Lifelong learning: key competences and access for all citizens

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This Staff Working Document is Annexed to the Commission Communication on Modernising Education and Training in Europe and is a draft joint progress report on the implementation of the "Education and Training 2010 work programme". It is a comprehensive, all encompassing report, covering a number of diverse and wide-ranging issues relating to all aspects of education. The subjects under discussion include primary education, life-long learning and to the impact of the Bologna Process on higher education in Europe. The Paper charts progress in implementing the Education and Training Programme since 2004 and provides an update of the 2003 Commission Staff Working Paper covering the first two years of implementation. Each of the 32 countries participating in the work programme submitted a national report. They were based on a structure devised by the Commission in which concise information was requested and included, for example, the relationship between national policies and the Lisbon Agenda.

As a starting point, the document refers to the Lisbon Declaration in which the EU's heads of state declared that Europe must renew its competitiveness, increase its growth and productivity, strengthen social cohesions and place a strong emphasis on knowledge, innovation and the optimisation of human capital. Clearly, education in all aspects, whether primary, secondary, higher or life-long plays a pivotal role in the relationship between innovation and competitiveness and the EU's desire to establish itself as the most dynamic, knowledge based economy in the world. However, if these ambitions are to be realised, urgent educational reforms are a must. Indeed the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy, carried out in 2005, reinforced the reform message. In order to examine these and other issues, the Paper has been organised through the analysis of cross-country national reports, which are outlined in Sections 2-7. Specifically,

- Section 2 examines the growing relationship between the Lisbon strategy and national education training policies.

- Section 3 gives an overview of Member States' priorities for reform and investment. It also takes stock of a country's effort to increase the efficiency of investments and to monitor how effective their education/training systems are.

- Section 4 assesses Member States' progress in adopting and implementing national strategies for lifelong learning taking account of the 2006 deadline set in the Interim Report. Both the coherence and competence of the strategies are discussed and national progress in relation to key lifelong learning objectives is reported. Also discussed are the challenges and obstacles faced by those wishing to pursue lifelong learning.

- Section 5 addresses higher education reform – both in relation to the Bologna Process and to the 2010 Education and Training programme.

- Section 6 examines how the Member Stats are improving the quality and attractiveness of VET, through the implementation of tools developed under the Copenhagen process.

- Section 7 concerns the European dimension of education and training both in terms of mobility and the kind of policies being implemented to promote student, pupil and teacher mobility. Also under scrutiny is what impact Europe has on national curricula at primary and secondary school level and in teacher education.

- Section 8 reports on the implementation of the 2010 Education and Training programme at a European level whilst at the same time making note of developments in the broader framework of the mid-term Lisbon strategy review.

The Commission stresses that the picture emerging from the cross-country analysis is not a comprehensive overview of the huge diversity and complexity of national situations. Rather, it seeks to provide a synthetic account of the main priorities, concerns, areas of progress and results still to be achieved.