

Brussels, 5 December 2006

EU-Canada relations: signature of new agreement to boost cooperation in higher education, vocational training and youth

Today, at an informal education ministerial meeting in Helsinki, a new eight-year education agreement was signed between the EU and Canada. It not only renews their long-standing cooperation programme in higher education and vocational training, but also expands it by including youth measures. Over a period of eight years, new innovative joint study/training programmes will be launched, exchanges of students, teachers and other professionals will be promoted, as well as the strengthening of the collaboration between youth organisations. The agreement will also encourage a policy dialogue on priority issues in the fields of higher education and vocational training.

The agreement was signed today in Helsinki, in the margins of a meeting on vocational training, by Ján Figel', Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture, and Multilingualism, Antti Kalliomäki, Finnish Minister of Education and Anne Bourcier, Ambassador of Canada to Finland.

Commissioner Figel', said at the signature ceremony: "*I am pleased to have signed today a renewed eight-year **Agreement on Higher Education, Training and Youth** which is built on the positive results of the past programme; it will enhance our co-operation as major actors in the world in the area of education and reinforce the long-standing co-operation between the EU and Canada*". And concluded: "*Both partners have now a stable, long-term legal framework to pursue their common objectives: to make our education systems more open and competitive and to promote mutual understanding between our peoples*".

Commissioner in charge of External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said: "*With this new agreement we are not only offering thousands of students the opportunity to study on the other side of the Atlantic, we are also contributing to the promotion of greater relations between our citizens, helping us to get to know our respective cultures, languages and institutions better and, therefore, to better understand each other. Better knowledge of each other leads to mutual respect!*"

Under the previous Agreement, some 108 European and 110 Canadian institutions participated in 31 joint projects, and more than 3 000 students have spent a transatlantic study period in Europe or Canada. The **renewed Agreement will bring even more Canadians and Europeans together by tripling the available funding and expanding its scope to cover youth actions as well.**

The European Commission plans to allocate almost **€ 18 million** to the co-operation programme over the period 2006-2013 with **a target of some 210 projects implemented and 4 430 EU and Canadian people** participating in mobility activities over the duration of the programme. The text signed in Helsinki will promote structural, long term partnerships among EU and Canadian higher education, vocational training and youth institutions. The following actions are specifically foreseen:

- 1) **Joint Consortia Projects**, providing support to multilateral partnerships of EU and Canadian institutions for the purpose of setting up joint study programmes - including joint/double degrees – and transatlantic mobility of students and faculty;
- 2) **Joint youth activities** relating to key themes such as citizenship, cultural diversity, community work/volunteering, and recognition of non-formal and informal learning;
- 3) **Policy-oriented measures**, addressing comparative higher education, vocational training and youth issues, and promoting dialogue on recognition of qualifications and the transfer of credits under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);

The EU and Canada have been running a joint cooperation programme in higher education and vocational training since 1995. The **programme's core activities are joint curriculum development and student exchanges in a wide range of areas** such as Biotechnology, Computer Sciences, Culture, Engineering, Environment and Energy Studies, Forestry, Health Care, International Education Development, Journalism as well as Migration and Identity.

Further information on the EU-Canada cooperation programme in higher education, training and youth can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/eu-canada/index_en.html

A first **call for proposals** will be published shortly at the same address.