

Brussels, den 21 June 2006

EU-US Summit: signature of new agreement to boost cooperation in higher education and vocational training

At today's EU-US summit in Vienna, a new eight-year education agreement was signed between the two parties, renewing their long-standing cooperation programme in higher education and vocational training. The new agreement will usher in innovative Transatlantic Degree programmes, promote exchanges of students, teachers and other professionals, strengthen the Schuman-Fulbright Programme and encourage greater institutional collaboration in tertiary education.

The Commissioner in charge of Education and Training, Ján Figel', said: *"The new education agreement signed today illustrates the determination of the EU and US to build on the positive results of the past programme and to enhance our cooperation as major world actors in this area. The new agreement provides us with a stable, long term legal framework to pursue our common objectives: to make our higher education systems more open and competitive and to promote mutual understanding between our peoples".*

The agreement was signed by Commissioner for External Relations and Neighborhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Austrian Foreign Minister and Council President in office Ursula Plassnik and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said at the signature ceremony: *"I am delighted that we have signed today this new agreement which reinforces the long standing and close cooperation between the EU and the US on higher education and vocational training. It will offer our students the opportunity to study on the other side of the Atlantic. Such invaluable experiences contribute greatly to relations between our citizens, helping us to understand each other better and making us more aware of our respective cultures, languages and institutions."*

The European Commission plans to allocate **€ 45 million** to the cooperation programme over the period 2006-2013 with **a target of 6 000 EU and US persons** participating in mobility activities over the duration of the programme. The text signed in Vienna will promote structural, long term partnerships among EU and US higher education and vocational training institutions. The following actions are specifically foreseen:

- 1) **Joint Consortia Projects**, providing support to multilateral partnerships of EU and US institutions for the purpose of setting up joint study programmes - including joint/double degrees – and transatlantic mobility of students and faculty;
- 2) **Excellence Mobility Projects**, providing follow-up financial support for student mobility to joint consortia that have a proven track record of excellence in transatlantic cooperation;
- 3) **Policy-oriented measures**, addressing comparative higher education and vocational training issues, and promoting dialogue on recognition of qualifications and accreditations;
- 4) **Schuman-Fulbright Programme providing scholarships** to highly qualified professionals for undertaking studies or training on the opposite side of the Atlantic, in areas of specific relevance to the EU/US relations.

The EU and the USA 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 disciplines such as International Education Development, Environment and Agriculture, Engineering, Health Science and International Business.

The programme enabled the creation of over 100 transatlantic consortia involving more than **700 institutions. Over 4 000 students** have benefited from the resulting exchanges.

Further information on the EU-US cooperation programme in higher education and vocational training can be found at:

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

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/us/sum06_06/index.htm

(see also [IP/06/795](#) on EU – US Summit, Vienna, 21 June 2006)