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INFORMATISATION FOR COMPETITIVE COOPERATION

The ambitious goal of Europe is to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. The major condition for achieving this goal is to develop an information society, which in the European context means a knowledge-based, socially integrated, open and culturally deeply rooted society.

Knowledge, however precious, is only an opportunity. To transform it into a developmental force, knowledge has to be shared and applied with responsibility in the processes of work and decision making. Combining research and education with knowledge transfer for innovations, particularly in production, services and environmental protection, is the way towards higher levels of development.

Improvements of hardware, software and communications are a very necessary, but not sufficient condition for mobilising creative potential of all people. A parallel major improvement of education is required. This is particularly true in the candidate countries. Information methods need to be strengthened in learning all subjects. Continuous professional development of teachers should place much more emphasis on information and communication technology. Inviting local information experts to support teachers? efforts could increase the quality of learning, and at the same time deepen relations with the local community.

Universities in candidate countries are still primarily oriented towards academic research and education in traditional subjects. They have to accept their part in the modernisation of the economy and develop into centres for research, education and innovation. Much closer cooperation with industry and the services? sector will enable universities to develop promising research results into competitive processes and products, without endangering basic research. A major reform of university curricula is needed, which will increase information and communication skills, combine development of critical thinking with problem solving, innovative skills with entrepreneurship, and group work skills with development of leadership. Last but not least, in a world with numerous, scattered, fragmented and rapidly changing data, universities have to educate by integrating knowledge with values, thus adding to the ?information leader? - noise, data, information and knowledge - its highest step: wisdom.