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TRANSATLANTIC CONFERENCE "BRIDGING THE ATLANTIC: PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE LINKS" ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS

The Transatlantic Agenda Conference organized in Washington, DC on May 5 & 6 by the US Department of State, the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the European Union drew together over 300 prominent Europeans and Americans to discuss ways to nurture the next generation of transatlantic leadership through new forms of partnership. The participants included senior US and EU officials, legislators, state and local officials, business executives, labor leaders, the media, heads of private foundations, and key actors in our exchange communities. Specialized working groups largely composed of personalities from non-governmental sectors took a fresh look at four areas' electronic exchange; civil society; education, culture and youth; and building partnerships in the global economy.

Here are the recommendations. The whole document will be on our web site at <http://www.eurunion.org>.

ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE

Key Proposals

Transatlantic Information Exchange Service (TIES): Establish a multilingual forum to connect the spectrum of institutions, projects and initiatives involved with EU-US affairs. A pilot project should be launched by January 1998 with the cooperation of CIESIN, the European University Institute, Prometheus-Europe, the Society for Old and New Media, and Georgetown University.

Transatlantic Digital Library Project: Convene one or more transatlantic task forces to expand cooperation between US and European libraries in the area of digitization; explore establishment of a transatlantic digital library with content linked to US-European relations. The Commission on Preservation and Access, the Library of Congress, the National Library of the Netherlands among others have expressed interest in participating.
The initial task force report and pilot digitization projects should be completed by the end of 1997.

Electronic Links between Legislators: Establish electronic links to facilitate legislative contacts between participating legislatures on issues of current interest on both sides of the Atlantic, perhaps in the form of a web site with a catalogue of available legislative resources on the relevant topics.

Electronic Links between Cities, Counties and Regions: Develop a system for sharing visions, expertise and "best practices" among European and US cities, counties and regions, using electronic means to meet citizens needs at the local level. Telecities on the European side and Public Technology Inc. in the US have offered to lead the project.

On-line Publishing: Convene workshops on electronic publishing in science, with a focus on the impact of intellectual property regimes on electronic publishing. They will examine the normative, technological and intellectual property issues related to the establishment of transatlantic scientific on-line journals. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), working with European partners, proposes to take the lead in organizing these workshops. Final reports could be circulated widely.

Virtual Transatlantic Classrooms: Create a transatlantic integrated electronic workspace; launch US-EU student web sites for discussion of common interests and cooperative projects; expand point-to-point and multi-point video conferences among students; extend networks among primary and secondary school teachers and students; and develop content (linked to TIES) for parallel use in European and US schools. Participating organizations could include AEGEE Europe, the Georgetown University Center for Communications, Culture and Technology; and the Transatlantic Classroom.

Democratic Values and the Information Society: Connect public interest organizations concerned with such issues as democracy promotion, personal privacy, freedom of expression, intellectual property, universal access to advanced information infrastructure (GII) and telecommunications regulation. Establish a data base of information on initiatives in the US and the EU, including such best practices as WebVote, Democracy Net, and SeniorWeb.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Key Proposals

Transatlantic Civil Society Dialogue (TACD): Establish a working group, including business, trade union, foundation, citizens' association and government representatives, to monitor progress on key initiatives.

Linking Key Actors: Use the proposed Transatlantic Information Exchange Service (TIES) and other means to improve information on the key organizations in civil society in the US and the EU and as a catalyst for enhanced cooperation and coordination on civil society issues.

Supporting the Work of NGOs: Assist those working to develop civic education, civil society and institution-building initiatives and programs throughout the world. Such cooperation could include support and facilitation for NGOs, foundations and citizens' associations promoting citizen action in the fields of environment, overseas aid, consumer affairs, social exclusion, youth and minority rights, including building an alliance of citizen actions and influence through CIVICUS and strengthening civic education through enhancing the outreach of CIVITAS.

Civic Education Exchanges: Create a jointly funded program to promote civic education exchanges with the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on development of a basic framework for creating and evaluating programs for education for democracy and respect for human rights.

Brokering New Dialogue: Work with TABD members to develop a EU - US database on successful corporate efforts to strengthen civil society; strengthen the transatlantic dialogue between the Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) of the EU and its US counterparts; establish an NGO reciprocal staff/leadership and intern exchange; link ARIES to CIVNET, the Internet site that facilitates communication and research among those engaged in civic education and in strengthening civil society.

Involving Ordinary Citizens: Extend existing exchanges to include ordinary citizens and use electronic communications to reach out to a large number of minorities and excluded citizens.

Supporting Local Linkages: Develop and strengthen local initiatives such as existing town-twinning/sister city and similar ties between US and EU towns by instituting an annual prize for the "Best Transatlantic Partnership Project" between sister cities; expand collaboration among US and EU organizations responsible for supporting partnerships between cities, regions and states through intern exchange; encourage trilateral town-twinning between US and EU sister cities and new partners in Central and Eastern Europe.

Special Projects: Establish joint EU - US consumer organization project on sustainable development and on food standards; set up a joint EU - US project on social exclusion in cooperation with community foundations and town twinning/sister city links.

EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND YOUTH

Key Proposals

Establish a New Transatlantic Forum: Organize a Transatlantic Education and Training Dialogue to increase mutual knowledge and understanding and to develop new initiatives such as thematic networks for curriculum development.

Youth Exchange: Increase opportunities for dialogue and interaction among young people and youth organizations on both sides of the Atlantic on issues of common concern. This effort should be as inclusive as possible to encourage broad participation.

Teacher Exchange: Expand teacher exchanges through existing programs to take advantage of the natural multiplier effect. This will enhance the perspectives and skills of teachers, make them more aware of the benefits of exchange for their students, and serve to improve curricula on both sides of the Atlantic.

Work Exchange: Encourage exchanges based on short-term work and internships and work together to eliminate obstacles to such exchanges -- e.g., visa issues, work permits, taxation -- in the EU and the US

Exchange as Good Business: Encourage the business community to actively support transatlantic exchange, not only through funding and internships, but also through business practices such as recognizing the value of international experience for their employees.

Utilizing New Technologies: Establish an Internet web site to disseminate comprehensive information on transatlantic exchange opportunities and existing best practices to the widest possible audience

Joint Consortia: Press for additional funding to the US-EC Joint Consortia Program in Higher Education and Vocational Training.

PARTNERS IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Key Proposals

Working Group on Workforce Development Issues: Establish a EU - US working group on workforce development concerns, giving particular emphasis to education and training issues. The working group would involve business, labor, and NGO representatives. Government officials would also be invited to participate.

Agenda Setting: Draft and circulate a paper summarizing the menu of ideas discussed at the Conference, including the radical ongoing transformation of work and work organization and new strategies within firms and educational institutions for continuous learning and workforce development.

Evaluating Current Exchange Models: Develop criteria for evaluating existing exchanges in terms of their relevance to the new competitive challenges facing firms and their workers and the contribution they can make to enhanced sharing of experience on workforce training and educational reform issues.

Developing New Approaches to Exchange: Explore new models of exchange, focusing on: business to business exchanges between small and medium-sized businesses, multinationals and business associations, on issues of competitiveness, workforce training and development; union to union exchanges, including local and regional labor leaders; and mixed exchanges involving educators, business, labor and government representatives and examining such key education reform issues as high expectations/ student performance and life-long learning

Workforce Development Conference: Support a EU-US funded conference on workforce development in the fall.

Building New Linkages: Cooperate with the Council of Europe in the areas of education reform, particularly benchmarking and setting international standards.

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