

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

BARCELONA EUROPEAN COUNCIL

15 AND 16 MARCH 2002

[...]

Promoting Skills and Mobility in the European Union

33. The European Council welcomes the Commission Action Plan to remove the barriers within European labour markets by 2005, and calls on the Council to take the necessary steps to put into practice the proposed measures. Priority should be given to:
- in accordance with the Action Plan adopted at Nice, putting into place the legal conditions required to ensure genuine mobility for all those involved in education, research and innovation;
 - ? lowering regulatory and administrative barriers to professional recognition as well as other barriers resulting from failure to recognise formal qualifications and non-formal learning taking into account the paragraph on education below;
 - ? ensuring that all citizens, and in particular groups such as unemployed women, are well equipped with basic qualifications, especially those linked with ICTs;
 - ? increasing where appropriate the transferability of social security rights, including pensions, across the European Union. In this context, the European Council asks for work to be pursued as a matter of urgency, on the basis of the parameters agreed at the Laeken European Council, on the reform of Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 on the coordination of social security systems, so that the new Regulation can be adopted before the end of 2003.
34. Concrete steps are needed. In this regard, the European Council has decided that:
- ? a European Health Insurance Card will replace the current paper forms needed for health treatment in another Member State. The Commission will present a proposal to that effect before the Spring European Council in 2003. Such a card will simplify procedures, but will not change existing rights and obligations;
 - ? a one-stop European Job Mobility Information Web Site, in close cooperation with the Member States, will be established, with a view to its full operability by the end of 2003, at the latest.

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A competitive economy based on knowledge

Education

43. The European Council welcomes the agreement on the detailed Work Programme for 2010 for education and training systems. The European Council sets the objective of making these educative and training systems a world quality reference by 2010. It agrees that the three basic principles to inspire this Programme shall be: improved quality, facilitation of universal access, and opening-up to the wider world.

It invites the Council and the Commission to report to the Spring European Council in 2004 on its effective implementation.

44. The European Council calls for further action in this field:
- ? to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (ECTS, diploma and certificate supplements, European CV) and closer cooperation with regard to university degrees in the context of the Sorbonne -Bologna-Prague process prior to the Berlin meeting in 2003; similar action should be promoted in the area of vocational training;
 - ? to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age: establishment of a linguistic competence indicator in 2003; development of digital literacy: generalisation of an Internet and computer user's certificate for secondary school pupils;
 - ? the European Council calls on the Commission to undertake a feasibility study to identify options for helping secondary schools to establish or enhance an internet twinning link with a partner school elsewhere in Europe, and report back to the Seville European Council in June;
 - ? to promote the European dimension in education and its integration into pupils' basic skills by 2004.
45. The European Council welcomes the Commission's Communication on "Making a European Area for Lifelong Learning a Reality" and invites the Council to adopt a resolution on lifelong Learning before the European Council in Seville, taking into account the European Employment Strategy.

Research and frontier technologies

46. The European Council again calls on the Council and the European Parliament to adopt the 6th Research Framework Programme (FP6) and its legal instruments by June 2002.

47. In order to close the gap between the EU and its major competitors, there must be a significant boost of the overall R&D and innovation effort in the Union, with a particular emphasis on frontier technologies. The European Council therefore:
 - agrees that overall spending on R&D and innovation in the Union should be increased with the aim of approaching 3% of GDP by 2010. Two-thirds of this new investment should come from the private sector;
 - notes the Commission's intention to propose measures in Spring 2003 to better integrate innovation into a European Knowledge Area, with the aim of improving the use of intellectual property rights across Europe, further developing and strengthening private investment and the use of risk capital in research and increasing networking between business and the science base;
 - reaffirms the importance of the Community Patent and invites the Council to reach a common political approach at its meeting in May. The Community Patent must be an efficient and flexible instrument obtainable by businesses at an affordable cost, while complying with the principles of legal certainty and non-discrimination between Member States and ensuring a high level of quality.

48. Frontier technologies are a key factor for future growth. The European Council asks the Council to examine before June 2002 the Commission's communication "Life Sciences and Biotechnology – a strategy for Europe". It asks the Council and the Commission to develop measures and a timetable which enable Community businesses to exploit the potential of biotechnology while taking due account of the precautionary principle and meeting ethical and social concerns. The Commission is invited to report on progress in advance of the Spring European Council 2003.

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