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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION
THE CONCRETE FUTURE OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its Lisbon meeting in March 2000, the European Council invited the Education Council *“to undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity, with a view to ... presenting a broader report to the European Council in the Spring of 2001”*¹. The Education Council at its June 2000 meeting invited the Commission to prepare a draft of the report. The Commission invited the Member States to contribute to this process by answering a questionnaire as to how they were following up the Lisbon Conclusions in the field of education generally, and specifically how they saw the concrete future objectives of the education systems. It presented a discussion paper to the Education Council on 9 November 2000, based on its own reflections and on current debate and research in the field of education (the contributions from Member States were not at that stage complete); the present draft report takes account not only of the contributions which Member States have made, but of the initial document and the Council discussion on that date. It prepares for the discussion in the Education Council of 12 February, which should adopt the report for the European Council in Stockholm as confirmed by the Nice European Council on 7–9 December 2000².
 2. This report covers not only the education systems as such, but the training systems as well; the Commission considers that the mandate from the Lisbon European Council can only be interpreted in that sense. It starts (section 1) with a brief analysis of the main elements emerging from the contributions made by Member States in response to the Commission’s questionnaire and of work done at EU-level. It then proposes (section 2) a number of concrete objectives which could form the basis for a joint work programme to be agreed by the Council; and finally (section 3) puts forward suggestions as to how to take forward this work programme in the context of the “open method of coordination”³ proposed for cooperation in the education field by the European Councils of Lisbon and Feira⁴.
- 1. THE PERSPECTIVE FROM MEMBER STATES ...**
3. The contributions from Member States⁵ were varied and diverse; but they show a number of common concerns about the future and about the contribution which the education systems must make if the Lisbon goal that Europe should 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”*

¹ Presidency Conclusions, paragraph 27

² Presidency Conclusions, paragraph 34

³ Presidency Conclusions, paragraphs 37/38

⁴ Presidency Conclusions, paragraph 38

⁵ The texts of Member States' contributions are available on (Europa web site address)

is to be achieved, and to the more general goals which society attributes to education. They also reflect the increasing pace of change within society and the economy, as well as the impact of increasing European integration. Overall, the Member States reflect view that education must contribute to three main goals: the development of the individual, who can thus realise his or her full potential and lead a happy and fruitful life; the development of society, in particular by reducing the disparities and inequities as between individuals or groups; and the development of the economy, by ensuring that the skills available on the labour market match the needs of businesses and employers. This should be done by a strategy of lifelong learning which overcomes the traditional barriers between the various parts of formal and informal education and training.

... **THEIR MAIN CONCERNS** ...

4. The five following points reflect the main concerns expressed by Member States:

4.1. **Quality**

All Member States perceive a need to increase the quality of their education and training systems. This applies to the quality of the learning process both for young people and for adults; to the quality of the teaching process, with the implications for initial and in-service teacher training and of support to teachers and trainers dealing with disadvantaged groups or with adults; and to the quality of the instruments and teaching materials available to help people learn.

4.2. **Access**

Member States see a need to develop access to learning at all stages of life, and in many cases mention a specific strategy regarding the development of lifelong learning. They also stress the role which the education systems must play in developing social cohesion, and in attracting people with difficulties or from minorities into learning so that they can be enabled to play their full part in society. In this connection, a number of Member States stress the need for learning to become more attractive and more responsive to the specific needs and circumstances of learners.

4.3. **Content**

All Member States see a need to reconsider the basic skills with which young people should leave initial school or training, and for these to integrate fully the Information and Communication Technologies. The need for a forward perspective on basic skills – i.e. for there to be a continuous process of adaptation of their definition, and of the means for teaching them, and for the range of subjects offered to be as wide as possible, is also stressed by some.

A number of Member States underline the role of education in transmitting the values of society – democracy, citizenship, community – though this also underlies the comments made by all Member States on the role of education as a whole.

4.4. **Openness**

Most Member States stress the need for schools, training centres and universities to be open to the world: to increase their links with the local environment (with

businesses and employers in particular, so as to increase their understanding of the needs of employers and thus to increase the employability of learners); to ensure an openness of spirit towards foreign countries, Europe and the wider world (e.g. through foreign language learning and mobility).

4.5. Effectiveness

Although Member States report increases in the investments in human resource spending (as proposed by the Lisbon Conclusions), they also stress the need for their education systems to make more use of quality assurance and evaluation systems in assessing their quality and becoming more effective in what they deliver; to ensure the best use of resources available to them; and to direct investment in human and financial terms where it will be most useful.

5. A summary of the contributions made by Member States, organised around the targets set by the Lisbon conclusions, will be found in Annex 1.

... AND EU-LEVEL ACTION

6. Similarly, a number of measures have been taken by the Commission since the Lisbon European Council – most notably the publication of the Communication on “e-learning”, and the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning which was presented to the Education Council on 9 November 2000. A summary of these EU-level activities will be found in Annex 2.

2. PROPOSED CONCRETE FUTURE OBJECTIVES

7. On the basis of these contributions, and of the analysis provided above, the Commission has noted a very real convergence of analysis and objectives between Member States. It considers that five concrete objectives could be defined, which would provide a basis for Member States to work together over the next ten years to define the contribution they would make at European level to achieving the goals set out by Lisbon. Of course, all Member States would continue their own efforts in other areas to increase the quality of service provided to learners and to society and the economy as a whole; the five objectives set out below would be those around which the Council could define a joint work programme in the context of the “open method of coordination” proposed by Lisbon, to be pursued jointly by the Member States, supported by the Commission, at European level.
8. These objectives also relate to the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning which the Commission presented to the Education Council on 9 November 2000, and around which it intends, with the cooperation of Member States, to develop a debate within the EU. While the formulation of the concrete objectives below relates to the contributions made by Member States, they themselves see the future within a lifelong learning context, and it is thus natural that the two exercises are closely linked.
9. The concrete objectives proposed, with some indication of the areas they might include, are as follows:

10. Raising the standard of learning in Europe

Raising the standard of learning is essential if Europe is to become a more competitive and dynamic society. It is also essential if Europe wishes to enable its citizens better to develop their own skills and competences, and to realise their potential as individuals, as members of society, and as economic agents. All Member States recognise the importance of quality, and indeed a recommendation from the Council and European Parliament on Quality in schools is under discussion, and one on Quality in higher education has been adopted⁶. They translate a general view of the need to ensure high and rising standards of learning for everyone in Europe.

11. Improving Training for Teachers and Trainers

Upgrading the initial and in-service training of teachers and trainers so that their skills respond both to the changes in society and expectations, and to the varied groups involved (all ages of young people in initial education and training, and a wide spectrum of ages of adults; people with specific learning difficulties, and with personal or societal difficulties; etc.) is a major challenge to the education systems over the next 10 years.

The skills of teachers and trainers are the key to the motivation of learners and to their success. Future-oriented training is now essential – the majority of teachers qualified 25 years ago or more, and the upgrading of their skills has in many cases not kept pace with change. Equally, the role of teachers has changed – they are no longer the unique source of knowledge, which they impart to a respectful audience; today they function more as tutors guiding learners as each travels a unique and individual pathway to knowledge. Training should enable teachers and trainers (whose problems are different, but have an impact in much the same way) to motivate their pupils not only to learn the vocational skills they need, but also to assume the responsibility for that unique and individual pathway which alone can bring them the competences required in society and in work today.

In the longer term, such questions around the role of the teacher may also need to take on board the issue of the attractiveness of the status of teachers, given the percentage of them who are closer to retirement age.

12. Increasing Literacy and Numeracy

Ensuring that all citizens achieve literacy and numeracy is essential to ensuring quality learning; they are the key to all subsequent learning capabilities, as well as to employability. Although an accurate assessment of the extent of the problem is difficult to make (because people are understandably reluctant to admit to difficulties with reading or arithmetic), there is no doubt but that a continuing problem exists in these two fields, and that weaknesses here hold back some people throughout their lives. Some groups (e.g. those whose mother tongue is not the language of learning) are particularly vulnerable here.

⁶ Recommendation 98/561/EC on Quality in Higher Education was adopted on 24 September 1998; the draft Recommendation on Quality in Schools was discussed by the Education Council on 9 November 2000, and a formal first reading is expected soon.

Although the problem is chiefly perceived as relating to initial education and training, there is also an increasing problem of people who lose these skills (particularly literacy) once they have moved out of formal learning. In a society which enables people to absorb more and more without reading, other means have to be found to persuade them that maintaining literacy and numeracy skills is essential both personally and professionally.

The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies both makes the problem more acute – since the changes in the workplace they induce lessen the numbers of jobs available to those whose literacy and numeracy skills are inadequate; and at the same time provides new and more individual ways of tackling the problem, which need further development if society as a whole is to reduce the proportions of people who suffer from this disadvantage. It is clear that a concerted effort to tackle this problem is now essential in some Member States, and will soon become so everywhere.

13. Making access to learning easier and more widespread at all times of life

Everyone accepts that education systems must adapt to a world of lifelong learning; and in a number of Member States this leads to concerns about the inclusiveness of education and its contribution to the fight against social exclusion, about its internal coherence, and about how attractive it is to young people and to adults. The change in the demographic pyramid – the proportion of young people in society has never been smaller – also reinforces the importance of encouraging continuing learning in the older age groups.

14. Access to Lifelong Learning

The need for education systems to adapt to the needs of people at all ages, and to be able to attract people of all ages into the learning process, is rightly seen as the most significant challenge of all by all Member States. All Member States recognise that the change in the nature of work and of the availability of information mean that a continuing appetite for learning and for information is crucial for individuals as well as for society and the economy.

Meeting this challenge involves first and foremost a recognition that change is needed in the ways the education and training are delivered if they are to become genuinely available to all, at all stages in their lives. It implies that all parts of those systems have to become more democratic and more welcoming in their attitude to learners – particularly higher education. Guidance has to become more readily available, and greater use made of the potential for individualising pathways offered by computers. But extending education in this way will raise issues which have not always been part of the education world – such as the adaptation of timetables to the availability of those with families, making available child care during courses, or even the recognition of prior experience gained outside formal education systems. It also requires further extension of education towards very young children – general cover for pre-school care, combining play and learning opportunities, is something which most parents seek, and which provides children with a better social base to move forward effectively into the more formal learning process of school.

15. Making learning more attractive

The issue of incentives to stay in learning, or of the extent to which provision can be seen to be “demand-led” also arises in this context. As young people reach an age at which they can leave formal education or training and go into paid employment, which (with tightening labour markets) becomes an increasing trend, other forms of incentive have to be available to counter-balance that of the pay packet. At later stages of life, the issue of finance for learning also arises – although in a different context. The lifelong learning context implies that people should not have to regard (e.g.) employment and learning as mutually exclusive.

The way in which these issues are presented varies (by definition) from Member State to Member State; but their existence is widespread, and solutions must therefore be found.

16. Internal coherence within education systems

The way in which *education* systems are organised can also make access more difficult. Are the systems flexible enough, do they provide entry points at all stages from early childhood right through to later life, how easy is it to move from a qualification in one stream to a qualification in another, do all paths enable the learner to go forward into (say) higher education? Questions such as these can encourage or discourage individuals, each with their own circumstances and ambitions, to move forward within learning or to opt out or not to come back in.

17. Education and social cohesion

Finally, if education is to fulfil its role of providing all individuals with an equitable entry point into society, it needs to do more than just attract and retain the interest of people from all backgrounds (and increasingly at all ages) to the learning process. It needs first to ensure that its content is adapted to the needs of the various groups involved; and secondly, that the picture of society which it conveys, through its curricula, through its teaching materials, is that which society itself would wish – for example, in areas such as equal opportunities, or the fight against racism or discrimination.

18. Updating the definition of basic skills for the knowledge society

The basic skills which society requires education to deliver are those which give an individual a secure foundation for life and work. They thus cover the vocational or technical skills as well as those social or personal competences which enable people to work together and to lead happy and fruitful lives. The increased pace of change in society and in the economy, and in particular the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) requires us continuously to keep the definition of basic skills under review, and to adapt it to those changes on a regular basis; and to see that those who left formal education or training before the new skills were available, have a chance to regain them later.

19. Information and Communication Technologies for everyone

The rapid development within society of the use of information and communication technologies has meant a revolution in the way schools and training institutions

work, as indeed it has changed the way in which very many people in Europe work. As far as the education systems are concerned, there are three challenges:

- **Equipping schools.** Here, Lisbon set a target that all schools should be equipped for the Internet and the use of multimedia resources by the end of 2001, and with considerable national effort, supported in some cases by the EU Structural Funds, this target will be achieved. Beyond this, however, lies the issue of equipping teachers and learners with free and easy access to computers.
- **Training teachers.** Here, too, Lisbon set a target (all teachers to be skilled in the use of the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2002), and the importance of providing good training for teachers is recognised by all Member States. Perhaps more importantly, though, new pedagogical issues arise around ways to encourage people to develop the specific skills to use ICTs well – skills such as the selection of information, its analysis and its subsequent transformation into knowledge and skill.
- **Networking and Resources.** The use of school networks is developing rapidly. Many Member States have specific networks for education and training, which they use to provide teachers with training and materials, classes with means and methods of cooperation both within and between schools, and individual learners with access to materials related to curricula or indeed with e-mail facilities. At the same time, the availability of multimedia resources and their linguistic diversity is expanding, and schools and teachers are becoming more accustomed to their use. The challenge now is to integrate these new resources within normal teaching practice, and to evaluate in which subject areas they are currently best used, and where they need further development before being able to make a worthwhile contribution to group learning.
- Even in the short time since Lisbon, however, the speed of change has made some of the targets suggested there less relevant. The real challenge is double: first of all to ensure that enough equipment and broadband connections exist for pupils to be able to get real advantage from the Internet and, secondly to ensure that appropriate learning content and adapted pedagogical frameworks are set up so that the new learning paradigm (e.g. using collaborative work over the internet) can be fully exploited. Similarly, for teachers, the issue is not just about training, it is about equipping them with the skills and the software to integrate the ICTs into their daily practice, and in this way increase the learning capacities of the people they work with. These challenges will be with us for a few years yet.

20. Professional skills and personal competences

The changing nature of society and of work means that increasingly, professional or vocational skills are not enough. At work, the complexity of work organisation, the increase in the types of task that employees are called upon to carry out, the introduction of flexible work patterns and of team working methods, mean that employees need skills beyond the purely technical in a way that their predecessors did not. The range of skills used in the work place is constantly widening. Similarly, society as a whole is less uniform than in the past, so personal competences (such as adaptability, tolerance of others and of authority, team work, problem solving and risk taking, independence, etc.) are more widely required if people are to live together in tolerance and respect for each other. The most important of these competences is the ability to learn – maintaining the curiosity and the interest in new issues and skills – without which lifelong learning cannot exist. For many teachers, however, this ability is difficult to stimulate; and its development should be a focus both of teacher training and of educational research in the coming years so that teachers are well prepared for acting in a constantly changing environment

Very often, education systems concentrate on transmission of the professional or vocational skills, leaving the personal competences more or less to chance. However, these can be developed and encouraged in parallel to, and through the teaching of, vocational skills, and research shows that where this is done, the effectiveness of teaching increases. Spreading these more personal skills required is a challenge for the knowledge society.

21. Specific Skills

The permanent review of the content of basic skills is essential in itself. However, it will from time to time be clear that within the normal basic skills package, some areas are not as attractive to learners as others – i.e. that not enough people are entering specific pathways in education or training, with the result that society and the economy suffer a shortage of skills in particular areas. This is why the continuous review of the content basic skills has to be prospective – it has to look both at what is available now and at what will be needed in the future.

Ministerial discussions have confirmed a current shortage of young people taking the maths and natural science pathways through school and into university. In particular, the numbers of girls and women taking these subjects are lower than their proportion of the population would suggest. Given the importance of these subject areas for the economy in the future, it is essential to understand the causes of such trends, and to take action to encourage greater take-up in these areas. "The Commission communication "Towards a European Research Area" (COM (2000)6) confirmed the disaffection for scientific study and a loss of interest among the young in careers in research.

22. Opening education and training to the local environment, to Europe and the world

There is consensus about the need to open up education systems to the influences of other parts of society – both those close to schools (parents, local institutions, local businesses) and those more distant (exchanges, mobility, e-mail networks). This is necessary not just because of the increased mobility, both professional and

geographical, that people undertake during their working lives, but also as part of the way in which Europe adapts to meet the challenges of a global economy. In addition, schools do not always have to look far for resources in this area: the multicultural nature of many city schools, where 10, 20 or even more languages may be spoken by pupils at home, provides access to other cultures and life-styles on the school's own door-step – and the same applies to training or youth institutions as well.

Within this multicultural European context, three particular areas of concern stand out:

23. Foreign language teaching

Better foreign language teaching is essential if Europe is to achieve its potential – whether this is its economic potential, its cultural or its social potential. Unlike our main competitors, ours is a multilingual society; and our teaching should reflect this – as it increasingly does.

Research suggests that early foreign language teaching is a key to greater language success later in life. Not only does it anchor the concept of foreign language in a child's mind at a period when the child is most receptive, it also enables interest about a society's neighbours and partners to be developed in new ways. The vast majority of Member States have experimented with early language learning; and the overall balance sheet is positive. We now need to build upon that success by mainstreaming that experience, so that it moves beyond the pilot stage into all schools; improving the way in which we deal with transition phases from one school to another – so that success in primary education is effectively built upon in secondary; and ensuring the availability of mother-tongue foreign language speakers in schools who can help children develop their skills beyond the capacity of normal primary or secondary teachers. The resource implications of this challenge are considerable.

The presence of foreign language mother-tongue teachers would also help with foreign language teaching at later ages, as would the development of teaching materials targeted specifically at adults. For most of the languages of the European Union, such materials are still scarce.

In both these areas, the contribution of EU programmes such as Socrates or Leonardo can be considerable; and the added value of cooperation between Member States is very clear.

24. Increasing mobility and exchanges

Over the last 10 years or so, not least because of interest sparked by the EU's own educational programmes Socrates, Leonardo or Youth, many schools have opened up to mobility and exchanges. These provide an occasion for a project-linked teaching cycle, where pupils themselves can often lead; for cross-curricular and team-teaching work; and for new forms of motivation for learners. While many such activities involve some public funding, the overall amount is often small as a proportion of the total costs, and schools and pupils show great resourcefulness in raising additional money to take the project forward – which is a further incidental benefit of the activity. Overall, they provide participants with a new view on the world – a practical use for foreign language learning, and show the positive sides to other people. They

also provide a different perspective on the learning process, and the possibility for teachers to share good practice with their foreign colleagues, and to learn from each other in that context.

It is now necessary to widen the range of schools and training institutions which take part in such activities, since institutions with less-advantaged learners tend to be under-represented. This implies an effort of training for those in the institutions; and targeting of resources towards such schools; and a campaign of encouragement and motivation to show what rewards these activities can bring to schools which invest the effort required.

25. Strengthening links with business

The need for schools and training institutions to relate to the world of business is now accepted – as regards training, it is in many countries inherent in the presence of the social partners in the organisation of training and is clearly an essential part of the process of ensuring employability. However, local businesses are a resource in other ways as well, for example in providing a perspective on the future needs for skills in the area, as well as a potential input for learners into the way in which the business world works. Schools should also build on the contacts they have with businesses in their local environment to provide role models of successful businesses as part of their civic education curricula.

Education systems should also consider whether their attitudes to business, and to partners outside the education system itself, are still valid in the new Millennium. Attitudes in the past have tended to be somewhat closed to outside influences – not least because of the size and ramifications of education systems, the numbers of people they employ and affect, and the importance attached to them politically. However, although the European tradition is of limited private sector involvement in education, experience from elsewhere in the world suggests that business has a long-term interest in seeing a quality output from schools. Society's best interest may be served by encouraging such interest and not by excluding it; and the education systems should review their practice to see what can be learned from such involvement in terms of motivating learners and of injecting a new perspective into schools or training establishments.

26. Developing the spirit of enterprise

The Lisbon conclusions underline the need for European societies to become more entrepreneurial. They point to the need to create “*a friendly environment for starting up and developing innovative businesses*”⁷, and to the need for Europe to make progress generally in this area. But the messages most children receive during their education do not concern entrepreneurship – still less do they encourage most children to see setting up their own business as a viable alternative to being employed by someone else. And yet research suggests that such decisions are in practice taken as early as the age of 12 to 13.

Entrepreneurship is also wider than business activity – it is also an active and reactive spirit – something that society as a whole should value and invest in.

⁷ Cf. Lisbon Conclusions, paragraph 13

Schools and training establishments should build this element into their curricula, and ensure that young people have the chance to develop in this sphere from an early age.

27. Making the best use of resources

Although all Member States have been able to report rises in spending on human resources, as Lisbon seeks, budgets generally are getting tighter. The pressure to use available resources – whether human or financial – to the best possible effect, is part of the daily life of leaders of schools and training institutions across the EU. A certain number of elements which help can be identified.

28. Quality Assurance systems

Quality assurance systems for schools and training institutions are an essential part of an effective education and training system. They enable schools and training institutions to look at the ways in which they serve people, and identify weaknesses or areas to be improved. The techniques which enable quality to be measured are readily available, though not all countries have the same experience of their use in education. Their introduction requires an effort of training for teachers and school leaders; but their application leads to increases in quality not just in the administrative areas of school life, but in the quality of the learning experience provided to young people and thereby the overall impression that the local community has of a school. This in turn enables an increase in confidence in the capacity of the school to deliver, and to increased expectations of pupil attainment. The whole is a virtuous circle which leads not only to a more effective use of resources, but to a significant increase in a school's contribution to its community.

29. Matching resources to needs

The combination of tighter education budgets and greater pressure for success means that resources must be targeted to where the needs actually are. This in turn implies that responsible authorities need to be able to understand which schools are doing well, which less well or badly; and to direct resources in the directions needed. This basis for this understanding also needs to be transparent to the citizen, and understood by all concerned.

Authorities therefore need a nationally recognised definition of the way in which success is to be measured (i.e. a progression index), which takes account both of differences in starting points and of the socio-economic background of the area in which a particular schools may be. Many Member States have such systems now, developing them is an essential part of making education more transparent to the citizen, and ensuring its effectiveness.

30. Developing a new partnership with schools

In practice, problems occur at local level; and the local level (i.e. the school or training establishment) should have the means and the powers to respond to problems in the most effective way possible within an overall resources limit. The broad principle should be that the more successful the institution, the less intervention is needed from outside – and vice versa. Where an institution is

seriously under-performing, the authorities have a clear responsibility to intervene. But where it is succeeding well, there is less need to intervene or to question the judgement of its leaders.

Decentralisation of management authority takes many forms, and there is no one ideal model, but the trend towards it is very general within the EU. Greater freedom for leaders enables them to have a different sort of partnership with public authorities, not just bilateral but multilateral, embracing not only other actors in the education or training system (such as universities or teacher training colleges, or other schools) but also private bodies such as businesses. Removing the barriers to such partnerships can be a fruitful way of enabling education and training institutions to make the best use of all the resources – financial and human capital as well as social capital – which are available to them.

3. THE “OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION” METHOD PROPOSED BY LISBON

31. During the discussion at the 9 November 2000 Education Council, the Commission proposed a two stage process to respond to the Lisbon invitation, viz.: first phase of the report to the Stockholm European Council on the content and broad lines of the Education Council’s response; then a process of consultation between the Member States and the Commission, leading to a second phase of the report (to the Seville European Council in March 2002) which would define the method for implementing the “open coordination” process.
32. The Commission takes the view that the concrete objectives outlined above provide ample work for the next decade. Clearly many of the elements outlined there can be a matter for national and or regional authorities and discussed with associations and social partners where appropriate; but all objectives would benefit from a process of peer review, of exchange of good practice, and of comparison of progress between Member States. Nor are the objectives in themselves new; as has already been said, they have been developed out of those put forward by Member States and out of the Commission’s reflections and discussions with researchers and others in the educational world, and represent areas in which work has already begun in many Member States, and in some cases is well advanced. However, if the learning society is to become a reality, all actors in the educational process have to be ready to learn; and the Commission suggests that mutual learning between Member States, as implicit within the “coordination” process, is a valuable way of increasing the quality of service delivered to the citizen.
33. The work programme implicit in these five concrete objectives is very substantial. The Commission suggests that during the year 2001 Member States and the Commission should together define what work should be undertaken in each of the areas concerned – which are suitable for peer review or the exchange of good practice, where progress should be compared against which benchmarks, which areas need indicators, where new indicators should be defined, the way in which Member States will take a view about developments likely to be positive in the future. At the same time, consideration will need to be given to the way in which education and training are represented within (say) the Luxembourg process, or the Commission’s annual Synthesis Report; just as continuing activity at EU level, such as the debate on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, will surely provide very valuable contributions to the discussions. This examination might be done through the

Education Committee; or it might be more efficient to use another group, less concerned with the regular work of the EU, and thus more able to bring the necessary time and perspective to the issues raised.

34. Against this backdrop, the Education Council should commit itself in the report to Stockholm to come to a view during 2001 – i.e. by the second phase of its report in 2002 – on the way in which “open coordination” should be implemented in the very special field of education. The Commission recognises, as do Member States, that the legal provisions of Articles 149 and 150 apply in these fields, and therefore apply to any work done as part of “open coordination” here too. The Commission will be ready to contribute to such discussions, and looks forward to taking them forward under the Swedish and Belgian Presidencies during 2001, and under the Spanish Presidency in 2002.

CONCLUSIONS

35. The concrete objectives proposed in this report set out a number of challenges which all education systems face today, to a greater or lesser extent. They are not confined to the current 15 Member States; they apply equally, perhaps more strongly in some cases, to the countries in the process of joining the Union. However, they are in essence common challenges.
36. The future of the Union – achieving all the aims inherent in the challenge set out in the Lisbon Conclusions, i.e. “*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*” – requires a solid contribution from the world of education. It requires that education systems can be adapted and developed so as to deliver the basic skills and competences everyone needs in the knowledge society; to make lifelong learning attractive and rewarding; and to reach out to everyone in society, however far from education and training they may consider themselves, with ways of developing their skills and making the best use of them.
37. The Commission believes that no single Member State can now accomplish all this alone. Our societies, like our economies, are now too interdependent for this to be realistic. While we must preserve the differences of structure and system which reflect the identities of the countries and regions of Europe, we must also recognise that our main objectives, and the results we all seek, are strikingly similar. We should build on those similarities to learn from each other, to share our successes and failures, and to use education together to advance European citizens and European society into the new millennium.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Council at Lisbon asked the Education Council “to undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns ...”. The Council in June 2000 asked the Commission to prepare a draft report; and the present document, prepared on the basis of Member State contributions and of a Council debate on 9 November 2000, is that draft.

It starts with an analysis of the main elements in the Member State contributions – summarised as concerns about the quality of teaching; access to learning; the content of learning; openness of schools and training institutions to the outside world; and the effectiveness with which resources in the education systems are used.

It then suggests that the Council adopt a long-term work programme, in the context of the open method of coordination put forward by Lisbon, in which the Member States, supported by the Commission, would work in five main areas:

- **Raising the standard of learning in Europe**, by improving the quality of training for teachers and trainers, and by making a specific effort on literacy and numeracy.
- **Making access to learning easier and more widespread at all times of life**, through an effort to make lifelong learning easier to enter and more attractive, by making it easier to move from one part of the education system to another (e.g. into higher education from vocational education).
- **Updating the definition of basic skills for the knowledge society**, in particular by integrating ICT skills, by concentrating more on personal competences, and by looking at shortages in specific skills.
- **Opening education and training to the local environment, to Europe and the world**, through foreign language teaching, mobility by strengthening links with business and by developing education for enterprise.
- **Making the best use of resources**, by introducing quality assurance into schools and training institutions; by better matching resources to needs, and by enabling schools to develop new partnerships to support their new, wider role.

The report then proposes an approach to the “open method of coordination” proposed by Lisbon, which takes account of the degree of subsidiarity attaching to education; and concludes that the objectives set out in the report cannot be achieved by Member States alone, and thus need cooperation at European level.

ANNEX 1

Analysis of national contributions describing Member States' follow-up to the Lisbon and Feira Summits

This analysis is structured in line with the objectives laid down in the Lisbon Conclusions. The Member States' replies outlined the measures implemented or planned. Although each Member State is working to put in place a raft of measures to adapt their education systems to the Knowledge Society, numerous initiatives still need to be taken.

- ***A substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources.***

Although Member States are working hard to increase the education and training budget, it is not always able to match the constantly growing needs. Depending on the country involved, such increases either cover all the various activities or are targeted on specific fields such as boosting the number of teachers, their continuing training or upgrading their pay, the entire vocational training set-up, the arrangements for keeping young people in a flexible education and training setting leading to qualifications, reforming the adult education system, or increasing the number of places available in pre-school education, vocational training or higher education.

In addition to increasing budgets, fund reallocation processes or rationalisation measures are planned in the hope of obtaining a better return on future investment. The courses on offer in secondary education and adult training are the two fields in which rationalisation measures appear to be particularly necessary.

- ***The number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training should be halved by 2010.***

Given the job market situation and the attested correlation between level of training and participation in working life, the Member States are concentrating their efforts on achieving such a reduction. It is clear that the situation varies from country to country. Some have a long way to go, while others have almost achieved the optimum level.

The Member States which, for various reasons, have a limited capacity at pre-school level, are focusing their efforts on initiatives aimed at increasing the facilities available, making the people involved more professional and ensuring greater quality of teaching at this level. Their aim is to try to provide, from the outset, young children with the best possible learning environment, so that they can further build on this. Here, too, some Member States provide pre-school facilities for almost all three- and four-year-olds whereas other countries still lag far behind on this score.

Failure at school, which is still too high in most Member States, is targeted for positive action such as educational guidance, establishment of early warning and prevention systems, individual support initiatives for risk groups (conurbations, ethnic minorities, etc.), measures to diversify teaching content and approaches, plus making individuals more responsible for themselves.

Teacher training is one of the major objectives given the extremely rapid developments in both technology and science. The aim here is to acquaint teachers with new contents, and new fields of university training are gradually opening up.

New learning contexts offering greater flexibility or overall approaches for learners and those around them are gradually springing up at local level.

- Technical and vocational education, plus adult education, are set to undergo major changes. As regards the former, such development needs to be based on an assessment of this strand of education, reorganising it on a more modular footing, increasing the courses on offer, introducing new areas, close cooperation with businesses and greater interplay with the job market.
- All adult education systems as a whole should be rethought to make courses more compatible with participants' needs (in terms of timetables, venue, possibility of combining lessons with a job, providing courses leading to qualifications in demand on the job market, etc.) – increasing second or third-chance opportunities, both for young people and adults in work, expanding the training courses on offer by adopting a more modular approach, developing continuous follow-up and positive evaluation systems for learners. Some moves are planned to boost cooperation with businesses, foster individual responsibility, raise the numbers of employees in continuing training, and offer skill audits to prospective learners, thereby making it possible to personalise training programmes and facilitate self-learning.
- ***Schools and training centres, all linked to the Internet, should be developed into multipurpose local learning centres accessible to all, using the most appropriate methods to address a wide range of target groups; learning partnerships should be established between schools, training centres, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit.***

To start with, the "places" devoted to skill learning and knowledge acquisition are on the increase. Most of them are centred around learning about information and communication technologies, vocational training programmes devised locally among various partners to cover identified needs, sharing hi-tech equipment, teacher training programmes – with or without distance-learning facilities – advice and guidance services sometimes located in local authority premises.

Schools will be increasingly requested to open their doors to adult training courses and to make their equipment and infrastructures available to them.

Such multipurpose places of knowledge acquisition and learning should be linked up in networks so as to bring together a large range of partners: schools, training centres, libraries, technological training institutes, local authorities, etc. These initiatives are gradually improving the interconnectivity of the local area, thereby – in the long term – making it easier for each citizen who so desires, no matter where they live or their particular circumstances, to gain access to a local resources centre, with or without distance guidance.

It is precisely in this field that, as shown by certain Member States' experience, it could be necessary – while making sure that all participants are interconnected – to preserve a certain amount of diversity among local centres. Having different courses improves access for a larger range of target groups.

In Member States where such facilities have been around for a long time now, these centres have been reinforced or have developed along new lines (for instance, in the higher education sphere).

- ***A European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills. A European diploma for basic IT skills, with decentralised certification procedures, should be established in order to promote digital literacy throughout the Union.***

Many Member States are aware of the need to adopt a new framework defining the basic skills to be acquired, mainly those mentioned in the Lisbon Summit Conclusions. In some case, particular stress is being placed on maths and science skills or on democratic and civic values.

In a few cases, the teacher training programmes have already been reviewed or are in the process of being so.

While most Member States would like a European framework defining these new skills to be adopted, the need for joint groundwork to finalise the details of the approach is considered a must so as to successfully conclude this matter.

In some countries, the basic ICT skills are validated by a nationally recognised "ICT driving licence". In such instances, establishments in the country are authorised to arrange the harmonised tests required for obtaining the licence. The table of vocational qualifications in this field has been reviewed on some occasions, taking into account the clarifications proving necessary when devising the licence.

The European diploma project is largely supported by Member States. However, some reservations are expressed as regards the longevity of the skills attested by such a certificate, given the rapidity with which this field of activities is evolving.

- ***Define, by the end of 2000, the means for fostering the mobility of students, teachers, training and research staff both through making the best use of existing Community programmes (Socrates, Leonardo, Youth, RTD) by removing obstacles and through greater transparency in the recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training. Take steps to remove obstacles to teachers' mobility by 2002 and to attract high-quality teachers.***

Promoting the mobility of the abovementioned target groups is an aim still to be achieved by Member States from an education cooperation angle. The mobility action plan adopted by the Nice European Council contains various ways of achieving this goal.

Publicity and information campaigns are being stepped up, although in certain cases the national demand for mobility outstrips the opportunities available. The debate is continuing on how to do away with the main obstacles, and measures are being taken to achieve this, the focus being on recognising foreign certificates, taking into account periods of study or training spend abroad, portability of financial assistance and compensation measures, clarifying the reference frameworks of qualifications, etc.

Specific measures allowing teachers to take part in mobility measures more easily are still all too rare. Some countries intend to take action to resolve the problems linked to teachers being absent from their home school, the need to find replacements for them there and career management.

The European Forum on Transparency of Qualifications is viewed with much interest by Member States and can count on active national participation.

A "diploma supplement" is being looked at in several Member States, not only to recognise courses of study and training pursued abroad but also to define more precisely what is taught under the main national course.

- ***A common European format should be developed for curricula vitae, to be used on a voluntary basis, in order to facilitate mobility by helping the assessment of knowledge acquired, both by education and training establishments and by employers.***

The European Forum on Transparency of Qualifications, in which Member States are actively participating, is also the most suitable setting for reflection on this matter. Working parties have been set up at national level in some cases. The European curriculum project is favourably received, especially since it could also be used to indicate skills acquired in non-formal or informal settings.

The "diploma supplement" is also an element mentioned when pondering the introduction of a European curriculum.

- ***Ensure that all schools in the Union have access to the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2001, and that all the teachers needed are skilled in the use of the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2002.***

Following the Lisbon and Feira Summits, all the Union countries wish to accelerate their national policies on ICTs applied to education and training. Various measures are planned in different education and training sectors for training/further training teachers – for instance via regional centres of expertise – and financial assistance to help cover the cost of using ICTs, organising a national forum on ICTs at school, creating research or guidance structures related to ICT-assisted teaching, and providing assistance in producing content. Infrastructures and equipment are to be boosted, with e-mail addresses sometimes being allocated to every pupil and each teacher. Some initiatives are being taken for less-advantaged groups likely to be left standing on the wrong side of the digital barrier. Partnerships with research bodies are being encouraged, as is accelerating the rate at which establishments are linked into networks.

ANNEX 2

Initiatives taken to implement the Lisbon Conclusions at Community level

This annex gives an overview of the main initiatives taken at Community level in implementing the Lisbon Conclusions.

1. MEMORANDUM ON LIFELONG LEARNING

This Memorandum⁸ was presented to the Education Council (9 November) under the French Presidency.

The Commission has announced that it intends to initiate a broad debate on the Memorandum at all levels involving all the players concerned by lifelong learning. The Memorandum will be the point of reference for devising an overall strategy to foster lifelong learning as a key element in the European social model and as part of the coordinated employment strategy. It will form the framework within which to define the new basic skills and devise a consistent strategy on continuing education and training which seeks to promote active citizenship, social inclusion, employability and adaptability.

The Memorandum will be discussed at the two Education Councils under the Swedish Presidency (12 February and 28 May 2001).

Depending on how the discussions go, the Education Council of 28 May 2001 could draw the initial conclusions from the debate. The Swedish Presidency intends to organise several conferences bringing together policy-makers and experts to discuss the Memorandum.

The consultation process should be finished in autumn 2001 with the presentation of a report to the Council under the Belgian Presidency.

2. E-LEARNING – DESIGNING TOMORROW'S EDUCATION

On 24 May 2000, the Commission adopted the Communication on "e-Learning-Designing Tomorrow's Education"⁹ which spells out and expands on the e-Europe action plan in the education and training fields. This initiative proposes measures along four main lines of action, viz.:

- availability of a high-quality infrastructure at reasonable cost;
- availability of courses and assisting services for teachers, trainers and learners so as to enable them to fully participate in the changes under way;
- development of a wide range of good-quality multimedia services and contents, plus viable economic or funding models;

⁸ SEC(2000) 1832, 30 October 2000

⁹ COM(2000) 318 final, 24 May 2000

- networking of initiatives and better dovetailing of measures at all levels.

The *e-learning* initiative met with a very favourable reception from the Education Ministers at the Education Council of 8 June and from the Heads of State and Government at the Feira European Council.

The Commission aims to publish a working document in spring 2001 covering all the work done at Community level to help implement this initiative. Conferences on *e-learning* will have been held under the French and Swedish Presidencies.

The Commission aims to submit to the Council, in spring 2001, a proposal for a draft resolution on use of information and communication technologies in the education and training fields. In addition, the Commission aims to present, under the Swedish Presidency, a progress report on implementation of the *e-learning* initiative to the Education Council in May 2001.

3. PROMOTING MOBILITY

On 21 January 2000, the Commission presented a proposal for a Recommendation on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, young volunteers, teachers and trainers¹⁰. This proposal aims at getting rid of numerous obstacles still hindering the mobility of these target groups. At its meeting of 9 November 2000 the Council came up with a common position on this recommendation. The action plan adopted by the Council at the French Presidency's initiative forms the recommendation's operational wing¹¹.

4. EUROPEAN REPORT ON QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

*The European Report on Quality of School Education*¹² was drawn up by the Commission in May 2000. It is based on 16 quality indicators chosen in close cooperation with a group of experts designated by the Education Ministers in 26 European countries. The report stems from the mandate given to the Commission during the conference of Education Ministers of the European Union and the candidate countries held in Prague in June 1998.

The 16 indicators cover the following four broad areas: (1) attainment levels; (2) educational success and transition; (3) monitoring of school education; (4) educational resources and structures.

The report was presented to the Education Council held under the Portuguese Presidency (8 June 2000) and to the conference of European Education Ministers held in Bucharest (18–20 June 2000) where it met with a very favourable reception.

The indicators included in the first report need to be fleshed out and updated regularly. In line with the mandate conferred by the Bucharest conference, the field covered by the report needs to be broadened to cover lifelong learning as a whole.

¹⁰ COM(1999) 708 final, 21 January 2000

¹¹ Not yet published

¹² European Report on Quality of School Education, European Commission, May 2000

The Commission has set up a group of experts from the 35 countries attending the Bucharest conference, and its first meeting is scheduled for early 2001. The Commission wishes to present to the conference of European Education Ministers, planned for Riga in June 2001, a proposal concerning the list of indicators it proposes to include in the second European Report on Quality of Lifelong Learning due to be published in 2002.

5. ACTIVITIES TO EVALUATE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Regarding higher education, the Council adopted a recommendation in September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education¹³. As part of the moves to implement this recommendation the Commission has set up a European quality assurance network consisting of policy-makers at education ministries, national evaluation agencies and representatives of European associations working in the higher education field.

Regarding school education, the Council has just adopted a common position on the proposal for a recommendation on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education¹⁴. This recommendation invites Member States to establish in particular transparent quality assurance systems and to encourage self-evaluation and external evaluation of schools. For its part, the Commission is invited to encourage cooperation between schools and the national authorities involved in school evaluation and to promote their networking at European level. The recommendation is due to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in spring 2001.

6. EUROPEAN YEAR OF LANGUAGES 2001

The decision establishing the European Year of Languages 2001 was adopted on 17 July 2000¹⁵. The Year will be mounted in close cooperation with the Council of Europe. This initiative has several aims, viz.:

- to raise European citizens' awareness of the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity within the European Union;
- encourage multilingualism and the lifelong learning of languages;
- to bring to the notice of the widest possible public the advantages of competencies in several languages, as a key element in the personal and professional development of individuals, in intercultural understanding, in making full use of the rights conferred by citizenship of the Union and in enhancing the economic and social potential of enterprises and society as a whole.

The European conference being held to launch the European Year is scheduled for 18 to 20 February 2001 in Lund under the Swedish Presidency.

¹³ OJ L 270, 7 October 1998

¹⁴ COM(1999) 709 final, 24 January 2000

¹⁵ OJ L 232, 14 September 2000

7. COORDINATION OF EMPLOYMENT POLICIES – LUXEMBOURG PROCESS -

The Lisbon Summit has set full employment as an overarching long-term goal for the new European economy. On this basis, the Commission steered the Luxembourg process further towards the Lisbon goals via the Employment Guidelines for 2001 which were endorsed by the Nice Council. The new Guidelines, while maintaining their original four-pillar structure (employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunity), add two horizontal issues, namely the role of the Social Partners and that of Lifelong Learning. These have thus become essential components of the employment strategy. Moreover, lifelong learning indicators form an important part of the quantitative reporting within the Joint Employment Report, issued annually in the framework of the Luxembourg process, as well as the Synthesis Report, called for in the Lisbon Conclusions. These indicators relate to educational expenditure, early school leavers, e-learning and participation in adult learning

The main financial instrument to support the Community employment and social policy is the European Social Fund and one of its five priority fields is lifelong training.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF INDICATORS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

The Commission has launched several activities to develop relevant statistical indicators for monitoring progress towards lifelong learning and the knowledge society. In February 2000 Eurostat initiated a Task Force on "measuring lifelong learning", in which other Commission DGs, EU agencies and networks as well as Member States, OECD and UNESCO have participated. The final report is expected in February 2001 and it will include recommendations for future work on the statistical aspects of lifelong learning. A seminar on "measuring lifelong learning" is to be held on 28 and 29 June 2001 with the participation of suppliers, producers and users of statistics as well as of researchers. This seminar is part of the structured debate on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.

9. RTD - WHETTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S APPETITE FOR SCIENCE

In January 2000 the Commission adopted a communication entitled "Towards a European Research Area" (COM(2000)6 final) aimed, in particular, at giving the young a taste for research and careers in science. Bearing in mind that (i) research and technology account for 25 to 50% of economic growth, but (ii) every country in the Union is observing a disaffection for scientific study among the young, the Commission recommends improved coordination of national awareness-raising campaigns among young people.

In another communication, on "Making a reality of the European Research Area: Guidelines for EU research activities" in October 2000 (COM(2000)612 final), the Commission confirms that it will launch initiatives to support the drive to train young people in scientific disciplines as soon as the next Framework Programme is presented in February 2001.

10. PREPARATION OF THE SYNTHESIS REPORT FOR THE STOCKHOLM EUROPEAN COUNCIL

On 27 September the Commission adopted a Communication on the structural indicators¹⁶ it proposes to use in the synthesis report for the Stockholm European Council. Three indicators have been adopted for the education and training fields, i.e. public expenditure on education, adult participation in education and training, and the proportion of early school-leavers not in further education or training. A fourth indicator covering connection of schools to the Internet needs to be worked on.

¹⁶ COM(2000) 594 final, 27 September 2000