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Background note to the session on BOOSTING AND UPGRADING THE HUMAN CAPITAL REQUIRED BY URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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**A EURO-INDIAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL
DEDICATED TO URBAN CRAFTS**

RATIONALE:

It is a well established fact that India lacks good skills in non-traditional construction crafts such as masonry, electrical work, plumbing, etc, which cannot be taught through a traditional father-to-son method and where however public vocational training is notoriously lacking.

It has been acknowledged that India needs to boost its human resources that can partake in a massive overhaul of its cities that was triggered by the J.N.N.U.R.M.. The last EuroIndia Forum acknowledged that one of the major weaknesses of this urban renewal programme is the lack of town planning capacities, notably due the lack of trained and experienced planners.

This is even more so, if one takes into consideration the new set of skills that is required to make new constructions environmentally compatible. It is reported that 30% of the greenhouse effect gas emissions in India come from the built stock. How can such a challenge be tackled in a growing economy such as India's which is poised for a construction boom, if state-of-the-art technical skills are not available with its construction craftsmen?

These crafts have been looked down upon by the Indian society and left to traditional village craft men and their progeny. They are not seen as a good career prospect and if left to choose, the son of a village craftsman will prefer to become a clerk, or even better an IT engineer!

This is in contrast with the stark market reality whereby such skilled craftsmen would easily find well-paid jobs in relation to the shortage in the market. They could therefore even find employers to pre-pay for their training costs, provided they get first priority on their recruitment after they get their degree.

This entails that the quality of training be according to the best international standards, as builders increasingly aim at delivering the best possible quality to their customers. It would require however that the awarded degree bears international recognition beyond doubt. In the process, the status of these crafts would be enhanced to the level of highly valuable technical professions.

THE SCHEME:

This is where the European contribution comes in. Indeed, Europe, Germany and Switzerland in particular, have perfected vocational training to meet the exacting standards of their

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construction industry. Should we be able to bring this state-of-the-art expertise to India, it would mean a quantum jump in the level of skills available to Indian construction crafts.

It requires however that such training be certified by a competent European authority to give the degree an undisputable value in the market.

It would be incumbent on the Centre to bring about such a Euro-Indian scheme which should be set-up as soon as possible with such features as to make it scaleable and replicable and to make a meaningful and visible impact on the construction job market and in turn on the urban renewal programme.

Such a scheme would need:

- A European educational institution with proven vocational skills in the construction field and the will to engage with India. It would provide:
 - o High quality vocational training
 - o International degree certification
- An Indian educational institution which is engaged in vocational training in India and knows how to adjust to the specific realities of the Indian social and cultural context. Such an institution should also be able to provide:
 - o Basic skills that may be found lacking: basic literacy, computation skills, English proficiency,
 - o A working interface and a JV partner to the European vocational training institution
- A local government/city to provide the space and the building as project equity in kind. Using an ITI which is in for a revamping of its curriculum may be the easiest option.
- European and Indian multinational companies involved in urban construction markets, such as say Lafarge for cement and construction materials, Schneider or Siemens in electrical ware, Asian paints in paints, etc. They could provide their world standards, their brand new training equipment, their own curriculum and coaches and a financial contribution that may provide seed capital for the institution to start and remunerate its recruited coaches. Branding the degree with its own corporate name could enhance its value further and add more value for the said company.
- European and Indian public institutions, which could provide additional funding, taking into account the highly positive social impact and the visible and sustainable international co-operation model that it could bring about. The scheme could for instance be sponsored by the Centre Government of India as part of its on-going plan to revamp vocational training in the country and/or as a key ingredient of the Jawahrlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

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- NGO's working with the urban poor could facilitate recruitment in directing the deserving elements in the jobless urban youth to such training, particular NGO's which endeavour to provide them with basic schooling that would provide a sound base for imbibing vocational training.

In focussing such on the jobless urban youth, one could expect the scheme to create thousands of well paid jobs with good career prospects.

THE ROLE OF THE EUROINDIA FORUM:

1. To try and get all the above required parties around a table to discuss the prerequisites to their involvement and evolve a feasible scheme that can be scaled up and replicated
2. To help find a new or existing location for the institution
3. To find international and Indian educational and financial support
4. To supervise the setting up of the institution
5. To try and replicate the model institute in other locations of India