on the improvement of the European innovation system. The sustainable development of the innovation system requires a sound base created by smooth collaboration between education and research.

The goal of the EIT is to strengthen cooperation between universities and enterprises and thus promote the commercialisation and social utilisation of knowledge and competence. The EIT would enhance networking and synergies between high-profile research and innovation communities by bringing together the best researchers and students in knowledge and innovation communities to work with enterprises. The EIT would play a key role in developing inter-disciplinary fields of research. If successfully implemented, the EIT would increase the involvement of industry and the investments made by industry in European higher education, research and innovation.

In the light of these initiatives, Ministers are invited to consider the following questions:

High-quality education and research are the cornerstones of innovation systems.

What are the implications - in terms of the political steering and governance of higher education - of closer collaboration between academia and the business community?

From a higher education perspective, how could the European Institute of Technology be used as a means, at both national and European level, to increase the competitiveness of the European innovation system?
