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to	Employment Committee (EMCO)
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Subject:	Contribution from the Education Committee to the Employment Committee on the draft 2012 Joint Employment Report

Following the Education Committee's meeting on 19-20 January 2012, delegations will find attached the Committee's opinion on the above draft report, which will now be forwarded to the Employment Committee (EMCO).

Contribution from the Education Committee to the Employment Committee on the draft 2012 Joint Employment Report

The Education Committee welcomes the draft 2012 Joint Employment Report¹, which stresses the importance of skills and competences as a prerequisite for growth through innovation, productivity and high employment. There is a lot of common ground between the findings presented in the JER and those set out in the draft "ET2020" Joint Report² on issues of particular importance in terms of ensuring growth and jobs.

With regard to section 2.4 ('Invest in education and training - Guidelines 8 and 9'), the Education Committee agrees with the report's emphasis on the urgent need, amongst other things, to modernise education and training systems so as to ensure that they effectively equip young people with relevant skills and competences. At a more general level, the current budgetary context calls for priority to be given to investment in education and skills development in order to reinforce the efficiency and effectiveness of those systems.

Greater efforts are needed to facilitate the transition from education to work for young people, who have been particularly badly hit by the current economic crisis. The Education Committee recognises the crucial role that education policies and measures can play in better anticipating future skills needs, in cooperation with the social partners and other relevant key stakeholders.

Supporting lifelong learning and the enhanced recognition of skills and competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning offer other ways for education policies to help labour market policies in meeting common challenges. The development of skills through cooperation between the world of education and that of work - for instance via social dialogue, dual education opportunities, internships, traineeships and other practical elements in education and training programmes - could also be better promoted at all levels of education.

¹ Doc. 17229/12 ADD 3.

² Doc. 18577/12.

Furthermore, in the context of Member States' efforts to work towards the headline education target in the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Education Committee supports a continued focus on preventive and early intervention policies to combat early school leaving and on measures to increase tertiary or equivalent attainment levels - in both cases including by ensuring more attractive VET systems - as well as enhance the relevance of tertiary or equivalent education to the labour market.

Finally, the Education Committee invites EMCO to engage in dialogue with a view to improving cooperation on the issues of the multilateral surveillance and ad hoc reviews which are to be held later in the European Semester.

Main policy messages

Addressing youth unemployment requires tackling it through active labour market policies and preventing it through equipping young people with relevant skills in line with labour market conditions and hereby preparing for a smooth transition from education to work. This requires:

- (1) forging stronger links between the world of education and the world of work, for instance by promoting practical elements and quality internships, including dual education programmes, at all relevant levels of education;
- (2) enhanced recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- (3) a continued focus on preventive and early intervention policies to combat early school leaving and measures to increase tertiary or equivalent attainment levels.

The Council adheres to the 2012 Annual Growth Survey's message that, in times of tight public finance, priority should be given to growth-enhancing policies such as education. Such investments have to go hand in hand with efforts to modernise education and training systems, with a view to reinforcing their quality, efficiency and effectiveness.