

**COMPETITIVENESS / INTEGRATED APPROACH - Council conclusions**  
**C: CONCERNING E-SKILLS STRATEGY, THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**  
[Council of the European Union 14865/07 \(Presse 259\)](#), Provisional Version, Press Release, 2832nd Council meeting, Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry and Research), Brussels, 22-23 November 2007

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

1. The 2007 Spring European Council, which called on Member States and EU institutions to create better framework conditions for innovation, enhance the better regulation agenda to create a more dynamic business environment, develop a sustainable integrated European climate and energy policy and invited the Commission to submit an ambitious and comprehensive review of the Single Market, with particular attention to stimulating the potential of SMEs, including in the cultural and creative sectors;
2. The Conclusions of the November 2006 Council linking external policies to the EU's broader competitiveness agenda, as presented in the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs;

HAVING REGARD

3. The contribution of the Commission to the October Meeting of Heads of State and Government –The European Interest: Succeeding in the age of globalisation;
4. The communication from the Commission on the Mid-Term review of Industrial Policy – a contribution to the EU's growth and jobs strategy;
5. The communication from the Commission on E-skills for the 21st Century, fostering Competitiveness, Growth and Jobs (E-skills strategy);
6. The communication from the Commission on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises – Key for delivering more growth and jobs. A mid-term review of Modern SME policy;
7. The European Competitiveness Report 2007;

STRESSES THAT

8. The goal of making the EU a dynamic and competitive, knowledge-based economy remains essential to achieving a sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion;
9. There is a need for more integrated policies contributing to European competitiveness, in the light of globalisation, advances in science and technology and environmental and energy challenges, particularly by:

- ensuring a better functioning of the Single Market;
- strengthening the knowledge triangle: R&D, innovation and education;
- improving the framework conditions for enterprises, stimulating entrepreneurship and enhancing the conditions to unlock the full potential of SMEs to promote their growth and development;
- fighting climate change and promoting the transition to a low carbon economy through a new sustainable approach to industrial policy, as set out in the 2007 Spring European Council Conclusions;
- further enhancing the external dimension of competitiveness;

THEREFORE, IN VIEW OF THE NEW CYCLE OF THE LISBON STRATEGY, THE COUNCIL

10. WELCOMES the Commission’s vision for the Growth and Jobs Strategy and CONSIDERS that the current Integrated Guidelines of the Lisbon Strategy remain broadly relevant and that the new cycle will represent the key instrument for tackling the current challenges and it should assure the necessary stability to deepen its implementation;
11. SHARES the Commission’s analysis on the need to maintain the four priority areas, as agreed by the 2006 Spring European Council focusing on delivery within the existing governance structures and ACKNOWLEDGES the need to reinforce competitiveness in tackling further reforms, at the Member States and at community level, within the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs, in particular in the following policy areas:
  - Enhancing the role of Industrial Policy, focusing on favourable and stable framework conditions to improve sustainability, technology and innovation, to face the challenges of increased international competition, technological progress, energy and global climate change;
  - Putting more emphasis on SMEs, taking into account their role as drivers of growth and job creation, helping them to take full advantage of the globalisation opportunities and promoting their competitiveness and sustainable growth;
  - Endorsing the invitations set out in the Council Resolutions on “Education and training as a key driver of the Lisbon Strategy” and on “New skills for new jobs” as well as developing a life long learning strategy and focusing on the need to address e-skills as a way of contributing to the development of an knowledge-intensive products and services and a more inclusive society;
  - Promoting the role of R&D and innovation, including non-technological innovation, to encourage the development of enterprises’ capacities and increase their competitiveness;

- Ensuring an efficient and effective Internal Market, addressing the existing barriers providing entrepreneurs with a solid foundation on which to adapt to globalisation and ensuring a level-playing field among enterprises across the EU to encourage, in particular SMEs, to engage more in cross-border activities;
- Accelerating the implementation of the Better Regulation Agenda, including the reduction of administrative burdens in accordance with the Conclusions of the 2007 Spring European Council;
- Developing, within our commitment to an open global trading system, the external dimension of competitiveness, pressing for increased opening up of international markets which should lead to reciprocal benefits, strong enforcement of IPR rules, strong efforts to create regulatory convergence with our trading partners, in order to create a level playing field, and transparent and effective trade defence instruments;

12. INVITES the Commission, within the partnership approach embodied in the re-launching of the Lisbon strategy, to:

- take into account the above-mentioned policy areas when presenting the new Community Lisbon Programme which should contain the most important Community level initiatives for attaining the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs;
- work closely with the other institutions to ensure that the key proposals of the new Community Lisbon Programme are given priority in the decision-making process and during implementation;
- report on the progress achieved in the context of the annual strategic debate on the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs;

AND SETS UP FURTHER ORIENTATION ON

A: industrial policy;

B: SME policy;

C: e-skills strategy;

D: innovation priorities;

UNDERLINING the importance of having coordinated action and close monitoring in these fields;

[...]

## **C: CONCERNING E-SKILLS STRATEGY, THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

1. RECALLING its conclusions on industrial policy of May 2007, which have encouraged the Commission and the Member States to continue their activities to promote entrepreneurship and associated skills, develop a long-term e-skills strategy for improving competitiveness, employability and lifelong learning;
2. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the recommendations of the European e-Skills Forum established in 2003 and those of the ICT Task Force launched in 2006, incorporated respectively, in the conclusions of the European e-skills conferences organized in 2004 and 2006 in Thessaloniki; as well as the Riga Ministerial Declaration on e-inclusion in 2006;
3. UNDERLINES the importance of e-skills (ICT-related skills) and the uptake of information and communication technologies (ICT) for competitiveness, growth, employment, education and lifelong training and social inclusion;
4. WELCOMES the Commission Communication, which proposes a long-term e-skills agenda, in response to the need to address e-skills as a way of contributing to the development of an economy based on knowledge-intensive products and services and a more inclusive society;
5. EMPHASISES the need to rapidly implement a long-term e-skills agenda, to improve cooperation and mobilization of all stakeholders and to adopt best strategies and practices in order to better face global competitive challenges, while recalling the central role of Member States in developing national policies and actions;
6. INVITES the Commission, Member States and stakeholders to proceed with the five action lines at the European level as presented in the Communication, with a view to complete them by 2010, while ensuring that any new proposals are consistent with existing initiatives and that Member States' responsibility for their education and training systems is respected;
7. SUPPORTS the Commission's intention to continue to:
  - provide a platform for the exchange of best practices;
  - promote a regular dialogue on e-skills and;
  - develop a European e-Competence Framework; in cooperation with Member states and stakeholders;
8. INVITES the Member States to:
  - further develop their long-term e-skills strategies, taking into account the key components and action lines proposed by the Commission, where appropriate;
  - include e-skills strategy in their national reform programmes, in the context of their lifelong learning and skills policies;

- take into account SMEs specificities in this field and the importance of ICT diffusion for their competitiveness;
9. ENCOURAGES the industry, social partners and education providers, including academia, to mobilise themselves, putting emphasis on social responsibility, to take initiatives contributing to the implementation of the long-term e-skills strategy;
  10. WELCOMES the Commission's intention to organize a conference in 2008 to report on progress made, present the results of the actions and discuss the way forward and to release a report in 2010 to the Council and the European Parliament based on the results of an independent evaluation and the assessment of the stakeholders;
  11. COMMITS to continue and enlarge the debate on these issues in order to achieve an integrated approach in which social cohesion, gender issues, such as encouraging women to choose ICT careers, e-inclusion and promotion of new ICT professions and skills can be fully discussed.

[...]