

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Industry, Research and Energy*

**2005/0221(COD)**

4.5.2006

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning  
(COM(2005)0548 – C6-0375/2005 – 2005/0221(COD))

Draftsman: Umberto Pirilli

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The basis of knowledge is learning, or the condition that enables man to learn.

The recommendation under consideration uses the term 'competences', drawing a distinction between basic competences and key competences. It takes the view that basic competences should be available to everyone and that everyone should then be encouraged to acquire the key competences, in other words the additional skills that will foster development and growth generally.

Drawing on international studies, the recommendation defines competence as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a particular situation. Key competences are defined as those that support personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.

The need to acquire key competences is dictated by the development of the knowledge society, which requires individuals to adapt.

In its proposal, the Commission identifies the following eight key competences:

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. Communication in foreign languages;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence;
7. Entrepreneurship;
8. Cultural expression.

The annex to the Commission proposal, 'Key competences for lifelong learning - a European reference framework', considers these competences individually, providing a concise yet generally comprehensive description.

The first competence, for example, communication in the mother tongue, is defined as 'the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form' and stipulates that this ability requires an individual to have a knowledge of basic vocabulary, functional grammar and the functions of language. Individuals should also have the 'skills' to communicate.

The word 'skills' occurs repeatedly and appears under each of the other seven points.

Skills therefore seem to be the vital elements through which an individual learns, communicates, understands, applies, uses and manipulates instruments, searches, gathers, discriminates, learns to learn, negotiates, forms relations, plans, or manages proactively. Skill are thus the main recurring feature of the Commission's recommendation. Yet we are not told how to acquire these skills. Surreptitious references are made to the natural abilities of individuals, but this is not enough.

'Only one thing I know, and that is that I know nothing' was the brilliant insight of Socrates, which the Romans, with their extraordinary capacity for synthesis, translated by the famous phrase '*Scio nihil scire*'. It is a notion to which we should give some thought.

Indeed, contemporary epistemology has not yet managed to classify all branches of knowledge in the world today. It has classified more than a thousand, but others are emerging every day and these thousand and one kinds of knowledge are giving rise to a thousand and one new trades. The civilisation in which we live is in a great hurry to push back the frontiers of competence. The Commission proposal is therefore quite right to seek to make learning a lifelong process through a series of proposals which can command broad support.

Nevertheless, the recommendation is particularly lacking in one area, namely the conditions necessary for acquiring key competences. The recommendation speaks in general terms of basic competences and attempts to define them. In my humble opinion, building a knowledge-based society does not mean creating individuals with a mastery of a thousand branches of learning, still less with eight key competences. Competence really means specific knowledge of a particular thing. To possess a stock of skills is useful for an individual and therefore for society as a whole. But if individuals are to be able to know and understand society, they must be provided with the basis for knowledge and not just basic skills.

To return to Socrates and how we should interpret his ideas, this means we should provide the individual with a stock of knowledge and of stimuli that will make him aware that he knows nothing. If cultivated in this way, knowledge will produce the fruits of learning, which are what the recommendation refers to as attitudes and 'skills'. It is the individual trained to think, and not necessarily the thinker, who will develop his technical skills exponentially and use the key competences not only to take his place in the knowledge society, but also to give it fresh impetus and help it develop. Since the European Council in Lisbon, it has frequently been said that human beings are the most important resource on which Europe should draw in order to build the knowledge society, as a vital precondition for securing growth and employment.

However, human beings cannot be treated as robots, and it is well known that children are more open to external stimuli and learn much more quickly when they are of school age. To equip these young people with competences rather than knowledge, to teach them how a machine works but not how the brain works, to introduce them to the modern world and not to man and his philosophy, to deprive them of the chance to study the philosophers, or the possibility to acquire the capacity for synthesis which only the study of Latin can provide, will be to create human beings who are capable of living in the knowledge society, but who are not masters of their destiny. A very serious study carried out in recent decades has shown that in Italy the best engineers and physicians possessed a grounding in the 'classics', in other words had attended a 'classical' high school where Greek, Latin and philosophy are studied, rather than a scientific school where the emphasis is on a more technical approach.

In conclusion, the Commission's proposal is a positive one, provided it clearly spells out the notion of basic competences which must be available to everyone. These competences, which I would prefer to call knowledge or basic learning, must render the individual apt and willing to learn, to be discerning, to reason and to think.

It would therefore be highly appropriate to identify those disciplines which can best help

develop the 'man of knowledge', who is also capable of thinking, understanding and thus knowing. These disciplines are essentially philosophy and Latin, the ones best suited for ensuring that everyone - in addition to the individual gifts he may otherwise possess - develops the capacity to think, order his thoughts, and express them accurately and concisely (as in the famous words attributed to Julius Caesar: *Veni, Vidi, Vici*).

## AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Text proposed by the Commission<sup>1</sup>

Amendments by Parliament

### Amendment 1 Recital 1

(1) The Lisbon European Council in 2000 concluded that a European framework should define the **new** basic **skills** as a key measure in Europe's response to globalisation and the shift to knowledge-based economies, and emphasised that people are Europe's main asset. Since then, these conclusions have been regularly restated including by the European Councils of March 2003 and of March 2005, and in the re-launched Lisbon Strategy which was approved in 2005

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*(This amendment applies to the entire text, whenever the words 'key competences' appear)*

### *Justification*

*Basic education provides not competences, but knowledge and learning. Knowledge as a whole constitutes the basis for learning, which is a prerequisite for acquiring key competences.*

### Amendment 2 Recital 3

(3) The Communication of the Commission on lifelong learning and the subsequent Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning identified "the **new** basic

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C ... /Not yet published in OJ.

*skills*” as a priority, and stressed that lifelong learning must *cover the preschool age to that of post-retirement*. The Youth Pact which is annexed to the conclusions of the Brussels European Council of March 2005 stressed the need to encourage the development of a common set of core skills.

*knowledge and learning*” as a priority, and stressed that learning must *be lifelong in nature*. The Youth Pact which is annexed to the conclusions of the Brussels European Council of March 2005 stressed the need to encourage the development of a common set of core skills.

#### *Justification*

*Basic education provides not competences, but knowledge and learning. Knowledge as a whole constitutes the basis for learning, which is a prerequisite for acquiring key competences.*

#### Amendment 3

##### Recommendations to the Member States, paragraph 5

5. Ensure the coherence of adult education and training provision for individual citizens via close links to employment *and* social **policies** and other policies affecting young people and collaboration with social partners and other stakeholders;

5. Ensure the coherence of adult education and training provision for individual citizens via close links to employment **policy**, social **policy, business and innovation policy** and other policies affecting young people and collaboration with social partners and other stakeholders;

#### *Justification*

*A direct reference in the proposal to links with Community business and innovation policy is necessary, given the interdependence of competitiveness, innovation, education and training. The European 'Integrated Action Programme in the Field of Lifelong Learning' will help to promote competitiveness and create an innovative mentality within the EU.*

#### Amendment 4

##### Points taking note of the Commission's intentions, paragraph 3

3. Promote the wider use of the ‘Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework’ in related Community policies, and particularly in the implementation of employment, youth *and* social policy, and develop further links with social partners and other organisations working in those fields;

3. Promote the wider use of the ‘Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework’ in related Community policies, and particularly in the implementation of employment, youth, social *and business and innovation* policy and develop further links with social partners and other organisations working in those fields;

### *Justification*

*A direct reference in the proposal to the inclusion of Community business and innovation policy in the European reference framework is necessary, given the interdependence between competitiveness, innovation, education and training. The European 'integrated programme of action in the field of lifelong learning' will help to promote competitiveness and create an innovative mentality within the EU.*

#### Amendment 5

Annex, Introduction, paragraph 1, point 1

1. Communication in the mother tongue

1. Communication **and education** in the mother tongue

### *Justification*

*As repeatedly pointed out by UNESCO, teaching in the mother tongue is a major factor in ensuring high quality education.*

#### Amendment 6

Annex, point 4 'Digital Culture', paragraph 1

Definition: Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks **via** the Internet.

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### *Justification*

*The Internet ITSELF is the network.*

#### Amendment 7

Annex, point 4 'Digital Culture', paragraph 2

Digital competence requires a sound understanding and knowledge of the nature, role and opportunities of IST in everyday contexts: in personal and social life as well as at work. This includes main computer applications such as word processing,

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spreadsheets, databases, information storage and management, and an understanding of the opportunities of Internet and communication via electronic media (e-mail, network tools) for leisure, information sharing and collaborative networking, learning and research, . Individuals should also understand how IST can support creativity and innovation, and be aware of issues around the validity and reliability of information available and the ethical principles of in the interactive use of IST.

spreadsheets, databases, information storage and management, and an understanding of the opportunities of Internet and communication via electronic media (e-mail, network tools) for leisure, information sharing and collaborative networking, learning and research, . Individuals should also understand how IST can support creativity and innovation, and be aware of issues around the validity and reliability of information available and the ethical principles of in the interactive use of IST. ***In these domains, technological neutrality and interoperability are crucial.***

#### Amendment 8

#### Annex, point 4 'Digital Culture', paragraph 3

Skills needed include: the ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way, assessing relevance and distinguishing real from virtual while recognising the links. Individuals should have skills to use tools to produce, present and understand complex information and the ability to access, search and use internet-based services; they should also be able use IST to support critical thinking, creativity, and innovation.

Skills needed include: the ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way, assessing relevance and distinguishing real from virtual while recognising the links, ***capacity to protect its privacy online***. Individuals should have skills to use tools to produce, present and understand complex information and the ability to access, search and use internet-based services; they should also be able use IST to support critical thinking, creativity, and innovation.

Amendment 9  
Annex, paragraph 7 'Entrepreneurship', paragraph 3

An entrepreneurial attitude is characterised by initiative, pro-activity, independence and innovation in personal and social life, as much as at work. It also includes motivation **and** determination to meet objectives, whether personal goals or aims held in common with others, and/or at work.

An entrepreneurial attitude is characterised by initiative, pro-activity, **awareness of the dangers facing entrepreneurs and** independence and innovation in personal and social life, as much as at work. It also includes motivation and determination to meet objectives, whether personal goals or aims held in common with others, and/or at work, **and more generally the creation of a favourable business climate.**

*Justification*

*In order to encourage an entrepreneurial mentality, it is necessary to take immediate measures to dispel the type of 'Angst' which acts as a powerful inhibitor to the development of skills and to create a business climate which rewards rather than penalises innovation.*

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning
<b>References</b>	COM(2005)0548 – C6-0375/2005 – 2005/0221(COD)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	CULT
<b>Opinion by</b> Date announced in plenary	ITRE 17.11.2005
<b>Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary</b>	
<b>Draftsman</b> Date appointed	Umberto Pirilli 13.12.2005
<b>Previous drafts(wo)man</b>	
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	20.3.2006
<b>Date adopted</b>	4.5.2006
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 38 –: 0 0: 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Šarūnas Birutis, Jan Březina, Renato Brunetta, Philippe Busquin, Jerzy Buzek, Joan Calabuig Rull, Pilar del Castillo Vera, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Giles Chichester, Nicole Fontaine, Umberto Guidoni, Fiona Hall, David Hammerstein Mintz, Rebecca Harms, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Ján Hudacký, Romana Jordan Cizelj, Anne Laperrouze, Vincenzo Lavarra, Pia Elda Locatelli, Eluned Morgan, Angelika Niebler, Umberto Pirilli, Vladimír Remek, Herbert Reul, Teresa Riera Madurell, Mechtild Rothe, Paul Rübig, Andres Tarand, Britta Thomsen, Catherine Trautmann, Nikolaos Vakalis, Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	María del Pilar Ayuso González, Zdzisław Kazimierz Chmielewski, Edit Herczog, Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, Esko Seppänen, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Francisca Pleguezuelos Aguilar
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	
<b>Comments (available in one language only)</b>	...