Training, education: teaching and learning, towards the learning society. White Paper

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OBJECTIVE: this White Paper on Education and Training is designed to provide an analysis and put forward guidelines for action in the fields of education and training at both Member State and Community level. The main lines of action at European level envisaged for 1996 include objectives to: . encourage the acquisition of new knowledge, . bring schools and the business sector closer together, . combat exclusion, . develop proficiency in three European languages, . treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis. SUBSTANCE: with this White Paper, the Commission is launching the debate on the contribution the European Union should make to the development of quality education in preparation for the 21st century. Its analyses and proposals will be debated in the Member States throughout 1996, the European Year of Lifelong Learning. * The challenges of education and training in Europe: The White Paper firstly states that the position of each European citizen in the future society will depend on the knowledge he has acquired. Furthermore, Europeans and their Member States must take responsibility for education and training today and work to ensure that they are more effective in the light of rising unemployment and exclusion within the Union. The Community will have to deal with three upheavals in the years ahead: - the globalisation of trade, which implies a general increase in the qualifications required, - the advent of the information society, which is radically transforming the nature of work and organisation of production, - the acceleration of scientific and technical progress. To counterbalance the harmful effects of these three upheavals, the Commission sets out two key responses: - reasserting the value of cultural identity: the ability to grasp the meaning of things, comprehension and creativity, which are the key factors in adapting to the economy and to employment, the essential basis for the acquisition of new technical skills; - developing employability, through the mobility of workers and students. To facilitate this mobility, there must be genuine recognition of knowledge within the European Union, over and above paper qualifications. * The lines of action proposed by the White Paper: the Commission proposed five major lines of action: - encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge: this involves a system of "personal skills cards", which would indicate a person's knowledge and validate his professional and technical abilities which were not necessarily recognised through a qualification. The Commission hopes that the mutual recognition of knowledge units obtained by students will become more widespread and that any students obtaining a grant may be able to use it for courses in any other Member State. It also states its intention to launch calls for proposals for the development of multimedia educational software; - bringing schools and the business sector closer together at European level: providing support for networks of apprenticeship centres in the various countries, fostering apprentice/trainee mobility along the lines of the Erasmus model, defining a European apprentice/trainee charter; - combating exclusion by providing second chances particularly for those wishing to return to school. Young people threatened with exclusion must have access to classes with fewer pupils where the pace of teaching and pedagogical methods are customised, to placements in industry, and to multimedia training facilities. To achieve this, the White Paper proposes to redirect additional European funding from programmes such as Socrates or Leonardo which complement local and national initiatives; - enabling young people to develop proficiency in three Community languages: defining a "European quality label" which would be granted to schools which have developed language learning to the highest level and enable these schools to work within a network. The recruitment of teachers from other countries of the European Union to teach their mother tongue would be systematically encouraged; - treating capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis: the Commission believes that it is necessary to review companies' fiscal and accounting approaches so that part of the sums they set aside for training personnel can be included in their accounts as intangible investment. Similarly, "training fund" schemes should be devised for those who wish to update their knowledge or re-embark upon training.