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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

*accompanying 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 partnership for the modernisation of universities: the EU Forum for  
UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS DIALOGUE"**

**Impact Assessment Summary**

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## COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

### SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR THE MODERNISATION OF UNIVERSITIES: THE EU FORUM FOR UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS DIALOGUE"

This impact assessment will accompany the Commission Communication on 'A new partnership for the modernisation of universities: the EU Forum for University-Business Dialogue'. The Education Council in its resolution on modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in a global knowledge economy invites the Commission to support the Member States with regard to the Modernisation agenda, including through encouraging partnerships between universities and industry/private sector.

Education and training was, from the start, identified as a crucial factor in achieving the overall objectives of the Lisbon Strategy. Particularly important in this context is the Knowledge Triangle as a key driver of the knowledge economy in delivering sustainable growth. Europe has to reinforce its efforts to make the triangle fully operational<sup>1</sup>. Universities have a key role to play in this regard and new forms of cooperation between universities and research organisations with the world of enterprise, to address education – research – innovation ecosystems have to be developed and implemented.

The Communication of the Commission “Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation”<sup>2</sup> highlighted the key role Universities play in **Europe’s future and for the successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society**. It underlined the need for in-depth restructuring and modernisation of the sector if Europe is not to lose out in the global competition in education, research and innovation. It proposed that business had a contribution to make in three areas:

- Governance: business management models could be imported to the university world;
- Funding: enterprises have a potential role to play in funding university activities in both the education and the research fields; and
- Curricula: students need to receive the kind of education which will prepare them for the world of work of the future, enterprises can both help to define that and can offer the kinds of placement which will help students make the transition from study to work. Enterprises must also feel encouraged to release their staff for further learning and updating of their skills throughout their working lives.

The revised Lisbon strategy underlines the importance of a partnership approach: the Lisbon agenda must be owned by all stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local level. All should contribute to construct Europe’s future. Mobilisation and collective effort are the key

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2008) 865 final “An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training”

<sup>2</sup> COM(2006) 208 final "Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation"

elements of the partnership. **Universities, research organisations and companies are crucial actors in such partnerships.**

The Commission organised a first University-Business Forum in February 2008 and three subsequent thematic seminars during later in the year. This showed that stakeholders value the dialogue. Discussions did not focus on the "IF there should be cooperation", but on "HOW cooperation is to be organised" so that it is beneficial for all stakeholders. Participants from both the enterprise and the education sides welcomed the opportunity to dialogue on these issues and to build on the experience already gained. There was strong support for a University Business Forum at the European level to act as a forum for dialogue and for mobilising partnerships and also for the collection, sharing, exchange and dissemination of good practices on how business and universities can cooperate to their mutual advantage. This Communication proposes to formalise the University-Business Forum and how it should be structured for the years ahead; it draws policy conclusions from the dialogue to date and outlines issues to be addressed in the next phase of its work.

The University-Business Forum should address a wide range of issues across the range identified in the 2006 Communication, notably:

- to support curricular development to ensure better employability of graduates;
- to support the identification of those skills that graduates are expected to have when entering the labour market;
- to support the development of an entrepreneurial mindset among graduates, professors and researchers;
- to support the development of appropriate Governance structures at Universities;
- to support the development of HE in the field of lifelong learning, more precisely the cooperation between universities and companies in the identification and provision of training/retraining programmes;
- to support inter and transdisciplinarity in the research and trainings agenda;
- to support the exchange, sharing and creation of knowledge through increased mobility between universities, research organisations and business (students, researchers, professors, other staff of HEI, company staff).

This impact assessment considers potential impacts relating to two main objectives from this overall agenda: the issue that too many graduates do not have the right mix of knowledge, skills and competences for the labour market, and the second, the insufficient innovation capacity of Europe.

Four main options exist for action on EU level: No additional action (baseline scenario); specific actions using the existing instruments; focused policy action on EU level including the issuing of a policy document on EU level together with the establishment of a platform on European level for a structured dialogue between the stakeholders; focused policy action targeted at Member States.

For none of the options any environmental impacts are expected. The different options do not have budgetary impacts. All proposed actions would be implemented within existing financial resources.

Observation shows that successful university-business cooperation has positive economic and social impacts. However it is difficult to assess to what extent the proposed options would have direct economic and social impacts in the Member States. There is no way to prescribe on European level that and what action is to be taken by the Member States. The EU can only provide supporting measures to the Member States. The EU can show that there is urgency for action, it can identify and inform about main issues and possible solutions, it can provide a platform for discussion and exchange between the stakeholders and it can provide access to examples of good practice stemming from multiple sources. On European level we can improve synergies between existing initiatives and programmes.

Option 3, namely a focused policy action on EU level including the issuing of a policy document on EU level together with the establishment of a platform on European level for a structured dialogue between the stakeholders is considered to be the most advantageous one.

Monitoring and evaluation would on one side be addressed under the updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, on the other specific surveys could be undertaken to assess progress in the field.