

Basic information

2009/2099(INI)

INI - Own-initiative procedure

University business dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities




Subject

3.45 Enterprise policy, inter-company cooperation
 3.45.02 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), craft industries
 3.50.04 Innovation
 4.15.06 Professional qualifications, recognition of qualifications
 4.40.04 Universities, higher education


Procedure completed

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur	Appointed
	CULT Culture and Education		SCHMITT Pál (PPE)	16/09/2009
			Shadow rapporteur REPO Mitro (S&D) LØKKEGAARD Morten (ALDE) BENARAB-ATTOU Malika (Verts/ALE) MIGALSKI Marek Henryk (ECR) VERGIAT Marie-Christine (GUE/NGL)	
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy (Associated committee)		RIERA MADURELL Teresa (S&D)	21/10/2009
European Commission	Commission DG		Commissioner	
	Education, Youth, Sport and Culture		VASSILIOU Androulla	

Key events			
Date	Event	Reference	Summary
02/04/2009	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2009)0158 	Summary
22/10/2009	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
17/12/2009	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
23/03/2010	Vote in committee		Summary
29/03/2010	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0108/2010	
19/05/2010	Debate in Parliament		
20/05/2010	Decision by Parliament	T7-0187/2010	Summary
20/05/2010	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/05/2010	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2009/2099(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/7/00997

Documentation gateway				
European Parliament				
Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE438.275	01/02/2010	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE430.708	24/02/2010	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE439.315	02/03/2010	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0108/2010	29/03/2010	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0187/2010	20/05/2010	Summary
European Commission				
Document type	Reference	Date	Summary	
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2009)0158 	02/04/2009	Summary	

University business dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities

2009/2099(INI) - 02/04/2009 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to highlight the activities of the European Forum for University-Business Dialogue, the new partnership for the modernisation of universities.

BACKGROUND: Europe aspires to become the world's leading knowledge economy and society and universities are powerful motors in achieving this ambition. In its 2006 communication, "Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation" (COM(2006)0208), the Commission underlined several areas of action in which there was an urgent need for greater cooperation between university and companies.

It was on this basis that the Commission created the European Forum for University-Business Dialogue as a European platform for dialogue between the two worlds. Indeed, the Forum's success has shown the renewed urgency for closer links between the partners to foster stronger cooperation between them, in particular in this current period of recession.

The aim of this communication is to respond to this need by taking stock of the Forum's activities in 2008-2009 and looking at how issues might be addressed by means of future actions.

CONTENT: the aims of this communication are:

- to take stock of what has been learned from the first year of the Forum, and other relevant activities at European level, about the challenges and barriers to university-business cooperation,
- to make proposals for the next steps in the Forum's work.
- to outline concrete follow-up actions to strengthen university-business cooperation.

1. 1st year of the Forum's activities – main conclusions: there are **6 main themes**:

1. **New curricula for employability:** employability is the Forum's central theme. There was consensus on the need for comprehensive change to curricula and learning methods and for: i) the inclusion of transversal and transferable skills; ii) better examination methods, more geared towards the assessment of learning and competences; iii) greater diversification of admission profiles and approaches to learning in order to tap talent from non-traditional backgrounds; iv) greater interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity of education and research agendas. To succeed in changing employability curricula in this way, the Commission considers that internal quality assurance (QA) and external accreditation systems should pay more attention to the social and economic relevance of learning programmes. And that accreditation agencies should include representatives from learners as well as of business and society at large;
2. **fostering entrepreneurship:** the regular flow of students and members of staff from university to business and of business people to universities would help create the required change in culture. The Commission concludes that i) the development of an entrepreneurial culture at universities requires profound changes in university governance and leadership; ii) entrepreneurship education has to be comprehensive and open to all interested students, in all academic disciplines, with due regard to the gender perspective; iii) universities should involve entrepreneurs and business people in the teaching of entrepreneurship; and iv) professors and teachers should have access to training in teaching entrepreneurship and exposure to the business world;
3. **knowledge transfer:** to promote knowledge transfer, the Commission considers that it is necessary for universities to: i) cooperate better with businesses in a general framework of cooperation and mutual understanding; ii) ensure interdisciplinarity; monodisciplinary solutions are rarely the answer to real world problems; iii) cooperate with public research organisations to have a clear long-term strategy for the management of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR); iv) reach out to SMEs;
4. **mobility:** student placements, industry-academia mobility programmes and collaborative project work between universities and industry: the overall level of contact, interaction and mobility between the two sectors remains far too low. In order to make progress it is important that: i) the value of mobility needs to be promoted and recognised by university and business in all its forms and at all levels; ii) in particular SMEs should participate more in internships; iii) legal frameworks have to be adapted to support and facilitate mobility between university and business; iv) mobility of academics, researchers or students to business needs to be recognised and accredited.
5. **opening up universities to lifelong learning:** at a time when student numbers may well start to turn down for demographic reasons, continuing education would seem to represent a hugely important potential opportunity for universities. Nevertheless, universities open themselves only to a very low share of the market for continuing education. It is of prime importance that: i) Lifelong Learning (LLL) is fully integrated into the missions and strategies of universities; ii) the updating/upgrading of skills has to be valued and recognised on the labour market and by employers; and iii) LLL has to be developed in partnership with enterprises – universities cannot design and deliver alone.
6. **better university governance:** the Forum focused on governance at national, regional and institutional level as a precondition for effective collaboration between university and business. According to the communication, at national level, changes are sought in legislation, funding arrangements and incentive structures which were seen as either not supportive of or sometimes hostile to university-business cooperation. Such cooperation should be part of the overall strategy of universities and included in development planning and objective setting. The Commission's main conclusions are: i) national and regional framework conditions have to provide a supportive environment for Universities to engage in cooperation with business; ii) University-Business cooperation has to

be embedded in institutional strategies; leadership and effective management of human resources are crucial for the implementation; and iii) governance has to ensure that relevant incentive and assessment systems that are in line with the mission, the role and the strategy of universities are put in place.

2. Future actions: the Commission proposes two types of follow-up actions. Firstly, responding to the wish strongly expressed by the Forum participants to continue and deepen the work. Secondly, the Forum has identified a number of issues and potential lines of action which deserve attention as soon as possible. In this context, a series of practical initiatives is proposed:

Continuing the dialogue:

- the Forum will continue with the structure of plenary meetings and thematic seminars; a web site will be developed;
- the partnership needs also the active involvement of national governments and regional authorities.
- drawing on the dialogue to date and on work ongoing in other areas, the following issues should be discussed: i) ensuring that the university world responds effectively to the 'New Skills for New Jobs' agenda and to the challenges posed by the economic downturn; ii) partnerships for regional development; iii) partnerships with SMEs; iv) diversification of approaches to learning and building bridges between various types of higher education; v) QA and accreditation as tools to support university-business cooperation;
- the Forum should be more explicitly open to actors from beyond the EU.

Developing new partnerships: the Forum has argued for the creation of new forms of structured partnership between business and universities to develop and deliver educational courses. The Commission proposes to explore immediately how such partnerships could be supported via relevant EU programmes, with a view to launching calls for proposals for exploratory actions under the Lifelong Learning programme (LLP) in 2010. The Commission will also explore how existing programmes – for example the Leonardo da Vinci and Comenius programmes – and initiatives as European Schoolnet can be used to bring enterprises and schools together in education partnerships, and how cooperation might be promoted via a European coordination body. The Commission intends to invite stakeholders to explore future possibilities for cooperation between enterprises and schools and VET institutions at a conference. The Commission will encourage national authorities to establish similar national-level dialogue structures (perhaps with the help of the Structural Funds). Lastly, it will launch a study to establish an inventory on existing best practices in the field of cooperation between universities and enterprises.

University business dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities

2009/2099(INI) - 20/05/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on university-business dialogue: a new partnership for the modernisation of Europe's universities, in response to the Commission Communication on the subject.

Members welcome the communication entitled and the areas on which it proposes to focus future cooperation. They believe that continuous dialogue and collaboration at local, regional, national and European level, including exchanges of best practice in relation to programmes and instruments, are vital in establishing closer links and partnerships between the university and business communities. Recognising the fact that there are wide differences among European universities, Members believe that each of them could benefit in its own way from national and cross-border collaboration with the business community.

Future priorities: the resolution endorses the view that dialogue and cooperation between business and higher education institutions should remain one of the priorities for the near future. It emphasises that university-business dialogue should not be targeted only at the mathematics, science and technology (MST) education but should cover all fields of study, e.g. humanities.

Parliament calls for awareness and **concrete action** by Member States where legal and financial framework still fail to reward or even inhibit the efforts of universities to cooperate with the business sector. It calls on national, regional and local authorities to continue, in association with the private sector, to explore and fund processes that enhance the interaction between universities and business, and to remove the administrative obstacles that impede them.

Members suggest that a special focus should be placed at securing SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) access to university education and research both by increasing public funding and by simplifying bureaucracy. They underline the need to dignify and give an incentive to investigation and research, not only in scientific and technologic areas but also in social and human areas where valuable knowledge for state-of-the-art business is provided.

Education and lifelong learning: Parliament emphasises that a **stronger learning culture** must be established, promoted and reinforced, and that continuing training and retraining at all stages of life are critical to increase Europe's competitiveness and foster growth and jobs in Europe, and to create conditions suitable for promoting a positive attitude to learning from childhood. Bearing in mind the demographic transformation of Europe (into an ageing society) and also the changing conditions of the labour market due to the economic, social and employment crisis, Members call on universities to widen access to learning and to **modernise curricula addressing the new challenges** in order to upgrade the skills of the European workforce. They also urge universities to widen access to learning and international exchange programmes also for people with disabilities.

The resolution underlines the need to provide more scope for stimulating continuous adaptation to the changing labour market – which is a priority for the EU especially in the current recession – by fostering lifelong learning, particularly through the development of distance learning courses specially adapted to the new technologies and courses for the over-45s, who are more vulnerable and at greater risk of social exclusion.

Mobility, partnerships and curricula: Parliament reiterates that **mobility is a cornerstone of the European higher education area** in which European universities are invited to undertake innovative, far-reaching and methodical curricular reform. This should be a political priority in the context of redefining the major goals of the Bologna Process beyond 2010.

The Commission is invited to propose a legal framework designed to support and facilitate mobility between universities and business, and among students and university lecturers, and to emphasise the need to recognise and certify this form of learning and teaching. Members encourage not only the extension and expansion of individual mobility schemes, but also the organisation of postgraduate European Masters of Excellence programmes, in cooperation with different universities and with the active participation of businesses coupled with grants for students and incentives for researchers.

The resolution stresses the need for higher education institutions to provide more **extra-curricular opportunities to learn other languages**. It encourages universities to explore new methods of cooperation between public institutions and the private sector, especially through joint public and private innovation funds in order to improve mobility in all areas. It stresses the need for proper preparation and training of teachers of subjects in the field of entrepreneurship and encourages the business world to help adapt the university curriculum, by initiating and financing specific courses, with the aim of familiarising students with the challenges of entrepreneurship.

Members stress the importance of widespread provision of **work placements in companies** as part of the curriculum, especially for students in higher education, and of remunerating such placements financially or through the European Credit Transfer System.

The Commission is asked to launch a **European Industrial PhD** scheme comparable to existing Industrial PhD schemes in Europe as part of the Marie Curie activities within the Framework Programme in order to promote targeted and affordable research for European companies as well as inputs from the business sector into European universities.

Research: the resolution underlines emphasises the need for enterprises to increase their absorption capacity to use and transform the scientific knowledge generated by universities by fostering internal research, lifelong learning and continuing education and engaging in an active policy of communicating their needs to the academic community and recruiting doctoral and post-doctoral graduates and researchers. It sees greater researcher mobility as imperative in enhancing knowledge transfer and calls on the Member States and the Commission to review the existing legal and financial framework and to **eliminate unnecessary barriers to mobility**, paying special attention to the recognition of academic qualifications and the reduction of bureaucracy.

Members invite the Commission to create incentives for the development of a competitive EU market for intellectual property rights (IPR). They emphasise the need to speed up efforts to **promote a Single European Patent and a harmonised European patent litigation system**. They point out that the joint participation of universities and business in public-private partnerships, such as European Technology Platforms, Joint Technology Initiatives and Knowledge and Innovation Communities, could enhance the exploitation of knowledge and help the EU to address the major challenges it faces.

Good practices: Parliament proposes that a **website** be set up for the purpose of sharing and disseminating experience and for communication focusing on sharing good practice and providing visitors with inspiration and concrete tools and mechanisms for designing and implementing cooperation projects. It points out the importance of using new technologies to foster closer cooperation between the university and business communities.

Members hope, on the basis of existing good practice in various Member States, for the promotion of a **European day** devoted to young inventors, i.e. to innovations, inventions or patents conceived by young Europeans.