# European area of education and lifelong learning: strategy and priorities

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The committee adopted the report by Kathleen VAN BREMPT (PES, B) on the Commission comunication. It welcomed the principles on which the Commission's proposals were based and said that lifelong learning was not merely a social necessity but should also be a social right for everyone. It further pointed out that transformation into a knowledge-based society meant that access to education and training must be simplified and equal access should be ensured for everyone. The committee regretted that, two years after the Lisbon European Council, little progress had been made towards developing clear and adequately funded strategies for promoting lifelong learning. It therefore urged the Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, to establish specific targets aimed at those who had not completed upper secondary level education, the unskilled, the functionally illiterate, the unemployed, individuals with special needs and those with learning difficulties, the over-50s, immigrants and women following maternity leave. The Member States were urged to remove barriers to participation in lifelong learning, particularly age barriers, to agree on a specific target for annual expenditure and to provide fiscal and other incentives to encourage investment in lifelong learning by employers and individual citizens. Other recommendations made by the committee included a call for the Commission to develop, in close cooperation with the Member States, a European framework of basic skills to be acquired by all pupils before they leave compulsory school education. Welcoming the EIB's i2i initiative (which widened the EIB's mandate to include lending to support education), the report also called on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate EIB lending for lifelong learning. Lastly, it welcomed the reaffirmation by the Member States at the Barcelona Summit of their commitment to ensuring that all school leavers are competent in two European languages other than their mother tongue.