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Education in the European Community
Medium-term perspectives: 1989-1992

(Communication from the Commission)

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1. Introduction and context

1.1 The medium term guidelines set out in this Communication are designed to provide a clear focus to the Commission's initiatives in this field in the period leading up to 1992. These guidelines have been prepared for consideration by the Education Council at its meeting on 25th May 1988, following the recent exchange of views at Münster at the informal Education Council. They are designed to enable the Community Institutions to evaluate systematically progress achieved, to identify and clearly define new priorities, to accelerate certain activities and adapt others in the perspective of 1992. Since these guidelines are addressed in the first instance to the education authorities of the Member States, the Commission in this Communication has focussed deliberately on education, while recognising the close link with vocational training policies.

1.2 The 1992 target date for the completion of the Internal Market, the adoption of the Single European Act and the recent decisions of the European Council in Brussels in February 1988, place education and training in a new context in the construction of the European Community. This new context is characterised by the pursuit of certain objectives⁽¹⁾ designed especially to promote economic and social cohesion at Community level.

1.3 The education and training systems must henceforth help to achieve these objectives and thus to create the conditions for the social and economic cohesion of the Community. Without investment in the present and future workforce, and their skills, versatility and entrepreneurial capacity, Europe's capacity to innovate, to compete, to create wealth and prosperity will be impaired. In this sense, education and training lie at the heart of the process of European construction.

(1) These objectives aim especially to :

- ensure the free movement of persons;
- promote the development of regions in difficulty;
- create growth in areas experiencing industrial restructuring;
- contribute to the fight against long-term unemployment;
- prepare young people for entry into the labour market;
- promote new possibilities for rural development; and
- support concerted technological cooperation.

1.4 Education's contribution to the achievement of these objectives, and particularly to the completion of the Internal Market, needs to be seen in the context of the following factors :

- o economic and technological development will call for continually rising skill levels in the workforce, and consequently higher levels of basic education;
- o speed of response to new technological advances will be critical for economic success, calling for much greater flexibility on the part of firms, education and training organizations, and individuals;
- o the importance of recruiting women into traditionally-male sectors of the labour force will increase;
- o all forms of economic activity will become increasingly European and mobile, placing a higher premium on European experience and training in the workforce.

1.5 These trends have a number of implications for national and Community-level policies in education, especially :

- o the need to attack problems of school failure and to reduce the numbers of those entering the labour market lacking basic skills and without qualifications;
- o the need to make education systems more responsive, and more quickly responsive, to change, to "customer" needs, and to local and/or regional priorities;
- o the need to encourage shared responsibility for education policies, between education providers, social partners and other organizations in the world of the economy;
- o the need to diversify, and multiply, opportunities for people at all stages of their education to have direct experience of other parts of the Community as an integral and regular part of compulsory and post-compulsory education and training;
- o the need to emphasise education and training experiences which foster enterprise and adaptability, and especially those which cross the still-strong traditional boundaries between general culture and the world of technology;
- o the need to promote the development of improved guidance and information for young people, and adults;
- o the need to identify and extend action aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity for girls and young women in education, so as to encourage them to consider the full range of choices for training and employment.

2. Towards 1992

2.1. Twelve years have passed since 1976, the year that marked the birth of the first action programme in education⁽¹⁾ at Community level, complementing and enriching the implementation of the common vocational training policy, as provided for in the Treaty of Rome. The Community has progressively been able to make a good start in establishing cooperative projects, which have engaged the active participation of all Member States, thus laying the foundations for a long-term continuing effort in the field of education. Willingness to further develop cooperation is widely supported throughout the Community at national, regional and local levels. The discussions at the Informal Council at Münster (February 1988) showed the extent and richness of the achievements to date through this cooperation.

2.2 The existing action programme contains many strands. These are summarised briefly below :

- o promotion of closer relations between the educational systems, including the setting up of the EURYDICE network for information on education policies in the Community;
- o introduction of new information technologies in the school systems;
- o higher education cooperation;
- o cooperation in providing educational statistics and documentation;
- o promotion of the European dimension in schools;
- o education of migrant workers and their families;
- o transition of young people from school to work;
- o special education of disabled young persons;
- o attack on illiteracy and school failure;
- o education on environmental issues;
- o education for consumer protection;
- o equality of opportunity for girls and boys in education;
- o cooperation on teacher education;
- o promotion of youth and school exchanges;

More recently of course the COMETT⁽²⁾ and ERASMUS⁽³⁾ programmes have been adopted by the Council, thus changing the scale of cooperation and its potential penetration in the different Member States.

2.4 These different activities are described fully in the Commission's report to the Standing Conference for European Ministers of Education up to 1986. A report on 1987 is in preparation and a further report on 1987 and 1988 will be presented by the Commission to the next Standing Conference to be held in Istanbul in May 1989.

(1) O.J. N° C 38 of 19.2.1976, p. 1
(2) O.J. N° L222 of 8.8.1986, p.17
(3) O.J. N° L166 of 25.6.1987, p.20

2.5 The growth in the development of the past few years in the education field nevertheless carries the dangers of fragmentation and dispersion. The guidelines therefore need to ensure continuity and clarity, to facilitate the progressive development of a concerted action programme in the area of education within the Community, building on the achievements to date. They should also provide a means of better differentiating between action to be undertaken by the Member States and action requiring Community intervention, through the added value it represents.

2.6 Against this background, the first and central objective, in the period up to 1992, must be the identification and application of the education and training systems' contribution to the creation of the Internal Market and to its exploitation subsequently.

This means, essentially, removing the constraints which hinder the free movement of people and ideas in the Community, and also encouraging initiative, innovation and enterprise at all levels. Opportunities should be found, and created, to maintain a steady advance towards convergence and coherence wherever this can be done without damage to the rich traditions of the diversity of educational practices in the Community.

The wide-ranging implications of the Internal Market, and through and beyond it the development of a more cohesive Europe, must be fully understood by the education and training systems in cooperation with all sectors of the economy and the social partners. The pivotal role of education and training in promoting changes of attitude has a vital part to play if the Community is to be understood and valued by its citizens generally, and lies at the heart of the Commission's effort to promote a People's Europe.

2.7 The Community's role here concerns not only the evolution of a coherent system of qualifications and certification but also the improvement of foreign language learning; support and stimulus for Member State measures in preparing young people for their future as European citizens; concern for multicultural education and the elimination of racism and xenophobia; and the continuing intensification of European awareness in the minds of education policy-makers and practitioners at all levels.

2.8 A second objective must be the closer integration of education and economic life at all levels and the identification of such changes with the emergence of the European Market. The right strategy, in the period ahead, when many Member States are trying to close the gap which separates education from "industry", must be to relate such changes to the emergence of the Internal Market and the growth of European identity, so that the movement towards such integration can be seen as a common cause, interpreted in the local/regional context but shared throughout the Community. The COMETT programme may be regarded as an example to follow, especially at school/college level.

2.9 The third major objective must be to make a contribution by education policies to the reduction of regional disparities and to the social cohesion of the Community. In this, the closer integration of education and training with economic development policies must be assured so as to identify solutions to the particular problems of such disadvantaged areas. This would complement the measures to be taken within the framework of the Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund, in respect of vocational training, and ensure the necessary foundation, at the basic education level, for the the Community's actions in the training field.

2.10 In the remaining sections these three major objectives are translated into two broad action areas, to give a clear view of the future links between elements which have hitherto been treated separately, and to show how new elements can be located.

3. Raising the quality of basic education

a. Innovation in compulsory education

3.1 National concern to raise substantially the quality of basic compulsory education is reflected in the movements to introduce large-scale and long-term reforms in the structure, content and methods of primary and secondary education in many Member States. The Commission's different actions since 1977 have shown the value of a number of strategies and approaches for raising the quality of provision :

- o the creation of closer links between the world of education and the world of work and the economy, at all levels including schools;
- o encouraging schools to play a more active role in the process of educational and vocational guidance, in cooperation with other guidance-providers;
- o initiating school-level review of the appropriateness of provision for the weakest pupils, with a view to adapting courses, teaching methods and practices so as to enhance motivation and achievement;
- o promoting school self-review and increasing provision for regular teacher in-service training, including cooperation with teachers in other types of school and work experience periods in industry;
- o encouraging school-level action, backed by policies calling for complementary action in training and employment, to raise teachers' awareness of gender equality issues ;
- o encouraging more active partnership between schools and parents.

3.2 In the light of its experience of the second Community action programme on the Transition of young people from education to adult and working life, the Commission considers that action at Community level should be further developed within the framework of a medium term programme which takes account of the need to strengthen the capacity of education systems to manage and monitor innovation so as to respond more effectively to social and economic change as well as individual needs. A strategy to do so should be founded on the encouragement of school-based development projects, and in-service training for teachers, as the principal instruments through which the implementation of the approaches outlined above can be achieved.

3.3 Such a programme should also provide a framework for :

- o dialogue and reflection between education authorities about future directions in secondary education in the 1990s;
- o action to improve the capacity of education and training to respond to the needs of areas and/or regions with particular needs, e.g. rural areas in danger of depopulation, or undergoing economic diversification away from dependence on agriculture;
- o the need to support developments aimed at inter-cultural cooperation in areas with ethnically-mixed populations;
- o the future development, and dissemination, of approaches, already validated in part in the second Transition action programme, in favour of disadvantaged young people. These include the reinforcement of guidance, the adaptation of curricula and the use of modular structures, and strengthening continuity of provision between the different stages of education and training.

3.4 This approach to Community-level action in this sensitive but vital area should be matched by the development of an understanding between Member States that national authorities responsible for education will take advantage of the growing system of communication and consultation at Community level, to check with their Community colleagues on the substance of any major reform affecting the content of their compulsory school curricula, which could affect the scope for free movement of young people between Member States. A steady convergence in this area is necessary if school-level barriers to free movement of families and young people within Europe are to be reduced. The Commission, drawing as appropriate on the EURYDICE network, would be available to assist such dialogue as part of the regular process of contact and mutual exchange already established.

b. Links between education and the economy

3.5 Modern technology calls for wider and deeper educational preparation before vocational training as such commences, and for education better adapted to economic realities. A major thrust in further Community action should be aimed at supporting Member States' policies for the growth of partnership between schools and industry, at all levels of school systems. This action should aim to promote, through school curricula, a spirit of enterprise in young people to work independently and to create firms, as well as to encourage the spread of an entrepreneurial culture which would enable the workers of tomorrow to feel better able to master their working environment. To this end, the action should aim :

- o to make school-industry cooperation a two-way process;

- o to promote the widespread introduction of liaison services or structures to facilitate school-industry linking at local level;
- o to bridge the gap between the general and technical cultures in secondary education, and provide positive reinforcement for girls' participation in technical fields;
- o to identify and disseminate new forms of school-industry collaboration, with a special emphasis on expanding opportunities for teachers to have direct experience of industry;
- o to associate small and medium sized firms with these developments.

c. Creating Europe in the minds of young people

3.6 The latest opinion poll, conducted on behalf of the Commission in 1987 by Eurobarometre, indicates that whilst many young people are open and willing to explore the European connection, they are generally ill-informed about the Community and its developments and, taking the 12 Member States as a whole, lack organised educational opportunities for contact and experience abroad.

3.7 Young people need to be better informed so as to understand for themselves the implications of the European connection, especially with regard to their future careers. They need to be equipped to take up their rights as voters for a directly elected European Parliament, to understand the issues and choices facing the Community and take their own stand on them. Too often sadly this element is missing in our school systems. Young people need to be able to participate directly themselves in building their Europe.

3.8 Two positive steps forward to remedy this situation, both of which correspond to the mandate of the European Council of Milan (1985), based on the Adonnino Committee Report on a People's Europe, should be taken shortly by the Council. Firstly, the Council should adopt the YES for Europe Programme ⁽¹⁾ proposed by the Commission in 1986, strongly supported by the European Parliament. This programme, running for the period 1989-91 in the first phase, will serve as a companion effort to the Young Workers Exchange Scheme which in 1987 involved some 3000 young workers in different types of study experience abroad. Secondly, the Council will establish a first series of measures to promote the European dimension in school curricula, involving the training of teachers and the preparation of special European modules of teaching material.

(1) Doc. Com(86) 52 final and Com(87) 76 final

3.9 In the second half of 1988, linked to its proposals to improve foreign language teaching, the Commission intends to submit proposals for the exchange of pupils and classes, and for the strengthening of advisory and information services in the Member States available to help in the planning of effective educational exchanges. This aspect was also included in the above-mentioned mandate of the European Council. These actions will be complemented by initiatives to improve foreign language training (see 4.e).

3.10 Furthermore, the Commission intends to take the following measures:

- o review the scope for setting aside a proportion of broadcasting time for European educational programmes of interest to schools and young people;
- o experiment with the use of new technologies and linked data-bases to provide European documentary resources for easy access by teachers.
- o review the experience with the pilot schemes conducted by the Commission since 1976 on the education of migrant workers' children, in the light of their changing economic, social and family circumstances.

d. Professional development of the teaching force

3.11 The success of Community actions to assist in raising the quality of basic education depends principally on the quality of the teaching profession. Given the demographic context of mainly stable, or falling, school populations and a similarly stable teaching force, with low turn-over and recruitment levels, the main emphasis for action to enhance performance must lie on extending participation in in-service training and ensuring that it is of high quality. The training structures in each Member State were analysed in a recent study ⁽¹⁾ by the Commission, discussion of which has strongly indicated already the interest of both teachers and policy-makers in teacher training, across the Community, to collaborate in European-level activities. The Commission intends to bring forward proposals accordingly in 1989.

3.12 At the same time, wide differences exist in the length and nature of initial training, and the extent of teachers' preparation to teach more than one subject and to teach children at different ages or stages of development. Given the profound influence which such differences have on the nature of the education offered in compulsory schools, strong encouragement should be given, at Community level, to promote dialogue and cooperation between teacher-training staffs, to promote faster convergence of philosophy and practice in this area. This, in turn, could help reduce differences in approach to each age-level of compulsory school, in the different countries, and thus contribute to easier mobility between countries for pupils and their families, and teachers themselves.

(1) "The conditions of service of teachers within the Member States of the European Community" - Study ; doc V/319/88 - EN

4. Towards an educated and trained workforce

a. Social integration of young people

4.1 The first objective should be to help raise the standards of school-leavers, and their qualifications, as they face the process of transition into adult and working life. The recent adoption of the Council Decision (1) on 1 December 1987 on this subject marks an important stage in setting a new Community-wide objective, namely that "all young people in the Community who so wish receive one year's, or if possible two or more years', vocational training in addition to their full-time compulsory education".

4.2 The implementation of this new Council Decision could be taken into account in the reform of the Structural Funds. In accordance with the terms of this Decision, action by the Member States will be supported by a number of Community-level initiatives including in particular the creation of European training partnership initiatives, bringing together education and manpower authorities in cooperation with the social partners in a much more concerted effort to provide linked work and training opportunities for young people. The key in this future effort lies in building those programmes which provide qualifying training and which will subsequently permit young adults to progress in their career. Continuing support, through guidance and counselling services, well conducted and equipped, especially at local level, is an essential element in this overall effort.

b. Intensifying cooperation at university level

4.3 Over the last year or so, the ERASMUS (2) and COMETT (2) programmes have pointed the way forward for the creation of stronger links between universities and other institutions of higher education in the Community, especially with regard to student mobility and exchange. The positive response from the university sector to these new Community programmes may be explained by at least three main reasons : the chance to play their part in the push to 1992; the interest in new sources of innovation and experiment from within Europe; and the considerable demand from students themselves.

(1) O.J. N° L 346 of 10.12.1987

(2) Annual reports on the ERASMUS (doc. Com (88) 192 final) and COMETT (doc. Com (88) 36 final) programmes.

4.4 The Community Programmes of research and technological development are powerful tools to foster transnational and multidisciplinary cooperation between universities, and between universities and industry. Along with the SCIENCE programme, universities are therefore now beginning to draw on Europe for both their research and teaching, as well as for developing bridges with the world of the economy. This is only a start. ERASMUS and COMETT need to be exploited fully to encourage further networking of transnational link-ups. The Commission intends to take the following steps :

- o presentation of its proposals for COMETT II (university-industry cooperation for advanced training for technological change) in July this year, spanning the five-year period 1990-1995, with a view to extending the transnational agreements for partnerships in this field, to providing a strong complement to the R & D framework programme and to giving special attention to experiences of cooperation involving small and medium-sized firms;

- o careful evaluation of the ERASMUS programme with a view to the presentation of its proposals for the second phase of ERASMUS, from 1990 onwards, with a view to increasing substantially the numbers of students involved from all Member States;

- o creation of a pool of European Fellowships to promote interdisciplinary teaching about the Community and its developments, drawing as appropriate on the experience of the European University Institute in Florence, the College of Europe in Bruges and the European Institute for Public Administration in Maastricht;

- o presentation of recommendations to eliminate barriers (such as social security or pensions) to the exchange of university teachers and administrators, including the possibility of reciprocal agreements for sabbatical years;

- o arranging for the continuing exchange of experience and greater mutual awareness of the plans for the expansion of higher education in the period up to 2000 AD, taking into account especially demographic changes, the balance of student numbers across disciplines, the extent of open or closed access to higher education (e.g. numerus clausus) the diversification of the higher education systems and the financial planning for this period;

- o monitoring the flow of students between Member States, both on a full or part-course basis, and identification of obstacles to such movement.

- o monitoring the flow of graduates into employment in other Member States, assessing periodically the financial implications of such movement;

In this field, the Commission intends to strengthen the valuable links it already enjoys with representatives of universities, notably the E.C. Liaison Committee of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors.

c. Free movement and the mobility of qualified manpower

4.5 The key to the full and free movement of persons throughout the Community is to be found through the mutual recognition of the different qualifications and skills of the various Member States at all levels.

To date, over many years, the Commission has made great efforts in particular to achieve the mutual recognition of qualifications in respect of the liberal professions, and also the comparability of vocational qualifications. The Draft Directive (1) on the general system of recognition of diplomas which was proposed by the Commission is scheduled for decision by the Council in the first half of 1988. Decision by the Council on this Directive could also have a valuable multiplier effect on the approach to be adopted in relation to other sectors and levels if the 1992 timetable is to be observed, especially in those vocational sectors likely to be most affected by the new opportunities opened up by the Internal Market.

4.6 The ERASMUS programme is designed to complement this effort by facilitating the mutual recognition of academic qualifications and periods of study spent abroad in all disciplines offered by universities. By opening up the floodgates to substantial numerical expansion of organized student mobility within the Community, ERASMUS can help break through the existing administrative and other blockages which inhibit mobility, not least since in most Member States universities, which are more or less autonomous in decisions on admissions and on the award of their degrees, will be able to create their own transnational agreements within the framework of the ERASMUS programme.

4.7 Working in cooperation with those concerned in the Member States, it is an important task for the Commission, to improve mutual understanding of the qualification systems of the different Member States and eliminate national prejudice. Intensive study visits for around 5000 academic staff, under the ERASMUS programmes, will be organized over the next 3 years, facilitating discussion and joint work with their academic partners. The first major evaluation of the ERASMUS Programme to be presented by the Commission in 1989/90 will provide the opportunity to specify the further steps to be taken in this field.

4.8 Moreover, the following measures will be taken by the Commission and should be decided by the Council as part of the overall progress towards 1992 :

- o development of a proposal to establish the mutual recognition of entry qualifications to universities, in a spirit of reciprocity, building on the positive experience of the special convention operating in this field for the European Schools;

- o development of a proposal to establish the mutual recognition of school-leaving qualifications, in particular those awarded at the end of full-time compulsory education.

4.9 The existing Community mechanism for exchanging authoritative information with regard to academic qualifications, known as NARIC (2), could be further developed to underpin such agreements.

(1) Doc. Com (85) 355 final and doc. com (86) 257 final

(2) Network for Academic Recognition Information Centres
(see the ERASMUS programme)

4.10 In this context, it is essential also to recall that for workers and their families, freedom of movement includes the right of access to the other education and vocational training systems on the same basis as nationals. Families wishing to take advantage of free movement still face obstacles that need to be removed, the first and foremost being the lack of information on the education and training systems in the other Member States. This information is simply not available in a form that is clear, precise and accessible to a worker who is considering living in a foreign country. The education and training systems of other Member States remain usually "unknown territory", a barrier difficult to surmount for every family.

4.11 The Commission therefore intends to propose that each Member State should establish, as appropriate, an easily accessible information service, supported by documentation in all the official languages of the Community, to give advice on the opportunities and conditions of access to education and training within its territory.

4.12 The Commission has, moreover, decided to take action in the area of public sector employment, so as to give Community citizens the greatest possible freedom of movement in order to find a job. At a time when the Community is implementing ambitious programmes to promote the mobility of students and researchers (ERASMUS, COMETT, and SCIENCE) this is all the more necessary. In this spirit, the Commission has recently detailed the way in which it wishes to see Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome applied to sections in the public domain which are sufficiently far from the exercise of public power to justify equal treatment in mobility terms (commercial services, health care, teachers and civil research). Following further preparatory work this year, the Commission envisages that the right of qualified teachers to apply for posts in other Member States will be fully recognised.

d. Continuing education and training

4.13 Later this year, the Commission will present its first proposals for a Community-wide strategy on continuing education and training in firms. The training of management and the workforce to prepare for 1992 is an urgent requirement, and will need transnational cooperation supported by the Commission. Priority will be given to the special training requirements of small and medium-sized firms, to the need to exploit open learning and other multi-media systems of delivery, and to the importance of company investment in training in terms of its pay-off in performance and productivity. In this latter context, the value of investment in training as a means of combatting unemployment will be analysed by the Commission, as part of its overall effort to eliminate long-term unemployment.

4.14 Moreover, building on the successful experience of the EUROTECNET programme, the Commission intends to strengthen cooperation on the impact of technological change on the workforce, male and female, and especially on the changing qualification requirements. To this end, a European network of "observatories" is being set up to monitor the evolution of qualifications, especially the emergence of new or hybrid qualifications and the analysis of skill deficits in key sectors.

e. Language : the Achilles heel

4.15 1992 has helped put the spotlight on one of the crucial constraints in the construction of the Internal Market, namely the need for many more people capable of working through at least two Community languages. Lack of capacity to communicate is a technical barrier to free movement; it is also a handicap to the increasing business and trading connexions within the Community.

4.16 The Commission has already announced its intentions to present its proposals in this field before the end of 1988, and will take into account the forthcoming exchange of views which will take place at the next Education Council in May 1988, with regard to providing for action both within Member States and at Community level (see also 3.c).

4.17 Member States should be encouraged to ensure that all official Community languages are on offer within their educational systems, even if there is an increasing trend towards certain languages in the choices made by young people and their parents. There is undoubtedly scope in this context to build on existing bilateral cultural agreements, and also on the provisions of the Council Directive ⁽¹⁾ on the teaching of the children of migrant workers from other Community countries.

4.18 Member States could also consider establishing a pool of foreign language teaching posts with the special tasks of stimulating greater attention to the oral aspects of language learning, the production of high quality teaching materials and the dissemination of good practices within the educational systems.

4.19 Priority attention at Community level could be focussed on a limited number of key factors, so as to provide a visible added value to the efforts of Member States. These should include :

(1) Directive 77/486/EEC, O.J. N°L 199 of 6.8.1977, p. 32

- o the initial training of foreign language teachers so that they must necessarily spend a period of preparation abroad;
 - o the in-service training of foreign language teachers (e.g. one term abroad every five years) so that they could also build up opportunities for school or class exchanges for their pupils;
 - o placements in industry abroad for young trainees in different sectors (as a companion effort to the ERASMUS and COMETT programmes for university students);
 - o the networking of information, research and documentation centres so as to pool the resources available;
 - o the encouragement of joint publishing initiatives;
 - o the earmarking of more broadcasting time for language programmes of an educational character.
- o the encouragement of exchange programmes and special language courses for the adult workforce, especially those in small and medium size enterprises,

4.21 The YES for Europe programme, which should be adopted by the Education Council in May 1988, should be followed by a Community-wide effort to promote organised school exchanges. This programme would be designed to multiply the opportunities for pupils, particularly in the 13-18 age range, to participate in such exchanges, and for the organisers of such schemes to have opportunities to set up school-to-school links. Priority needs to be given in this context to the peripheral regions.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Commission invites the Education Council to take account of this Communication in its forthcoming review of medium-term perspectives in the field of education.

5.2 On the basis of these medium-term perspectives and the priorities indicated, the Commission intends to prepare a work programme for the period up to 1992, to be complemented by further measures designed to strengthen the pursuit of common policies in the field of vocational training policies.

The European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee will also be invited to express their opinions on it.

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