

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 22 May 2008 on promoting creativity and innovation through education and training

(2008/C 141/10)

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

RECALLING the political background to this issue as set out in the Annex to these conclusions, and in the light of the Conference on *Promoting Innovation and Creativity: Schools' Response to the Challenges of Future Societies* held in Brdo on 9-10 April 2008,

NOTE THAT:

1. while Member States are fully responsible for the organisation and content of their education and training systems, promoting creativity and innovation is an area in which quality and efficiency at national and regional level could benefit from cooperation at European level;
2. the common European objectives of quality, access and openness to the wider world have been supported under the present 'Education and Training 2010' work programme by the search for efficiency and equity. Since creativity and the capacity to innovate are also crucial to sustainable economic and social development in Europe, these issues deserve greater emphasis in the context of future European cooperation in the field of education;
3. all levels of education and training can contribute to creativity and innovation in a lifelong learning perspective: the early stages of education concentrating on motivation, learning to learn skills and other key competences, and subsequent stages focusing on more specific skills and the creation, development and application of new knowledge and ideas.

CONSIDER that:

1. creativity is the prime source of innovation, which in turn is acknowledged as the main driver of growth and wealth creation, as key to improvements in the social field and as an essential tool in addressing global challenges such as climate change, health care and sustainable development;
2. there is a growing need for action at national level as well as cooperation at EU level to bring about the more ambitious change necessary if schools are to prepare pupils adequately to face the significant challenges and problems of a fast-changing world;

3. beyond their essential tasks of ensuring the acquisition of key competences and providing the knowledge triangle with a solid skills base, education and training systems can play a fundamental role in the development of creative and innovative capacities as key factors in enhancing future economic competitiveness and promoting social cohesion and individual well-being;
4. starting at school level, education systems need to combine the development of specific knowledge and skills together with that of generic capacities linked to creativity, such as curiosity, intuition, critical and lateral thinking, problem solving, experimentation, risk taking and the ability to learn from failure, use of the imagination and hypothetical reasoning, and a sense of entrepreneurship;
5. the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined in 2006 EU Recommendation ⁽¹⁾ relate to skills which are of particular relevance to creativity and the capacity to innovate. In particular, there is a need for skills and competences that enable people to embrace change as an opportunity, to remain receptive to new ideas and to respect and appreciate the values of others;
6. in the face of evidence that diversity and multicultural environments can stimulate creativity, inclusive education policies aimed at tolerance and mutual understanding have the potential to turn the increasing multiculturalism of European societies into an asset for creativity, innovation and growth;
7. the participation of schools in new and different networks, particularly those based in the local community, can help them to achieve their educational objectives, as well as contribute to the promotion of creativity and innovation. Partnerships between education, the working world and civil society in general are crucial for anticipating and adapting to the changing needs of professional and social life: traineeships, joint projects, peer learning and course instructors from outside education can introduce teachers and pupils to new ideas;
8. teachers have a crucial role to play in nurturing and supporting each child's creative potential, and can contribute to this by exemplifying creativity in their own teaching.

⁽¹⁾ Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10).

In this regard, more personalised, learner-centred approaches to education tailored to the needs and abilities of different learners — including those with special talents — seem particularly conducive to creativity and, notwithstanding their implications in terms of resources and internal organisation, to increasing the motivation and confidence of more practically or artistically oriented learners;

9. teacher education institutions also have a key contribution to make in providing teaching staff with the knowledge and competences required for change, such as the skills needed to promote learner-centred approaches, collaborative working methods and the use of modern learning tools, particularly those based on ICT. Fostering creative abilities and attitudes within schools also requires the support of an organisational culture open to creativity and the creation of an innovation-friendly environment in general, as well as committed and forward-looking leadership at all levels;
10. since an increasing share of learning occurs at the workplace, in non-formal contexts and in leisure time — often through new ICT-based learning tools and methods — the development of creative and innovative capacities has relevance for all aspects of lifelong learning;
11. greater research, supported by data sharing, is needed on methods for identifying, defining, measuring and recording learning outcomes in soft transversal skills such as creativity and innovative capacity. There is also a need to provide education policy makers with a stronger evidence base for the promotion of creative and innovative capacities through lifelong learning, and to explore the possible contribution which the EU could make to this process.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

1. consider how to foster greater synergy between knowledge and skills on the one hand and creativity on the other, as well as how best to promote, monitor and assess creativity and innovative capacity, at all levels of education and training;
2. encourage teachers to develop their professional role as learning facilitators and promoters of creativity, and help teacher education institutions to respond to the new demands of the teaching profession, for instance by promoting collaborative, learner-centred approaches, innovative learning environments and the use of open education resources;
3. promote a learning culture through the development of broader learning communities, by facilitating and supporting

networks and partnerships — involving civil society and other stakeholders — between education and related areas such as culture on the one hand, and the working world on the other.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

1. consider including the promotion of creativity and innovative capacity among the objectives for current and future European cooperation in the field of education and training as complementary to promoting and supporting the implementation of the 2006 Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning; and explore appropriate and effective means at European level — such as peer learning — to achieve those goals at all levels of education and training and in a lifelong learning perspective;
2. promote cultural production, intercultural dialogue and cooperation at local, regional, national and international level with a view to developing environments especially conducive to creativity and innovation;
3. create synergies to support the promotion of creativity and innovation through active cooperation with relevant international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe, Unesco and the OECD, on topics such as intercultural education, democracy, tolerance and human rights (The right of participation of all Member States in such work should be ensured);
4. encourage and support the development, exchange and dissemination of good practice on evidence-based education policy relating to the promotion of creative and innovative skills in Europe;
5. make appropriate use of EU programmes and instruments to promote and support creativity and innovative capacity at all stages of lifelong learning, as well as in the educational process itself.

AND INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

1. support relevant research, and analyse and exchange data, at both EU level and among the Member States — in cooperation with European and international research institutions — on the promotion and development of creative and innovative skills through education and training;
2. in the process of designing a new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training beyond 2010, continue efforts to raise the level of understanding on issues associated with the development of creative and innovative capacity through education and training within the overall context of a broad-based innovation policy for the EU.

ANNEX

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Education Council's report to the Spring 2001 European Council (¹) and the subsequently adopted detailed work programme (²), which set a number of concrete future objectives for education and training systems in Europe, including *Developing skills for the knowledge society, Making learning more attractive* and *Strengthening the links with working life and research, and society at large*.
2. The conclusions of the Spring 2006 European Council, which stressed that reforms must be stepped up to ensure high quality education systems which are both efficient and equitable and acknowledged the crucial role of all levels of education and training in the search for excellence and innovation (³).
3. The November 2006 Council conclusions on efficiency and equity in education and training, which stated that educational institutions should focus on the wider learning environment in order to promote and maintain efficiency, equity and general well-being (⁴).
4. The December 2006 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for life-long learning, which highlighted the role of critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking, and constructive management of feelings in all eight key competences (⁵).
5. The December 2006 Council conclusions on the strategic priorities for innovation at EU level (⁶), which defined education as a pre-condition for innovation and stated that education must promote talent and creativity from an early age, and which were adopted in response to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 13 September 2006 — *Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU* (⁷).
6. The May 2007 Commission communication 'A European agenda for culture in a globalizing world', which stated that the role of culture in supporting and fostering creativity and innovation must be explored and promoted and sees creativity as the basis of innovation (⁸).
7. The Council conclusions of May 2007, on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training, which recognised that defining a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks was a continuous and consultative process (⁹).
8. The November 2007 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on improving the quality of teacher education, which agreed to promote the acquisition of competences which will enable teachers to develop new knowledge and be innovative through engagement in reflective practice and research (¹⁰).
9. The 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme 'Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation', which emphasised that research and innovation need a broad skills base in the population and that excellence and the key competences must be developed in all systems and levels of education and training (¹¹).
10. The key messages from the Education Council to the Spring 2008 European Council, which stated that education and training must both provide a broad knowledge and skills base in the population and develop learners' creativity and capacity for innovation, and that to this end curricula on all levels should be developed so as to enhance the creative and innovative competences of learners (¹²).

(¹) *The concrete future objectives of education and training systems* — Report from the Education Council to the European Council (doc. 5980/01).

(²) *Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe*, generally referred to as the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme (OJ C 142, 14.6.2002, p. 1).

(³) Presidency conclusions, Brussels European Council, 23-24 March 2006 (doc. 7775/06).

(⁴) Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 14 November 2006, on efficiency and equity in education and training (OJ C 298, 8.12.2006, p. 3).

(⁵) Recommendation 2006/962/EC.

(⁶) Council conclusions on 4 December 2006 on a Broad-based Innovation Strategy: Strategic Priorities for Innovation at EU Level (doc. 16253/06).

(⁷) Doc. 12940/06.

(⁸) Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 10 May 2007 — *A European agenda for culture in a globalizing world* (COM(2007) 242 final).

(⁹) Council conclusions on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training, 24 May 2007 (OJ C 311, 21.12.2007, p. 13).

(¹⁰) Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007 on improving the quality of teacher education (OJ C 300, 12.12.2007, p. 6).

(¹¹) 'Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation' — 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme (doc. 5723/08).

(¹²) Key messages of the Education Council to the Spring European Council in the fields of education/training and youth (doc. 6445/08).

11. The conclusions of the Spring 2008 European Council, which considered the full development of the potential for innovation and creativity of European citizens built on European culture and excellence in science as a key factor for future growth (¹).
12. The Commission Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009) (²).

(¹) Brussels European Council, 13-14 March 2008, Presidency Conclusions (doc. 7652/08).
(²) Doc. 7755/08.