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## REPORT

on the Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning  
(SEC(2000)1832) – C5-0192/2001 – 2001/2088(COS))

Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

Rapporteur: Kathleen Van Brempt

(Delegation of the power of decision – Rule 62)

Draftsman<sup>(\*)</sup>: Herman Schmid, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

<sup>(\*)</sup> Hughes procedure



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(*) Hughes procedure	

By letter of 30 October 2000 the Commission forwarded its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (SEC(2000)1832) – 2001/2088 (COS)) to Parliament.

At the sitting of 14 May 2001 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred this report to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport as the committee responsible, and to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for its opinion (C5-0192/2001).

At the sitting of 17 May 2001 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs was to be involved in drawing up the report under the Hughes procedure.

At the sitting of 14 June 2001 the President of Parliament announced that the Conference of Presidents had delegated the power of decision to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport under Rule 62.

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport had appointed Kathleen Van Brempt rapporteur at its meeting of 6 March 2001.

It considered the Commission proposal and the draft report at its meetings of 29 May, 26 June, 10 July and 18 September 2001.

At the sitting of 18 September 2001 it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Giuseppe Gargani, chairman; Kathleen Van Brempt, rapporteur; Pedro Aparicio Sánchez, Marielle de Sarnez, Maria Martens, Mario Mauro, Pietro-Paolo Mennea, Barbara O'Toole, Doris Pack, Roy Perry, Mónica Ridruejo, Luckas Vander Taelen, Eurig Wyn, Sabine Zissener, Cristina Gutiérrez Cortines (for Theresa Zabell), The Earl of Stockton (for Christopher Heaton-Harris), Robert J.E. Evans (for Phillip Whitehead), Thomas Mann (for Ruth Hieronymi pursuant to Rule 153(2)) and Herman Schmid (for Geneviève Fraisse pursuant to Rules 153(2)).

The opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is attached.

The report was tabled on 9 October 2001.

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

### **European Parliament resolution on the Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (SEC(2000)1832 - C5-0192/2001 – 2001/2088(COS))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission memorandum (SEC(2000) 1832 - C5-0192/2001),
  - having regard to the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) and the European Parliament resolution on the Commission report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996)<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the Luxembourg European Council (1997) which made increased employability and adaptability through training a priority topic in the ‘employment guidelines’,
  - having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon, Santa Maria da Feira and Stockholm European Councils,
  - having regard to the OECD publication ‘Education policy analyses’,
  - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Article 14 thereof, which guarantees that everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training,
  - having regard to Articles 149 and 150 of the EC Treaty,
  - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having delegated the power of decision to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport under Rule 62 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A5-0322/2001),
- A. whereas we are living in a rapidly changing 'knowledge society' characterised by the continual introduction of new technology, and the exponential growth in the quantity of information and in the speed with which this information is spread,
- B. whereas the knowledge society can considerably improve the quality of life and work for everyone, provided that at the same time policy measures are taken to guarantee equal chances for everyone to participate actively in that society,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 135, 7.5.2001, p. 304.

- C. whereas the present-day economy, based chiefly on knowledge and mobility, makes it necessary for everyone to have the opportunity to add to their skills so that they are able to face up to potential new risks linked to the rapid development of society and the new technologies; whereas, in particular, merely obtaining a qualification no longer determines one's career for the rest of one's life; whereas the traditional pattern of life (study-work-retirement) is coming under pressure,
- D. whereas, according to OECD studies, people with higher education qualifications have easier access to lifelong learning, continuing education, training and re-training, and whereas access to information regarding training offered for those without higher education should therefore be improved,
- E. Having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon Summit seeking to make the European Union the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy and society,
- F. whereas the European lifelong learning project forms part of the wider policy framework of future education and training objectives; whereas this European project cannot be divorced from other specific European policy issues such as employment, social policy, mobility, ICT and e-learning,
- G. whereas lifelong learning concerns all socio-economic sectors, workers, employees, academics, management, researchers and others, and this diversity should be taken into account by the Union and the Member States when setting up training programmes and their funding,
- H. whereas enlargement will change the market for employment and vocational training,
- I. whereas the 'employment guidelines', which have been used since 1997 to coordinate the employment policies of the Member States, include lifelong learning as one of their priorities; whereas the 2001 guidelines to the Member States call for target figures to be set for the participation of people in the 25-64 age bracket in lifelong learning and call on the social partners to negotiate on subjects such as participation in training,
  - 1. Supports the strategy, outlined by the Commission, of initiating a broad social debate on lifelong learning;
  - 2. Is convinced that lifelong learning is a social necessity but should also be a social right for everyone;
  - 3. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the concrete policy measures on lifelong learning are based on the following principles:
    - a. democratisation and the principle of equality: lifelong learning should replace the notion of (in most cases) a single educational opportunity with that of several opportunities for learning and acquiring new skills during the course of one's life, i.e. the creation of 'life chances': each individual must have equal opportunities as regards lifelong learning;

- b. individual personality development: the notion of lifelong learning should be an answer to each individual's need to add to and expand his or her skills and obtain inner enrichment;
  - c. the individual right to lifelong learning: the concept of lifelong learning should give concrete form to each individual's right to education and training;
  - d. personal responsibility: the concept of lifelong learning should also be aimed at a person's growth in terms of citizenship and sense of responsibility;
  - e. a holistic approach to learning: 'learning' cannot mean just the development of knowledge and a purely functional approach with a view, for example, to employment: learning should also be aimed at attitude-forming;
4. Notes that lifelong learning sometimes calls for a radical change in policy on education, training and the labour market and sometimes for supporting measures, such as:
- a. development of priority action areas based on the need for a balance between economic motives (employability of the individual) and social and cultural motives (individual personality development) and social integration;
  - b. integrating the concept of lifelong learning into school education so that the certificate acquired is not seen as the last before professional life but rather as the first and so that other certificates may be obtained during working life, whatever the field of activity;
  - c. giving express consideration to the most vulnerable groups which do not have easy access to information on the possibilities for lifelong learning;
  - d. incorporating the 'joy of learning' into the process of learning, especially by encouraging teaching methods which place emphasis on support, assistance and guidance;
  - e. active support for educational and training projects for adults, entitling all to equal opportunities, regardless of age or sex;

- f. encouraging new forms of learning alongside traditional learning at educational establishments, recognition and certification of experience and abilities acquired, including in a non-formal context, and recognition of experience acquired abroad as well (equivalence of diplomas and certificates);
  - g. wider social recognition of the achievements of individuals who improve their level of skills through lifelong learning projects;
  - h. encouraging all those involved on the one hand to see lifelong learning as progress for society and the individual, and on the other hand to shoulder their responsibilities (funding of training, time available, recognition of skills acquired, etc.): this concerns the Member State governments, the European Union, industry and individuals;
  - i. seeking adequate funding to promote and set up lifelong learning programmes: ESF, ERDF, Structural Funds, EIB, etc.;
5. Considers that, if lifelong learning is to be effective, a distinction needs to be made among the large segments of which it is composed so as to organise programmes with a definite profile and coherent objectives. A distinction needs to be drawn between courses targeted at the incorporation of new knowledge into professions, and courses aimed at the acquisition of the skills necessary for social integration;
6. Considers that the efforts of the Union, the Member States and the regions with regard to lifelong learning must be aligned by the open coordination method, with common objectives, guidelines, indicators and benchmarking on the basis of best practice in Member States, regular monitoring and evaluation of the progress made; calls on the Commission to draft proposals for Member States to act and calls for the European Parliament to be involved in these activities;
7. Calls on the Commission to define lifelong learning concepts clearly in the proposals it draws up in the future, differentiating between:
- training to make good failure at school or designed to ensure that disadvantaged or minority groups acquire basic education and culture,
  - distance learning for adults in areas contributing to general and cultural education, including the new technologies,
  - professional qualifications in regulated and non-regulated areas,
  - training geared to employment and labour integration, regardless of the student's age,
  - the acquisition of new qualifications to adapt and renew skills in the face of the demands of the new labour market, including the new technologies,
  - lifelong learning for professionals, lecturers and researchers as a means of updating knowledge;
8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure greater coordination of existing funding in order as far as possible to guarantee the right to education and access to vocational and continuing training for each citizen;



9. Calls on the Member States, in the context of the 2002 Employment Guidelines, to set specific objectives and adopt practical measures, organised according to age group and level of training, for participation in education and training measures;
10. Calls on the Commission to announce, by the end of 2001, the action plan which it envisages in the area of lifelong learning, involving the European Parliament in its reflections;
11. Calls on the social partners to ensure as a matter of urgency, in implementation of the 'employment guidelines' and the social agenda, that binding agreements are reached regarding the right to lifelong learning at European level;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, through the method of open coordination, to devise a system broadly based on 'credits' bringing together existing evaluation and recognition instruments in a coherent, transparent system covering not only regular but also irregular and informal experience;
13. Calls on the Commission, to apply the principle of mainstreaming to the lifelong learning policy, as to other areas, so that lifelong learning can be horizontally integrated into the operation of the ESF and into Community programmes;
14. Calls on the Commission to include in the lifelong learning and training process workers who are not nationals of a Member State but who have acquired the right to work;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to draft proposals for the funding of the lifelong learning project; urges that the EIB be involved in these proposals, given that the development of human capital is an integral part of the EIB's new package of tasks;
16. Calls on the Commission and Member States, under their common responsibility and on the basis of best practice, to adopt promotion measures at individual level; supports in this context the system of 'individual learning accounts' as used, for example, in the UK and in Sweden;
17. Stresses the impact of enlargement on the labour and training market and calls on the Commission to take this into account in the priorities and actions which it is to undertake in the area of lifelong learning;

## Lifelong Learning and Employment

### *General principles*

18. Stresses that the adaptation of education and training systems with a view to integrating the concept of lifelong learning is – in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity – primarily a matter of the Member states; takes the view, however, that a jointly coordinated effort at EU-level is desirable to enable Member states to exchange examples of good practice; considers, therefore, the open coordinating method the

right framework for setting common objectives for lifelong learning;

19. Considers that the primary obstacles to the development of lifelong learning systems are the lack of agreements and the fundamental disagreements on forms of funding and the setting of priorities;
20. Believes that the choices and priority issues need to be identified to allow political action to concentrate on the essentials;
21. Believes that there is a direct link between quality of work and lifelong learning, and therefore calls on the Commission to explain how the policies on lifelong learning, quality of work and the organisation of work can be mutually supportive;
22. Considers it important for lifelong education to be included as a clear priority for political action, in order to ensure employability, which is a vital prerequisite for active citizenship, and to make it possible to achieve economic growth where people are the main resource and combat social exclusion;
23. Hopes that the situation in the various applicant countries concerning education and training will be ascertained and included in the overall picture;
24. Considers that there is a need to develop towards an integrated society which offers everyone equal opportunities for quality lifelong learning;

#### *Basic school systems*

25. Raises the question of how the basic school systems in the Member States, which are the foundation for lifelong learning, may be improved in quality and transformed to meet present and future needs;
26. Points to the widespread need for modern, appropriately sized school buildings, equipment that meets modern educational standards and, for teaching purposes, smaller classes, access to new technologies, use of computers, knowledge of programmes and Internet connections;
27. Considers that teachers, as key individuals in a knowledge-based society, must have access to facilities to enable them to upgrade their knowledge and a greater range of further training geared to the needs of society and, in view of the importance of their social role, appropriate pay and proper recognition of their activity;
28. Considers that educational organisations generally need to be freed of red tape, decentralised and opened up to the community;
29. Points out that giving teachers more scope for proposing initiatives and pupils and parents greater and more active involvement may improve the quality of the education provided;
30. Calls, in order to ensure good cohesion between the education system and local labour markets, for proposals on how to transform schools into open and attractive local learning centres;

31. Notes the need to promote life long learning at local and regional levels by establishing effective community networks;

#### *Adult education systems*

32. Recognises that adult education systems are important to both industry and employment as well as for well-being, culture and personal development and therefore need to be extended, overhauled and diversified in order to meet the many new needs;
33. Points out that any large-scale employer has to have a training and skill-development plan agreed between the two sides of industry and jointly managed in accordance with agreements and national legislation;
34. Recognises that life long learning is important throughout life and not only in relation to paid employment or the labour market; the notion of life long learning should also apply to the time after retirement and the access of older people's - either retired or employed - to life long learning schemes should be facilitated;
35. Calls on the Member States to ensure that older people, the disabled and others outside the world of work are offered opportunities for further education to meet their personal educational ambitions and to become involved in cultural activities;
36. Stresses that the education systems in the EU should, inter alia, support the labour market and the development of a genuinely European labour market which leads to greater cross-border mobility, calls for mutual recognition of diplomas;

#### *Financing*

37. Notes that the necessary increase in quality in basic education will inevitably involve substantial and in some cases very substantial increases in spending;
38. Points out that vocational training, further training and higher education, which are increasing at a greater rate than other parts of the educational system, also require considerable increases in spending;
39. Calls for a discussion on how these costs can be apportioned in the Member States between individuals, employers and public bodies both effectively and in a spirit of solidarity;
40. Assumes that the cost of in-service training and further training of staff is an investment in human capital and that the financial resources, the budget, the educational targets and the necessary measures will be established and organised with the involvement of both sides of industry and other relevant groups in the community and in accordance with national labour market regulation;
41. Draws attention to the fact that most Member States have few or no forms of funding retraining for a new occupation, something which is particularly necessary during crisis situations and industrial redevelopment;
42. Draws attention to the proposal that all persons should be entitled to a certain number of years of public education, which implies that those who left school early are entitled

later in life to complementary education with a view to acquire the necessary vocational qualifications that will enable them to play an active role in society and give them access to the labour market;

43. Draws attention to the link between the cost of education as an investment and as a source of added value, and considers that this approach should inform a policy for the long-term funding of education;

*The European Union's role*

44. Calls for an open political debate on the three strategies for education and employment adopted simultaneously in Lisbon and points out that the problem of setting priorities has yet to be solved;
45. Supports the proposal that the open coordination procedure should be applied to lifelong learning and in particular stresses the need for guidelines on resources, organisation and links between the various educational institutions;
46. Would like to see the open coordination take the form of a bottom-up rather than the top-down process devised for employment policy and calls for more emphasis to be placed on developing a positive attitude to life long learning amongst socially excluded groups;
47. Stresses the vital importance of the knowledge of two languages for cross-border cooperation in Europe and in the world;
48. Draws attention to the need for coordination between countries, with due regard for the Member States' autonomy in this sector, on educational programmes, student and teacher mobility, mutual recognition of diplomas, admission criteria for training and vocational courses, and exchange of best practice;
49. Hopes that these views will also be noted by the Commission and taken into account in the continuing work on the forthcoming plan of action for lifelong learning;
50. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the European social partners.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### I. INTRODUCTION

To many people, the idea that they should resume their education is anything but welcome. Yet in the information age lifelong learning (LLL) is the key to the future.

At one time, most people's education came to an end when they left school. Those who later decided that they wanted to better themselves a bit went to evening classes. Nowadays, LLL is seen as the only way to get on in life. Our prosperity depends on it. The mere fact of having been through the education system, whether or not acquiring a certificate on the way, is no longer enough to guarantee a job for life.

Lifelong learning can **create fresh opportunities for everybody**. This includes the unskilled, who are at greatest risk of exclusion at present. However, they will only be able to benefit if a certain distortion is corrected. At the moment, LLL still too often serves to reinforce existing inequalities: those who are already educated, or even highly educated, take up adult education opportunities, which enables them to further increase the advantages they enjoy. *A recent OECD survey<sup>1</sup> has shown, for example, that it is precisely those without advanced secondary education, and whose literacy skills are limited, that are least inclined to undergo further education or training as adults. They account for less than 4% of enrolments in three quarters of all OECD countries. Only in four countries (Belgium, Sweden, UK and Australia) do they account for more than 11%.*

This uneven participation applies not only to courses which people take at their own initiative but also to those organised by businesses. *Employers also spend far more, in relative terms, on training their highly skilled employees. The distribution of employment-related training is most unequal in Belgium, where the participation rate in education and training related to the job of the person concerned is 40% for adults with university backgrounds, but only 5% for adults with less than advanced secondary schooling.*

LLL is also an important way of enabling people to participate in society again or for longer. In order to combine family responsibilities with work nowadays, many young parents – particularly mothers – sometimes see no other option than temporary withdrawal from the labour market. But when the time comes to return to work, once their children are somewhat older, this proves less straightforward than they might have supposed. Taking a course could ease the return to work. In the case of older workers, in-service training can ensure that they are not thrown on the scrap-heap prematurely.

But it is not only for economic reasons that it is important for people to carry on learning. It is **also, and especially, important for the individuals themselves**. LLL creates new opportunities. When people have a chance to discover new things for themselves and to try them out, learning becomes a pleasure in its own right. LLL is a way of understanding the world around one better and pursuing one's interests. Thus these motives go far beyond the economic, and include social and cultural participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Policy Analysis 2001, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. OECD Publications.

## **II. EUROPE: A PROACTIVE POLICY ON LLL**

The memorandum on LLL is a European initiative which deserves ample support. By means of its 6 key points, the Commission is seeking to launch a broad public debate with all parties concerned.

Your rapporteur welcomes this initiative, particularly because the Commission is taking the lead and adopting a proactive approach.

**The time has come to formulate a policy framework for the LLL strategy**, calling on all parties concerned to assume their responsibilities in this field. We cannot afford to postpone this fundamental debate if we are to take seriously the ambitious objective of the Lisbon, Feira and Stockholm European Councils, namely to make Europe the most dynamic economy in the world.

In this report your rapporteur aims to make it clear what she regards as the **essential points** on which the LLL strategy should be based.

Firstly: the principle of equality and democratisation

LLL presents us with a unique opportunity genuinely to democratise education. By means of LLL we must succeed in replacing the existing approach, whereby each person has virtually only one opportunity to acquire education in the course of a lifetime, with an approach which will allow them multiple opportunities. In other words, the opportunity which is currently available only between the ages of 6 and 18 needs to be extended so as to create **opportunities for life**. A crucial point here is that LLL should become available to **all, irrespective of age, origin or educational background**, provided only that they are legally resident within the territory of the European Union. Education is the key to successful participation. It is therefore very important that we should pursue an LLL policy which makes it easier to become involved.

Secondly: individual development

LLL must not merely become a way of enabling people to be put to more uses. LLL also helps to bring about social change; it renders people more self-reliant, so that they can make more of a mark on society; it should help to get the best out of the individual and also satisfy the individual's thirst for knowledge and mental enrichment. This principle touches upon the wider debate concerning greater investment in human capital and creativity versus productivity.

Thirdly: the individual right to lifelong learning

LLL should be a practical expression of the right of every individual to broaden his knowledge and hone his skills throughout his lifetime. An essential aspect of this is **that LLL should entail a transition from compulsory schooling to the right to learn**.

### III. THE STARTING POINT FOR A DYNAMIC PROCESS

In order to turn this LLL approach into reality, **measures** are needed at European, national and regional level. Existing policies on education, training and the labour market must therefore change. We cannot continue to cling to them in their present form as if they were inviolable. The Member States have a heavy responsibility here, as it is they that must find the political courage to set in train a dynamic process and remove the existing obstacles.

One of the most important changes which our policy should bring about is a realisation of the **joy of learning**. LLL should acquire a positive connotation; people must discover that learning can be fun, and should be accorded recognition for doing it. Many people see studying as a necessary evil. If we promote the LLL approach without taking account of the spirit of the times, which makes young people afraid to learn and afraid of failure, we shall never succeed.

It is also essential to introduce LLL more widely by **adopting a more flexible approach to it**. At present a rigid system with strict entry conditions and inflexible organisation often creates obstacles. All too often, the unskilled are deterred by the strict classroom-based character of the learning process. This is why individually tailored programmes are needed, which should provide each individual with something suitable as quickly as possible. A **low access threshold** is absolutely vital for this; the least educated, in particular, need to have their attention drawn to LLL facilities by services which can readily contact them.

In order for LLL to be a success, it is essential that we should manage to develop a comprehensive strategy. On the one hand, it should embrace **lifelong learning**, i.e. opportunities which are unlimited in time, each individual having the right to new opportunities throughout his life. On the other hand, it should include **lifewide learning** – opportunities which are unlimited in scope, giving each individual the right to seek knowledge in the widest range of fields, including in an informal context. This is very important because it will encourage people to learn without this necessarily having to lead to a formal certificate and thus will also recognise a greater amount of genuine, ready knowledge and skills on the part of the individual.

It is in this light that your rapporteur also considers it important to reward people for their efforts to enhance their knowledge after or in parallel with formal education. This is important to the less educated, who possess skills but are deterred by formal examinations and certificates. If they know that the extra things they learn will be appreciated, they will also be more willing to venture along this path. Some Member States have already recognised this: in May 2000, the Danish Parliament approved a number of measures to increase the recognition accorded to knowledge and skills acquired by means of work and experience; in Finland, the government has published a statement of its views on LLL and methods of recognising non-formal and informal learning. The Netherlands, the UK and Sweden likewise recognise non-formal and informal learning activities.

#### IV. PRACTICAL TASKS FACING EUROPE

If the European Union itself wishes its attitude to LLL to be taken seriously, it must **incorporate this concept in Community policy**. In practical terms, your rapporteur considers that this should entail:

- across-the-board implementation of the LLL approach in the European Structural Funds, in the existing and future programmes of the European Union and in the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research.
- adoption of binding benchmarks for the right to LLL in the European employment guidelines for 2002. Not only the Commission but the Council too must play its part in this.
- formulation of Community objectives, guidelines, indicators and benchmarks on the basis of the best practices of the Member States, the aim being to attain the average performance of the three best Member States.

In addition, in developing the **European CV** the Commission should devise a credits-based scheme which brings together the existing assessment and recognition instruments in a coherent system and also affords scope for recognition of experience gained informally.

Finally, your rapporteur fully appreciates that the **European LLL strategy will cost money**. In particular, more funding will be needed when we adopt specific policy objectives such as a right to LLL for all, wide access to education in the early years of life, far greater participation by adults, and a greater and more differentiated range of options.

Your rapporteur does not endorse the tendency in more and more countries to divert subsidies from educational institutions to the individual student and to replace or supplement grants with loans. She believes that action should be taken on two fronts here. First, and above all, the right to **basic qualifications acquired with the support of public funding**. This should remain one of the core responsibilities of the public authorities. In addition, there is a need to develop a **combined system in which all parties concerned shoulder their financial responsibilities**.

The British Ministry of Education's **European Learning Account Project** is worth mentioning in this context. Its purpose is to ascertain how individual learning accounts can help to increase participation in education and facilitate its funding.

Your rapporteur is also very interested to learn the reply which the President of the EIB, Mr Maystadt, will give to her practical proposal that **EIB investment** should no longer be confined to infrastructure but that it should also be possible to invest in people by means of LLL.

#### V. CONCLUSION

In this report, your rapporteur has tried to make it clear how she believes that LLL should be implemented. She hopes that, in drawing up its action plans, the Commission will make use of the contributions of all parties concerned whom it has contacted in connection with its broad public debate. LLL is the project for the future for which everyone bears some small share of responsibility. She hopes that practical measures will be proposed before the end of the



Belgian Presidency.

# **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

on the Commission Memorandum on lifelong learning  
(SEC(2000)1832 – C5-0192/2001 – 2001/2088 (COS))

Draftsman: Herman Schmid(\*)

(\*) Hughes procedure

## **PROCEDURE**

At its meeting of 15 February 2001 the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs appointed Herman Schmid draftsman of an opinion.

The committee considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 21 June 2001 and 9 and 10 July 2001.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Michel Rocard, chairman; Winfried Menrad and Marie-Thérèse Hermange, vice-chairmen; Herman Schmid, draftsman; Jan Andersson, María Antonia Avilés Perea, Regina Bastos, Alejandro Cercas, Luigi Cocilovo, Elisa Maria Damião, Harald Ettl, Ilda Figueiredo, Anne-Karin Glase, Stephen Hughes, Karin Jöns, Piia-Noora Kauppi, Ioannis Koukiadis, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Jean Lambert, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Claude Moraes, Paolo Pastorelli, Manuel Pérez Álvarez, Bartho Pronk, Tokia Saïfi, Miet Smet, Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Ieke van den Burg.

## **SHORT JUSTIFICATION**

The Commission Memorandum on lifelong learning (SEC(2000)1832) describes the new knowledge-based society and its need for expanded and reformed educational systems. These needs are summarised in the now familiar six 'key messages' which appear in all papers and speeches on lifelong learning in the new knowledge society: we need more skills at all levels, more money for education, new attitudes and values, new teaching methods and forms of control etc.

### **Mobilising economic resources**

Everyone agrees that huge improvements in the educational and training systems are required, but the problem is that far too little is actually happening. The situation resembles that of the environment, where there is a similar benevolent consensus on what is essential, but no corresponding agreement on the priorities and who is to pay.

The most important of the six messages in the Commission Memorandum is therefore that referring to raised levels of investment in human resources. However, the considerable difficulties are not dealt with in sufficient detail. They are how financial resources are to be obtained and how priorities are to be set between the various target groups when resources are in short supply.

### **Forms of funding**

There are three main types of funding in present-day educational systems in the Member States: public funding is predominant, with company and individual funding on the sidelines. Is this pattern to continue or should it be changed?

Existing educational systems are dominated by basic State education for young people. An emphasis on lifelong learning would shift the centre of gravity towards adult education and further education throughout a person's lifetime and enhance the relationship between various types of education. Education will become a dimension in all human activity, in working life and in communal life in general.

This has increased interest in forms of company and individual forms of funding. In practice it has turned out that companies are reluctant to invest in skills which their employees can also use in other companies or industries, and that individuals find it hard to raise their own money for further education. We therefore have to develop and assess new approaches and alternative solutions. The Commission Memorandum mentions individual learning accounts as an example, but without discussing the problems involved, and various schemes for reducing working hours for personal study purposes.

The questions of how to increase resources for education and training to a substantial degree and possible new systems need to be examined in far greater detail in the Commission's forthcoming action plan for lifelong learning. It would be reasonable to start from the assumption that the educational system is one of the basic infrastructures of the new knowledge-based society and that various solutions needed to be assessed in the broadest context.

## **Setting priorities for target groups and needs**

As even at best resources will be limited, we also need to consider priorities among the various needs. The Lisbon strategy outlines three different objectives entailing three different strategies for a new educational and knowledge policy. The first mentions the development of new skills within the most advanced sectors of the developing research-based economy (the elite strategy), the second, the importance of combating social exclusion and thus of giving priority to basic education for marginalised groups and individuals (the compensation strategy) and the third, full employment as a priority goal (the comprehensive strategy).

Even if these three strategies can be combined the problem remains of the relative weight to be given to each of the three competing requirements. Here it is conceivable that different Member States will prefer different strategy combinations, but this should be done in the open and in such a way as to make it possible to compare and assess them on a quantitative basis.

## **The special role of the EU**

Education is fundamentally a national responsibility, but lifelong learning has already become an important part of the Luxembourg process, and the Lisbon Summit called for European-level coordination of future education policy. This should give the European Union a special role in overall educational planning and a specific responsibility for coordination on the basis of the open coordination procedure.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its motion for a resolution:

- A. Having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon Summit seeking to make the European Union the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy and society;

### *General principles*

1. Stresses that the adaptation of education and training systems with a view to integrating the concept of lifelong learning is – in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity – primarily a matter of the Member states; takes the view, however, that a jointly coordinated effort at EU-level is desirable to enable Member states to exchange examples of good practice; considers, therefore, the open coordinating method the right framework for setting common objectives for lifelong learning;
2. Considers that the primary obstacles to the development of lifelong learning systems are the lack of agreements and the fundamental disagreements on forms of funding and the setting of priorities;
3. Believes that the choices and priority issues need to be identified to allow political action to concentrate on the essentials;

4. Believes that there is a direct link between quality of work and lifelong learning, and therefore calls on the Commission to explain how the policies on lifelong learning, quality of work and the organisation of work can be mutually supportive;
5. Considers it important for lifelong education to be included as a clear priority for political action, in order to ensure employability, which is a vital prerequisite for active citizenship, and to make it possible to achieve economic growth where people are the main resource and combat social exclusion;
6. Hopes that the situation in the various applicant countries concerning education and training will be ascertained and included in the overall picture;
7. Considers that there is a need to develop towards an integrated society which offers everyone equal opportunities for quality lifelong learning;

#### *Basic school systems*

8. Raises the question of how the basic school systems in the Member States, which are the foundation for lifelong learning, may be improved in quality and transformed to meet present and future needs;
9. Points to the widespread need for modern, appropriately sized school buildings, equipment that meets modern educational standards and, for teaching purposes, smaller classes, access to new technologies, use of computers, knowledge of programmes and Internet connections;
10. Considers that teachers, as key individuals in a knowledge-based society, must have access to facilities to enable them to upgrade their knowledge and a greater range of further training geared to the needs of society and, in view of the importance of their social role, appropriate pay and proper recognition of their activity;
11. Considers that educational organisations generally need to be freed of red tape, decentralised and opened up to the community;
12. Points out that giving teachers more scope for proposing initiatives and pupils and parents greater and more active involvement may improve the quality of the education provided;
13. Calls, in order to ensure good cohesion between the education system and local labour markets, for proposals on how to transform schools into open and attractive local learning centres;
14. Notes the need to promote life long learning at local and regional levels by establishing effective community networks;

#### *Adult education systems*

15. Recognises that adult education systems are important to both industry and

employment as well as for well-being, culture and personal development and therefore need to be extended, overhauled and diversified in order to meet the many new needs;

16. Points out that any large-scale employer has to have a training and skill-development plan agreed between the two sides of industry and jointly managed in accordance with agreements and national legislation;
17. Recognises that life long learning is important throughout life and not only in relation to paid employment or the labour market; the notion of life long learning should also apply to the time after retirement and the access of older people's - either retired or employed - to life long learning schemes should be facilitated;
18. Calls on the Member States to ensure that older people, the disabled and others outside the world of work are offered opportunities for further education to meet their personal educational ambitions and to become involved in cultural activities;
19. Stresses that the education systems in the EU should, inter alia, support the labour market and the development of a genuinely European labour market which leads to greater cross-border mobility, calls for mutual recognition of diplomas;

#### *Financing*

20. Notes that the necessary increase in quality in basic education will inevitably involve substantial and in some cases very substantial increases in spending;
21. Points out that vocational training, further training and higher education, which are increasing at a greater rate than other parts of the educational system, also require considerable increases in spending;
22. Calls for a discussion on how these costs can be apportioned in the Member States between individuals, employers and public bodies both effectively and in a spirit of solidarity;
23. Assumes that the cost of in-service training and further training of staff is an investment in human capital and that the financial resources, the budget, the educational targets and the necessary measures will be established and organised with the involvement of both sides of industry and other relevant groups in the community and in accordance with national labour market regulation;
24. Draws attention to the fact that most Member States have few or no forms of funding retraining for a new occupation, something which is particularly necessary during crisis situations and industrial redevelopment;
25. Draws attention to the proposal that all persons should be entitled to a certain number of years of public education, which implies that those who left school early are entitled later in life to complementary education with a view to acquire the necessary vocational qualifications that will enable them to play an active role in society and give them access to the labour market;

26. Draws attention to the link between the cost of education as an investment and as a source of added value, and considers that this approach should inform a policy for the long-term funding of education;

*The European Union's role*

27. Calls for an open political debate on the three strategies for education and employment adopted simultaneously in Lisbon and points out that the problem of setting priorities has yet to be solved;
28. Supports the proposal that the open coordination procedure should be applied to lifelong learning and in particular stresses the need for guidelines on resources, organisation and links between the various educational institutions;
29. Would like to see the open coordination take the form of a bottom-up rather than the top-down process devised for employment policy and calls for more emphasis to be placed on developing a positive attitude to life long learning amongst socially excluded groups;
30. Stresses the vital importance of the knowledge of two languages for cross-border cooperation in Europe and in the world;
31. Draws attention to the need for coordination between countries, with due regard for the Member States' autonomy in this sector, on educational programmes, student and teacher mobility, mutual recognition of diplomas, admission criteria for training and vocational courses, and exchange of best practice;
32. Hopes that these views will also be noted by the Commission and taken into account in the continuing work on the forthcoming plan of action for lifelong learning.