Education and training: innovation and new technologies

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The committee adopted the report by Alexandros ALAVANOS (EUL/NGL, GR) on the Commission report. It shared the Commission's concern that Europe was lagging behind the United States regarding the use of IT in education and business and that most educational establishments in the EU were still seriously under-equipped. It also noted that there were major disparities between individuals, regions and countries in terms of access to new technologies and that every effort must be made to bridge these gaps. The report stressed that access to information and communications technologies (ICT) should be open to citizens from all sections of society and all age groups. It was critical of the fact that the Commission's report focused purely on education for children and young people in educational establishments and ignored the essential role played by lifelong learning for adults and all those outside the traditional learning environment. In this connection, the committee issued a reminder of the goal set by the Lisbon Summit of establishing a 'learning society'. The committee recommended a number of measures designed to address some of the shortcomings of the EU's current policy in this area: - the development of indicators enabling actual practice (i.e. the use made of ICT in educational establishments) to be thoroughly assessed and monitored; - the development, at EU level, of minimum quantity and quality indicators relating to minimum hardware and software requirements and the quality and appropriateness of content; - making the provision of basic and continuing training in ICT compulsory for teachers and future teachers in all the Member States; - the development of programmes to encourage knowledge mobility and to promote the convergence of ICT languages and supports; - networking between educational establishments (such as joint programmes between different universities for the development of ICT); - tax incentives to suppliers of multimedia equipment and services who offer special rates to educational establishments.