Education, training and youth: action plan 2000-2006 for a Europe of knowledge

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OBJECTIVE: to set out the guidelines for future Community action in the areas of education and training for the period 2000-2006. SUBSTANCE: future policy on education and training will be based around two major concerns: - strengthening knowledge policies by stressing the initiatives associated with research and training and innovation and developing lifelong learning activities, - promoting employment by raising the basis of knowledge and skills of Europe's citizens. This new generation of activities will have three main characteristics: 1) a limited number of objectives: it will be necessary to increase access for citizens to education resources, to provide innovation in these resources (e.g. second-chance schools or the accreditation of skills) and better dissemination of good practice; 2) more focused activities: six major types of action will be proposed and developed at transnational level: - physical mobility involving the whole European educational area (students, school pupils, young people, trainers, associations, the voluntary sector, etc.) and including arrangements for the recognition of diplomas and skills acquired, - virtual mobility: promotion of new educational tools, their production and dissemination, - building up cooperation networks to permit mutual exchange of experience, - promotion of language skills and understanding of different cultures (transversal activities), - innovation through pilot projects seeking to create new education and training products, - improvement of Community sources of reference with regard to education and training policies in the Member States (key data, etc.); 3) streamlined management of initiatives: the idea is to encourage decentralized management of activities and to delegate as far as possible responsibility for the daily management of initiatives. This increased decentralisation will also involve measures seeking to strengthen the Commission's role in stimulation and coordination and in follow up and assessment of the activities undertaken. The Commission intends to raise the visibility of Community actions and to ensure that certain educational products and activities benefit from the award of a European label based on criteria of quality and transnational cooperation. It also hopes to encourage cofinancing with public and private sources of funding and to simplify radically access to Community aid (reducing decision-making time, simplifying administrative procedures and reducing the number of single-establishment contracts as part of a global grant approach). The Commission also stresses partnerships: it wishes to integrate all the parties concerned, whatever the decision-making level, in the process of establishing a Europe of knowledge: the Member States, educational partners, social partners, economic partners, regional and local partners and partners in the voluntary sector. Lastly, if these activities are to be developed, new budgetary resources will be needed and greater complementarity with other activities and Community policies (e.g. structural policy).