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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject: Draft Council Resolution on A New Skills Agenda for an Inclusive and
Competitive Europe
- *Adoption*

In the course of several meetings, the Education Committee has prepared the above conclusions with a view to their adoption at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 21-22 November 2016.

The text now meets with the broad agreement of all delegations, subject only to any linguistic reservations.

The Permanent Representatives Committee is accordingly invited to confirm the agreement reached and to forward the text to the Council for adoption and subsequent publication in the Official Journal.

Council Resolution

on A New Skills Agenda for an Inclusive and Competitive Europe

The Council of the European Union,

ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEW POLICY CONTEXT in which

- new ways of working, automation and robotisation are affecting the types of knowledge, skills and competences needed in an evermore competitive, complex and multicultural world, many economic sectors are undergoing rapid technological and structural change, and digital competence and transversal skills have become necessary to overcome skills gaps and mismatches and to enable people to perform and adapt to future jobs and societal changes;
- low levels of basic skills, transversal skills and digital competence may jeopardize employability and active participation in society;
- at the same time, and to varying degrees, parts of Europe are subject to different phenomena, such as prolonged periods of low economic and employment growth particularly affecting young people, an ageing population, as well as the increased migratory flows, low levels of innovation and new security risks;

1. TAKES NOTE of the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A New Skills Agenda for Europe: Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness¹; WELCOMES its contribution to joint efforts on skills development within the EU and to bringing together the worlds of work and education; and RECALLS that individual proposals under the New Skills Agenda for Europe will undergo examination in the respective Council bodies;
2. AGREES that the following issues should be underlined due to their utmost importance:
 - a) the mission of education and training is to prepare not only for the labour market, but also to contribute to social inclusion and cohesion, through a broader personal development of individuals and life-long learning, leading towards a critical, confident, active and independent citizen, able to understand the complexity of modern society and prepared to cope with the fast-paced changes that occur within it. It is important to go beyond the immediate needs of the labour market and focus also on those aspects of education and training that are able to drive innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity, shape sectors, create jobs and new markets, empower people (including the most vulnerable), enrich democratic life, and develop engaged, talented and active citizens. With regard to recent tragic events related to radicalization in parts of Europe, a particular focus on civic, democratic, intercultural competences and critical thinking is even more urgent;

¹ Doc. 10038/16

- b) learners at all ages need excellent teachers and trainers to develop a broad set of competences they need both for life and future work. Teachers and trainers can inspire and help learners acquire higher and more relevant knowledge, skills and competences and play a key role in introducing new teaching and learning methods. However, continuous and sustained efforts are needed to attract, support and retain talent and excellence within the teaching profession by ensuring that teachers and trainers have an appropriate working environment and are themselves kept up to date with the latest developments and an open-minded approach to the technological and societal changes happening around them;
- c) closer links between education and training and the world of work, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders play a key role in ensuring that the potential and talent of every individual is unlocked and contributes to their better employability, integration and active participation in society; such links also help to ensure that education and training systems remain flexible and responsive to changes in society and the labour market. It is also important to promote the commitment of employers towards the lifelong learning of their employees;
- d) the acquisition of digital competence from an early age is vital, but education and training need to respond not only to current labour market needs for specifically identified technical skills, but also to the longer term objective of developing the flexible mind-set and curiosity needed to adapt and acquire the new, as yet unidentifiable, knowledge, skills and competences that will be needed to steer the technological development of the future;

- e) the measures outlined in the New Skills Agenda for Europe should be carried out in coherence with the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), as it brings together all forms of learning, fully respects subsidiarity, offers a useful platform to support Member States' policies and fosters EU-level cooperation, as well as with other relevant policy processes such as the European Semester. The arrangements for coordination at the European level in the area of education, training and skills and the reporting issues, should be efficient and effective, in agreement between the Member States and the Commission. Full use of the expertise of the Member States should be made, building on already existing structures;
 - f) the availability of adequate EU funding needs to be considered to ensure the viability of agreed actions under the New Skills Agenda for Europe.
3. CALLS on the Commission to take account of this Resolution when submitting further deliverables under the New Skills Agenda for Europe.
