EC/Canada agreement: framework for co-operation in the fields of higher education, training and youth

2006/0096(CNS) - 07/06/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to conclude the Agreement between the European Community and the government of Canada establishing a framework for co-operation in the fields of higher education, training and youth for the period 2006-2013.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : the present proposal is set against the dual background of the European Union higher education agenda and EU/Canada relations which call, respectively, for higher education to become a world reference for relevance and excellence and for broader education cooperation.

The proposed Agreement seeks to extend an existing EU-Canada Agreement on higher and vocational education, which ran out at the end of 2005 (refer to **CNS/2000/0264**). In 2005, the Council authorised the Commission to re-negotiate an Agreement, based partly on positive responses from independent evaluators. This independent evaluation concluded that the programme is a powerful tool for establishing long lasting partnerships and synergies in higher education and vocational training over the

Atlantic and that this has contributed to improving mutual understanding and the quality of human resource development.

The Agreement sets out general, specific and operational objectives.

The **general objectives** of this Agreement shall be to:

- promote mutual understanding between the peoples of the European Union and Canada including broader knowledge of their languages, cultures and institutions;

- improve the quality of human resources in both the European Community and Canada, by facilitating the acquisition of skills required to meet the challenges of the global knowledge-based economy.

The **specific objectives** of the Agreement shall be to:

- reinforce a European Community and a Canadian value-added dimension to transatlantic cooperation in higher education, training and youth;

- contribute to transatlantic exchanges between citizens of both the European Union and Canada;

- contribute to the development of higher education and training institutions, as well as youth structures and organisations;

- promote and/or enhance partnerships among stakeholders active in the areas of higher education, training and youth in the European Community and Canada;

§ contribute to the professional development of individuals while achieving the general objectives of the Agreement;

§ develop opportunities for dialogue and exchanges on youth policy and youth work.

The **operational objectives** of the Agreement shall be to:

§ support collaboration between higher education and training institutions with a view to promoting and developing joint study and/or training programmes and student mobility;

§ improve the quality of transatlantic student mobility by promoting transparency, mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training, and where appropriate portability of credits;

§ support collaboration among public and private organisations active in the areas of higher education, training and youth with a view to encouraging discussion and exchange of experience on policy issues;

§ support transatlantic mobility of professionals (including professionals-in-training) with a view to improving mutual understanding, and expertise, of issues relevant to European Union/Canada relations;

§ support collaboration among youth structures and organisations as well as youth workers, young leaders and other youth actors with a view to promoting exchanges of good practices and developing networks.

Description of the intervention : the agreement would pursue its objectives through the following actions:

§ **higher education and training actions :** this action will respond to two specific objectives, namely, contributing to the development of higher education and vocational training institutions and organisations as well as increasing the mobility of staff, students and trainees. This type of project would largely consist of a continuation of the type of joint projects currently funded. Consortia projects would focus on priority fields which are key to EU/Canada cooperation, to be identified in consultation with the Canadian authorities. Also under this action, projects that prove to be of outstanding quality could receive further financial support at the end of the initial 3 or 4-year period, granted exclusively to fund additional opportunities for student mobility;

§ **youth action :** the target public for this measure would be a) youth structures, organisations and youth workers and the focus on activities aimed at facilitating a dialogue and an exchange of best practices as well as the sharing of tools on youth work methodology among policy makers, youth work practitioners, youth organisations, and other structures responsible for youth matters including youth mobility. These activities would include seminars, training courses, job shadowing and study visits on targeted themes, e.g. cultural diversity, volunteering and recognition of non-formal learning; b) building sustainable new multilateral partnerships and networks with a view to further cooperation and youth mobility among the participating organisations, through meetings, internet platforms, sharing of information etc;

§ **complementary action :** these measures would pursue the specific objective of enhancing collaboration between the EU and Canada as regards the development of higher education and vocational training, focusing on priority themes. In the longer term, these measures would have an impact on policy and system development. Activities under this category could include studies, conferences, seminars, working groups, benchmarking exercises. Under this action support may

be provided for the mobility of professionals, mainly from outside the academia and public administration (decision makers, social partner representatives, journalists, etc.) who want to undertake studies or training, in areas of specific relevance to the EU/Canada relationship, which would be identified in consultation with the Canadian authorities. Financial support may be provided also to an Alumni Association involving students who have participated in exchanges implemented by the EC/Canada consortia in higher education and vocational training.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.