



COUNCIL MEETINGS

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS)

26.11.2012 - 27.11.2012

**Location: Council of the European Union (Justus Lipsius building),
Brussels**

MINISTER PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS

26 November 2012

Monday 26 November 2012

12:55 Press Conference (20 λεπτά)

Statement in Greek

EDUCATION

Dear members of the media good day to you all,

Allow me to welcome you to this first press conference of the Council concerning the works of the meeting for Education, Audiovisual and Culture.

The main goal of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union is to achieve our common targets for a better Europe for future generations, a Europe that is committed to the fundamental values in the name of which sustainable solutions will be promoted and secured with social sensitivity, better living standards and quality of life. A European Union which means more for its citizens and the world, based on the principle of solidarity, aiming to foster social cohesion and effectiveness based on targeted policies that will contribute to growth.

In particular, in the fields of Education and Training we are building on the cooperation and the common concerns of all Member States in order to promote EU policies in all areas that affect us in a manner

beneficial for Europe and its citizens. We rely on the assumption that these areas are important for economic development, social cohesion and welfare of citizens of the European Union, especially in the tough economic times we all experience today.

It is in this frame that we worked at our Ministerial Meeting, during which we discussed a number of important issues in the field of education:

The Cyprus Presidency briefed the Council on the progress of the work on the proposal to renew the program “Erasmus for All» for the years 2014-2020.

Then, as expected, we reached a political agreement on the recommendation for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which invites Member States to establish mechanisms to validate these types of learning at the latest by 2018.

Another important issue of education addressed today was the problem of illiteracy that affects all the Member States of the European Union as one in five European citizens do not possess the skills required for succeeding in modern job market and life.

We have adopted Council conclusions on Literacy, which is one of the priorities of the Presidency in the field of education and training. Last September, the Cypriot Presidency had a Conference on "Literacy for All" during which the survey results of the High-Level Group on subject were studied. The conclusions of the conference call on Member States to improve the literacy skills of their citizens,

with the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders, organizations and authorities, as part of the wider strategy for acquiring skills. The issue was also discussed at the Informal Ministerial Council of Education which was held in Nicosia last October. As Ministers responsible for education, we received and responded to these messages.

Council Conclusions were also adopted regarding the crucial role of education and training as part of the strategy "Europe 2020" in order to achieve economic recovery, growth, employment and social cohesion.

We have also held a public discussion, based on the discussion paper prepared by the Cyprus Presidency on how to enhance the quality, capacity and authority of teachers at a time of limited financial resources.

A shared belief of all ministers is that improving the quality of education should be our most basic aspiration. Investing in education at a time of crisis through smart and innovative actions will have a positive long term effect and therefore we must commit to a better Europe and a better future for our citizens.

As noted by the Nobel Laureate and Professor of Economics Mr Pissarides at the Informal Ministerial Council in Nicosia, education can help eliminate the consequences of the economic crisis, reducing the long-term impact of the crisis on growth and help to achieve a more robust growth after that. Cuts in education can leave permanent injuries to a generation that can last for decades. So it is important to

give priority to maintaining the quality of education in every possible way. The effort to enhance the quality of education provision, through targeted and effective investment in education will have positive consequences for people, their societies and economies, as well as to address other problems, such as poverty and unemployment.

Dear All,

The Presidency is satisfied with the discussions and decisions taken. The cooperation and all the discussions held throughout the semester, as a continuation of previous presidencies, provide us with a detailed and comprehensive analysis of policies and actions through which education can build a solid foundation for a long term, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe.

I believe that the issues discussed relate directly to everyone and are the focus of everyone's attention. I am confident that through the interesting and productive discussions that we have had we have now a much more accurate picture of what to do. We are now ready to move into action and Cyprus Presidency assured that we will use all the decisions, opinions and suggestions.

CULTURE AND AUDIOVISUAL

I'll conclude my statement with a reference to issues of culture and media which are in the afternoon agenda.

The issues on Culture to be discussed at the meeting of the Ministerial Council during the afternoon session is firstly, the presentation of the progress report on the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Capital of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 and secondly, the adoption of Council Conclusions on Cultural Governance.

In relation to the Council conclusions on cultural governance, it is worth mentioning that this is an initiative of the Cyprus Presidency. On 28 and 29 August 2012, we had the Conference of Senior Officials for Culture. The Committee on Cultural Affairs, discussed and amended, in collaboration with Member States and the European Commission, the text of the above conclusions. The aim of the Cyprus Presidency is the adoption of the conclusions in the afternoon session of the Council.

In the field of Audiovisual we expect to achieve a partial general approach on the proposal for a Regulation establishing the "Creative Europe" programme. Specifically, the partial general approach that the Council reached last May, is further completed with an agreement on the loan guarantee facility which is a financial mechanism, aiming to facilitate access to finance of the cultural and creative sectors. This mechanism is an innovative initiative that is anticipated with great interest among the creative and cultural enterprises and organizations.

Also, the Council will proceed with the adoption of the conclusions on the Better and safer Internet for Children, in response to the Commission's recently adopted European Strategy for a better internet for Children. On the same theme, there will be a political debate between ministers, focusing on the effective interplay between government and industry in order to achieve a better and safer use of the Internet by children.

The issue is of vital importance as it concerns children. We believe it is important to invest in policies that offer more positive opportunities to children as they are the future citizens of the EU. Investing in them means investing in a better future.