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**INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

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from : General Secretariat of the Council

to : Council

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Subject : Contribution of the Council (in the field of education) to the Spring European Council

– Key messages to the Spring European Council

– *Adoption*

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Delegations will find attached a set of key messages in the field of education and training, as they result from the Education Committee's proceedings, and as endorsed by the Permanent Representatives committee on 2 February 2007.

In the light of its unanimous endorsement of the text, the Permanent Representatives Committee would therefore advise the Council to agree on these key messages with a view to their subsequent submission to the Spring 2007 European Council.

**Key messages in the field of education and training  
from the Education, Youth & Culture (EYC) Council  
to the Spring 2007 European Council**

Lifelong learning lies at the crossroads of economic, social and employment policies. In a knowledge society, it contributes to competitiveness, innovation, social cohesion, employability and the active involvement of citizens in society.

**A. Progress in 2006**

Solid progress has been made in implementing the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme over the last 12 months, which have witnessed the adoption of:

- the **Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013**, aimed at fostering interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community;
- a **Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning**, designed to serve as a reference tool for the key competences which all citizens should possess in order to live successfully in a knowledge society;
- the **European Quality Charter for Mobility**, aimed at promoting mobility among Europe's citizens as a factor in boosting their personal development and improving their chances on the labour market;
- **Council conclusions on Efficiency and Equity**, which emphasise the hidden but ultimately high social costs of educational inequity and thus the importance of ensuring high quality education and training for all, irrespective of socio-economic background;
- **Council conclusions on the future priorities for enhanced cooperation on Vocational Education and Training (VET)**, which reaffirm the central role of VET in the Lisbon strategy and call for efforts to improve the attractiveness of VET and to develop and implement common European tools, such as the proposed European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET);

- **Council conclusions on a European Indicator of Language Competence**, aimed at providing Member States with reliable data on citizens' foreign language skills, which are significant factors in increasing employability.

Work has also been taken forward on the development of a **European Qualifications Framework**, which is aimed at increasing transparency, improving comparability and facilitating the use of different qualifications acquired under the various EU education and training systems.

Moreover, preparations for the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008**, in which education will play an important part, are currently well under way.

## **B. Key messages**

Education and training are prerequisites for a well-functioning knowledge triangle (education - research - innovation). They have a key role in boosting growth and jobs, and ensuring equal opportunities and social cohesion for all citizens. National reform programmes indicate that promising developments are either under way or being prepared in many Member States. However, more substantial efforts are required to pursue such reforms and to fully implement the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme, including by strengthening the exchange of good practice between the Member States. Comprehensive lifelong learning strategies based on efficiency and equity are yet to be put in place in most Member States. To provide a broad skills base underpinning Europe's capacity for excellence and innovation, reforms need to be stepped up to further strengthen the different levels of education. In particular, efforts should be made to modernise higher education and to ensure high quality and attractive vocational education and training.

Investment in education and training is crucial for Europe's future. At the same time, educational policies and practices require a stronger evidence base. There is a need to develop a culture of evaluation and to promote further research. In addition, full use must be made of the opportunities provided by the Structural Funds and the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013.