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

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In adopting the report by Mrs Susan WADDINGTON (PSE, UK) on the Commission's white paper on 'education and training - teaching and learning- towards the learning society', Parliament criticized the Commission's approach, which concentrated almost exclusively on young people and considered that the debate should be expanded to cover lifelong learning and widened to include the following groups: - children, - adult workers, - women, - people excluded or marginalized from society, - enterprises. . with regard to children: it considered that efforts should be made to introduce children to a wide curriculum and that it should foster equality between the sexes. It was not convinced by the proposal in the white paper on the creation of second-chance schools which risked the creation of ghetto schools. To the extent that general education was a key instrument in preventing the exclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the main aim must be to reintegrate young people into the mainstream education system. Parliament called for increased opportunities for education for disadvantaged groups and suggested the establishment of learning partnerships with these people (including the families of pupils and students) in order to fight against illiteracy. Fearing in particular that new cuts in education budgets could only widen social divisions, Parliament called for urgent research in order to act against educational failure which was very costly. . with regard to young people: Parliament criticized the white paper for underemphasizing the role of education and training in preparing young people for social, egalitarian, democratic and working roles in adult life. It therefore proposed: - striving for a more balanced mix between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, - delaying streaming decisions between general and vocational routes, - developing cooperation and mobility in general education, - providing career advice services (in particular for those leaving compulsory schooling), - encouraging young people to participate in opportunities for active citizenship, work experience, entrepreneurial and voluntary action, - avoiding the creation of educational courses which lead to dead ends. . with regard to women: the conditions must be created to enable women to access education and training. . with regard to disadvantaged groups: opportunities for access to education and training systems must be improved in particular for the long-term unemployed. Parliament called on the public authorities to provide for systems of 'continual chances' for disadvantaged people. Parliament also made a certain number of recommendations in particular in the following areas: . the teaching environment and teachers: it called on the Commission to support schemes to improve knowledge of languages. A certain number of objectives were set: - proficiency in the mother tongue, - good functional knowledge of a first foreign language (starting from primary education), - passive knowledge of one or more other foreign languages (languages related to the mother tongue or languages of neighbouring countries), - undertaking that a maximum choice of foreign languages is offered in secondary education, - adequate teacher training. It also called for support for the use of educational multimedia. . the employed and enterprise: it believed that governments should encourage investment in continuing education and learning by: - ensuring every worker's right to appropriate training, - finding ways of accrediting newly acquired skills and achievements, - targeting training for less skilled workers, - addressing the difficulties experienced by workers in small and medium sized undertakings. . partnerships and resources: the Commission was encouraged to promote debate between the social partners on practical means for promoting investment in education and training. Partnerships should be established between local and regional authorities, non-governmental organizations, local people and enterprises to provide access to training for all sectors of the population. It called on the Member States to step up their cooperation and to organize exchanges and courses. The states should also redirect their resources in order to promote lifelong learning and training. . EU role: recalling that the EU could only initiate in this matter while the main powers lay with the Member States, Parliament expected the Council and the Commission to pay greater attention, including in financial terms, to education and training as a means of promoting employment. It did not share the Commission's view that no additional resources were needed to meet the challenges of our society as regards education. It drew attention to the fact that programmes such as

SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI , as the financial framework for the measures proposed, are already underfunded. It therefore called on the budgetary authority to increase funding for these programmes. With regard to financial aspects it also called on the Commission to explore the opportunities offered by tax incentives, training levies, distance learning techniques, etc. in order to encourage training. Noting that the recognition of qualifications obtained outside mainstream education and training posed great difficulties, Parliament called for greater transparency with regard to the substance of vocational certificates and the recognition of qualifications at European level. Parliament called on the Commission on the basis of Article 126 and 127 of the EU Treaty to: - promote dissemination of information on the prevention of school failure and support teachers specialising in assistance to low achievers, in particular through new information technologies; - fund partnership projects for the implementation of strategies to build an inclusive learning society (mentoring schemes for those at risk of exclusion, women, immigrants); - encourage the development of good practice to improve integration of disadvantaged people in the learning society. The Commission was also called on to submit a detailed proposal for the setting up of a European apprenticeship scheme and to prepare on the basis of the White Paper a more detailed and comprehensive proposal in the light of the criticisms and contributions made by Parliament in its resolution. A revised plan was therefore expected by Parliament based on its recommendations.