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Communication from the Commission to the Council, the
European Parliament,

the Economic and Social Committee and to
the Committee of the Regions.

Education and training in the face of technological,
industrial and social challenges: First thoughts.

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Introduction

- 1 This Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, is designed to lay the foundations for a forward-looking approach to education and training policy in order to implement the guidelines set out in the White Paper in the light of the objectives of competitiveness, growth and employment, without prejudice to the fundamental role of education to prepare for citizenship and integration into an active society..
- 2 The Commission considers that the diagnoses and conclusions of the White Paper – the far-reaching adaptation of systems, notably by the development of continuing training, and the specific measures for young people who leave school without adequate training – should be seen as the starting point, accepted and confirmed by the European Council meetings in Brussels and Corfu. It is now necessary to move on to examine proposals which could be made for tackling the various challenges. The Communication also takes into account, from the outset, those elements developed by the Commission in its White Paper on social policy (1) as well as the communications on industrial competitiveness (2) and the information society (3).

3 The Commission is using this Communication to set out the main areas in which it considers larger-scale measures to be necessary, in line with the changes taking place in the Member States, in order to ensure that education and training systems are able to respond appropriately to socio-economic change, the extent of which was set out in the White Paper.

4 Under the pressure of the accelerating pace of socio-economic and technological and social change, training needs, in particular continuing training, are increasing and diversifying for both businesses and individuals. In simple terms, there are three areas in which training needs are expanding:

- needs relating to the adaptation to industrial change and resulting from the transformation of production processes and, more importantly, from the organisational changes in businesses, as a result of combining (among other things) technological skills and inter-personal skills;
- needs relating to the emergence of the information society, which puts access to knowledge and the increase in the ways it can be obtained at the centre of links between the individual and society;
- needs relating to the development of new activities in the area of services, which will determine the extent to which new employment sources can be tapped, and the establishment of new skills profiles adapted to the new occupations or qualifications which will emerge.

In addition to taking action in each of these three areas, there is a very strong case for education and training playing a more and more decisive role in the process of socialisation, integration or re-integration in a changing society. The coherence of this approach must not only be preserved, but consolidated at the level of objectives and methods to respond to the social role of education and training in our modern societies. More than ever, education and training must be seen, not just as a policy tool, but as an autonomous and coherent policy area acting in support of and jointly with the other decisive factors in social and economic modernisation.

- 5 The Communication covers five main themes:
- the anticipation of needs for the adaptation of systems,
 - the development of supply,
 - the ways and the means,
 - the resources,
 - the players.

- 6 For each of these themes, the Communication sets out the ways in which the Commission intends to develop Community activities in order to support and complement the measures taken by the Member States. This, ultimately, sets in motion those aspects related to the promotion of the European dimension.

I. THE ANTICIPATION OF NEEDS FOR THE ADAPTATION OF SYSTEMS

- 7 In a socio-economic world marked by universal and far-reaching changes, the ability to anticipate phenomena and changes in skills determines the flexibility and speed of response of education and training systems. While the processes of adapting the training-employment relationship are highly diversified at micro-economic level, the systems of training and integration assistance respond somewhat slowly and in the long term.

- 8 An improved capacity for anticipation of the systems should combine three elements:

- a) The search for greater convergence on strategic objectives of the measures taken by the various players. Certain countries have acted along these lines by setting medium-term objectives for young people undergoing initial training or for the labour force as a whole. This approach should be encouraged and generalised.
- b) The development of cooperation for improving the technical tools for forecasting. Following the coordination work done by the Commission, two general conclusions can be drawn in this area:

- considerable progress is achieved by partnerships between businesses, public authorities and instructors. In order to reach conclusions of wider scope, such schemes must be based on expertise, and scientific approaches to the anticipation of new occupations;
 - the means of anticipation are developed at various levels (macro-economic, sectoral, regional, employment and training area). It is beneficial to set up links between them, but this does not mean establishing a single system.
- c) The consideration of the change in the quality of skills. The main results stem from the transformation of work situations and of the content of skills. The observation of this change is the real advantage of anticipation schemes in terms of the piloting and implementation of training policies and measures.

9 This approach must extend to an understanding of the skills needed for a genuinely active society and give consideration to the principal purpose of education to enable individuals and citizens to take responsibility for their own choices and make a contribution to sustainable economic growth. It is forward-looking, since, far from merely observing changes, it assumes a debate between all the players involved, followed by decisions which will have an effect on the design of programmes and education in general.

10 The improvement in the ability to anticipate must be backed up by an improved ability to assess measures and to guide the adaptation of systems. Several Member States have expressed this concern, but it seems that significant progress still needs to be made in speeding up the response rates of systems and schemes characterised by a considerable degree of inertia. The concept of assessment is still too vague and is interpreted differently from one Member State to another. The development of cooperation in the area of the assessment of education and training should make it possible to determine the measures which are necessary and feasible. The teaching world and training bodies must gradually develop an assessment culture, which is a guarantee of quality, and seek to dispel doubts concerning these moves.

11 In order to promote anticipation and facilitate exchanges of methods and tools concerning this sensitive question, **the Commission is considering a proposal, in the framework of LEONARDO and its resources, for the establishment of a European network to observe changes in skills and occupations.** Such a network would draw on the work of CEDEFOP, could be linked with those organisations and bodies which have an influential role in this area in the Member States. It would be assisted by and linked to the observatory of technology trends established by DG XII, as well as the work of the EURYDICE network in the field of education. This network would have as a principle function to support ideas about methodology for the analysis and evaluation of skill needs. In this context it is the Commission's profoundly held wish that methodological questions and scientific approaches will be taken forward in initiatives linked to the anticipation of needs and competences (i.e. projects under Force and Comett and then Leonardo as well as Adapt). The Commission holds the view that the appropriate involvement of the of research specialists in education and training, would play a positive role for guiding and monitoring the work of this network.

12 The work of the network could usefully support, or evaluate, actions and projects to transfer education and training research results into the policies of the different organisations and interests involved, in particular, in the area of vocational guidance where the networking of those organisations concerned with this issue is foreseen in the LEONARDO programme. On the basis of the observations made and the database compiled by the network, it should be possible to disseminate information on the changes taking place more effectively to those most concerned

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPLY

13 Over the years, initial, integration and continuing training systems and schemes have been developed on the basis of the specialisation of structures and services for particular target groups or to address particular problems. This approach, which has resulted in considerable progress towards the introduction of diversified educational options, is now faced with a dual development:

- The transfer of innovation - be it in the areas of education or technology or in terms of products or methods - between areas or disciplines. The most striking example is the identification and acquisition of key or core skills, a concept drawn from the business world and which is becoming increasingly widespread as one of the key elements in initial training.
- The necessary adaptation - which is certainly now imminent - of the mechanisms for allocating resources in order to channel them into new areas: the development of continuing training, the improvement of the integration phase, multi-disciplinary training, increasing involvement of universities in continuing training, development of multi-media training opportunities.

14 The development of the sectors producing a new generation of major technological innovation will make it necessary to devise and disseminate new training products. The generalisation of information technology is naturally of major importance, since it affects all economic activities. The area of biotechnology looks set to produce similar phenomena in the coming years with the associated new training needs. These changes raise the question of the definition of the core of basic skills which everyone will have to acquire and which will probably have to include a technological dimension, in particular in the understanding of technology, in addition to traditional basic learning. It is also likely that new markets producing technological innovation or with the potential for creating new activities will generate needs for new multi-disciplinary skills: for example the environment, the management and development of cultural heritage, and urban areas.

15 The monitoring and guiding of systems are, therefore, becoming priority tasks for all parties involved, especially for political decision-makers. The establishment by the Commission of education/training management charts as part of the follow-up to the White Paper has made it possible to consolidate the available information drawn from the various reports of the Member States and to produce an overall view of changes, which is a useful complement to the detailed analyses of each area. **In the framework of SOCRATES and LEONARDO after adoption, the Commission is considering that the production of management charts be made on-**

going with a view to the interim reports to be produced by the Member States in 1996, that the charts be enhanced by devising and introducing quantitative indicators along the lines of the 'key figures' operation in the area of education, and that they be linked to the common framework of objectives, one of the fundamental achievements of Leonardo.

- 16 On this dual basis - management charts and common objectives - it should be possible to establish a process of permanent follow-up to developments under way in the Member States and of their convergence on several major common policy objectives. On this basis, **the Commission is also considering the possibility of outlining in more detail the content of the common objectives, through Recommendations of the Council.**

III. THE WAYS AND THE MEANS

- 17 The emergence of the information society is also a source of far-reaching change - fundamental change, in the eyes of some - in the organisation of training. This possible or probable revolution will be based on an ever faster transition from a period in which individuals have to travel to centres of knowledge (universities, training centres, libraries, etc.), to a society in which information will be disseminated on a large scale to individuals. The key question will be not so much that of access to information, but rather of the way in which it is used, to realise educational goals.

- 18 Training itself and the way in which it is organised will therefore have to be largely rethought in the light of this development. The traditional teacher-pupil model, which still predominates even in adult training courses, will decline in importance to be replaced by teach-yourself methods and a system in which each person organises his own training. The training environment and the training tools themselves will also have to be fundamentally rethought. Training in a traditional sense as a specific period of time, separate from other vocational activity and based on its own tools and structures, is going to be increasingly merged with activities in the workplace or in during leisure time, which will themselves acquire

an educational and training aspect. The growing number of computer linked work stations and the growing availability of multi-media products and materials in the home are the first signs of this phenomena. In the near future, simulations using virtual images will modify the ways we acquire technological competence and equally will transform the ways we learn. Education and initial training will also be affected; new technologies can not only enhance the teacher-pupil relationship, but can also enrich its potential. Instead of a single type of teacher-pupil relationship, it will be possible, to a greater or lesser degree, to introduce educational models in where pupils will play a more active role in learning situations.

19 In such a scenario, the question of the control of networks and of the content of the products distributed on such information transmission networks with an educational objective or effect, becomes a fundamental policy question. the development of a new range of multi-media products and its wide distribution through networks - cable or optical - is likely and should be encouraged. Following the current trends in service industries, particularly in the area of information, the participation in and/or control of the production of these new education and training media and of the pedagogical information in terms of content and language, is a major economic and cultural issue.

20 A significant number (several thousand) of innovative and transferable products have been developed through Community vocational training programmes and Community initiatives. **In the framework of Socrates and Leonardo and their resources, the Commission is examining the possibility of setting up a database of innovative products and methods in education and training.** This database would relate not only to technological innovations (NIT, biotechnology), but also to areas of potential job-creation (environment, personal services, development of cultural heritage, land management). Users could be offered remote access to this information, which could cover several thousand innovative training products, with approximately a thousand more being added every year as programmes and community initiatives are implemented.

IV. THE RESOURCES

21 The likely exponential rise in training needs resulting from the factors set out above will not be met unless new resources are made available at the same time. Traditional ways of funding training measures (public budgets for certain categories of measures and the current account of businesses for continuing training) are not unlimited. The information available - which will be consolidated by the first European continuing training survey to be carried out in 1994 by EUROSTAT - shows that funding for continuing training accounts for, at most, 3-4% of the wage bill in the countries with the most highly developed arrangements. These levels of funding are significant, but insufficient to cope with the expected diversification and strong growth of new needs. In this regard it appears that a **number of possibilities should be analyzed at Community level:**

- the treatment of the training costs of businesses or individuals as capital and not only current expenditure, especially in the way they are treated for accounting and taxation purposes (including incentives);
- the establishment of financial partnerships which involve various players, especially in employment or training areas (public authorities, local authorities, businesses, etc.); producing genuine synergy of resources and leading to the definition of transparent common arrangements for action, both in the field of education and training;
- the study of new financial services (training savings accounts, training insurance schemes) which use a proportion of household savings for funds for covering training expenditure, or unexpected increases in it, which individuals have to bear. Part of household savings would, therefore, be used to maintain and reproduce intellectual capital, in the same way as the tangible capital of individuals is protected. Accordingly, careful attention should be paid to the search for new ways of introducing joint investment by employees (in terms of funding and, above all, of time).

V. THE PLAYERS

- 22 The social dialogue on initial training, integration training and continuing training is widespread and variously affects all the operating levels of the social partners: the business, the employment area and the regional level, the sector, the national joint-trade association, the European Union. Even if practice is sometimes less consensual than theory, the actors involved and, in particular the social partners, agree that consultation and dialogue should be used to define the objectives of training policies. Consultation between partners and with the public authorities is used virtually throughout the European Union for the introduction of continuing training and alternance-based training schemes.
- 23 It also appears that the social dialogue is a good way of encouraging the development of training for two reasons. First, it is now recognised that dialogue leads to an improvement in the quality of training and especially to better matching of the needs of businesses and individuals. Second, even though there are sharp differences of opinion between employers and trade unions on this aspect, the dialogue can be beneficial for strengthening links between the training policy and the overall economic and social strategy of the business.
- 24 The involvement of the social partners in shaping training opportunities is a different question. In almost all Member States, jointly managed training bodies wield a powerful influence over training opportunities because of the level of public funding they receive. The capacity of these bodies could be increased, possibly by types of partnership or association with private bodies, so that they can play a key role in the dissemination of all kinds of educational, methodological and instrumental innovations.
- 25 The Commission's assistance to the social partners for their social dialogue and for the joint operations and projects they have initiated has been confirmed with the development of Community measures. It should now be seen as an integral part of the development of the Union's policy on vocational training, both initial and continuing. With this in mind, two approaches should be developed:

- the enhancement of the dialogue at all levels with a view to establishing the objectives of training policies and measures;
- the systematic observation of good practice in social dialogue which have led to the development or improvement of continuing training or the integration of young people.

26 The Commission is examining the possibility of a proposal to extend joint action by the social partners, notably in the framework of Leonardo. This is being considered in the context of the continuation of the measures of the FORCE programme (joint projects, study on transferability) and so building on the achievements of the support system for the social dialogue on continuing training, within which the social partners have done considerable work and which they see as a positive step forward. The common objective of these measures would be to ensure systematic dissemination of factors and elements of innovation to the parties involved in the dialogue and in the negotiation of agreements, with a view to establishing a common culture of dialogue and negotiation based on the variety of practices in use in the Union.

VI. CONCLUSIONS: THE PROMOTION OF THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

27 **Mobility and the knowledge of several languages in the Community** will be fundamental to the construction of a people's Europe. It is therefore necessary to anticipate this need and to promote a more dynamic language policy in all Member States. Insufficient progress has been made in this area: young people and adults do not have enough linguistic knowledge and insufficient use is being made in this area of modern technology in schools.

28 **The academic and vocational recognition of diplomas** is a key area for the promotion of the European dimension. The Community institutions have already taken many measures to facilitate the recognition of qualifications between the Member States, to overcome the obstacles to the mobility of people caused by the variety of vocational education systems. The Commission is now seeking to assign

an overall objective to the measures for both academic and vocational recognition. It thinks that overall consideration should be given to the types of action aimed at developing synergy between the different types of recognition, such as information, academic and occupational networks, voluntary adaptation of training and quality assessment.

29 **The organisation of the European Year of Lifelong Learning** will provide a communication framework for the measures taken by the European Union. The audience reached will thus be wider than those directly affected by the measures and there will be a greater awareness-raising effect than could be attained by individual measures taken by the Member States. As stated by the Commission in its proposal for a Decision to the Council and the European Parliament, the objectives of the European Year of Lifelong Learning are as follows: making the public aware of the importance of education and training, fostering better cooperation between structures, establishing a European area of education and training, and stressing the importance of equality of opportunities in access to education and training. In this way, the Commission intends to foster the necessary public debate on the means and objectives of lifelong learning with all parties concerned.

References

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