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### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON LIFELONG LEARNING 2003 SYNTHESIS OF CONCLUSIONS FROM ALL COUNTRIES' REPLIES**

An examination of the replies of existing, applicant and candidate countries of the European Union and EEA to the March 2003 questionnaire on lifelong learning reveals that the achievement of a learning society is a work still in progress. The situation has not changed radically in the last two years, but a number of developments over recent years are beginning to take effect. Evidence of the long lead-times between the espousal of such an ideal and its concrete implementation is provided by countries' recognition of the need to ensure that education, training and guidance practitioners are among those who must be adequately trained and equipped to deal with their new role as facilitators of a more learner-driven approach to learning.

The replies do not always distinguish clearly between initiatives taken in the last two years and other more or less recent developments. Nevertheless it is clear that important initiatives have been taken in many countries. This is particularly true of almost all the ACCs, where preparation for participation in a range of Community processes and access to structural funding has created debate on education and training systems and helped to accelerate reforms, especially in the adult education sector.

The EU/EEA countries identify lifelong learning (LLL) as an issue concerning the population as a whole, but much of the content of their replies focuses on initial education (including second-chance access to basic competencies) and the working population. They also devote considerable attention to the validation of competencies acquired outside the formal system, and target a range of obstacles facing particular population groups. The ACCs, on the other hand, mainly focus on the formal system (including adult education) and there is little evidence of their making any attempt to deal with learning outside this framework. There is a corresponding disparity in relation to the creation of pathways between formal and other learning environments.

The EU/EEA countries note the role of multiple stakeholders sharing responsibility for creating a LLL culture centred on the individual. They appear to be making progress in regard to coordination between ministries concerned and the development of integrated LLL policies, whereas in the ACCs, coordination is still weak. The social partners are involved, in both groups of countries, in various advisory or supervisory bodies, but their role as initiators of LLL strategies seems relatively undeveloped, or at least unreported, particularly in the ACCs.

ICT literacy is mentioned by many countries, but particularly by the ACCs, both in terms of basic competencies and as a means to promoting access to learning. ICT development is also identified as the main source of public-private partnerships in these countries.

Topics which are absent or inadequately dealt with include the role of early childhood learning and basic education as the first links in a cradle-to-grave learning chain; the potential of the workplace as a learning-oriented environment, with collective bargaining as a source of incentives to promote participation in LLL; and LLL including language learning as a preparation for life in a Europe of free movement.