Mid-term assessment of the Lisbon strategy from a gender perspective

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The Council adopted a series of conclusions on the the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy with reference to education. In preparation for the next joint report of the Council and Commission to the European Council in 2006, further action be taken at European and national level, having regard to the Lisbon Mid-Term Review according to the priority levers of "Education and Training 2010", as they were stated in the 2004 Joint Interim Report, in particular with reference to actions for the development of human capital:

1) Focus reform and investment on the key areas for the knowledge-based society:

• Realise the Lisbon objective of a substantial increase in, and efficient use of public and private investment in education and training.

• Develop a culture of excellence as well as evaluation systems to ensure that EU education and training systems become a world quality reference.

• Improve governance at national level by involving all relevant stakeholders, including the social partners, and by improving coordination among the public authorities concerned.

• Strengthen synergies and complementarity between education and other policy areas such as employment, research and innovation, and macroeconomic policy.

2) Making lifelong learning a reality: National strategies for lifelong learning should aim to ensure that all citizens acquire the key competences they need in a knowledge society and that open, attractive and

accessible learning environments are created. The following measures, among others, can contribute to achieving these goals:

• Multiply opportunities of lifelong learning, for example by means of distance-learning especially through the use of ICT.

• Stimulate lifelong learning demand through measures to reconcile work and family life.

• Identify cost sharing models of continuing training (employers, employees and public service).

• Develop national strategies, aiming inter alia at filling the current gap in terms of access to lifelong learning opportunities between large and small companies, and between high and low skilled people.

• Adopt the future integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

3) Establish a European area of Education and Training and strengthen the open method of coordination, for example by:

• working in "peer learning" clusters, allowing Member States to focus on their priority areas;

improving the scope, precision and reliability of education and training statistics;

• identifying indicators in new fields and making them operational, as envisaged in the Joint Interim Report, including the foreign language competence indicator requested by the Barcelona European Council, in March 2002.

4) Adopt common reference points at European level in fields such as key competences and the training of teachers and trainers.

• Strengthen the role of higher education institutions in the Lisbon Strategy and improve the quality of higher education in order to enhance its international attractiveness and the mobility of the students and staff.

• Enhance the synergy and the complementarity between Higher Education and Research to stimulate innovation and employment through the mobility of young researchers and the networking of centres of excellence.

• Develop by the end of 2006 a European Qualifications Framework as a common reference covering both VET and general education (secondary and higher), based on competences and learning outcomes.

Lastly, the European Council is invited to reaffirm that lifelong learning is and will remain a sine qua non for achieving the Lisbon goals. In this context, the successful implementation of the "Education and Training 2010" Work Programme is essential in order both to develop knowledge and innovation and to create more and better jobs. It is also invited to include the initiative of a European Pact for Youth, in the framework of the Mid-Term Review of the Lisbon strategy, in order to promote a generation of young Europeans with quality jobs, a higher level of education and undergoing training to

improve their adaptability and to define orientations for concrete measures for this purpose in the framework of "Education and Training 2010" and of existing programmes.