



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 20 February 2008

6445/08

**EDUC 59
JEUN 21
ECOFIN 82
AG 22
COMPET 71
RECH 70**

REPORT

From : the Council (Education, Youth and Culture)
to European Council (13-14 March 2008)

Subject : Key messages to the Spring European Council in the fields of Education/Training
and Youth

Delegations will find attached the text of the key messages in the fields of Education/Training and Youth, as adopted by the Council (EYC) on 14 February 2008.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Key Messages on delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation

THE COUNCIL, meeting in its Education, Youth and Culture configuration,

RECALLING the political progress made during 2007 and early 2008, in particular:

- the Council Conclusions of 24 May 2007 on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training;
- the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning;
- the Conclusions of 15 November 2007 of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on improving the quality of teacher education;
- the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy;
- the political agreement of 22 November 2007 reached on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology;
- the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on "New skills for new jobs";
- the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on education and training as a key driver of the Lisbon Strategy;
- the Commission's strategic report of 11 December 2007 on the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs: *"Launching the new cycle (2008-2010) - Keeping up the pace of change"*;
- the 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010" work programme.

SUBMITS the following key messages in the field of education and training to the Spring 2008 European Council:

1. In education and training progress has been made towards achieving the 2010 goals and benchmarks, but important challenges regarding the **implementation of lifelong learning strategies** remain in a number of key areas. As a priority, Member States should take concrete action to:
 - reduce substantially the numbers of young people who still cannot read properly and the number of early school leavers;
 - improve the achievement levels of learners with a migrant background;
 - ensure that teaching is regarded as an attractive career choice by the best graduates and that teachers receive high quality initial training and continuing professional development;
 - Attract more adults, particularly low-skilled and older workers, into education and training.

2. For the **knowledge triangle** to be effective, education and training must both provide a broad knowledge and skills base in the population and develop learners' **creativity and capacity for innovation**. To this end:
 - Curricula on all levels should be developed so as to enhance the creative and innovative competences of learners;
 - A review of future skills requirements should be envisaged at European level as part of the follow-up to the "New skills for new jobs" initiative;
 - Universities should be given the necessary autonomy to develop partnerships with the business community and other national, regional and local stakeholders and so enable them to benefit from complementary private sector funding. Universities should increasingly reach out to non-traditional learners;
 - Policy cooperation between the areas of culture and education should be developed.

3. Equipping individuals with the necessary competences to engage in **intercultural dialogue** is essential for Europe as an inclusive society and a competitive economy. In addition to its intercultural role, multilingualism and language proficiency give European business a genuine competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

4. Transnational **mobility** should be further developed in its quality, scope and equity. Alongside the Lifelong Learning Programme, national and regional mobility programmes should operate in such a way as to ensure that a certain period of time spent studying abroad becomes common practice in higher education and that greater mobility is fostered in the field of vocational education and training.

ACCORDINGLY INVITES THE COMMISSION,

with a view to ensuring the continuity of the present "Education and Training 2010" work programme, as well as identifying new goals in these areas, to submit a proposal by the end of 2008 for an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training.

YOUTH

Key Messages on further implementation of the European Pact for Youth

A. Context and Progress made in 2007 regarding the European Youth Pact

- (1) Since 2005 the European Youth Pact has developed into a key tool of European action for youth. It covers a broad range of measures aiming at facilitating transitions between education and employment and at reconciling professional, private and family life, some in the microeconomic strand (entrepreneurship), some in the employment and social inclusion strand of the Lisbon national reform programmes (NRP).
- (2) "Investing in Youth: an empowerment strategy", a document issued in April 2007 by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers of the European Commission, points out that effective investment in youth is the key to making the future prosperous, both economically and socially, and that Member States should recognise the common challenges they face in the long-term goal of empowering youth and adapt their economic and social policies accordingly.
- (3) In its Communication "Promoting young people's full participation in education employment and society", adopted on 5 September 2007¹, the Commission underlined the social and economic challenges of youth unemployment for Europe and proposed a transversal approach with concrete actions for the European level and for the Member States.

¹ COM(2007) 498 final.

- (4) In November 2007, the Council of Ministers welcomed the proposals made by the Commission in its Communication of 5 September 2007 by adopting conclusions on a transversal approach to youth policy¹ and held a debate on the implementation and monitoring of the European Youth Pact; Ministers underlined the need for better monitoring of the implementation of the European Youth Pact at all levels of decision-making, and to develop an exchange of good practices, including methodologies for analysing good practices and their transferability.
- (5) In December 2007, the European Council pointed out that a life-cycle approach to work should be developed, particularly by making the European Youth Pact more operational, including via effective monitoring and mainstreaming.
- (6) The analysis of the National Reform Programmes for 2007 shows that:
- More and more Member States treat youth as a priority in the context of the Lisbon Strategy. Since the adoption of the European Youth Pact in 2005 youth unemployment decreased in some of the Member States; however, it continued to increase in a few others.
 - Although the situation varies greatly among Member States, youth unemployment remains high (17,4%) and around 4,7 million young people are currently not in a stable socio-occupational situation.
 - Drop-out rates are falling in most Member States.

¹ OJ C 282, 24.11.2007, p. 16.

- Ensuring secured pathways for social and professional inclusion of young people remains a key objective of youth policies; young people, particularly those with disadvantaged backgrounds, face challenges in the stages of life between school and employment.
- Many Member States still lack a coherent and cross-sectoral youth strategy.
- There is a new tendency for the European Social Fund to be mentioned frequently, and it contributes in many Member States to active labour market measures, especially to youth measures, but there is still a need to use the existing political and financial instruments more efficiently.
- There is also a lack of substantial European Youth Pact oriented information and follow-up instruments.

B. Key Messages

Young people are essential actors in achieving social and economic progress. This fact is collectively recognised in the context of the Lisbon strategy and is more and more widely taken into account in the implementation of the European Youth Pact. Although some progress has already been made in the areas concerned, issues related to youth employment are still key challenges for the public authorities in Europe.

In further implementing the European Youth Pact, Member States should emphasise the following priorities:

- (1) *Youth employment, participation in education and training and the social integration of young people should remain key objectives of the economic and social strategies, and Member States should focus on concrete measures in order to tackle these challenges.***

Depending on national circumstances, Member States' employment and social strategies should include a special focus on youth employment objectives, particularly as concerns the transition from education to employment, precarious working conditions, flexicurity, employability, the promotion of entrepreneurship, the recognition of competences acquired through non-formal learning and the support for the autonomy of young people.

The EU Structural Funds should also be better used in local and regional projects specially designed to take into account the youth dimension.

- (2) *Particular attention should be paid to young people with fewer opportunities, especially through stronger guidance, multidisciplinary support and tailored measures.***

In some cases young people with fewer opportunities still find themselves in marginalised situations; they are not always sufficiently taken into account by education, training or employment and social policies. Policies affecting youth should pay more attention to young people with fewer opportunities and find innovative and specific pathways to support them better in their transition from education, inactivity or unemployment to employment.

Determined efforts are needed to improve the basic skills of young people and reduce early school leaving. Member States should design tailored measures for example in the field of information, guidance and counselling, job experience and all opportunities so as to allow them to acquire and develop competences and qualifications.

(3) *Efforts should be maintained to develop the youth dimension, based on a cross-sectoral approach and youth empowerment, in the governance of the Lisbon Strategy.*

The cross-sectoral approach should be reinforced by strengthening the cooperation between youth administrations and those in charge of the implementation of and reporting on the Lisbon Strategy at the national level.

Member States should work with young people and all the relevant partners to improve the implementation and evaluation process regarding the European Youth Pact.

The results obtained should be made more visible, inter alia through the development of methods and tools for better evaluation of the implementation of the European Youth Pact in national reports and in the Annual Progress Report of the Commission in which the latter could make recommendations to Member States as regards the implementation of the Pact.
