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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

from : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
to Council

Subject : Key messages to the Spring European Council in the field of education and training
- *Adoption*

Delegations will find attached a set of key messages in the field of education and training, as they result from the proceedings of the Education Committee and as endorsed by the Permanent Representatives Committee on 30 January 2009.

In the light of such endorsement, the Permanent Representatives Committee would advise the Council to confirm those key messages with a view to their subsequent submission to the Spring 2009 European Council.

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Key messages to the Spring European Council in the field of education and training

Education and the road to recovery

The global financial and economic crisis, with the serious challenges it poses for growth, employment and social stability, has demonstrated the need for swift and coordinated action at European level. It is precisely in times of economic difficulty that the key strategic importance of sustaining open and efficient, high-quality education and training systems - as a means of enhancing future competitiveness while fostering social cohesion and active citizenship - must continue to be emphasised. More specifically, the current downturn highlights the need to accelerate efforts aimed at upgrading existing skills and acquiring new ones throughout life, especially in the knowledge-based employment sectors and the evolving low-carbon economy. Long-term investment in knowledge, skills and competences, the development of partnerships and effective cooperation with the world of work and support for the free movement of knowledge are accordingly required as a means of preparing for recovery and ensuring future socio-economic prosperity. With this in view, greater attention should be paid to seeking new and diversified funding sources - including, where appropriate, private ones – for education and training, and to developing corporate social responsibility.

Against this background, the Council - meeting in its Education, Youth and Culture configuration - submits the following key messages in the field of education and training to the Spring European Council:

1. In responding to the challenges posed by the global financial crisis and consequent economic downturn, full consideration should be given to the essential contribution which education and training can make towards recovery. Higher and more efficient investment in human capital is needed. Efforts should also be stepped up to ensure that education can fulfil its role in the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation) as a key driver of a knowledge-based society, and that it can contribute to the development of the proposed European Innovation Plan. To support Member States in meeting these challenges, a significant role will be played by the updated strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training, currently being prepared in anticipation of future developments in the Lisbon process and with a view to adoption in the first half of 2009.

2. Now, more than ever, education and training systems across Europe need to be responsive to current and future labour market requirements and to the challenge of promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. Various forms of cooperation and partnership between education and training institutions on the one hand, and employers and other relevant stakeholders on the other, should be encouraged as a means of enhancing the long-term employability of all citizens through the acquisition of key competences and skills in a lifelong learning perspective. Since learning mobility also contributes to this, periods of learning abroad should gradually become the rule rather than the exception. The anticipation of skills needs, the upgrading and development of skills - in particular entrepreneurship, language and intercultural skills - and the fostering of citizens' creative and innovative potential are key to securing the EU's future prosperity and maintaining social cohesion in the transition to a knowledge-based, low-carbon economy.

**PROGRESS MADE DURING 2008
IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)¹;
- [- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)]²;
- [- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training]³;
- Recast Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Training Foundation⁴;
- Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009)⁵;
- 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme - Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation⁶;

¹ OJ C 111, 06.05.2008.

² First reading agreement reached between the European Parliament and Council in December 2008, adoption expected during the first few months of 2009.

³ Idem.

⁴ OJ L 354, 31.12.2008.

⁵ OJ L 348, 24.12.2008.

⁶ OJ C 86, 05.04.2008.

- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 22 May 2008 on promoting creativity and innovation through education and training⁷;
- Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on multilingualism⁸;
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the future priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training⁹;
- Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning¹⁰;
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 21 November 2008 on preparing young people for the 21st century: an agenda for European cooperation on schools¹¹;
- Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies¹²;
- Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism¹³;

⁷ OJ C 141, 07.06.2008

⁸ OJ C 140, 06.06.2008.

⁹ OJ C 18, 24.01.2009.

¹⁰ OJ C 140, 06.06.2008.

¹¹ OJ C 319, 13.12.2008.

¹² OJ C 319, 13.12.2008.

¹³ OJ C 320, 16.12.2008.

- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 21 November 2008 on youth mobility¹⁴;
- Launch of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), on 4 March 2008, endorsed by the Bologna Ministers (London 18 May 2007) and asked for in the Parliament Council Recommendation of 15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education¹⁵;
- Report from the Commission to the Council on the Council Resolution of 23 November 2007 on Modernising Universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy Com (2008) 680 final of 30 October 2008¹⁶;
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - "An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training"¹⁷;
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - "New Skills for New Jobs - Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs"¹⁸.



¹⁴ OJ C 320, 16.12.2008.

¹⁵ Doc. 8289/08 [COM(2008) 179 final]

¹⁶ Doc. 15292/08 [COM(2008) 860 final] - without prejudice to the Council's position on this document.

¹⁷ Doc. 17535/08 [COM(2008) 865 final] - without prejudice to the Council's position on this document.

¹⁸ Doc. 17537/08 [COM(2008) 868 final] - without prejudice to the Council's position on this document.