COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Council
Subject: European University - Business Forum on 28-29 February in Brussels - Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above subject which has been put on the provisional agenda, under "other business", for the forthcoming Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting on 14 February 2008.
Education, Youth and Culture Council 14 February 2008

Information Note from the Commission

European University - Business Forum on 28-29 February in Brussels

The revised Lisbon strategy underlines that the Lisbon agenda must be owned by all stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local level in a partnership approach.

One important partnership is that between, on the one hand, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) as “providers” of knowledge, skills and competences, and, on the other, companies as “users”. It is important to ensure that these partners understand each other, that they operate in synergy and that they support each other in the best possible way for the benefice of their own organisations, of their staff and their students and of society at large.

The Forum

To pursue this objective, the Commission raised the idea in March 2007 of launching a European Forum on cooperation between Higher Education Institutions and the economic actors in society. A seminar was organised in Brussels in July 2007 involving stakeholders from the academic and economic world to discuss the idea. All participants welcomed and supported the establishment of the forum.

By offering a platform for the exchange of best practice and for the identification of innovative solutions, the Commission can offer genuine added value and facilitate dialogue between HEIs and the business community.

The first meeting of the European University/Business Forum will be held on 28-29 February 2008 in Brussels, with about 150 participants representing the different stakeholders.
The Forum will provide for institutional presentations, examples of good practice, discussions and opportunities to network. The Forum is not meant to be a one-off event but the start of a lasting structured dialogue with university and business stakeholders, as we consider such a dialogue an essential element of Europe's efforts to make its Education and Training systems more effective and efficient.

The topics that are proposed to be addressed during this 1st Forum are:

- **Continuing Education:**
  - How can the opportunities and labour market relevance of continuing education be increased?
  - How can universities cooperate with companies in the provision of training/retraining programmes?
  - How can higher education open up to learners with a non-traditional background, including the recognition of prior learning?

- **Modernising governance structures within universities**
  - How can expertise from enterprises help universities in defining their mission and strategic priorities?
  - How can enterprises contribute to a more professional management of human resources, investment and administrative procedures?
  - How can enterprise representatives become involved in university governance (boards, councils, etc.)

- **Curriculum development:**
  - How can curricula and training programmes be made more relevant to the labour market by providing the right mix of skills and competences?
  - How can representatives of enterprises and professional bodies contribute to the formulation of learning outcomes for study programmes to ensure employability of graduates?
  - How can an entrepreneurial mindset be stimulated amongst students?
- **Mobility:**
  - How to facilitate and optimise the placement of students in companies (national or trans-national mobility)?
  - Teaching staff working for a limited period in a company?
  - Company staff working for a limited period at a university?
  - Mobility an added value enhancing the chances of the student to get a job?
  - How is mobility viewed and supported by universities and by industry?
  - Mobility as part of the curriculum?

Speakers will be drawn from a wide range of stakeholders:

- Relevant European organisations and associations (University and Business);
- Universities (Rectors or Professors that are in charge of topics to be covered at the forum);
- Large and small companies and/or national or regional organisations of employers/industries;
- Ministries/public authorities;
- Projects/initiatives that can present examples of good practice.

Three additional thematic forums with approx. 50 participants are foreseen to be organised in 2008, where specific topics will be explored more in depth, including questions related to knowledge and technology transfer.