



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6185/08 (Presse 30)

**PRESS RELEASE**

2848th Council meeting

**Education, Youth and Culture**

Brussels, 14 February 2008

President      **Mr Milan ZVER**  
Minister for Education and Sport of Slovenia

**P R E S S**

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6185/08 (Presse 30)

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## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council adopted a set of key messages concerning **youth policy** addressed to the forthcoming European Council.*

*The Council held an exchange of views on **intercultural dialogue and young people** in the context of the European year of intercultural dialogue 2008.*

*The Council adopted a set of key messages in the field of **education** intended as a contribution to the conclusions of the forthcoming European Council.*

*In addition, the Council adopted without debate a regulation simplifying the **cross compliance** provisions introduced by Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003.*

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- 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.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- 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 Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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## PARTICIPANTS

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

### Belgium:

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Ms Isabelle WEYKMANS

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### Greece:

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Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education

**Commission:**

Mr Ján FIGEL

Member

**ITEMS DEBATED****IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN PACT FOR YOUTH - CONTRIBUTION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

The Council adopted a set of key messages addressed to the spring meeting of the European Council (13 and 14 March) on further implementation of the European Pact for Youth ([5582/08](#)).

Following a reference to the progress made in implementing the European Pact for Youth in 2007 and to the analysis of the National Reform Programmes for 2007, and drawing on the Commission's strategic report on the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs: launching the new cycle (2008-2010) - keeping up the pace of change (*16714/07*), the Council announced the following priorities for further implementation of the Pact:

- Youth employment, participation in education and training and the social integration of young people should remain key objectives of economic and social strategies, and member states should focus on concrete measures in order to tackle these challenges.
- Particular attention should be paid to young people with fewer opportunities, especially through stronger guidance, multidisciplinary support and tailored measures.
- 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 adoption of the European Pact for Youth in March 2005, as part of a revised Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, was a recognition of the importance of integrating young people into society and working life and of making better use of the potential they represent.

## **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Council held an exchange of views on the basis of a Presidency paper on intercultural dialogue and young people in the context of the European year of intercultural dialogue 2008 ([5584/08](#)).

Young people are the main target group of the activities planned in the framework of the European year of intercultural dialogue, since they are the ones still shaping their own vision of the world and acquiring skills and competences for their future. Contact and interaction with different cultures teaches tolerance and mutual respect which are essential prerequisites for intercultural dialogue.

During their exchange of views on how national youth policies can pursue and provide support for intercultural dialogue, the ministers emphasised in particular the importance of the following issues:

- the inclusion of all young people in the dialogue, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background;
- the role of education in shaping young people's values and attitudes; the training of teachers and the inclusion of intercultural dialogue on the school curricula;
- experiences gained through non-formal learning in out-of-school education;
- the crucial role of mobility in developing intercultural competences;
- the role of the media and the use of new technologies in shaping young people's values and attitudes;
- the importance of access to culture for young people and the role of culture, arts, music and sport in shaping young people's identities and bringing them together;
- the role of organised civil society, the involvement of youth organisations and non-governmental organisations as well as the importance of voluntary activities.



There was general agreement that intercultural dialogue should become a permanent issue on the European agenda in general and in future cooperation in the youth field in particular. The ministers also stressed the importance of the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) as the most efficient instrument at European level for supporting activities promoting intercultural dialogue.

The views expressed in the debate will be taken into account in the contribution of the youth field to the Council conclusions on intercultural competences due to be adopted at Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting in May 2008.

The European year of intercultural dialogue 2008 is expected to promote intercultural dialogue as an instrument to assist European citizens, and all those living in the EU, in acquiring the knowledge and aptitudes to enable them to deal with a more open and more complex environment as well as to raise their awareness of the importance of developing active European citizenship which is open to the world, respectful of cultural diversity and based on common values.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Council adopted a 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "*Education and Training 2010 work programme*", a programme established to follow up the objectives set by the Lisbon agenda as regards education and training systems in Europe.

The 3rd joint progress report, entitled "*Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*" ([5723/08](#)), gives a picture of progress made, identifies areas where progress remains insufficient and proposes measures to be taken for further improvements. The report points to the following three areas that will need particular efforts: raising skills levels, implementing lifelong learning strategies and strengthening the knowledge triangle (education - research - innovation).

Joint progress reports are adopted on a biennial basis by the Commission and the Council. The report is a key document in measuring the contribution of education to the Lisbon process, and it is the background against which the key messages to the European Council have been formulated (see below).

## **KEY MESSAGES TO THE SPRING EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

Following an exchange of views, the Council adopted key messages in the field of education and training addressed to the spring meeting of the European Council (13 and 14 March in Brussels) ([5586/08](#)).

The key messages highlight a number of actions and issues that need to be drawn to the attention of the European Council at this critical stage for the implementation of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. They emphasise the following four themes:

- implementation of lifelong learning strategies, inviting member states to take concrete action to:
  - address the lack of progress on youth literacy and reduce the number of early school leavers;
  - improve achievement levels among migrants;
  - make the teaching profession more attractive to the best graduates;
  - attract more adults into education and training.
- the knowledge triangle (education - research - innovation), emphasising in particular the crucial role of education and training in promoting creativity and innovation;
- intercultural dialogue, underlining the importance of equipping individuals with the competences needed to engage in such a dialogue;
- transnational mobility, which should become common practice in higher education and be developed further in the field of vocational education and training.

In addition, the Council invited the Commission to submit by the end of 2008 a proposal for an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training.

Ministers also held an exchange of views in connection with the adoption of the text. As an additional focus for this discussion, a well-known education expert presented an example of outcomes of a peer learning activity carried out in the framework of the open method of coordination, specifically on early school leaving.

The debate which followed covered, in particular, the following items:

- the key messages and in particular the importance of basic skills and teacher training;
- the effectiveness of the open method of coordination and the role of peer learning, indicators and benchmarks, particularly with regard to the EU strategy for the post-2010 period;
- the particular issue of early school leaving, and the means that can be used to address this problem, including increased support for disadvantaged schools, closer teacher-parent cooperation, mentoring schemes and special attention for the children of migrants.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **European University - Business Forum**

The Commission briefed the Council on the first meeting of the European University-Business Forum, to be held in Brussels on 28-29 February 2008 ([5789/08](#)). The forum will provide for institutional presentations, examples of good practice, discussions and opportunities to network. The forum is meant to be the start of a lasting structured dialogue with university and business stakeholders, which is considered by the Commission as an essential element of Europe's efforts to make its education and training systems more effective and efficient.

### **Designation of the 2009 European year of creativity and innovation**

The Commission briefed the Council on the plan to designate 2009 as the European year of creativity and innovation, an initiative raised at previous Council meetings. Its aim will be to promote creativity and innovation as key competences for the personal fulfilment and well-being of all individuals in society ([5790/08](#)).

### **EuroSkills 2008**

The European Commission and the Netherlands's delegation briefed the Council on EuroSkills, the first ever Europe-wide skills competition, which will be held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 18 - 20 September 2008. It will be organised by a newly established association, the European Skills Promotion Organisation (ESPO), in cooperation with Skills Netherlands. The European Commission is supporting the organisation of the event through the Lifelong Learning Programme ([6142/08](#)).

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **YOUTH**

#### **EU/Switzerland - Youth in action and lifelong learning programmes**

The Council authorised the Commission to negotiate a bilateral agreement with Switzerland on the participation of Switzerland in the youth in action programme and in the action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

### **EDUCATION**

#### **Qualifications framework for lifelong learning**

The Council adopted a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (3662/07).

The aim of the recommendation is to provide a common language to describe qualifications, thereby increasing transparency, improving comparability and facilitating the recognition of different qualifications acquired under the various EU education and training systems.

### **EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**

#### **Cooperation in specific fields through Community programmes**

The Council approved a draft decision, to be adopted by the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Committee, amending the EEA agreement on cooperation in specific fields outside the four freedoms with a view to extending cooperation on the specific programme "Drug prevention and information" as part of the general programme "Fundamental Rights and Justice" (5273/08).

**AGRICULTURE****Cross compliance**

The Council adopted a regulation simplifying the cross compliance provisions introduced by Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003 (5308/08, 5601/08 ADD 1).

The regulation provides for certain adjustments to the cross-compliance rules contained in Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003<sup>1</sup>, in particular:

– ***de minimis*** :

In order to reduce the administrative burden, it will be possible for member states to decide not to apply a reduction or exclusion amounting to EUR 100 or less per farmer and per calendar year, provided that remedial action is taken by the farmer.

– ***minor infringements:***

A measure of tolerance will be acceptable for minor cases of non-compliance<sup>2</sup>, provided that the member states carry out appropriate follow up until the non-compliance has been remedied.

– **setting of the date for eligibility of land under the SPS ("10 month" rule):**

In order to ensure that double claims are not made for the same land, member states will determine an appropriate date which should be no later than the date fixed for amendment of the aid application. Consequently, the obligation for the parcels corresponding to the eligible hectare to be at the farmer's *disposal for at least 10 months* is repealed.

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1 which also imply amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.

2 Except in cases constituting a direct public and/or animal health risk.

– **liability:**

In the event of transfer of land, farmers who submit an aid application will be held liable vis-a-vis the competent authority with regard to any failure to fulfil the cross-compliance requirements for the calendar year concerned. This rule will not preclude private law arrangements under national legislation between farmers who made the aid application and the person to whom the land was transferred. This provision will apply as from 1 April 2008.

– **phasing-in period for new member states<sup>1</sup>:**

It will be possible for the new member states applying the single area payment scheme to introduce a three year phasing-in period for the compliance with the statutory management requirements.

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Batteries and accumulators - Technical adjustment - Regulatory procedure with scrutiny**

The Council adopted a directive amending Directive 2006/66/EC on batteries and accumulators, in order to adjust it to the new regulatory procedure with scrutiny (3666/2/07).

A new regulatory procedure with scrutiny has been introduced by Decision 2006/512/EC. It is intended to be used for measures of general scope which seek to amend non-essential elements of a basic instrument adopted under the legislative co-decision procedure.

Directive 2006/66/EC on batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and accumulators was agreed by the co-legislators just prior to the entry into force of the new decision, and therefore now needs to be adjusted so as to include references to the new regulatory procedure with scrutiny.

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<sup>1</sup> All new member States **except** Malta & Slovenia.



## **INTERNAL MARKET**

### **Veterinary medicine- Electro-medical equipment \***

The Council adopted a directive repealing Directive 84/539/EEC on electro-medical equipment used in veterinary medicine (3699/07, 5547/1/08 ADD1).

The Spanish and Maltese delegations abstained from voting.

Directive 84/539/EEC originally covered electro-medical equipment used in human and veterinary medicine. When Directive 93/42/EEC on medical devices was adopted, the scope of directive 84/539/EEC was limited to products for veterinary use. In practice, it had a limited use since most suppliers chose to align their products with the requirements of Directive 93/42/EEC.

Furthermore, the Community regulatory framework also provides adequate rules offering health and safety guarantees through Directives: 2006/42/EC on machinery, 2004/108/EC relating to electromagnetic compatibility and 85/374/EEC on product liability.

## **STATISTICS**

### **Structural business statistics**

The Council adopted a revised regulation on structural business statistics with a view to extending the framework for the collection, compilation, transmission and evaluation of Community statistics on the structure, activity, competitiveness and performance of businesses in the Community (3643/07).

The regulation responds to the increased need for statistical data to underpin policy making and monitoring, and will improve the current regulation by increasing coverage of service activities, by adding annexes on business demography and business services and by introducing a new tool to respond to emerging user needs.

The regulation repeals Regulation No 58/97 and Article 20 of Regulation No 1893/2006.

### **Statistical classification of products by activity**

The Council adopted a regulation establishing a new statistical classification of products by activity (CPA) in order to ensure relevance with respect to the economic reality and comparability between national, Community and international classifications and hence national, Community and international statistics (3639/07).

The statistical classification of products by activity was established in 1993 for the harmonisation of economic statistics. The revised version reflects technological development and structural changes in the economy since then.

The regulation repeals Regulation (EEC) No 3696/93.

### **Statistics on education and lifelong learning**

The Council adopted a regulation on the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning (3659/07).

The regulation establishes a common framework for the systematic production of Community statistics in these fields. It will apply to the production of statistics in three domains:

- education and training systems;
- the participation of adults in lifelong learning;
- other statistics on education and lifelong learning, such as statistics on human capital and on the social and economic benefits of education.

Comparable statistics and indicators on education, training and lifelong learning are of increasing importance if the EU is to support the open method of coordination in the area of education and training policy. They are also necessary for policy discussions on human capital, innovation, growth and competitiveness in the framework of employment, research and innovation and economic policies.

### **Creation of advisory bodies**

The Council adopted a decision aimed at establishing a European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (3664/07).

The new high-level advisory body (seven members) will provide an independent overview of the European statistical system as regards the implementation of its code of practice. The code of practice has the dual purpose of improving trust and confidence in statistical authorities by proposing institutional and organisational arrangements and reinforcing the quality of the statistics they produce.

The Council also adopted a decision aimed at establishing a European Statistical Advisory Committee, which will replace the committee set up under Decision 91/116/EEC (3663/07).

The new committee will assist the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in ensuring that user requirements and the costs borne by information providers and producers are taken into account in coordinating the strategic objectives and priorities of the Community's statistical information policy.

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