

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
of 24 May 2005
on new indicators in education and training

(2005/C 141/04)

THE COUNCIL,

Having regard to:

1. the new strategic goal set for the European Union by the Lisbon European Council of 23-24 March 2000 and reaffirmed by the Stockholm European Council of 23 and 24 March 2001, 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion';
2. the conclusions of the Spring 2005 European Council, which underline that 'human capital is Europe's most important asset' ⁽¹⁾;
3. the Lisbon European Council's affirmation that Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for a higher level and quality of employment. Hence, the mandate from the Lisbon European Council to the Education Council 'to undertake a general reflection on concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity with a view to contributing to the Luxembourg and Cardiff processes' ⁽²⁾;
4. the Barcelona European Council Conclusions of 15-16 March 2002 ⁽³⁾, which endorsed the work programme ⁽⁴⁾, including an indicative list of indicators to be used to measure progress towards the implementation of the thirteen concrete objectives through the Open Method of Coordination, with the aim for European education and training systems of becoming 'a world reference for quality by 2010', and which called for the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator;
5. the reaffirmation of the central role of indicators and the five reference levels in giving directions and measuring progress in the field of education and training towards the Lisbon goals ⁽⁵⁾;

6. the Joint Interim Report of February 2004, ⁽⁶⁾ which underlined the need to improve the quality and comparability of existing indicators, particularly in the field of life-long learning, and its request that the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks and all existing Working Groups propose, by the end of 2004, a limited list of new indicators for development;

7. the Commission's preliminary response to this request, outlining possible short, medium and long-term strategies in nine indicator areas ⁽⁷⁾;

REAFFIRMS that

8. periodic monitoring of performance and progress through the use of indicators and benchmarks is an essential part of the Lisbon process, allowing the identification of strengths and weaknesses with a view to providing strategic guidance and steering for both short and long term measures of the Education and Training 2010 strategy;

RECOGNISES that

9. it is desirable to develop a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks to monitor performance and progress in the field of education and training;
10. the development of the necessary data for new indicators can be a long-term project, at times lasting 5-10 years;
11. enhanced cooperation in education and training could be used for the establishment of a coherent indicator framework supported by appropriate data sources, going beyond the 2010 Lisbon horizon;
12. the establishment of the 'research unit on lifelong learning' at the Joint Research Centre at ISPRA can significantly increase the Commission's research capacity in terms of the development of new indicators;

⁽¹⁾ Doc 7619/05, paragraph 34.

⁽²⁾ Doc. SN 100/1/00 REV 1, paragraph 27.

⁽³⁾ SN 100/1/02 REV 1.

⁽⁴⁾ 'Detailed work programme for the follow-up of the report on the concrete objectives of education and training systems' adopted by the Education Council on 14 February 2002.

⁽⁵⁾ Council Conclusions on benchmark adopted on 5 May 2003.

⁽⁶⁾ 'Education and training 2010' — The Success of the Lisbon Strategy Hinges on Urgent Reforms, adopted jointly by the Council and the Commission on 26 February 2004.

⁽⁷⁾ Staff Working Paper from the Commission, 'New Indicators on Education and Training' (SEC(2004), 1524).

STRESSES that

13. full use should be made of existing data and indicators while further efforts should be made to improve their comparability, relevance and timeliness;
14. the development of new indicators shall fully respect the responsibility of Member States for the organisation of their education systems and should not impose undue administrative or financial burdens on the organisation and institutions concerned, nor inevitably lead to an increased number of indicators used to monitor progress;
15. there is a need to continue to enhance cooperation with other international organisations active in this field (e.g. OECD, Unesco, IEA), particularly in order to improve international data coherence.

INVITES the Commission

16. with regard to indicator areas where data collections already exist or EU surveys are planned, to further develop and submit to the Council strategies in the indicator areas of efficiency of investment, ICT, mobility, adult education, teachers and trainers, vocational education and training, social inclusion and active citizenship;
17. with regard to indicator areas where no comparable data exist, to present to the Council detailed survey proposals for the development of new indicators, in the areas of:
 - learning-to-learn;
 - language skills;and in any other area where new surveys might become relevant;
18. with regard to indicator areas where international organisations (e.g. OECD, Unesco, IEA) are planning new surveys, to cooperate with international organisations in order to satisfy the information needs of the EU in indicator areas such as ICT, adult skills and professional development of teachers, where other international organisa-

tions are already discussing the possibility of carrying out surveys;

19. when developing such strategies and new instruments for data collection, including in cooperation with international organisations to:
 - where necessary analyse their political relevance also considering the relation between the development of human capital and integrated education work policies;
 - present a detailed technical specification of the proposed new surveys;
 - include a timetable for the development work to be undertaken;
 - include an estimate of the likely costs and necessary infrastructure for such developmental works and subsequent data collection in the Member States involved and for the Commission;
 - specify appropriate management structures, enabling Member States to be involved in methodological and development work, and to be in a position to take the necessary decisions, ensuring the development of relevant and high quality data, in accordance with the timetable;
 20. with a view to reporting back to the Council, no later than the end of 2006, to:
 - take stock of initiatives taken in other survey areas, including the impact of ICT on teaching and learning, the labour market outcomes of mobility, and the social background of tertiary students;
 - assess progress made towards the establishment of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for following-up on the Lisbon objectives in the area of education and training, including a reconsideration of the suitability of existing indicators used for monitoring progress.
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