**Miguel Arias Cañete,** *Member of the Commission***.** – Madam President, thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on this draft resolution, which is very much in line with the Commission’s own policy and strategy.

On 30 May, we published an education package, which contains actions spanning from early childhood education and care to higher education, and which includes a strong focus on both digital and lifelong learning. The package takes account of developments and issues that have a direct impact on education – such as globalisation, digitalisation, diversity and exclusion – and considers how best to support people of all ages in developing the skills that they will need to thrive both personally and professionally. Many of the actions are very relevant to the recommendations in the draft resolution.

The Commission Communication on ‘School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life’ starts from the assumption that high-quality education for all will help Europe achieve its economic and social objectives while fostering the personal and professional developments of European citizens.

I would like to thank you for highlighting the importance of Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 for enhancing lifelong learning, and for the call to bridge technological gaps between educational institutions across Europe and to connect schools to ultra-fast Internet, thus addressing the digital divide and ensuring equal opportunities for all students.

I would also like to thank you for your acknowledgment in your report of the work done through the eTwinning and School Education Gateway platforms. In order to improve learning outcomes, inclusiveness and equity in school education, the Commission plans to further promote participation in those online platforms.

Further actions planned of particular relevance include a digital capacity self-assessment tool based on the Digital Competence Framework and called ‘Selfie’, which enables schools in the European Union, on a voluntary basis, to self-evaluate where they stand in relation to common criteria on the effective use of technologies for digital age learning, and how they can further improve. In addition, through Erasmus+, we will support improvements in school-level education in science, technologies, engineering and maths by promoting best practice in developing links and cooperation between higher education, research, businesses and schools at European Union level.

I would also like to highlight three initiatives within our renewed European Union agenda for higher education that are relevant to your draft resolution.

We will develop and implement a digital readiness model to help higher education institutions, their staff and students to implement digital learning strategies and exploit the potential of technology.

We will provide support through Erasmus+ for higher education teachers, doctoral candidates and postdoctoral graduates to develop pedagogical and curriculum design skills, including in digital learning.

Also through Erasmus+, we will promote the development and testing of flexible and modular course design.

Let me also mention the Commission’s support for research and innovation projects under Horizon 2020, developing ICT applications for education and training, making learning more effective, engaging and collaborative.

We are also conscious of the importance of youth work in supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in developing digital skills and competences. The Commission welcomes, therefore, the reference to recognising competences gained outside the formal education system.

Last but not least, we should emphasise the important role of Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 in supporting innovation in all sectors of education, and for people of all ages.

For the next three years (2018-2020) Erasmus+ will implement the ‘Digital Opportunity Scheme’, supporting internships to develop digital skills. Through our Horizon 2020 stakeholders, as well as through the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, we have been mobilising companies to offer more internships in this field, strengthening Europe’s innovation capacity.

One of the EU’s most successful programmes, Erasmus+ contributes to promoting growth and jobs, developing skills and promoting European values and social cohesion. Over the last 30 years, it has had an impact on the personal and professional lives of more than nine million participants, within and outside Europe. Among others, it funds eTwinning, promoting cooperation between schools through distance learning.

There are clear and strong messages at the highest political level regarding the crucial role of Erasmus+ in supporting the goals of the Rome Declaration, specifically ‘a Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent’.

The recommendations within this draft resolution will provide us with much inspiration in our continued work to provide the best possible support to people of all ages on their lifelong learning journey.