COUNCIL RESOLUTION

of 15 July 2003

on Social and Human Capital Building social and human capital in the knowledge society: learning, work, social cohesion and gender

(2003/C 175/02)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

(1) RECALLING that the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 called for an Information Society for all, and underlined the need for investment in human resources and for every citizen to be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in the information society and the need to further all aspects of equality between men and women, including the reduction of occupational segregation;

(2) RECALLING that the Lisbon European Council set the objective of raising the employment rate to an average of 70 % and of increasing the number of women in employment to an average of more than 60 % by 2010, and that the Stockholm European Council of March 2001 set intermediate targets for Community employment rates and a target of 50 % for older workers by 2010;

(3) TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the Brussels European Council of March 2003, in the context of the European Employment Strategy, underlined the importance of investment in human capital and lifelong learning as a prerequisite for the promotion of European competitiveness, for achieving high rates in growth and employment and for moving to a knowledge-based economy, and that it called for implementation of the 10-year programme on the objectives for education systems in this context;

(4) RECALLING that one of the objectives in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, approved by the Nice European Council of December 2000 and revised by the Council in December 2002, is to fully exploit the potential of the knowledge-based society and of new information and communication technologies and ensure that no-one is excluded, taking particular account of the needs of people with disabilities;

(5) RECALLING the key role that the social partners, through their autonomous work programme and in accordance with national traditions and practice, and non-governmental organisations should play, in particular in reducing the digital divide, by promoting access for all to the knowledge-based society and by exploiting the resulting potential, in particular in terms of jobs and qualifications;

(6) RECALLING that the Council by its Resolution of 8 October 2001 on 'e-Inclusion' — exploiting the opportunities of the information society for social inclusion [1] called on the Member States to, amongst other things, provide Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) training and other learning to disadvantaged people, promote digital literacy, encourage partnerships of all stakeholders and mainstream a gender equality approach in e-Inclusion policies;

(7) RECALLING that, in accordance with the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of March 2002, there is a need to ensure that all citizens, and in particular groups such as unemployed women, are well equipped with basic qualifications, especially those linked with ICTs;

(8) RECALLING that the e-Europe 2005 Action Plan includes e-learning among its key areas and provides for actions for 're-skilling in the knowledge society', and that the Council's Conclusions on 'ICTs and e-business skills in Europe' of December 2002 underlined the need to contine and further strengthen efforts to close the still existing e-skills gaps and mismatches;

(9) RECALLING, in the context of the European Year of People with disabilities (2003), the opportunities for participation of people with disabilities in the knowledge society and their need for barrier-free access, and Council Resolution on 6 February 2003 'e-Accessibility' — improving the access of people with disabilities to the knowledge-based society [2];

(10) TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the conclusions of the Conference 'Social and human capital in the knowledge society: policy implications' (October 2002), which highlighted the mutually reinforcing role of social and human capital for economic growth and social cohesion;

(11) TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Conclusions on the participation and access of women to the ICTs, following the 47th Session of the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women (New York, March 2003);

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[1] OJ C 292, 18.10.2001, p. 6.

[2] OJ C 39, 18.2.2003, p. 5.

(12) TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Ministerial conference on 'Gender and ICTs' (Athens, May 2003) devoted to the risks and opportunities of the knowledge society for gender equality;

(13) TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Commission Staff Working Paper, developed with the support of the High Level Group on the Employment and Social Dimension of the Information Society (ESDIS), on 'Building the Knowledge Society: Social and Human Capital Interactions' ([1]);

1. RECOGNISES the key role that knowledge embodied in individual capabilities and social networks plays in the context of the Lisbon strategy for ensuring that the European Union becomes the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

2. UNDERLINES the need to develop the positive interactions of social and human capital in three areas in particular: learning, work and social cohesion, while integrating the gender dimension into all these areas.

3. CALLS on Member States to consider the social and human capital elements in the planning, development and implementation of their policies and initiatives, in particular as regards the following areas:

(a) Learning

— to promote existing policies and initiatives in education and training, in particular by ensuring quality by increasing the efficiency of investments in those areas, and strengthening complementarity between education, training and employment policies, as a basis for boosting new economic and sustainable growth in the context of the Lisbon strategy,

— to promote the new possibilities for education and training within lifelong learning, such as e-learning and learning at work, taking into consideration the needs and priorities of women, as well as the importance of increased efforts in areas such as transparency, validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning and certification of skills for boosting mobility,

— to foster the skills necessary in the knowledge society, including not only basic ICTs skills but also more general capabilities such as cognitive skills, 'learning to learn', teamwork and problem solving,

— to underline the importance of synergies between teachers, parents, local communities, NGOs and enterprises for building both human and social capital through education and training,

— to emphasise the crucial importance of motivating people to participate in lifelong learning, particularly by encouraging people with a low level of qualifications, both at work and with regard to learning methods, and to emphasise the need to encourage enterprises to participate;

(b) Work

— to encourage enterprises, particularly SMEs, also using the Structural Funds and abiding by the competition rules, in the adoption of innovative work practices such as networking, clustering, e-business and e-work,

— to harness the potential of organisational learning and knowledge management solutions to enhance both social and human capital in the enterprise and foster innovation and competitiveness,

— to highlight the importance of ensuring that all workers within their specific enterprises and organisations are fully involved and properly trained in the adoption of innovative work practices, organisational learning and knowledge management which can help facilitate change, and are thus aware of the benefits in terms of improved competitiveness and quality of working life,

— to foster social capital at local level, while abiding by the competition rules, through cooperation with the social partners, enterprises, universities, research centres, NGOs and local administrations,

— to encourage, also using the Structural Funds, specific initiatives aimed at tackling the problem of well-educated/trained people having more possibilities and, in reality, more access to learning opportunities than less well-educated/trained people, who should most benefit from training, such as women and older workers,

([1]) ESDIS definitions:
Human capital: Knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate personal, social and economic well-being.
Social capital: Networks and participation in public life together with shared norms, values, culture, habits and practices, trust and understanding that facilitate cooperation within or among groups, to pursue shared objectives.

— to encourage the creation of new tasks and activities, identifying new occupational profiles as a means of innovation, creating jobs, boosting productivity and increasing human capital;

(c) Social Cohesion

— to favour an inclusive knowledge society by further developing e-Inclusion policies, in order, in particular, to tap the opportunities offered by new technologies for the inclusion of people with disabilities, and by economic development of disadvantaged areas,

— to promote the positive role of the social economy, of local development initiatives and of local communities in social capital building,

— to highlight the importance of formal and informal social networks, including digital networks, for social cohesion and the balance between flexibility, security and quality of life,

— to foster the new possibilities that ICTs offer for civic participation and volunteering,

— to prevent any imbalance in access to new technologies for persons over 40 and encourage involvement of the potentially active workforce, in the framework of the European Employment Strategy;

(d) Gender

— to fully integrate the gender perspective in all the areas mentioned under (a), (b) and (c), according to the principles of gender mainstreaming,

— to favour the empowerment of women in the knowledge society and ensure equal opportunities of access to decision-making positions in economic and public life,

— to address the current gender gaps in access to ICTs-related education, jobs and the use of ICTs,

— to enable full participation by women, including those with disabilities, in professional life, *inter alia* via the adequate provision of care facilities for children and other dependants,

— to examine working conditions for women in the knowledge society and promote any necessary improvements,

— to exploit the potential offered by ICTs for the creation of new job opportunities, especially through e-working, by making it easier to reconcile working and family life, and for the development of distance-learning programmes, especially for women in rural areas,

— to promote the use of ICTs as an effective tool for the dissemination of information and for protection and support against gender violence,

— to develop policies in support of women's economic initiatives in the ICTs sector and to foster equal participation in relevant networks,

— to highlight the consequences of the different choices made by gender as regards educational subjects and the subsequent effect on work and social life and, in particular, encourage more women to pursue higher-education studies in subjects connected with the information society,

— to ensure the collection of gender disaggregated data in ICTs use in order to develop relevant indicators.

4. NOTES the commitments already undertaken by the social partners as part of their autonomous work programme, and RECOMMENDS them in accordance with national traditions and practices:

(a) to further develop their attention to the issue of the training of women and men in the knowledge society;

(b) to pay particular attention to continuing their initiatives favouring equal opportunities for men and women in access to training, such as family-friendly practical arrangements, and to their initiatives relating to people with disabilities;

(c) to continue their efforts to implement their framework for action on lifelong learning concluded in 2002, with particular attention to the aspects identified above;

(d) to study and analyse new ways and possibilities favouring accumulation and development of human and social capital in the changing workplace;

(e) to make progress in the field of corporate social responsibility, also given its positive role for local community development;

(f) to support by different means the attainment of an adequate work-life balance allowing citizens to fully engage in family and community related activities, as well in volunteering, civic and political participation;

(g) to pay particular attention to the gender perspective when developing ICTs policies in order to give women and men equal access to ICTs jobs.

5. INVITES the Commission to:

(a) pay special attention to the social and human capital aspects in all its on-going policies and initiatives, ensuring coordination and avoiding unnecessary duplications;

(b) underline the key role of networking, also via ICTs, between higher education, centres for excellence and research institutions, to build social capital for the development and diffusion of high-quality learning material and methodology;

(c) continue, in cooperation with the Member States, the analysis on human and social capital issues, on their evolving interactions in the knowledge society and on their effects on living and working conditions; and pursue advanced research in this area, including via its dedicated centres;

(d) establish, or enhance, on-going cooperation with other international institutions and third countries, on social and human capital issues and develop improved empirical analysis in this area, also with a view to the UN World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003; and

(e) ensure the integration of the gender dimension when pursuing and developing the activities mentioned above and consider the need for gender impact assessments, in the areas mentioned, in order to avoid any undesired adverse effects and enhance the quality and effectiveness of the policies.