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(Information)

COUNCIL

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling higher education to make its full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy

(2005/C 292/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Whereas:

The European Council Conclusions of 22 and 23 March 2005 ⁽¹⁾ relaunching the Lisbon Strategy call for an emphasis on knowledge, innovation and the optimisation of human capital to deliver the key priorities of jobs and growth. The Conclusions underline the need for better investment in universities, modernised management of universities and university and industry partnerships.

The Joint Interim Report 2004 of the Council and the Commission on 'Education and Training 2010' ⁽²⁾ explains that the European Higher Education sector should pursue excellence and become a worldwide quality reference to be in a position to compete against the best in the world. The Report points out that the Bologna Process has resulted in progress in reforming some aspects of higher education, including measures to increase mobility, facilitate greater transparency and make degrees more readily comparable.

NOTE THAT:

— Higher education is a matter for individual Member States to organise and resource, in accordance with national priorities, legislation and practices.

— In a knowledge-based economy and society, higher education should be seen in close conjunction with research and innovation.

TAKE NOTE of the Commission's Communication on 'Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon strategy' ⁽³⁾ as an important contribution to the debate on how to raise the quality of higher education across Europe as a means of increasing Europe's competitiveness.

SHARE the view that Member States should:

1. enable higher education institutions in Europe to improve their performance in terms of attainment, access and research in comparison to other regions and countries in the world;
2. enable higher education institutions to adapt to changing circumstances in order to enhance their quality, attractiveness and relevance to society and the economy;
3. assist the development of governance in higher education institutions and ensure that they have sufficient autonomy;
4. improve the sustainability of funding for higher education institutions, by increasing investment and diversifying the sources of investment, as necessary;
5. strengthen the social dimension of higher education, particularly by widening access to a broad range of socio-economic groups whilst working to reduce student dropout rates;
6. encourage institutions to develop stronger partnerships with the society around them, including local communities and the business world.

⁽¹⁾ Doc. 7619/1/05.

⁽²⁾ Doc. 6905/04.

⁽³⁾ Council doc. 8437/05 + ADD 1.

UNDERLINE the importance of:

1. adapting, where necessary, the regulatory framework within which higher education institutions operate, with a view to developing a more flexible relationship between individual institutions and Member State authorities responsible for the strategic direction of higher education systems, thereby helping them to modernise and adapt to the changing needs of society and to be accountable for their decisions;
2. enhancing the attractiveness of higher education to students through high quality facilities, better information, greater diversity in teaching and learning, particularly by means of ICT, higher quality and better preparation of individuals so as to ensure their successful academic careers, their sustainable integration into the labour market and their active participation in society;
3. widening access to higher education, particularly for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping individuals to achieve their potential and enabling a greater variety of paths to higher education, making lifelong learning a reality;
4. encouraging diversity within higher education systems and institutions and also developing centres of excellence which can contribute to the process of reform through collaboration with other institutions and bodies;
5. encouraging higher education institutions to develop sustainable partnerships with the broader community and industry, in order to meet the changing needs of society and the labour market;
6. involving all stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of reforms;

- 6a. considering investment in higher education as an investment in the future of society;
7. examining the level of resources devoted to higher education and reviewing the possibilities for securing additional funds through a variety of means, including both public and private support as appropriate;
8. providing incentives for reform, for instance, by targeting investment to improve the quality of teaching and learning, research, innovation, management and student services.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- address the issues raised in this Resolution and report on progress in their contributions to the 2008 Joint Interim Report on the implementation of the 'Education and Training 2010' Work Programme.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

- make use of peer learning and the next Joint Interim Report on the implementation of the 'Education and Training 2010' Work Programme to address the issues raised in this Resolution;
- address the needs of higher education through more effective use of Community programmes such as Socrates, Leonardo and future education and training programmes, the European funding instruments of the European Investment Bank Group and the structural funds, where appropriate;
- encourage international cooperation between higher education institutions, particularly through their participation in Community programmes such as Tempus and Erasmus Mundus.