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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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from : Working Party on Social Questions
to : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) / Council
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Subject : **Draft Council Conclusions**
- New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward

Delegations will find in the Annex draft Council Conclusions on which agreement¹ was reached at the level of the Working Party on Social Questions on 29 April 2010.²

The Committee is invited to forward the draft Conclusions to the EPSCO Council for adoption.

¹ HU entered linguistic scrutiny reservation pending receipt of the Hungarian translation.

² Minor editorial changes have been introduced by the Council Secretariat; see in particular paragraph 29.

Draft Council Conclusions
"New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward"

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

1. The European Commission Communication “New Skills for New Jobs - Anticipating and matching labour market and skill needs” of 16 December 2008 highlighting the fact that, between now and 2020, the skills required by the labour market will significantly increase; the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 as well as the Council Conclusions of 9 March 2009 and the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication;³
2. The informal Employment Summit held in Prague in May 2009 stressing the importance of measures related to education, vocational training and learning and the Presidency conclusions of the European Council of 18-19 June 2009 on strengthening efforts to support employment;⁴
3. The Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (“ET 2020”) and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competencies for lifelong learning;⁵

³ COM (2008) 868 final, 17537/08; 14415/07; 6479/09;
SOC/346 - CESE 1712/2009

⁴ 10093/09; 11225/09

⁵ 9845/09; OJ L 394 of 30.12.2006

4. The Commission Communication “A shared commitment for employment”⁶, which stated that employment is the best way out of exclusion;
5. The discussions during the Conference "New skills and new jobs for more competitive Europe" held in Barcelona on 8-9 March 2010 and, in particular, the contribution of the Employment Committee to the Conference⁷;
6. Other multilateral meetings welcoming the implementation of initiatives such as "New Skills for New Jobs"; for example, the G-20 Employment Ministers' meeting in Washington on 20-21 April 2010 stressed the need for better anticipation and matching of skills linked to growth strategies, supporting good-quality jobs and prioritising employment by, inter alia, strengthening active labour market policies;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT

7. The European Union is facing one of its biggest challenges as a consequence of the global recession. The way out of the crisis must mean moving to a more competitive economy, which is knowledge-based, inclusive and sustainable, giving good employment opportunities for women and men. Special attention must be paid to young people and disadvantaged groups, providing them with employment and training opportunities to prevent their social exclusion;

⁶ COM (2009) 257 final, 10628/09

⁷ 8815/1/10 REV 1

8. Several long-term factors are stimulating the demand for different and higher skills and driving profound sectoral and occupational changes: globalisation and international trade; adaptation to climate change, requiring a transition towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy with increased need for green skills; the growing importance of the knowledge-based economy, particularly of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and nanotechnologies; ageing population, urbanisation and changing social structures;
9. Lifelong learning, together with the recognition of acquired competences, skills and knowledge and experience, is the best mechanism for adapting citizens' skills to new challenges and for promoting positive transitions as well as more and better jobs. By helping people to deal with change, lifelong learning also has a key role to play in promoting social cohesion and inclusion. This requires both expanding the capacity and improving the efficiency of education and training systems in order to increase the number of people benefiting from high-quality and attractive training offer, designed to meet their needs and the needs of employers;
10. “An agenda for New Skills and Jobs” to modernise labour markets by facilitating labour mobility and the development of skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increasing labour participation and better matching jobs and skills is one of the seven flagship initiatives for the EU proposed in the Commission Communication "EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth"⁸; the European Council of 25-26 March 2010 requested the Commission to further develop these flagship initiatives;⁹
11. An important body of studies and policy documents on matching skills with labour market needs and forecasts of skills and demand has been developed at Member State, European Union and international levels;

⁸ COM (2010) 2020 final, 7110/10

⁹ EUCO 7/10, conclusion 5(f)

URGES THE MEMBER STATES TO

12. Invest in skills and encourage both companies and citizens to do so, including through financial and non-financial incentives; promote better use of skills within companies and public administrations, including through support for innovation; and modernise labour market institutions and training systems in support of these aims;
13. Modernise education and training systems in order to develop key competences, such as communication, maths, science and technology, ICT, learning to learn, social skills, entrepreneurship, intercultural knowledge, teamwork, flexibility and adaptation to change; recognise acquired competences, skills and knowledge and work experience; and promote lifelong learning;
14. Increase flexibility of education and training programmes in order to match education and training better to the needs of the labour market, both in emerging and fast-growing sectors and in established sectors, including social, green and white (care and healthcare) sectors and self-employment; promote the development of national qualification frameworks, within quality assurance and accreditation systems and paying particular attention to the qualifications acquired through work experience;
15. Further develop the links between the education and training and the labour market, to improve the transition from education to work and to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). This includes close and effective partnerships between education and training institutions and public and private employers and, as appropriate, their sectoral representatives;

16. Promote the status of vocational education and training, and promote increased vocational training in companies, bearing in mind the specific needs of SMEs and the importance of developing high-quality apprenticeships and other training programmes in sectors of future growth, including the green and white economies;
17. Promote the participation of the younger and older generations as well low-skilled and other disadvantaged groups in the labour market, with specific policies to improve their skills and qualifications;
18. Support the autonomy of each person in access to lifelong learning and employment, including access to relevant labour market information (vacancies, skills needs) and social services such as child and elderly care; tailored guidance and counselling play an important role, including in combating gender stereotypes, which are strong barriers to gender equality in learning, employment and other activities;
19. Further develop the recognition of non-formal and informal learning to improve access to employment and mobility;
20. Enhance the role of Public Employment Services as sources of information on labour supply and demand and required skills and qualifications, as well as in the delivery of efficient active labour market policies. Public Employment Services should work in partnership with the full range of stakeholders to build up a network with a comprehensive and shared vision of the labour market;
21. While taking into account the specific competencies of actors in both the education and employment sectors, continue to assess the effectiveness of education and training systems, including their interaction with labour market needs, and disseminate the results of these assessments through, inter alia, the appropriate mechanisms of the European Employment Strategy;

22. Take account of, and where appropriate involve, the social partners in the process of adapting education and training to the needs of the labour market, in particular through social dialogue;
23. Open up the education and training sectors and make them more flexible, by assisting educational and training institutions to be more innovative and receptive to the needs of the labour market and by increasing their capacity to offer attractive and high-quality lifelong learning to all;

CALLS ON THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES TO

24. Foster partnerships between relevant stakeholders – such as the social partners, companies, education and training providers, public and private employment services, public authorities at various levels, research organisations and civil society – in order to anticipate skill needs more effectively, to promote new learning initiatives, and to improve the transfer and use of new and existing knowledge on future skills needs between the stakeholders; this includes exploring the potential of Sector Councils on Employment and Skills;
25. Involve actors from both the employment and education sectors in developing integrated approaches to assessing progress in the EU and Member States in the matching of skills and labour market needs;
26. Encourage mobility within the EU, in order to more effectively match workers' skills with employment opportunities as well as to promote professional, sectoral and geographic mobility, including through the EURES network;

27. Relate National Qualifications Frameworks, with the support of the Commission, to the European Qualifications Framework in order to improve the transparency of qualifications and promote workers' mobility;
28. Foster the role of the Network of Public Employment Services as a source of exchange of experience and of mutual learning, and promote dialogue between the Network and other stakeholders, including through EU instruments such as PROGRESS;
29. At EU level, support the coordination of skills initiatives with economic growth and industrial initiatives between the relevant Council formations and the bodies preparing their work¹⁰, in order to promote demand for skills and effective skills utilisation within the private and public sectors;

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO

30. Propose, during the autumn of 2010, further concrete steps to develop the “New Skills for New Jobs” initiative, ensuring its coherence with the EUROPE 2020 Strategy, in particular the flagship initiative “An agenda for new skills and jobs”;
31. Improve the analysis of labour market trends and labour market forecasting, develop tools and services that will improve the quality of guidance, promote labour mobility and help to tackle mismatches between supply and demand as regards skills. Examples include the development of a European taxonomy on Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO), and the EURES “Match and Map” service. CEDEFOP's forecasts of employment and skills supply and demand at the European level should be updated every two years;

¹⁰ The wording "the bodies preparing their work" has been used for the sake of clarity.

32. Improve the understanding of global employment and skills challenges through cooperation with the OECD and the ILO and through dialogue and partnerships with other countries and within regions¹¹;
 33. Consider strengthening the role of the EU funding mechanisms in the development of measures to anticipate skills demand and supply, particularly in the context of labour mobility and of lifelong learning.
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¹¹ Whenever reference to the OECD is made or implied in this text, it is to be understood that the right of participation of all Member States in the work of that organisation should be ensured.