



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 4 November 2016
(OR. en)

13631/16

EDUC 341
JEUN 87
SPORT 71
CULT 100
SOC 639
EMPL 435
RECH 294

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
No. prev. doc.:	13443/16 EDUC 333 JEUN 80 SPORT 67 CULT 95 SOC 632 EMPL 428 RECH 292
Subject:	Fostering and developing talent: policies for discovering and drawing out the best in young people - <i>Policy debate</i> (Public debate in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Council's Rules of Procedure [proposed by the Presidency])

Following consultation of the Education Committee, the Presidency has prepared the attached discussion paper, which is submitted as the basis for the policy debate to the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 21-22 November 2016.

Fostering and Developing Talent: policies for discovering and drawing out the best in young people

Presidency discussion paper

“Talent” is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a natural endowment or a special characteristic feature, aptitude, or disposition of a person, often athletic, creative, or artistic.” In a metaphysical sense, it can be understood as something innate that exists in all human beings, waiting to be discovered and drawn-out – to share with the world. It is not elitist, but democratic and inclusive, in that every person has something unique inside them, which deserves equal opportunity to be fostered and developed. Some people may be more talented than others in some areas, but the question is how to bring the best out of everyone – of whatever level.

Self-discovery is important in developing the personal identity of young people. Being recognized as a talented basketball player, violinist, scientist, creative writer, carpenter, maths student or cartoonist can be a positive source of pride and provide a sense of place in society for anyone growing-up. Aside from the humanistic and moral dimension of enabling its development, talent is the necessary spark to any economy that seeks to be globally-competitive in the borderless marketplace. Being good at your job is one thing, but also having the deep technical capabilities and imaginative vision to shape new industries and sectors are also key to prosperous long-term growth.

Talent has often succeeded in emerging from adversity, exclusion and even conflict if one looks at the history of technological change. Nonetheless, in a civilized and peaceful society which holds happiness to a premium¹, talent is something that can be better enabled through positive learning environments. Talent is not necessarily taught as such, but the discovery, effort, space, support and opportunities to foster and develop it are things which educators and educational systems — ranging from early childhood, basic schooling, youth work, vocational to higher education — can strive to provide.

¹ As cited in Article 3 of the Treaty of the European Union, “the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the **well-being** of its peoples.”

This of course represents a challenge, not least because there is research evidence to show that young people, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalised, often lack the opportunity to make the most of their talents (if they ever become aware that they have them). Encouraging passion and commitment, the hand-maidens to talent, are also equally important in the drive to develop talent to the fullest extent.

With this background, and using any of the following questions, Ministers are invited to exchange views and share their experiences, including one or two brief examples of good practice:

1. ***“A mind is a terrible thing to waste”: What are Member States doing to ensure all young people have the opportunity to discover their talents and realize their full potential?***
2. ***Putting people on the right track: How can talent and educational pathways (i.e. school curricula, vocational training, non-formal learning, university etc.) be better matched to market demands and personal development? How can we avoid ‘overskilling’ in some economic sectors and ‘underskilling’ in others?***
3. ***In the competitive race to attract and retain top talent in science and the arts, what can the EU and Member States do to foster and develop their own ground-breaking generation of innovators and ‘path-breakers’?***

To give all Ministers an opportunity to contribute, as well as to foster a more interactive discussion, interventions should be as concise as possible. In this way, Ministers may have the option of intervening more than once.

The Presidency’s aim is that Ministers leave the discussion with some practical ideas which they can take back to their capitals for inspiration and/or consideration.
