Lifelong learning: key competences and access for all citizens

2005/0221(COD) - 10/11/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To present a European reference tool on key skills through lifelong learning.

PROPOSED ACT: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT: The mandate for this proposal can be traced back to the 2000 Lisbon European Council. The heads of government recognised that in order for the EU to adapt to the challenges of globalisation and in order to shift the EU towards a knowledge-based economy every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in the information society. The heads of government therefore called for the establishment of a European framework which would define the new basic skills that needed to be provided through lifelong learning, namely IT skills, foreign languages, a technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills. The mandate to enact a European framework for the learning of key skills within the context of a knowledge-based economy was developed in the "Education and Training 2010" work programme (ET2010). The proposed Recommendation is linked to ET2010 in that it seeks to present a European reference tool for key *competences* and how they can be accessed by all of the EU's citizens through lifelong learning. In this context the Commission suggest that the term "competences" refers to a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. More concretely speaking, the objectives of the Recommendation are to:

- Identify and define the key competences necessary for personal fulfilment, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society.

- Support Member States' work to guarantee that young people are equipped with certain key skills by the time their initial training and education has been completed and to support Member State's policies guaranteeing adults the ability to develop and update key skills throughout their lives.

- Provide a European level reference tool for policy makers, educational providers, employers and earners to facilitate national and European efforts towards commonly agreed objectives.

- Provide a framework for further action at Community level both within the Education and Training 2010 work programme and within the Community Education and Training programmes.

The reference tool is outlined in Annex form to the Recommendation and is entitled "Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework". Eight key skills or competences are identified. They are:

- Communication in the mother tongue;

- Communication in foreign languages;

- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;

- Digital competence;

- Learning to learn;

- Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence;

- Entrepreneurship; and

- Cultural expression.

According to the Commission this proposal fulfils both the subsidiarity and proportionality principles in that the key competences are to be acquired by all citizens thereby creating a political commitment for reforms that can not be achieved by solely relying on the Community education and training programmes. Implementation of the reference framework is entirely up to the Member States. Lastly, the proposal has no budgetary implication for the Community budget.