



YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE BUILDING OF A EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY - FINAL DOCUMENT VOTED DURING THE ENDING PLENARY SESSION

Paris-France, October 27th, 2008

PREAMBLE FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

We are students in high school or at university, young workers, young unemployed, youngsters with fewer opportunities. We hope to be as representative of European youths as possible even if its goal is not accessible. During the ending plenary session, we decided to add this preamble to our recommendations by writing this text in order to facilitate the understanding of our collective work.

You may be surprised by the content of our propositions when we focus on knowledge accessibility, on educative issues, on strengthening human rights, on social inclusion strategies as fundamental touchstone of any kind of policies which aim to build a European knowledge-based society. Why this choice?

Our definition of a knowledge-based society is different from the ones written by big international institutions, such as the World Bank or the European Commission, or at least the definitions we heard about, for example the definition decided by member states of the European Union during the State summits of Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2001). In our opinion knowledge-based society can not talk only about scientific, research and innovation issues. It must include cultural, social and democratic issues and dimensions.

We have been working for six months and we have observed such a surprising and strong tendency across all European Union. Even experts, scientists and politicians we met did not deeply understand, for most of them, what could signify a knowledge-based society. Though, this concept talks about our future jobs, about the European Union economical strategy within a global economy frame, about research and innovation policies, about educative and life-long learning policies. In other terms, talking about knowledge-based society is talking about all dimensions of our future lives.

Thus, there is a huge democratic problem that imposes to our institutions, and first of all European Union and member states, to develop and to promote democratic debates that include citizens, scientific institutions and all kind of social actors which will help our societies to discuss about *their* own vision of a European knowledge-based society. Our first conclusion is this: there can not be any building of a robust European knowledge-based society, as a common perspective shared by citizens, without democratic process of decision-making, without integrating at all territorial levels the voice of European youths. This constitutes a fundamental prerequisite to our work. We deeply hope to be heard by authorities on this precise point beyond speeches.

As an extension to this postulate, we have been particularly watchful to deal with the issue of the excluded people of the knowledge-based society. On our opinion, to define and talk about the outside frame help any decision-maker to precise what we are talking about.

Of course, we have focused on the core issues of the knowledge-based society concept. We have been very interested in its economical, fiscal, political, academic and scientific dimensions. We think to be ready to contribute in a better way to this specific debate, in a close future.

To end this introduction, we want to thank all institutions and organizations across Europe, and particularly in France, that have enabled this process, whom identity is both formal and non formal. And we hope and wish to all European youths to live such experiences in a very close future. To extend in a very significant way those process will help, without any doubt, the building of free speeches and free thoughts. We know that it necessitates major funding but on the other hand, we are convinced that the cohesion and the strengthening of our common European space require such investments. We think, and we can be considered as "human proofs", that any citizen can develop his relevant own opinion about complex subjects on the strict condition that he or she can be informed during a specific and adapted institute framework.

WE RECOMMEND

POLITICAL ASPECTS

- * To organize open debates between scientists, politicians and European youths, in each member states as at the European level to clarify a common shared vision of what should be promoted as our knowledge-based society
- * To ensure for the European Union citizens the same studying conditions in every member states whatever their citizenship
- * The whole society and public authorities promote socially and financially the status and job of scientists, teachers and educators in order to make these professions prestigious
- * To extend European exchange and mobility programs to everyone, not only students but also workers



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SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS

- * That the European Union should encourage interest in science & technology by creating and strengthening regular links between basic education and recent scientific work
- * To create an institute to overview European research to improve communication among scientists by creating a universal database where information on different research subjects could be found

EDUCATIVE ASPECTS

- * To unify a qualification credit point system for life-long learning programs must be established on the European level, seeking an update and acquisition of new knowledge
- * That the European Union and all member states have to consider as paramount the development and the promotion of critical thinking as a major educative and scientific issue, in order to turn information into knowledge
- * That educative systems should improve the understanding of the European Union and its principles as well as enabling multiculturalism
- * Learning English and two other European languages, including the mother tongue, should be compulsory throughout the compulsory levels of education in every European country
- * European authorities to promote other ways of educating people such as non-formal educative system and to include more practical skills
- * That students from all levels should be offered diverse learning methods
- * That educative systems should develop student's ability to learn how to learn in order to be adapted to a quickly evolving environment
- * That learning economics and practical financial issues should be integrated into secondary school education
- * To create a European Union platform where educators could exchange experiences and learn different teaching methodologies

CULTURAL ASPECTS

- * To organise an annual event called "European Capital of Science" which will be held alternately in every European Union country
- * Free access to all libraries for everybody within the European Union

SOCIAL ASPECTS

- * That the European Union should ensure financial support for improving accessibility and quality of public transport all over Europe for everyone and especially for disabled people in order to support them in obtaining education and their international mobility
- * In order to facilitate equal access to education, that economically-challenged citizens should be provided with financial aid to cover their living expenses during studies

ECONOMICAL ASPECTS

- * To develop policies to encourage scientists to stay in the European Union to make European science better
- * To promote open-source software and support open standards by legislating them on both national and international levels
- * That the European Union should provide basic Internet access to all European inhabitants free of charge
- * That every citizen should have the opportunity for free education at all levels which should be funded with tax-money. It is important that funding is transparent and independent from the private sector
- * To give tax relief for small and medium-size enterprises investing in science, research and development in the European Union
- * That European taxpayers must have a right to direct certain proportion of their income tax towards a social-interest or science organization of their choice