



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6079/05 (Presse 20)

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

2639th Council meeting

### **Education, Youth and Culture**

Brussels, 21 February 2005

President

**Ms Mady DELVAUX-STEHRÉS,**  
Minister for Education and Vocational Training  
**Ms Marie-Josée JACOBS,**  
Minister for the Family and Integration, Minister for  
Equal Opportunities

of Luxembourg

# **P R E S S**

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6079/05 (Presse 20)

## **Main Results of the Council**

*The Council adopted contributions that will be submitted to the European Council on 22 and 23 March 2005 for the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy.*

## **CONTENTS**<sup>1</sup>

<b>PARTICIPANTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
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### **ITEMS DEBATED**

EDUCATION.....	6
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- Contribution to the Spring European Council on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy – Council conclusions ..... 6
- Effectiveness and fairness of European education systems ..... 13

YOUTH.....	15
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- Contribution to the Spring European Council on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy – Council conclusions ..... 15

### **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

#### *ENVIRONMENT*

- Recycling of packaging – Enlargement ..... 19

<sup>1</sup>

- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the abovementioned Council Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

### **Belgium:**

Mr Frank VANDENBROUCKE

Vice-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Employment, Education and Training  
Minister for Culture and Media, Protection of Monuments, Youth and Sport (German-speaking community)

Ms Isabelle WEYKMANS

### **Czech Republic:**

Ms Alena ŠTĚRBOVÁ

Deputy Minister for Education, Youth and Sport

### **Denmark:**

Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN

Deputy Permanent Representative

### **Germany:**

Mr Wolf-Michael CATENHUSEN  
Mr Peter RUHENSTROTH-BAUER

State Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Research  
State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

### **Estonia:**

Mr Toivo MAIMETS

Minister for Education and Science

### **Greece:**

Mr Andreas KARAMANOS

Secretary-General

### **Spain:**

Ms María Jesús SANSEGUNDO GÓMEZ DE CADIÑANOS

Minister for Education and Science

### **France:**

Mr François FILLON  
Mr Jean-François LAMOUR

Minister for Education, Higher Education and Research  
Minister for Youth, Sport and the Voluntary Sector

### **Ireland:**

Ms Síle DE VALERA

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (with special responsibility for Adult Education, Youth Affairs and Educational Disadvantage)

### **Italy:**

Ms Valentina APREA

State Secretary for Education, the Universities and Research  
State Secretary for Labour and for Social Policies

Ms Grazia SESTINI

### **Cyprus:**

Mr Pefkios GEORGIADES

Minister for Education and Culture

### **Latvia:**

Ms Ina DRUVIETE

Minister for Education and Science

### **Lithuania:**

Mr Remigijus MOTUZAS  
Ms Violeta MURAUSKAITE

Minister for Education and Science  
Under Secretary, Ministry of Social Security and Labour

### **Luxembourg:**

Ms Mady DELVAUX-STEHRES  
Ms Marie-Josée JACOBS

Minister for Education and Vocational Training  
Minister for the Family and Integration, Minister for Equal Opportunities

**Hungary:**

Ms Kinga GÖNCZ  
Mr Egon DIENES-OEHM

Minister for Youth, Family and Equal Opportunities  
Deputy Permanent Representative

**Malta:**

Mr Louis GALEA

Minister for Education, Youth and Employment

**Netherlands:**

Ms Maria van der HOEVEN  
Ms Clementia Ignatia Johanna Maria ROSS-van DORP

Minister for Education, Cultural Affairs and Science  
State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment

**Austria:**

Ms Elisabeth GEHRER  
Mr Sigisbert DOLINSCHKE

Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture  
State Secretary

**Poland:**

Ms Ewa SYNOWIEC

Deputy Permanent Representative

**Portugal:**

Mr Pedro de SAMPAIO NUNES

State Secretary for Science and Innovation

**Slovenia:**

Mr Milan ZVER

Minister for Education and Sport

**Slovakia:**

Mr Martin FRONC

Minister for Education

**Finland:**

Ms Tuula HAATAINEN  
Ms Nina VASKUNLAHTI

Minister for Education  
Deputy Permanent Representative

**Sweden:**

Ms Lena HALLENGREN

Minister at the Ministry of Education and Culture, with  
responsibility for Pre-school Education, Youth Affairs and  
Adult Learning  
Deputy Permanent Representative

Ms Ingrid HJELT AF TROLLE

**United Kingdom:**

Mr Ivan LEWIS

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and  
Vocational Education

**Commission:**

M. Ján FIGEL

Member

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **EDUCATION**

- ***Contribution to the Spring European Council on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy – Council conclusions***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL

having regard to

1. The new strategic goal set for the European Union by the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000 and reaffirmed by the Stockholm European Council of 23 and 24 March 2001 to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".
2. The substantial contribution of Lifelong Learning, covering all forms of learning and all levels and dimensions of Education and Training, to all these objectives and to the achievement of sustainable development, as acknowledged by the Lisbon European Council itself.
3. The fact that some 33 million people in the European Union are not in active employment; Europe's workforce is ageing, and 32% of the working age population (78 million) is low skilled. In contrast, over the next five years, only 15% of newly created jobs will be for people with basic schooling, whereas 50% of newly created jobs will require highly skilled workers.
4. The progress made, in particular in the context of the "Education and Training 2010" Work Programme at national and European level.
5. The Commission Communication to the Spring European Council 2005 ("Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy") and the need to identify areas where the European Council may support further progress.

## STRESSES THAT:

6. The knowledge society is key to the Lisbon Strategy. The contribution of education and training is therefore essential, as they provide the indispensable skills base and creative potential.
- The Lisbon goals of competitiveness and economic growth can only be achieved if young people coming onto the labour market are properly equipped through quality education and training in line with the evolution of society.
  - More efficient investment in education and training leads in general to a significant increase of the national product of a country and contributes to the future income of the learners.
  - Better quality of education and training as well as better access and higher participation not only enable an increasing number of people to achieve personal development but also contribute to sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and more and better jobs.
  - Increasing participation and completion rates in initial education and training will have a positive effect on the quality of the labour force, improve people's employability and therefore reduce public spending.
  - The higher education sector is situated at the crossroads of research, education and innovation and is therefore key to the competitiveness of the European Union.
  - No advanced economy can survive without continuous upgrading of people's skills, regardless of their age. Lifelong learning is therefore essential, and needs to be encouraged in all the Member States. It increases the overall skills levels of the workforce, allowing people to adapt to the rapidly changing needs of the labour market and to new technologies and improving the conditions for occupational and geographical mobility. In this regard, basic training in ICT (digital literacy) for all is essential.
7. As regards the issue of sustainable growth and "more and better jobs", education and training provide the foundation on which better quality jobs can be created and growth sustained. This is even more true in knowledge-based societies and economies.

- More jobs can only result from a better and more job-intensive economic growth; this in turn requires that the labour force have the skills and competences needed by entrepreneurs and companies.
  - Better quality jobs imply a higher level of competence from the worker, which in turn implies greater individual development at all levels of education and training throughout life, in the light of demographic change. Education and training, non-formal and informal learning, are means to achieve this.
  - Education and training raise young people's awareness of the environmental dimension and help them understand that sustainable economic growth, while addressing the needs of present generations, must not put at risk those of future generations.
8. As regards the question of "greater social cohesion", education and training promote understanding and tolerance. Moreover, they open a more equitable start in life for all.
- Early education provides the best chance to develop social skills in children, and to prepare them for the increasingly multi-cultural world in which we live and, in particular, to give children with fewer opportunities a better preparation for school.
  - Citizenship education in its broadest sense, including opportunities for participation in civil society, is a complementary means of combating cultural and social exclusion and facilitating the integration of young people as well as people with special needs in society.

#### RECALLS THAT:

9. In accordance with the Lisbon conclusions, the Council has agreed on a coherent and integrated Work Programme, now referred to as "Education and Training 2010". The Council and Commission, in their Joint Interim Report to the European Council adopted in February 2004, underlined three priority areas for immediate further action:
- Focus reform and investment on the key areas for the knowledge-based society.
  - Make lifelong learning a reality.
  - Establish a European area of education and training.



10. Agreement has been reached on Europass, as well as on other key issues, such as the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and guidance throughout life. Priority should now be given to implementing these agreements at the national level. The future priorities for reforms and investment in VET are defined in the Council conclusions adopted on 15 November 2004, which formed the basis for the Maastricht Communiqué adopted on 14 December 2004.
11. Under the impulse of the Bologna process, progress has been made in stimulating curricular reform in higher education across Europe. In addition, the Erasmus Mundus programme was adopted in December 2003 to promote the EU as a centre of excellence in learning around the world. However, more action and support from the EU would enable higher education institutions to fulfil their key role in achieving the Lisbon objectives.
12. In order to monitor progress under the Work Programme, the Council adopted a number of benchmarks for the EU as a whole in May 2003. They are all-important for the Lisbon Strategy and should therefore be achieved by 2010.
13. At national level, the modernisation of education and training systems is underway, but much remains to be done to implement the necessary reforms.

#### RECOMMENDS THAT:

14. In preparation for the next joint report of the Council and Commission to the European Council in 2006, further action be taken at European and national level, having regard to the Lisbon Mid-Term Review according to the priority levers of "Education and Training 2010", as they were stated in the 2004 Joint Interim Report, in particular with reference to actions for the development of human capital:
  - Focus reform and investment on the key areas for the knowledge-based society
    - Realise the Lisbon objective of a substantial increase in, and efficient use of public and private investment in education and training.
    - Develop a culture of excellence as well as evaluation systems to ensure that EU education and training systems become a world quality reference.

- Improve governance at national level by involving all relevant stakeholders, including the social partners, and by improving coordination among the public authorities concerned.
- Strengthen synergies and complementarity between education and other policy areas such as employment, research and innovation, and macroeconomic policy.

– Making lifelong learning a reality:

National strategies for lifelong learning should aim to ensure that all citizens acquire the key competences they need in a knowledge society and that open, attractive and accessible learning environments are created. The following measures, among others, can contribute to achieving these goals:

- Multiply opportunities of lifelong learning, for example by means of distance-learning especially through the use of ICT.
- Stimulate lifelong learning demand through measures to reconcile work and family life.
- Identify cost sharing models of continuing training (employers, employees and public service).
- Develop national strategies, aiming *inter alia* at filling the current gap in terms of access to lifelong learning opportunities between large and small companies, and between high and low skilled people.
- Adopt the future integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

– Establish a European area of Education and Training:

- Strengthen the open method of coordination, for example by:
  - working in "peer learning" clusters, allowing Member States to focus on their priority areas;

- improving the scope, precision and reliability of education and training statistics;
  - identifying indicators in new fields and making them operational, as envisaged in the Joint Interim Report, including the foreign language competence indicator requested by the Barcelona European Council, in March 2002.
- Adopt common reference points at European level in fields such as key competences and the training of teachers and trainers.
  - Strengthen the role of higher education institutions in the Lisbon Strategy and improve the quality of higher education in order to enhance its international attractiveness and the mobility of the students and staff.
  - Enhance the synergy and the complementarity between Higher Education and Research to stimulate innovation and employment through the mobility of young researchers and the networking of centres of excellence.
  - Develop by the end of 2006 a European Qualifications Framework as a common reference covering both VET and general education (secondary and higher), based on competences and learning outcomes.

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL:

15. To reaffirm that lifelong learning is and will remain a *sine qua non* for achieving the Lisbon goals. In this context, the successful implementation of the "Education and Training 2010" Work Programme is essential in order both to develop knowledge and innovation and to create more and better jobs.
16. To seize the momentum of the Mid-Term-Review, by giving priority to:
  - the putting in place of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies in the Member States by 2006 encompassing all levels and dimensions of education and training to develop the skills and competences needed, with the involvement of all stakeholders concerned;

- the promotion of excellence at all levels of Education and Training systems in support of jobs and growth, as well as social cohesion;
  - the implementation in the Member States of the "Education and Training 2010" Work Programme, including the necessary increase in and more efficient use of investment in education and training;
  - enhanced European cooperation in education and training in order to stimulate and support reform, particularly through
    - peer learning, made more relevant to Member States' needs;
    - improving the quality of the monitoring of progress;
    - enhancing the contribution of VET, higher Education and Research to the Lisbon strategy;
    - developing and implementing a European Qualifications Framework.
17. To call on the Council (Education/Youth/Culture) to contribute to the monitoring of those aspects coming within its competence i.e. education and training, in the framework of the reporting mechanisms of the Lisbon Strategy.
18. To include the initiative of a European Pact for Youth, in the framework of the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon strategy, in order to promote a generation of young Europeans with quality jobs, a higher level of education and undergoing training to improve their adaptability and to define orientations for concrete measures for this purpose in the framework of "Education and Training 2010" and of existing programmes."

– *Effectiveness and fairness of European education systems*

The Council discussed the subjects of the effectiveness and fairness of national education systems, which are seen as essential elements of the "Education and Training" <sup>1</sup> dimension of the Lisbon Strategy <sup>2</sup>.

Beforehand, Mr Marc Demeuse of the University of Mons-Hainaut and Mr Ludger Wössman of the University of Munich were invited to present the results of their studies on these subjects.

Mr Wössman argued for the complementarity of two measures for making European education systems more effective: school autonomy or the decentralisation of decision-making – with all the advantages accruing from a better understanding of problems at local level – together with a system of external assessment as a way of encouraging pupils and their schools to perform better.

Mr Demeuse sought to give an overview of the level of fairness at school in the European countries, and to offer appropriate tools – scientifically recognised and internationally validated indicators – for evaluating that level.

The ensuing discussion focussed on the following:

- The structural factors ensuring effectiveness and fairness that could be identified in national education systems.

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<sup>1</sup> See OJ C 142, 14.6.2002, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> In March 2000 (see Lisbon European Council conclusions, 100/1/00) the Union set itself the aim of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

- Evaluation of the functioning of education systems with regard to fairness. Use of the results of such evaluations.
- Forms of quality assurance that can raise accountability and improve effectiveness and fairness in schools.

This was an opportunity for delegations to share their experience in the matter of effectiveness and fairness, which were generally agreed to be essential objectives.

The delegations noted examples of good practice in other Member States which they could draw upon, taking account of the specific characteristics and traditions of their own systems.

The delegations expressed a wish to continue their discussion of these matters at a later date.

## **YOUTH**

### **– *Contribution to the Spring European Council on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy – Council conclusions***

With a view to the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy, the Council had an exchange of views on the importance of the role of young people in achieving the Lisbon objectives.

In this connection, delegations referred in particular to the following aspects in their contributions:

- recognition of demographic change, which called for policies to be refocused on young people;
- the initiatives recently launched at national level, which took account of the specific interests of young people;
- the importance of establishing priorities for young people in areas such as employment, education, training and reconciling family and working life;
- in this context, the increased importance of ensuring the broadest possible consultation and participation of young people in decisions relating to them.

The Council welcomed the initiative of creating a European Pact for Youth provided for in the Commission communication "*Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy*" (5990/05), and to be integrated into the Lisbon Strategy as part of the mid-term review by the Spring European Council. The Commission will shortly be submitting proposals to flesh out this initiative.

The Council adopted the following conclusions in particular:

"THE COUNCIL,

Having regard to:

1. the objective, set by the Lisbon European Council on 23 and 24 March 2000 and reaffirmed by the Stockholm European Council on 23 and 24 March 2001, of making the European Union "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*";
2. the White Paper "A new impetus for European youth", adopted by the Commission on 21 November 2001, which recognises that "*This strategy sets new goals for different policy fields which are closely related to youth, such as education, employment, social inclusion, information and civil society*";

3. the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 adopting, on the basis of the aforementioned White Paper, the open method of coordination as a new framework for cooperation in the youth field and proposing the inclusion of the youth dimension in other policies and programmes;
4. the conclusions of the European Council of 4 and 5 November 2004, taking note of the letter from the Heads of State or Government of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden pointing out the importance of demographic factors in shaping the future economic and social development of Europe and calling for the elaboration of a "European Pact for Youth";
5. the Commission Communication to the Spring European Council 2005 ("Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy") on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy, which states that *"we still need a vision for society which can integrate both the ageing and the young" and underlines "the need for urgent action"*.

#### UNDERLINES

6. the importance of a youth perspective in the Lisbon Strategy, having regard to the demographic, economic, social and political development of the European Union, and in particular its ageing population;
7. the contribution made by youth's innovative capacity, spirit of initiative and enterprise, mobility and capacity for multicultural integration in terms of competitiveness, sustainable growth and social cohesion;
8. the importance of a concerted, cohesive and cross-cutting policy focused on young people;
9. the relevance, in this context, of the White Paper on youth, especially the open method of coordination and the inclusion of youth in other policies, as well as the need to strengthen synergies and complementarity among the different policies and programmes affecting youth;
10. that a better understanding of youth and young people's living conditions is a precondition for identifying effective measures to encourage young people to make the most of their potential;
11. that the Lisbon Strategy needs the support of young people to succeed.



## SHARES

12. in this connection, the belief expressed by the Commission that the Lisbon Strategy must *"ensure that the reforms proposed help to give young people a first chance in life and equip them with the skills needed throughout their lives"*;
13. the concern expressed by the Commission, in its Communication to the Spring European Council 2005, that young people should be targeted within the framework of certain key areas such as employment, the reconciliation of family and professional life, investment in human capital and research and development.

## CONSIDERS THAT

14. on the basis of the existing instruments and mechanisms, such an approach, targeted towards young people, should be effectively integrated in the policies envisaged by the Lisbon Strategy;
15. the specific efforts in favour of young people must take account of gender equality and apply equally to young people with fewer opportunities, in particular in the fields of education, employment, social integration and mobility;
16. the active participation of young people in society is both an objective and a method guaranteeing the involvement of European citizens in the Lisbon objectives and contributing to the personal development of young people, their social integration and social cohesion in general. Consequently, it constitutes an additional factor for the success of the Lisbon Strategy.

## INVITES THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL TO

17. include, in the framework of the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon Strategy, and of the discussions on the Commission's communication to the Spring European Council 2005, the initiative of a European Pact for Youth, encompassing particularly the fields of employment, social cohesion, education, training, mobility, and the reconciliation of family and professional life;

18. define orientations for the concrete measures required to implement this initiative in all sectors concerned;
19. take note of the Commission's intention to adopt a communication on this initiative;
20. entrust the Commission and the Member States with the task of ensuring that young people and youth organisations, inter alia via the "European Youth Forum", are fully involved in this approach;
21. monitor the implementation of the European Pact for Youth through the reporting mechanisms of the Lisbon Strategy, and call on the Council (Education/Youth/Culture) to contribute to the monitoring of those aspects coming within its competence."

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Recycling of packaging – Enlargement**

The Council adopted a Directive setting the time limits within which the Member States that joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 had to comply with the new objectives laid down in the Directive on packaging and packaging waste <sup>3</sup> (*PE-CONS 3601/05*).

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<sup>3</sup> Directive 94/62/CE (OJ L 365, 31.12.1994, p. 10, as revised by Directive 2004/12/CE (OJ L 47, 18.2.2004, p. 26).