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EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR HIGH ABILITY

Dear Honourable Members of the European Commission!

With great pleasure I could read the "Commission Working Document Consultation on the Future 'ËU 2020' Strategy." On page 12 of the document you ask for comments and suggestions.
As chairman of ECHA (European Council for High Ability) during three terms (1992-2000 and 2004-2008) I am completely in agreement with you when you emphasize in your document that education, innovation, and creativity are the key ingredients for future growth.
We use the terms gifted, talented, more or very able synonymously. Educators and scientists define giftedness as follows "giftedness is the individual potential for good or outstanding achievements in one or more areas". Only if individuals with high potential will get appropriate education at home and in school, they can develop their potentials and transform into performance. ECHA's concern is to nurture able individuals from early on in a supportive and stimulating way. Gifted education has no social boundaries, it is open for everybody. From the perspective of justice and societal needs it is a MUST. Equal opportunity means not 'everybody get's the same', but 'each individual get's what he/she needs'. Human beings are different from the very beginning on. Some like to learn eagerly from early childhood on, some ar more creative than others, some learn very fast and getting bored and demotivated when they have to learn accordimg the principle 'no child left behind'. Many gifted children like to become independent and autonomous learners, some are great in putting potential into innovative performance – if the educational system is supportive..

During the last decade it became more and more evident that a strong education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is more crucial than ever. (The German equivalent is MINT = Mathematik, Informatik, Naturwisscenschaften und Technik.) Able students in the STEM fields supplying the creative thinkers in developing new technologies in e.g. medicine, computers, and science. A good example of private industry is the Hector seminar in Karlsruhe (Germany). This intervention project for very able students (boys and girls) in the STEM fields lastet 8 years. Results will be presented on a closing seminar in Karlsruhe on March 4, 2010. . This is a worldwide unique project and can serve as a model.

The Council of Europe (Strasbourg) organized together with the Center for the Study of Giftedness at the Radboud University Nijmegen from 23-26 July 1991 an educational research workshop in Nijmegen on *Education of the Gifted in Europe: Theoretical and Research Issues.* The final summary report of this workshop was guideline for the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council**

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of Europe when this assembly published ***Recommendation 1248 on education for gifted children*** (1994). We regard this as an extremely important political document.
My colleague Peter Csermely send me his comments and suggestions. It will be no surprise for you that I fully support him

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Honorary President ECHA

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