

# ELL(2) 03-06(p5)

## Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

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| <b>Date:</b>  | 26 January 2006                               |
| <b>Time:</b>  | 9.00 - 12.30                                  |
| <b>Venue:</b> | National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay      |
| <b>Title:</b> | EU policy and legislative priorities for 2006 |

### Purpose of Paper

1. This paper invites Members to note which European Union policy and legislative issues the Committee should prioritise and focus on in its forward work programme for 2006. The Welsh Assembly Government has provided a summary of the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme 2006 (hereafter, 'Work Programme') and its implications for the Assembly Government - extract from the Welsh Assembly Government's paper to the European and External Affairs Committee (18 January) is attached at Annex A.

### Background

2. At this meeting, this Committee has been invited to note suggested priority areas for the coming year from the European Commission's Forward Work Programme. Each of the Subject Committees, the Equal Opportunities Committee and European and External Affairs Committee are being invited to do the same, with the European and External Affairs Committee maintaining a strategic overview of the process.

3. The European Commission's Work Programme was published on 25 October 2005. It lists all priority items which the Commission will propose in 2006, under the Commission's four key aims: prosperity, solidarity, security and Europe as a world partner. A further non-priority list of items is also published by the Commission. These documents can be accessed on the Commission's website:

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/atwork/programmes/index\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm)

4. The Welsh Assembly Government paper to the European and External Affairs Committee includes their analysis of the implications of the work programme for the WAG, according to subject area. The final section of the paper focusses on education policy, notably the recommendation for a European qualification framework.

## **Suggested Priorities for 2006**

5. Members' Research and Committee Service has sifted the work programme for items which are relevant to this Committee's remit. These are mainly identified on the basis of the Commission's 2005 political priorities and are proposed in view of their cross-cutting nature, impact and relevance to Wales. A summary list of the proposals relevant to the ELL Committee can be found in Annex B and are divided into two lists, "suggested priorities" and "other items which may be of interest to the Committee".

6. The protocol for dealing with EU issues, as agreed by the Panel of Chairs, is attached as Annex C.

7. The following therefore is the suggested ELL priority for 2006, taking into account the Welsh Assembly Government's statement:

“ Recommendations for a European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

A link to the complete WAG paper is attached for reference:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/assemblydata/N00000000000000000000000000000039495.htm>

8. The Committee may decide to review its priorities or take on others which are brought to its attention during the course of the year.

## **Action for Committee**

9. The Committee is invited to note the suggested priority item from the Commission's work programme for 2006, taking into account the Welsh Assembly Government's Statement summarised at Annex A.

**Peter Black AM**

**Chair of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee**

**Contact Point: David Blair, Members' Research Service, Extn: 8691**

## Annex A

**Extract from the Welsh Assembly Government's paper to the European and External Affairs Committee (18 January).**

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### **EUROPEAN & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Date:</b>  | 18 January 2006   |
| <b>Time:</b>  | 09.00 – 12.00   |
| <b>Venue:</b> | National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay  |
| <b>Title:</b> | European Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2006: the implications for the Welsh Assembly Government |

### **Extract:**

#### **Introduction**

The Commission work programme for 2006 feels lighter, in terms of potential impact on Wales, than its programme for 2005. Some of the most important issues for the Assembly Government during 2006 will be "carry-overs" from the 05 programme. Specifically these will include the Working Time Directive, the chemical registration REACH Directive and the Directive for a single market in Services.

Structural Funds will be at the forefront of the Assembly's work. With the budgetary arrangements in place, the Assembly Government will be heavily occupied negotiating programmes with partners in Wales and with the Commission in Brussels.

2006 will be the year of preparation for the start of the new programme on 01/01/07. Beyond the Structural Funds, a new generation of programmes in areas like rural development, innovation, research and education will open up. Wales has benefited from all of these in the past and demand should remain high. 2006 is also a critical year for the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs which reaches a key implementation stage.

In the context of Wales' Presidency of the Regions with Legislative Powers (REGLEG) during 2006, the

Commission's ambitions for "Delivery and Better Regulation" will be particularly important. A reduced legislative burden, in itself, indicates part of the Commission's response to improving regulation. The Commission has committed itself to the "rigorous application" of better regulation discipline through simplification, modernisation, consultation, and a careful evaluation of the impact of policies. Our role, with partners, is to assist the Commission in this work and to help hold them to account against commitments.

## **The Commission Preamble**

The present Commission set out some key strategic aims at the start of its mandate - prosperity, solidarity, security and Europe as a world partner – and its programme for 2006 is designed to reflect these themes. In the absence of a ratified Constitution the Commission has launched a communication programme – "Plan D for democracy, dialogue and debate" – to help stimulate debate on Europe's future. The precise format of this effort and the extent of Member States' involvement will vary.

**Prosperity:** the Commission will report to the spring European Council on progress towards Lisbon through the 25 national reform programmes adopted by Member States. A European Institute of Technology is proposed and work will continue to launch the new framework programme for research from 2007. 2006 is designated the European Year of Mobility for Workers. Emphasis is placed on finalising the internal market for energy and work will continue to explore new technological solutions such as clean coal and renewable energies. The single market will be simplified in general but strengthened specifically on postal services, public procurement and banking. The potential for enlargement of the eurozone will be examined in the light of macroeconomic conditions.

**Solidarity:** the Commission will set out ideas on coping with the problem of demographic ageing; alongside this will be thoughts on the effective management of migration flows. There will be further discussions on climate change and proposed measures such as bringing the aviation sector into the emissions trading scheme. The sustainable management of natural resources will extend to reform of the wine, fruit and vegetables and the bananas sectors – this will bring the current process of agricultural reform into its final phase following the agreement on sugar reform. Soaring oil prices have under-lined the importance of competitive and secure energy supplies for Europe. Energy efficiency and renewable sources will be promoted and the potential of biofuels further explored. A new maritime strategy will pioneer an integrated approach to developing the maritime economy supported by excellence in marine science and technology.

**Security:** the cross-border nature of terrorism calls for better co-ordination between law enforcement authorities; the same applies for organised crime. A number of initiatives are planned in relation to confronting health risks, specifically in the fields of food safety and transport.

**Europe as a world partner:** enlargement preparations will continue for Bulgaria and Romania as well as accession talks with Turkey and Croatia. Further accession requests may be dealt with and neighbourhood action plans progressed, particularly in developing integrated energy markets. Major

development commitments were made in 2005; the Union must deliver on these in 2006. The consequences of the Doha round of negotiations in Hong Kong will be followed up. The Union will contribute to an efficient multilateral approach to sustainable development worldwide.

**Delivery and Better Regulation:** Impact assessments are now standard for legislative and policy defining proposals. As a result of following Better Regulation principles, the Commission withdrew 68 proposals in 2005 and is committed to testing all proposals against subsidiarity and proportionality (in plain English, acting only when necessary and "in the lightest form consistent with achieving its objectives"). The Commission's approach to value for money is thus defined: "The EU Budget should only be used when it can offer better value for money than spending at national level." The Commission is committed to simplifying legislation and will focus on the automotive, construction and waste sectors during the first phase.

Below is a more detailed summary of the Commission's plans divided into work sectors that reflect Assembly organisation...

### **... EDUCATION POLICY**

The principal dossier on the education side will be:

The Recommendation for a European Qualification Framework.

This legislative proposal aims to improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications across the EU (The Welsh Assembly has responded to the ongoing Commission consultation on EQF and has drafted a position on behalf of the European regional lifelong learning network (EARLALL)).

The Commission will publish a revision of the Television without Frontiers Directive. This legislative proposal, which has the dual aim of promoting competitiveness and cultural diversity, covers new media for the first time (internet and mobile phones) and proposes modified rules to govern advertising in broadcasting.

2006 will also see the publication of the Joint Council-Commission Interim report on education and training which tracks progress vis-à-vis meeting the Lisbon goals in the area of education and training.

There are no specific proposals for youth and culture in the work programme but the Commission and Council will focus on implementing the European Youth Pact and on the contribution of culture to the Lisbon agenda.

## **Annex B: items for ELL Committee**

i. Suggested priority items

There is one suggested priority item for the ELL Committee from the EC work programme

| <b>Qualifications</b>   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Recommendation for a European Qualifications Framework (EQF)</p> <p>[This is referenced in the Welsh Assembly Government's paper and is noted in papers to EDT (high priority) and HSS (lower priority) Committees]</p> <p>Non-legislative</p> | <p>The main policy objective is to establish - on a voluntary basis - a European reference framework that will facilitate transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications in Europe. A set of common reference levels will facilitate the comparison of education and training provisions and be supported by principles for quality assurance, validation, guidance, key competences etc. The EQF will support the comparability and thus eventually also the recognition of qualifications, provide a framework for development of qualifications at sector level and support the lifelong learning of individual citizens.</p> <p>From the initial impact assessment - The main problem addressed in this initiative is the lack of transparency of qualifications, a reluctance to recognise qualifications acquired in another Member State and the lack of arrangements allowing citizens to transfer qualifications from one setting to another. An additional problem linked to these is the tendency to value learning in formal settings higher than those acquired in non-formal and informal settings (for example at work).</p> <p>As the nature of the main problem addressed here is transnational, it cannot be solved by individual Member States alone, but requires either bilateral/multilateral or EU level action</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: Sept 06</p> |

**ii. other items which may be of interest to the Committee**

|   | Title   | Brief Description   |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | <p>Youth in action</p> <p>Règles relatives aux responsabilités des Etats membres et de la Commission dans les relations avec les Agences Nationales des programmes Jeunesse en action et Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Legislative</p> | <p>This decision defines the respective rights and obligations of the Commission and the Member States as far as the role of National Agencies in implementing the programmes Youth in Action and Lifelong Learning, and, in particular, the contractual relations with the Agencies, the financing conditions and the responsibilities for, and modalities of, supervision and follow-up, control and audit.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 4th quarter 2006</p> |
| 3 | <p>Teacher competences and qualifications</p> <p>Proposal for a recommendation of the Council and the European Parliament on the quality of teacher education in the member states.</p> <p>Non-legislative</p>                    | <p>The proposal sets out a set of common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications which will support Member States' policy development in order to ensure that teachers entering the profession are appropriately qualified and continue to develop and update their skills throughout their careers.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 1st quarter 2006</p>   |

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| 4 | <p>Lisbon objectives</p> <p>Commission staff working paper on the progress towards the Lisbon objectives in the fields of education and training (2006 report).</p> <p>Non-legislative</p> | <p>The report evaluates progress made of the Member States by 2005 in the field of education and training in a world-wide perspective, following up the Lisbon objectives. The analysis is based on 29 indicators and five benchmarks of progress for 2010. The analysis covers apart from the 25 Member States also Candidate and Accession countries as well as countries of the European Economic Area.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 1st quarter 2006</p> |
| 5 | <p>Tempus – higher education</p> <p>Commission Communication on the pursuit of the Tempus scheme after 2006</p> <p>Non-legislative</p>   | <p>The Communication will outline the European Union's actions with its partner countries in Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean region in the field of higher education within the Tempus scheme after 2006.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 1st quarter 2006</p>  |



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| 6 | <p>Education &amp; Training systems<br/>– equity and efficiency</p> <p>Commission Communication<br/>on Efficiency and Equity of<br/>Education and Training Systems</p> <p>Non-legislative</p>  | <p>The Communication will explore policy situations where equity and efficiency complement each other and where government intervention may produce more efficient and equitable education and training systems. The focus will be on the importance of institutional reforms and incentive changes.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 3rd quarter 2006</p>   |
| 7 | <p>Lisbon – indicators &amp;<br/>benchmarks</p> <p>Commission Communication<br/>on establishing a coherent<br/>framework of indicators and<br/>benchmarks in the field of<br/>education and training<br/>following up the Lisbon<br/>Objectives</p> <p>Non-legislative</p> | <p>In the Council Conclusion of 24 May 2005 on "New Indicators in education and training" the Commission was invited to report back to the Council no later than the end of 2006 in order to take stock of initiatives taken and to assess progress made towards the establishment of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks, including a reconsideration of the suitability of existing indicators used for monitoring progress.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 3rd quarter 2006</p> |

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| 8 | <p>Adult education</p> <p>Commission Communication on Adult Education</p> <p>Non-legislative</p>  | <p>The proposed Communication underlines the importance of adult education as a fundamental component of lifelong learning policies. It also identifies existing good practices, structures and systems as well as policy actions needed to improve access to and quality of adult education. In addition, the Communication provides the necessary policy-oriented underpinning for the sectoral programme on adult education, "Grundtvig", which will form part of the overall Integrated Programme for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013.</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 4th quarter 2006</p> |
| 9 | <p>The use of ICT</p> <p>Commission Communication on the use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all - 'Towards a Learning Society for all'</p> <p>Non-legislative</p> | <p>The Communication analyses the use of ICT for education and training, focusing on innovation and the support offered for lifelong learning. It builds upon the e-Learning Action Plan (2001), work under the e-Learning Programme 2004-2006 and the e-Learning conference of 2005 and aims to set the political priorities for ICT in the new integrated lifelong learning programme (ILLP).</p> <p>Estimated date of adoption: 4th quarter 2006</p>  |

## **Annex C Protocol for committee scrutiny and action on EU policy**

**This protocol was agreed by the Panel of Chairs in April 2005.**

The key to influencing proposals is to engage with the right players at the right time. This is a suggested general approach to European issues, Committees may wish to consider some or all of the following in order to maximise their effectiveness:

Inviting the Welsh Assembly Government to explain the impact of a proposal on Wales, to give its response to the proposal and explain how it is making its views known to the UK government and Commission.

Inviting a Commission representative, UK government officials or MEPs for a direct exchange of views.

Inviting Welsh or UK organisations to the committee or expert witnesses to give their views on any particular issue, (e.g. business representatives, ASPBs, Welsh Local Government Association, social and environmental NGOs, universities).

EU proposals may sometimes cut across several committees remit and will therefore require co-ordination of views and perspectives. In such a case, it may be appropriate for one committee to take the lead.

Having agreed its position on an issue, Committees may wish to promote this to the key institutions in the decision-making process, and other relevant players, as follows:

The European Parliament: for example, by communicating this to Wales MEPs and inviting them to pursue the issue in the European Parliament. Channels open to MEPs to do so include:

- influencing relevant EP committee rapporteurs;

- tabling amendments;

- tabling questions to the Commission and representatives of the Council of Ministers;

- influencing the position of their EP political grouping.

The European Commission:

- by responding to Commission consultations;

- inviting the Commission to Committee meetings or engaging in dialogue with the Commission through other opportunities, such as European conferences;

- write to the relevant Commissioner responsible for the policy to promote the Committee's view.

In addition to scrutinising the WAG's position, the Committee may wish to

write to the relevant UK government Minister to make its view known.

Other potential players include:

the European committees of the Houses of Parliament, for example, submitting evidence to House of Lords' enquiries;

Assembly Members of the Committee of the Regions may table amendments to the CoR's reports;

European associations on which the Assembly is represented and other networks of like-minded regions and organisations. Forming a pan-European coalition on an issue is important for having a wider impact and takes the debate beyond national boundaries.

Monitoring the progress of the proposal through the decision-making process, either through updates from the Welsh Assembly Government in particular on the outcome of Council meetings (Minister's report, for example), or through European update briefings from the Members' Research Service.

In the interest of transparency, the Committee Chair should request that WAG systematically brief committees on the outcome of Council of Ministers meetings which are relevant to the committee's remit.

It may be necessary for the committee to re-assess its view in light of the evolving negotiations and to issue a further response at a later stage.