



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 30 May 2007

10083/07

**EDUC 100
SOC 234
STATIS 66**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

of : Council

No. prev. doc. : 9126/07 EDUC 86 SOC 173 STATIS 66

No. Cion prop. : 6672/07 EDUC 36 - COM(2007) 61 final

Subject : Council conclusions on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training

Delegations will find attached the text of the above conclusions as amended and adopted during the meeting of the Education, Youth and Culture Council on 25 May 2007.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
of 25 May 2007
on a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks
for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

HAVING REGARD TO

1. the Spring 2000 Lisbon European Council's call for Europe's education and training systems to be modernised in response to the demands of a knowledge-based economy and the increasing socio-economic and demographic challenges confronting the Union in a globalised world¹;
2. the March 2002 Barcelona European Council conclusions, which set the overall goal of making European education and training systems "*a world quality reference by 2010*" and which, with that aim in view, endorsed a set of common objectives for the improvement of those systems²;
3. the detailed work programme on the follow-up of those common objectives - generally referred to as the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme - which included an indicative list of indicators to be used for measuring progress towards the implementation of the thirteen concrete objectives through the open method of coordination;

¹ Presidency conclusions, Lisbon, 23-24 March 2000 (SN 100/00, paragraph 2).

² Presidency conclusions, Barcelona, 15-16 March 2002 (SN 100/02, paragraph 43).

4. the Council conclusions of 5 May 2003, which established a set of reference levels of European average performance in education and training (benchmarks) to be used as *"one of the tools for monitoring the implementation of the detailed work programme"*³;
5. the Maastricht Communiqué of 14 December 2004, in the context of the Copenhagen process, which made the improvement of the scope, precision and reliability of VET statistics a priority, arguing that adequate data and indicators are the key to understanding what is happening in VET and that additional interventions and decision-making are required by all parties involved⁴;
6. the Bergen Communiqué of 19-20 May 2005, in the context of the Bologna process, which called for comparable data on the mobility of staff and students, as well as on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries, as a basis for future stocktaking⁵;
7. the Council conclusions of 24 May 2005, which invited the Commission to report back to the Council on *"progress made towards the establishment of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for following-up the Lisbon objectives in the area of education and training"*⁶;
8. the Council conclusions of 19 May 2006, which invited the Commission to report back to the Council on progress in developing a European Indicator of Language Competence⁷;

³ Council conclusions on reference levels of European average performance in education and training (Benchmarks), OJ C 134, 7.06.2003, p. 3.

⁴ Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Vocational Education and Training on the future priorities of enhanced European co-operation in Vocational Education and Training (Copenhagen process), Maastricht, 14 December 2004.

⁵ Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education - *"The European Higher Education Area - achieving the goals"* (Bologna Process), Bergen, 19-20 May 2005.

⁶ Council conclusions of 24 May 2005 on new indicators in education and training, OJ C 141, 10.06.2005, p.7.

⁷ Council conclusions on the European Indicator of Language Competence, OJ C 172, 25.7.2006, p. 1

9. the Council conclusions of 13 November 2006, which called on the Commission to devote *"attention to the development of the VET components within the coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks"*;
10. the Council's key messages in the field of education and training to the Spring 2007 European Council, which emphasised that *"educational policies and practices require a stronger evidence base"* and that *"there is a need to develop a culture of evaluation and research"*⁸;
11. the Commission communication of 22 February 2007 entitled *"a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training"*, which proposes 20 core indicators that the Commission considers coherent with the policy objectives under the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme⁹;

TAKES NOTE of

the report on progress made in developing a European Indicator of Language Competence, as outlined in the Commission communication of 13 April 2007 entitled *"Framework for the European survey on language competences"*¹⁰, including the Commission's intention to ensure that, before subsequent rounds of tests, the survey covers all the official European languages taught in the European Union;

⁸ Contribution of the Council (in the field of education) to the Spring European Council, doc. 5625/07, p.3.

⁹ (1) Participation in pre-school education; (2) Special needs education; (3) Early school leavers; (4) Literacy in reading, mathematics and science; (5) Language skills; (6) ICT skills; (7) Civic skills; (8) Learning to learn skills; (9) Upper-secondary completion rates of young people; (10) School management; (11) Schools as multi-purpose local learning centres; (12) Professional development of teachers and trainers; (13) Stratification of education and training systems; (14) Higher education graduates; (15) Cross-national mobility of students in higher education; (16) Participation of adults in lifelong learning; (17) Adults' skills; (18) Educational attainment of the population; (19) Investment in education and training; (20) Returns to education and training.

¹⁰ Doc. 8387/07 - COM (2007) 184 final.

CONSIDERS that

the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme constitutes the strategic framework for the Council's work in the field of education and training;

discussions on future policy orientations to follow up on the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme are now beginning and should be stepped up in the years ahead;

identifying, defining and implementing a coherent framework of indicators is an ongoing process, which must be synchronised with the strategic framework provided by the 2010 work programme and its eventual successor;

REAFFIRMS that

the development of new indicators shall fully respect the responsibility of Member States for the organisation of their education systems and should not impose undue administrative or financial burdens on the organisation and institutions concerned;

periodic monitoring of performance and progress through the use of indicators and benchmarks is an essential part of the Lisbon process, allowing strengths and weaknesses to be identified with a view to providing strategic guidance to the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme;

the five benchmarks adopted by the Council in May 2003 are of continuing relevance in guiding policy actions within the 2010 work programme;

there is a need to continue to improve the quality of data produced by the European Statistical System, in particular to ensure valid, internationally comparable and, where appropriate, gender-specific data;

there is a parallel need to continue to enhance cooperation with other international organisations active in this field, in order to improve international data coherence and comparability, to avoid duplication and to satisfy EU data needs that cannot be met within the European Statistical System (ESS);

RECOGNISES

the importance of concerted and continuous efforts to develop a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks in close cooperation between the Member States and the Commission;

the Commission communication entitled "*A coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training*" as an important step towards the establishment of such a framework;

that defining a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks is a continuous and consultative process, as regards both the selection of new indicators and the definition of the individual concrete indicators;

Accordingly INVITES THE COMMISSION

- to make use of, or further develop, sixteen of the proposed core indicators, as outlined below:
 - a) with regard to those indicators which can largely be based on existing data and whose definition is already broadly established,
 - to make full use of the following indicators:
 - participation in pre-school education
 - early school leavers
 - literacy in reading, mathematics and science
 - upper-secondary completion rates of young people
 - higher education graduates
 - participation of adults in lifelong learning
 - cross-national mobility of students in higher education
 - educational attainment of the population
 - and to report back to the Council in the event of any major new developments;
 - b) with regard to those indicators which can largely be based on existing data and whose definition still needs further clarification,

to submit to the Council, for further consideration, information on the definition of the following indicators:

- special needs education
- ICT skills
- investment in education and training

including their composition, data sources, costs and other relevant technical specifications;

- c) with regard to those indicators which are still in the process of development in co-operation with other international organisations;
- to pursue the development of indicators on:
 - civic skills
 - adult skills
 - professional development of teachers and trainers
 - and to report back to the Council in due course, in particular on the participation of EU Member States and the coverage of EU data needs;
- d) with regard to those indicators which are still in the process of development and which would be based on new EU surveys,
- to further examine the development of indicators on:
 - language skills
 - learning to learn skills
 - and to report back to the Council on the results in due course.

Before proceeding with any new surveys relating to the indicators referred to in sections c) and d) above, the Commission shall submit the relevant reports to the Council for consideration. These reports should cover the following aspects, as appropriate:

- the political relevance of the indicators;
 - the detailed technical specifications of any proposed new survey;
 - the availability and relevance of existing data at national level;
 - the comparability of the data;
 - a timetable for the development work to be undertaken;
 - an estimate of the infrastructure required for such development work and subsequent data collection, as well as of the likely costs to be incurred by the Community and by the Member States involved;
 - appropriate management and support structures, enabling Member States to be involved in methodological and development work.
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- to continue its work on the development of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks, drawing on the expertise of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks, the Advisory Board on the European Indicator of Language Competence and other relevant expert groups of national representatives, and to report back regularly to the Council.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

- closely cooperate in the development and implementation of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks, including the improvement of the statistical basis;
- work towards the objective that the indicators in that framework should cover all Member States.