



## SPEECH

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### **MEETING BETWEEN THE TROIKA OF THE EDUCATION COUNCIL AND SOCIAL PARTNERS, BRUSSELS, 21 MAY 2008**

#### **SPEECH BY BUSINESSEUROPE SECRETARY GENERAL, PHILIPPE DE BUCK**

##### **Introduction**

Dear Ministers, Commissioner, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here this evening to share with you the views of business on how to help stimulate creativity and innovation in Europe.

To start, we know that Europe needs to invest more – and more effectively – in human capital if it wants to enhance productivity and innovation.

We are now in 2008 some way from reaching most of the 5 Lisbon targets set in 2000 for education and training, with much variance between countries.

*(\*Early school leavers, Lifelong learning participation, Upper secondary completion, Low achievers in reading, Maths Science Technology graduates)*

While these targets remain as valid as they were in 2000, we need to also focus on the qualitative changes needed in education and training systems.

All sectors of education and training can and must play their full role in promoting innovation and creativity.

Innovation is not only important in terms of goods and products but also in learning processes, and in changing the way we think and adapt to change.

I will like to highlight some key messages from recent BUSINESSEUROPE positions focusing on schools and higher education. They notably stress the necessity today to reinforce dialogue and links between all levels of education and the world of work.

## **Schools**

Globalisation and the speed of technological progress require that we adapt the way we think, approach problems, and the way we work.

Putting in place genuine lifelong learning strategies starts in schools - providing young people with the skills they need to participate in the knowledge society and to move smoothly onto the labour market.

Most importantly this entails an understanding that they have responsibility for developing their employability throughout their working life.

With the use of individualised learning programmes based on Learning Outcomes, students need to be equipped with both generic basic competences and transversal competences for successful careers and personal fulfilment throughout life.

'Jobs for life' will in the future become more and more obsolete, this is also a reality that young people must understand – to be ready to cope with change.

Society also needs to better integrate migrants and disadvantaged groups with different cultural backgrounds, especially in schools. Multiculturalism and exposure to diversity fosters open-mindedness and new ways of thinking.

Continuing teacher training and professional development is needed with links to industry so that schools can better keep up with economic life.

Finally, we need autonomous schools able to choose their team of teachers, develop strong contacts with parents, the local community, and employers.

## **Higher education**

We also need to review the way universities and education systems function so that their contributions to modernising labour markets are maximised.

Enhancing cooperation and developing partnerships between business and universities are key in shaping the way in which our societies invest in our future and how we optimise research and innovation capacities of universities.

Europe will increasingly rely on creating high productivity jobs in technology-intensive production and sectors to reinforce its competitive advantages.

The evolution of work organisation increasingly requires employees to be adaptable, to develop problem-solving skills and to work in teams.

We need not only to raise higher education attainment levels, but also to focus specifically on science, technology, engineering and maths disciplines.

Most of Europe is already experiencing shortages in these areas that are especially important to fulfilling innovation potential.



Competition in business is the main factor driving excellence. So, the EU needs to inject more competition in higher education systems.

The **2008 joint report of the Council and the Commission (on education and training 2010)** rightly highlights the importance of the knowledge triangle to boost growth and jobs. We would add commercial awareness and providing individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset as equally important.

Boosting the innovation potential of Europe and turning knowledge into growth can be achieved if business can cooperate more with autonomous universities. This is a necessary step to increase the efficiency of spending.

This can be a catalyst to overturn current low levels of investment into higher education and R&D as well as countering the brain drain phenomenon, which sees many of Europe's scientists and academics living and working in the US.

Priorities for research should be established through joint foresight involving the scientific community, society and industry. It should also be implemented in ways that ensure the efficient participation of each community, encourage learning through competition, and aim always to improve quality.

We need excellent, diversified research institutions embedded in the social and economic life of where they are based, interacting routinely with the world of business and engaging in durable public/private partnerships.

BUSINESSEUROPE also looks forward to the realisation of the EIT and hopes that it will succeed in its goals. It offers a unique opportunity to link together the best minds in Europe with a view to responding to societal challenges.

The development of regular communication channels with enterprises is needed. The involvement of business company representatives on university boards can offer valuable expertise and know-how on fulfilling strategic goals.

Permeability between educational pathways should also be enhanced, notably opening access to those with a vocational qualification.

### **Conclusion**

BUSINESSEUROPE looks forward to 2009 as the European Year for Innovation and Creativity – and we are ready to contribute in this project.

Member states must ensure that they meet these challenges and deliver the highest quality in education systems, while responding to the needs of

- individuals,
- business,
- and society.

Thank you.

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