

ACTION PLAN ON BASIC SKILLS AND MOBILITY

The Council heard a presentation by Commissioner REDING of the action plan adopted by the Commission on 13 February 2002 on basic skills and mobility, which is an important part of the preparations for the Barcelona European Council in March 2002.

The purpose of the action plan is to promote workers' mobility and the opening up of new labour markets to European workers; the aim being to remove obstacles to mobility to enable workers to move about within the European Union. It also makes specific proposals for more uniform, more transparent and more flexible arrangements for recognising qualifications and diplomas and periods of study. To that end, the action plan proposes 25 specific measures, 15 of which relate to education and training in particular.

The Stockholm European Council in March 2001 requested the Commission to present this document. Subsequently, the Commission set up a high-level task force made up of experts from business, the world of education and the two sides of industry. This task force submitted its recommendations on 14 December 2001, on the basis of which the Commission drew up its action plan.

TEMPUS/MEDA PROGRAMME

The Council heard a presentation by Commissioner REDING of her recent proposal for a Decision to extend the TEMPUS programme to Mediterranean third countries in order to encourage cooperation in university exchanges. The Commission proposes to add a new objective relating to the development of democratic civic societies to those of TEMPUS III which is currently in force. The proposal for a Decision also provides for researchers to be included among those eligible under the programme. Finally, the Commission proposes to prolong the TEMPUS III decision until 2006, thus aligning it on the other Community programmes in this area such as SOCRATES and LEONARDO.