



Brussels, 20 February 2006

DRAFT

BACKGROUND ¹
EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE COUNCIL
Brussels, 23 February 2006

(only Education and Youth items)

The Council's meeting will start at 9:30, on 23 November, under the presidency of Ms Elisabeth Gehrler, Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture and Ms Ursula Haubner, Federal Minister for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection of Austria.

Education

*The Council will be briefed by the Commission on its **annual report to the Spring European Council**: "Time to move up a gear". It will adopt the 2006 joint interim Council and Commission report on the progress of the **Education and training 2010 work programme** and will further adopt **key messages** addressed to the Spring European Council.*

*The Council will hold an exchange of views on a proposal for a recommendation on **key competences for lifelong learning**. It will hold a policy debate on the communication from the Commission: "**The European indicator of language competence**" and will also be briefed by the Commission on its communication: "A new framework strategy for **multilingualism**".*

Youth

*In the youth part of its agenda, the Council will hold an exchange of views on the Commission's **annual report to the Spring European Council** "Time to move up a gear" and will also adopt conclusions on the implementation of the **European Pact for Youth** that will serve as contribution to the Spring European Council.*

Discussions on the European indicator of language competence and on multilingualism may continue over lunch.

The Presidency will hold two press conferences, one before lunch, on the education items, and the other at the end of the day, on the youth items.

¹ This note has been drawn up under the sole responsibility of the Press Office.

EDUCATION

Preparation of the Spring European Council

The Commission will present its 2006 annual report addressed to the Spring European Council in the context of the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs: "*Time to move up a gear*" (5745/06), with special relevance to its education elements.

Part I of the report, "*The new partnership for growth and jobs*", evaluates the process of drawing up national reform programmes and highlights a number of key initiatives for agreement at the European Council.

Part II, "*Country chapters*", is a detailed assessment of the national reform programmes, pointing out their strengths as well as areas where they need review and updating by Member States.

The first cycle of implementation of the Lisbon strategy as re-launched last year will culminate in messages from the Spring 2006 European Council pointing out the strategy for the year ahead. The Commission progress report on the national reform programmes is intended to be a contribution in this context.

No debate is expected within the Council at this stage.

Education and training 2010 work programme – key messages

The Council will adopt the 2006 joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on progress achieved within the context of the "*Education and training 2010 work programme*", a programme established to follow up the objectives set by the Lisbon reform agenda as regards education and training systems in Europe.

The joint interim report, entitled "*Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe*" (5767/06), gives a picture of progress already made and proposes measures to be taken for further improvements.

The Council will further adopt key messages addressed to the Spring European Council (6262/06) on the contribution of education and training for the objectives of the renewed Lisbon strategy: growth, jobs and social cohesion.

The key messages are divided in two parts, emphasising the following themes:

- Education and training are vital for growth, jobs and social cohesion
- Progress is being made but more substantial efforts are required in key areas

Key competences for lifelong learning

The Council will hold an exchange of views on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning on the basis of the following question suggested by the Presidency (5758/06):

Are the eight key competences outlined in the proposal for a Recommendation broadly those which all individuals need in the context of lifelong learning and, if so, how do you think they should be promoted?

The outcome of the debate will be used as a reference for future examination of the recommendation.

The proposal for a recommendation aims at establishing a European reference tool defining the basic skills (*key competences*) needed to be provided to all citizens for personal fulfilment, social cohesion and employability in knowledge-based economies and societies.

The key competences would be:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- Digital competence;
- Learning to learn;
- Social and civic competences;
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
- Cultural awareness and expression.

The proposal further establishes how the key competences can be accessed through lifelong learning.

Legal basis proposed: Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty – qualified majority required for a Council decision; co-decision procedure with the European Parliament applicable.

The European indicator of language competence

The Council will hold a policy debate on a Commission communication on "*The European indicator of language competence*", on the basis of the following questions suggested by the Presidency, aimed at giving a clearer picture of the practical and financial arrangements needed to implement the indicator (6244/06):

- *What is your view of the approach outlined in the Commission communication towards the establishment of the European indicator of language competence (EILC)?*
- *More specifically, would you agree to invite the Commission to establish an Advisory Board composed of a representative of each Member State whose initial mandate would be to clarify/define the parameters for implementation?*

- *As regards the main parameters for the EILC it is important that Ministers take a view on the two following issues:*
 - (i) *data should be gathered on competences in first and second foreign languages from a representative sample of pupils in education and training at International standard classification of education (ISCED) level 2.*
 - (ii) *because respect for linguistic diversity is a core value of the European Union and the indicator should be based upon data concerning the knowledge of all the official languages of the European Union taught as foreign languages in the Union, but for practical reasons it would be advisable, in the first round of data-gathering, for tests to be made available in those official languages of the European Union that are most widely taught in the Member States, to the extent that they provide a sufficiently large sample of testees.*

In its communication (11704/05), the Commission states that:

At the European Council meeting in Barcelona, heads of state and government called for the establishment of a European indicator of language competence. (...)The final objective is to provide Member States with hard data on which any necessary adjustments in their approach to foreign language teaching and learning can be based.

The Commission invites the Council to agree with the approach outlined in the Communication concerning the implementation of the European indicator of language competence.

It is expected that the Council, in a forthcoming session, will adopt conclusions on the establishment of such an indicator.

The indicator should also be seen in the context of the range of indicators that Member States have agreed to develop through the "Education and training 2010" process.

The debate on this item may continue during lunch.

"A new framework strategy for multilingualism"

The Commission will present its communication on "A new framework strategy for multilingualism" (14908/05).

This communication is the first one on this policy area which:

- *reaffirms the Commission's commitment to multilingualism in the European Union;*
- *sets out the Commission's strategy for promoting multilingualism in European society, in the economy and in the Commission itself; and*
- *proposes a number of specific actions stemming from this strategic framework.*

Multilingualism is defined in the communication as *the new field of Commission policy that promotes a climate that is conducive to the full expression of all languages, in which the teaching and learning of a variety of languages can flourish*. The communication further states that the Commission's multilingualism policy has three aims:

- *to encourage language learning and promoting linguistic diversity in society*
- *to promote a healthy multilingual economy, and*
- *to give citizens access to European legislation, procedures and information in their own languages.*

Ministers will be invited to continue the exchange of views during lunch.

YOUTH

Preparation of the Spring European Council

The Commission will present its communication addressed to the European Council in the context of the renewed Lisbon strategy: "*Time to move up a gear*" (5745/06).

It is recalled that in March 2005, the European Council adopted a Pact for Youth as one of the instruments contributing to the achievement of the re-launched Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. The Pact for youth was included in the *integrated guidelines* that form the basis for Member States' national reform programmes, on which the Commission published its first annual progress "*Time to move up a gear*".

The Council will hold an exchange of views on the annual progress report on the basis of the following questions suggested by the Presidency (5954/06):

- *In implementing the Lisbon strategy, it is important that young people with fewer opportunities should be able to access the labour market. What measures could be taken under the Pact to facilitate this?*
- *Based on experiences so far, what kind of initiatives could be taken to reinforce the youth dimension of the Lisbon strategy at the level of policy content and of process?*
- *What measures would Ministers propose to strengthen the involvement of young people and youth organisations in the Pact?*

Implementation of the European youth pact – contribution to the Spring European Council

The Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States will adopt conclusions on the implementation of the European Pact for Youth that will serve as a contribution from the (Youth) Council to the Spring European Council (5708/1/06).

These conclusions follow on from the adoption by the European Council last Spring of the European Pact for Youth and the publication of the Commission's 2006 annual report on the progress made in the national reform programmes under the re-launched Lisbon strategy.

In their conclusions, the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States enumerate the Community initiatives related to youth policy, the challenges and perspectives faced by young people in Europe, the role that the Pact for Youth may play to help achieving the objectives of the renewed Lisbon strategy, and notably invite the European Council to:

- *encourage further progress with regard to measures for young people by implementing the European Pact for Youth in the Lisbon strategy;*
- *invite the Member States to reinforce links between policies on education, training, employment, social inclusion and mobility, so as to develop more effective cross-sectoral strategies for young people;*
- *invite the Member States, when preparing their national reform programmes, and the Commission, in its annual progress report, to report more systematically and more visibly on the Pact within the Lisbon strategy, in order to facilitate monitoring of the progress made;*
- *reiterate its request to the Commission and the Member States to involve young people and youth organisations at all levels in the implementation of the European Pact for Youth.*

Other business

The Council will be briefed on the following items:

- a) Communication from the Commission "Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning"
- presentation by the Commission
- b) Communication from the Commission "Launching a knowledge flagship: the European Institute of Technology"
- presentation by the Commission
- c) EuroSkills Competition
- information from the NL delegation and the Commission
