EC/United States agreement : cooperation programme in higher education and training, renewal

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PURPOSE : to renew the Cooperation Programme in Higher Education and Training between the European Community and the United States of America. CONTENT : the existing Agreement has proved to be a highly positive component of Transatlantic relations and has been acknowledged by both sides as having been amongst the most concrete contributions to building bridges of friendship and understanding between the peoples and institutions of the EC and the United States. The proposed renewal of the Agreement would build on and consolidate these results. The objectives of the Cooperation Programme are to: - promote closer understanding between the peoples of the European Community and the United States, including broader knowledge of their languages, cultures and institutions; - improve the quality of human resource development in both the EC and Canada, including the acquisition of skills required to meet the challenges of the global knowledge-based economy; - encourage an innovative and sustainable range of student-centred higher education and training cooperative activities between the different regions in the European Community and in the United States that have a durable impact; - improve the quality of Transatlantic student mobility by promoting transparency, mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training, and where appropriate, portability of credits; - encourage the exchange of expertise in e-learning and open and distances education and their effective use by project consortia to broaden Programme impact; - form or enhance partnerships among higher education and training institutions, professional associations, public authorities, private sector and other associations as appropriate in both the EC and the United States; - reinforce a EC and US value-added dimension to Transatlantic cooperation in higher education and training; - complement bilateral programmes between the Member States of the EC and the United States of America as well as the other EC and US programmes and initiatives. This programme will continue to build on intra-Community links, thus reinforcing the European dimension of education and, at the same time will contribute to the diversification of existing bilateral cooperation between the US and the Member States. The programme will provide a framework for the search for innovative solutions to the challenges posed by the emerging knowledge-based economy, through student-based structural cooperation and other cooperative activities with a durable impact. Furthermore, the draft agreement furthers the cooperation strategy as set out in the 1995 New Transatlantic Agenda and the EC/US Joint Action plan. The Commission considers that the draft agreement is acceptable to the Community. Accordingly, it proposes that the Council: - approves the results of the negotiation; - decides to sign the agreement and - intiates the procedure for its conclusion.