

Education as the cornerstone of the Lisbon process

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Guy BONO (PES, FR) on education as the cornerstone of the Lisbon process. The report said that, in order to achieve the Lisbon objectives, more emphasis should be placed on education and the EU should "as a matter of urgency" promote the convergence of the education systems of the Member States towards higher standards of performance. The specific measures in the field of education and training at both Community and national level should focus primarily on target groups such as young people, job-seekers and those in search of training. The report called on the Member States to implement the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme with the involvement of all the relevant players.

MEPs laid great emphasis on developing a policy for lifelong learning and training which should result in social inclusion as well as being tailored to social, demographic and economic change. There should, for example, be systematic training in the use of new technologies in all lifelong learning and training establishments.

The report made a number of other recommendations:

- the Council, Commission and Member States should take steps to speed up the mobility of students, trainees, workers and researchers, as well as the mutual recognition of qualifications;
- priority should be given to reducing the high number of young people leaving school prematurely without qualifications;
- the Commission should create a pilot project aimed at framing an Erasmus-type programme for apprentices enabling the latter to have access to "new generation" Community education and training programmes;
- the Member States should strive to ensure a 15% increase in the number of science graduates between now and 2010, while at the same time correcting the imbalance between men and women;
- the Member States should frame more consistent national policies and improve the conditions for access by job-seekers to education and training, with the involvement of the social partners.

Lastly, the committee stressed the crucial role of universities in creating and spreading knowledge and called for greater synergy between European higher education, the European research area, European lifelong learning and the productive sector.