

IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES

COUNCIL

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007, on improving the quality of teacher education ⁽¹⁾

(2007/C 300/07)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

conditions to support teachers through initial and in-service training, and of attracting recruits to teaching and training who have professional experience in other fields ⁽⁴⁾.

HAVING REGARD to:

1. The Lisbon European Council conclusions of 23-24 March 2000, which emphasised that investing in people was crucial to Europe's place in the knowledge economy, and which called upon Member States to *'take steps to remove obstacles to teachers' mobility and to attract high-quality teachers'* ⁽²⁾.
2. The Education Council's February 2001 report to the European Council on the concrete future objectives of education and training systems, which emphasised the changing role of teachers who, while continuing to impart knowledge, *'also function as tutors, guiding learners on their individual pathway to knowledge'* ⁽³⁾.
3. Objective 1.1 of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme — *Improving education and training for teachers and trainers*, which highlights the importance of attracting and retaining well-qualified and motivated people to the teaching profession, of identifying the skills that teachers require to meet the changing needs of society, of providing
4. The Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning, which invited the Member States to improve the education and training of teachers involved in lifelong learning so that they acquire the necessary skills for the knowledge society ⁽⁵⁾.
5. The joint interim report of the Council and the Commission of 26 February 2004 on progress towards the Lisbon objectives in the fields of education and training ⁽⁶⁾, which gave priority to the development of common European principles for the competences and qualifications needed by teachers in order to fulfil their changing role in the knowledge society ⁽⁷⁾.
6. The joint interim report of the Council and the Commission of 23 February 2006 on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010' work programme, which emphasised that *'investment in the training of teachers and trainers and the strengthening of leadership for education and training institutions are crucial to improving the efficiency of education and training systems'* ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ These conclusions relate to teachers in general education and in initial vocational education; for these purposes a teacher is a person who is acknowledged as having the status of a teacher (or equivalent) according to the legislation and practice of a Member State. It does not include persons employed outside the formal systems of education and training because of the different nature and context of the tasks they undertake.

⁽²⁾ Doc. SN 100/1/00 REV 1.

⁽³⁾ Doc. 5980/01.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 142, 14.6.2002, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 163, 9.7.2002, p. 1.

⁽⁶⁾ Doc. 6905/04.

⁽⁷⁾ Annexes I and II to doc. 12414/07 ADD 1.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 79, 1.4.2006, p. 1.

7. The conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 14 November 2006 on efficiency and equity in education and training, which stated that *'the motivation, skills and competences of teachers, trainers, other teaching staff and guidance and welfare services, as well as the quality of school leadership, are key factors in achieving high quality learning outcomes'* and that *'the efforts of teaching staff should be supported by continuous professional development'*.
8. The conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 14 November 2006 on the future priorities for enhanced European cooperation on vocational education and training, which emphasised the need for highly qualified teachers who undertake continuous professional development ⁽⁹⁾.
9. Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, which includes, under the Comenius Programme, the specific objective of enhancing the quality and European dimension of teacher education ⁽¹⁰⁾.
10. The Recommendation 2006/961/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽¹¹⁾, which sets out the minimum knowledge, skills and attitudes which all pupils should have acquired by the end of initial education and training in order to take part in the knowledge society and which, given their transversal nature, imply a greater degree of collaboration and teamwork between teachers, as well as an approach to teaching that goes beyond traditional subject boundaries.

WELCOME the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 23 August 2007 on improving the quality of teacher education ⁽¹²⁾, which identifies the quality of teaching and teacher education as key factors in raising educational attainment levels and achieving the Lisbon goals, and accordingly sets out proposals aimed at maintaining and improving these.

REAFFIRM that, while responsibility for the organisation and content of education and training systems and the achievement of objective 1.1 of the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme rests with individual Member States, and while schools in many Member States enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy, European cooperation has a useful role to play in

helping the Member States to meet common challenges, particularly by means of the open method of coordination, which involves the development of common principles and goals, as well as joint initiatives such as peer learning activities, the exchange of experience and good practice and mutual monitoring.

CONSIDER that:

1. High quality teaching is a prerequisite for high-quality education and training, which are in turn powerful determinants of Europe's long-term competitiveness and capacity to create more jobs and growth in line with the Lisbon goals and in conjunction with other relevant policy areas such as economic policy, social policy and research.
2. Equally importantly, teaching provides a service of considerable social relevance: teachers play a vital role in enabling people to identify and develop their talents and to fulfil their potential for personal growth and well-being, as well as in helping them to acquire the complex range of knowledge, skills and key competences that they will need as citizens throughout their personal, social and professional lives.
3. The ability of teachers to meet the challenges of increasing social and cultural diversity in the classroom is crucial for the development of more equitable education systems and for progress towards providing equal opportunities for all.
4. The education and training of teachers is a crucial element in the modernisation of European education and training systems, and future increases in the overall level of educational attainment and the pace of progress towards the common objectives of the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme will be facilitated by the existence of effective systems of teacher education.
5. In view of the above considerations, Member States should give high priority to sustaining and improving the quality of teacher education within a career-long perspective.

NOTE that:

1. Numerous social, cultural, economic and technological changes in society place new demands on the teaching profession and hasten the need for the development of more competence-centred approaches to teaching, together with a greater emphasis on learning outcomes.

In acquiring key competences for life, pupils are increasingly expected to develop greater learning autonomy and to take responsibility for their own learning.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 298, 8.12.2006, p. 8.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 45.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 5.

⁽¹²⁾ Doc. 12414/07 + ADD 1 + ADD 2.

Furthermore, the learners in any class may come from an increasingly wide range of backgrounds and may have a very broad range of abilities.

In order to enable teachers to adapt their teaching methods to the evolving needs of learners, there is a need for them regularly to update existing skills and/or develop new ones.

2. The new demands facing teachers not only create the need to develop new learning environments and approaches to teaching, but also require a high degree of professionalism.

As schools become more autonomous and open learning environments, teachers assume ever greater responsibility for the content, organisation and monitoring of the learning process, as well as for their own personal career-long professional development.

3. This in turn presents teacher education institutions, teacher educators and schools with fresh challenges when developing or implementing programmes for both student teachers and practising teachers. In order to enable teacher education systems to meet those challenges, better coordination is required between the various strands of teacher education — from initial education, through additional early career support ('induction' ⁽¹³⁾) to in-service professional development.

In addition, greater incentives are needed for teachers to carry on updating their skills throughout their professional lives, while efforts are also required to ensure that in-service education is responsive to teaching needs in terms of both quality and quantity.

4. In several Member States there is a need not only to attract new people — including suitably qualified people with experience from other professions — into the teaching profession, but also to persuade experienced teachers to remain in the profession rather than retiring early or moving to other professions.

Improving the quality of teacher education can provide one means of making the teaching profession an attractive career choice.

⁽¹³⁾ 'Induction' refers to the process in some Member States whereby newly qualified teachers during their first years of employment are provided with the additional support (e.g. through mentoring, training, advice) which they need to take on their new role within the school and the profession; it thus forms a bridge between initial teacher education and actual professional practice.

AGREE, within the framework of their responsibilities, to:

1. Endeavour to ensure that teachers:

- hold a qualification from a higher education institution ⁽¹⁴⁾ which strikes a suitable balance between research-based studies and teaching practice,
- possess specialist knowledge of their subjects, as well as the pedagogical skills required,
- have access to effective early career support programmes at the start of their career,
- have access to adequate mentoring support throughout their careers,
- are encouraged and supported throughout their careers to review their learning needs and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence through formal, informal and non-formal learning, including exchanges and placements abroad.

2. Endeavour to ensure that teachers with leadership functions, in addition to possessing teaching skills and experience, have access to high quality training in school management and leadership.

3. Aim to ensure that provision for teachers' initial education, early career support and further professional development is coordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured.

4. Consider the adoption of measures aimed at raising the level of qualifications and the degree of practical experience required for employment as a teacher.

5. Encourage closer links and partnerships between schools — which should develop as 'learning communities' — and teacher education institutions, whilst ensuring that those institutions provide coherent, high quality and relevant teacher education programmes which respond effectively to the evolving needs of schools, teachers and society at large.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Or, in the case of those working in the field of initial vocational education, are highly qualified in their professional area and hold a suitable pedagogical qualification.

6. Promote during initial teacher education, early career support and through continuous professional development the acquisition of competences which will enable teachers to:
 - teach transversal competences such as those outlined in the Recommendation on key competences ⁽¹⁵⁾,
 - create a safe and attractive school environment which is based on mutual respect and cooperation,
 - teach effectively in heterogeneous classes of pupils from diverse social and cultural backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities and needs, including special education needs,
 - work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community,
 - participate in the development of the school or training centre in which they are employed,
 - develop new knowledge and be innovative through engagement in reflective practice and research,
 - make use of ICT in their various tasks, as well as in their own continuing professional development,
 - become autonomous learners in their own career-long professional development.
7. Provide appropriate support for teacher education institutions and teacher educators, so as to enable these to develop innovative responses to the new demands on teacher education.
8. Support mobility programmes for teachers, student teachers and teacher educators which are designed to have a significant impact on their professional development, as well as to foster better understanding of cultural differences and an awareness of the European dimension of teaching.
9. Take any appropriate steps to make the teaching profession a more attractive career choice.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMISSION, to:

1. Work together to enhance European cooperation within the framework of the open method of coordination — in consultation with the relevant stakeholders and as a transversal policy objective of the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme and its successor — in order to promote implementation of the policy priorities on teacher education outlined in these conclusions.
2. Use all available instruments, such as those forming part of the open method of coordination, the Lifelong Learning Programme, the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development and the European Social Fund, to promote — using an integrated approach — evidence-based knowledge relevant to teacher education policies, further initiatives on mutual learning, innovative teacher education projects and the mobility of teachers, teacher educators and student teachers.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See note 11.