



EDUCATION
TRAINING
YOUTH

Le Magazine

FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH IN EUROPE

PUBLISHED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION - 1998 - ISSUE 9



**2nd chance schools
open closed doors**

Contents

Editorial



Our three programmes, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe, are now well known and enjoy growing support, not only in the current European Union but also in the new candidate and non-member countries. The success of European Voluntary Service further illustrates my point. In 1997, almost 400,000 Europeans of all ages were able to go abroad as a result of one or other of our actions. This is just one example and one statistic. In the last 10 years, how many hundreds of thousands of students and teachers, trainees, apprentices, youth workers and young people in general have benefited every year from EU support in order to study abroad, meet colleagues from another Member State, or to add a European dimension to their knowledge and skills?

If there is one effect of our activities which can never be quantified but which represents a real and far-reaching result, it is integration. While statistics confirm the scale of cooperation, its results are to be measured in terms of changing attitudes, a spirit of openness and the awareness that we simultaneously define ourselves as European born, nationals of a country, and residents of a region. I am proud that our directorate-general has been able to contribute to bringing about this change.

But our work must not stop there. In today's world, a heavy responsibility is placed on education and training. Knowledge and skills must be constantly adapted and updated if we are to lead the field in a world of constant change. Europe most certainly possesses vast resources and the challenge in this age of information and the global economy is to know how to unlock these resources through innovative methods of education and training.

As the 21st century approaches, the new generation of programmes aims to meet the requirements of each individual, irrespective of age or levels of attainment; to preserve cultural heritages and the best of each national educational system; to broaden horizons and develop the exchange of experiences through trans-European cooperation. Will integration thus become our model of society? That is my hope.

T. O'Dwyer

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YOUTH



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1998

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Paving the way for new programmes

At a time when the assembled heads of state and government in Cardiff have stressed the need for a Europe closer to the people, it is encouraging to find that Community programmes in the fields of education, training and youth are among the most popular of all the Union's programmes. A recent poll showed that 85% of programme participants are satisfied with the results and 95% consider they contribute to European integration. Over a million Europeans have been able to spend a period of study or training in another EU country as a result of mobility schemes. Recent initiatives, such as the second chance schools or European voluntary service, also demonstrate how closely these actions correspond to our hopes and needs.

In looking ahead to European cooperation in these fields during the years 2000-2004 we must build on the success achieved and capitalize on the many and sometimes spectacular benefits. But we must also be sure to take into account the far-reaching changes experienced by these sectors in a society undergoing rapid change under the influence of technical progress and globalization. These developments bring the need for lifelong learning, a concept which has directly inspired the structure of the new programmes. The Europe of the 21st century will be a Europe of knowledge. Our future competitiveness will be linked directly to our ability to develop new knowledge, to transmit and transform this knowledge, and ultimately to put it to the best possible use through the widespread use of information and communication technologies.

It is not therefore by chance that, in its Agenda 2000, the Commission awards absolute priority to a Europe of knowledge. This is why I have opted for a bold approach in our future actions, in qualitative and quantitative terms. We must innovate on the basis of the most notable achievements of our present actions, simplify objectives and procedures to encourage greater participation by Europe's citizens and, finally, strengthen the European dimension of these initiatives by progressively creating a genuine European education area, as encouraged by the Maastricht Treaty.

I want each and every one of us in Europe, regardless of age, ability or social circumstances, to be able to benefit from the opportunities offered by this new generation of programmes.

Edith CRESSON

Member of the European Commission, responsible for research, innovation, education, training and youth.

On 27 May, the Commission adopted three proposals for the renewal of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes and the launch of a new "Youth" programme, incorporating Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service, for the years 2000-2004. The overall budget would be increased by 60%, to ECU 3 billion, allowing twice as many people to benefit from mobility schemes during this period.

An integrated knowledge policy

Towards a Europe of Knowledge, the Commission 'communication' put forward as both a discussion paper and a framework for drafting the new programmes, was presented in the last issue of *Le Magazine*. These new texts generally provided for a more integrated structure, permitting greater coherence between the EU education, training and youth programmes while continuing to take account of their specific characteristics.

Community policy in these three areas follows the same basic objective, namely to create a European education area.

The concept of a European education area was first evoked in the Treaty of Amsterdam and subsequently in Agenda 2000. *Towards a Europe of Knowledge* reflects the preamble to the Amsterdam Treaty, referring to "the development of the highest possible level of knowledge" for Europe's citizens through "wide access to education" and the continuous – i.e. lifelong – updating of skills and knowledge. The changing nature and organization of work require us to adapt continuously if we are to develop our employability. In order to improve growth and living standards, innovation must be given the chance to flourish under optimal social and technical conditions. Awareness of these factors underlies the decision to harness more closely these three areas of policy.

But employment and growth are not enough in themselves and are not the ultimate ambition of the new programmes. Helping individuals to secure a satisfactory standard of living and place in society improves the prospects of achieving a sense of European citizenship within a common social and cultural as well as educational area. This is the true underlying justification for cooperation between the programmes.

In seeking a coordinated and simplified approach, account was taken of the wish expressed at all levels to develop activities common to the three programmes and for the possibility of transfer between them, as a necessary means of achieving the primary objective, namely lifelong access to a single education area. The new programmes therefore offer a common core of activities in regard to which one or more programmes can implement any one or more measures. These are:

- Learning abroad – the physical mobility of students, trainees, teaching staff and instructors.
- The various kinds of virtual mobility and the use of new information and communication technologies.
- The development of cooperation networks at European level.
- The promotion of language skills and understanding of different cultures.
- The development of innovation through European cooperation on pilot projects based on transnational partnerships.
- The constant improvement of Community sources of reference with regard to education, training and youth systems and policies in the Member States (data bases, exchange of good practices).

Finally, each of the programmes has provisions permitting the launch of joint actions in order to make it possible to develop, in particular, a joint information system, a coordinated structure for observing good practices in lifelong education and training, measures in the field of education and training multimedia, and European knowledge centres at regional level.



Socrates: 4 objectives

Increasing the European dimension of education at all levels

Promoting European cooperation in all sectors

Developing exchanges of information and experience

Encouraging innovation

The Commission proposes overall funding of ECU 3,000 million, with ECU 1,400 m for phase II of the Socrates programme, ECU 1,000 m for phase II of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and ECU 600 million for the implementation of the "Youth" programme. This represents a 60% increase on present funding.

Respecting programme diversity

The decision to adopt an overall view of the three fields and to act in concert does not mean that the specific characteristics of the individual fields will not be respected. Each of the three proposals includes specific provisions.

Leonardo da Vinci

Eighteen months before the end of phase I of Leonardo da Vinci, it is already clear that a general expertise in vocational training is being acquired and shared in Europe and that the concept of a European innovation laboratory in this area is very much a reality. However, past experience also confirms that the diversity of the present programme can make it rather complex. So phase II will bring a much more limited number of objectives, more focused actions and a radically streamlined management.

The objectives are reduced from 19 to three, namely: to improve the social and occupational integration of young people, in particular through apprenticeships and other work-linked training; to expand lifelong access to good quality continuing training and the acquisition of skills, in particular to keep pace with technological and organizational change and investment in training; to consolidate the processes of reintegrating people in a vulnerable situation into jobs, in particular through increased cooperation between economic, training and social structures.

The number of measures is reduced from 23 to six, adapting to the field of vocational training the measures provided in the common core of activities as described above. For example, some of them will be implemented by means of demonstration actions of an experimental nature.

This reduction in the number of objectives, the concentration of measures and the search for maximum efficiency in the use of funds are key elements in a new programme which has been much modified and simplified.

The proposed method of implementation brings further streamlining by including a general call for proposals to be published at the start of the programme, for all the objectives and all the actions and measures with a fixed set of priorities. At the same time, flexibility will be ensured by launching a second call at mid-term, the interim evaluation report serving as a basis for establishing new priorities or adapting the original priorities. More decentralized management, with more decisions taken by the Member States, completes the operational component of the proposal.

Socrates

When deciding to increase the Socrates budget for the 1998-99 period, both the European Parliament and the Council noted the "exceptional results achieved by the programme during the first two years which followed its adoption" and considered that "it is necessary to maintain this rate of progress in achieving its objectives."

There is no doubt that in its new context targeted at the field of education as a whole, Socrates has made it possible to increase European cooperation in terms of quantity and quality in fields such as school education, adult education, and open and distance learning in which there was previously little structured transnational cooperation. The "Erasmus" component of Socrates, of course, is particularly well known.

Nevertheless, as in the case of Leonardo da Vinci, a number of obstacles to an optimal development of actions were also identified. While some of them are not the Commission's responsibility – such as educational systems with little tradition of international cooperation and relatively little autonomy – others can indeed be attributed to the way the programme works, such as fragmentation, complexity and lack of coordination or information.

The proposal for Socrates phase II therefore aims to maximize its impact by giving substance to a number of key concepts which served to guide the programme reforms. These are: continuity to ensure continued familiarization with structures in their present form, coupled with flexibility and innovation to correct insufficiencies or satisfy new needs; ease of access and use by reducing the objectives to four (see box) and restructuring actions along the lines of both the three stages in lifelong learning (school, universities, other) and the transversal policies (languages, multimedia, exchange of information); simplicity of submission and selection procedures; finally, close partnership between the Commission and Member States by introducing a set of conditions conducive to the widest possible access, the most effective implementation and the most lasting impact. The systematic search for increased cooperation at local or regional level should result in the creation of "European poles of knowledge" as the cornerstones of a European education area.

A policy open to all young people: the new "Youth" programme

Launched 10 years ago, European cooperation in youth work has made the European Union a centre of experiment and development for national and local initiatives outside formal education. Each in its own educational context, these aim at involving young people in European integration, encouraging their active participation and offering them a formative experience. Over these years, Community support has widened from youth exchanges to the promotion of initiatives by young people themselves and European Voluntary Service.

The new proposed structure reflects the same thinking as described in the case of the Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes: Community actions in favour of young people benefit from being part of a rational and coherent structure and achieve greater impact through the links established between formal education and vocational training. The overall objective is to consolidate and build on past experience and develop innovative actions in order to create a broader basis for participation open to all young people, which involves wide-ranging partnerships across various fields.

The programme includes five actions:

Action 1: European Voluntary Service for young people which, through its individualized approach and wide range of partners, makes it possible to find activities suited to all young people.

Action 2: Youth for Europe, which intends to further diversify the forms of mobility for groups of young people, both inside and outside the EU. Sports and cultural activities with an educational aim, open to all, can make a major contribution to tolerance and the acceptance of other people's differences.

Action 3: Opportunities for young people, building on the present youth initiatives and offering wider scope for young people to realize a cherished project.

Action 4: Joint actions, which build bridges with formal education and vocational training in order to associate a range of participants able to offer an activity involving young people, irrespective of sector and whether inside or outside an institutional framework.

Action 5: Accompanying measure, designed to support and complete the other programme actions. One example of this is working in areas which are not traditionally part of the youth sector but which make it possible to try out new methods of informal education. These measures include information, which largely depends for its effectiveness on addressing the target public in the appropriate manner.



Cooperation in education and training with Central and Eastern Europe

The European learning zone: wider still and wider

By opening Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe to the Central and Eastern European countries, the EU welcomes them to its activities on equal terms for the first time. Bolstered by support from Tempus Phare, these countries now move onto the level playing field of three Community programmes in which cooperation is mainly what you make it. So what will they make of it?

The Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) continue to take their places in the three programmes, alongside the 15 EU Member States, and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. In early 1998, Poland and the Slovak Republic joined Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania in the programmes, together with Cyprus. If, as expected, the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Bulgaria and Slovenia also join in the next 18 months, almost 30 countries across Europe may be involved by the year 2000.

For the 10 CEECs, these events are part of the pre-accession strategy launched by the June 1993 European Council in Copenhagen, following the European Agreements on accession of the previous year. In particular, the Council proposed the participation of these countries in a wide range of Community activities to familiarize them with aspects of full EU membership. In this context, the education, training and youth programmes were fast identified as a top priority. Above all, they can help young Europeans from the CEECs to become accustomed to many of the rights and responsibilities of future Community citizenship.

Preparation for accession

As the CEECs join the programmes, the strategy – and with it the cooperation involved – enters an entirely new phase.

First and foremost, these states will now cooperate on the same basis as the other participating countries. This means that they are no longer a specific focus for assistance, as formerly in Tempus. Instead, their universities, schools and other bodies can act as partners, promoters or coordinators in supported projects. Like the participating countries too, they can be involved not only in programme activities controlled by the Commission, but also in decentralized initiatives managed by national agencies.

Different starting-points

The inter-university networks established by the Community with the CEECs since Tempus was launched in 1990 seem certain to condition partnerships under Socrates (Erasmus) in the early stages, despite the differences between the two programmes.

By contrast, Socrates (Comenius) for European cooperation among schools is still barely three years old, and has no comparable Community precedent. Yet not all the CEECs will be starting such activity from scratch. Romania and Poland are two of the countries in which schools have already cooperated bilaterally. The Polish national agency also highlights the substantial work in European schools cooperation of both Unesco and the Council of Europe. In the Czech Republic, the foundation for future Comenius partnerships is less visible. "Schools had practically no experience of international cooperation before Socrates", says Josef Vochozka at the national agency in Prague.

How far is the scene set for Leonardo da Vinci in Central and Eastern Europe? Again, Tempus has created networks of universities and companies in the region which may provide a partial foundation for the links planned between them in Leonardo da Vinci. However, the basis for cooperation may be strengthened in particular by bilateral relations between EU countries and the CEECs outside Tempus. Tadeusz Kozek of the Warsaw National Coordinating Unit (NCU) says that in Poland such assistance has focused mainly on management education and training. "Other programmes, both bilateral and multilateral, have created similar links between secondary vocational schools involving Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands", he adds.

Bilateral youth exchanges with EU countries in most of the CEECs will also be a useful bridge to Youth for Europe. In this respect, the Czech national agency singles out France and Germany, the Romanian one France and Italy. Another helpful preliminary has been the provision in Youth for Europe of projects involving third countries, which the CEECs now leave as they join the programme as equal partners.

Initial applications and action

Much programme activity in the CEECs is already under way, with next year's field also lining up. In Erasmus, the five CEECs now eligible, with Cyprus, have submitted some 150 applications for university institutional contracts for the 1998/99 academic year. Within them is provision for around 5,600 outgoing students and just over 4,000 incoming, giving reasonably balanced mobility flows as now required.

The humanist Comenius was born in Moravia, in 1592. Over four centuries later in the Czech Republic, the Comenius chapter of Socrates is springing to life. According to Josef Vochozka, 63 European Education Projects (EEPs) had been launched by the end of March when further applications were still being processed. Vladimíra Svatosova, an EEP coordinator at the Tábořská primary school, Prague, describes a visit to the school by two teachers from Finland. "The Czech pupils prepared greetings cards for them, gave accounts of national Christmas customs and discussed their hobbies. All are looking forward to further collaboration", she says.

Following a general call for proposals under Leonardo da Vinci, a total of ECU 6.5 million was allocated in 1997 to 18 projects promoted by Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic, and an additional 135 partners from these countries took part in projects from other participating countries. In all, they cover fields as wide-ranging as health care, train-

Romania

Appointed Minister for Youth and Sport in Romania last year, Crin George Antonescu will be closely watching his country's participation in Youth for Europe.

ing for the furniture sector, the use of multimedia teaching aids in vocational training, and ecological tourism. More than ECU 500,000 has also been allocated to support the mobility towards other participating countries of around 1,300 young people undergoing initial vocational training, and young workers. An additional 200 instructors from the three countries are also involved in exchanges.

As regards **Youth for Europe**, the CEECs may now participate in all actions except Action D for (other) non-member countries. Initial activity includes 18 Hungarian projects approved in mid-March 1998, under the programme's provision for youth exchanges and mobility. Distinct from educational visits or tourism, these projects are based on an intercultural learning approach and normally initiated and organized by the young people taking part.

Key aspects of cooperation

The sense of moving "back to Europe" or "European standards" is often reported from Central and Eastern Europe. It is also present in recent national agency comments about the benefits of **Comenius** – and, in the longer term, European accession itself – on national school systems. "Schools in our country will gain the degree of openness required for a smoother, structural 'Europeanization', while offering traditional values of possible significance to a Europe of the future, in return", says Roxana Mihail of the Comenius national agency in Romania.

But do problems lie in wait – for example, those of combining European school cooperation with ongoing reform in national education systems, and the integration of EEPs, with their diversity of themes, into national curricula? Mihail does not anticipate outright conflict here, but adds "integration might become a problem if the project-oriented work of school partnership were to compete, in terms of time, with other curricular components". "In Poland", says Tadeusz Wojciechowski at the national agency in Warsaw, "the financial implications aside, it may not be easy to transfer the European priorities of partnerships across into reform, or adjust their requirements to Polish reality. We may also have to contend with language barriers and a lack of understanding among local authorities about EEP activities". He advocates improved information activities, including training sessions and workshops, the use of a databank and help with identifying and approaching school partners. Cooperation in **Leonardo da Vinci** targets initial and continuing vocational training and lifelong learning to help improve training systems, as well as cooperation between universities and industry. First unofficial indications from the Slovak Republic are that this latter dimension will be of special significance, particularly where linked to issues such as technology transfer. Meanwhile, the Czech national agency expects the information and experience of its vocational schools to be especially useful in initial training.

In the West, efforts to improve training systems and practice, as in Leonardo da Vinci, are part of the fight against unemployment. In Hungary, where unemployment is almost 20% in some regions in the wake of radical restructuring (the national rate is 10%), the case for better vocational training to open up the labour market and support new jobs may be overwhelming. In the Czech Republic, where the rate is still only 5%, this is less evident. Yet training to meet changing skills profiles may be the most appropriate way of formulating the unemployment issue. If so, able people will be retrained for work in fast-moving revitalized sectors such as accountancy, banking, agricultural distribution and environmental protection.

With the emergence of such sectors comes the need for new training courses and qualifications which all the national agencies rank as "very important". "Leonardo da Vinci will bring a framework for certification and improved comparison of training content and output", says Dr Miroslava Kopicová at the Czech NCU.

What then of prospects for **Youth for Europe** which stands outside formal education and training provision? Initial reluctance, in certain cases, to replace the regimented pre-1990 youth structures with anything else appears to be dissolving, as the steady growth of recent bilateral exchanges illustrates. All national agencies now attach importance to the role of Youth for Europe in promoting the notions of a European dimension, active citizenship, intercultural learning and sensitivity, and in lessening social exclusion. Katarzyna Pladys at the national agency in Poland says that youth exchanges there are often organized by adults for poor or vulnerable young people unable to act on their own. "We hope that Youth for Europe will change this and help to boost their creativity". At the Romanian agency, director Gabriel Badica, and colleagues Alexandra Chisui and Mariana Petrescu, are more upbeat. "Few are better than the young themselves at publicizing their achievements on the international stage as a result of youth policy initiatives", says Badica. "They are able to give free rein to their creativity and adapt the new models to the qualitative demands of the programme".

Hungary

Attila Hilbert is director of the Tempus Foundation in Hungary, responsible for coordinating Tempus, Erasmus (Socrates), and the Central European Exchange Programme (Ceepus) there.

As such, he is ideally placed to comment on national implications of the Tempus-to-Erasmus transition.

Current programme entry timetable

1997

- 1 September
Hungary
Romania
- 1 October
Czech Republic
- 1 Novembre
Cyprus

1998

- 1 March
Poland
- 1 April
Slovak Republic
- July-December
Estonia
Latvia
Lithuania
Bulgaria (Socrates, Youth for Europe)

1999

- January-June
Slovenia
Bulgaria (Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci)

Note: Tempus activities in the associated Phare countries from 1998-2000 will be of two kinds : first, **Joint European Projects (JEPs)**, in part to complement Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci activities and thus ease the entry of these countries into both programmes ; secondly, **individual mobility grants** solely for those countries not yet taking part in Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci.



hails Youth for Europe effort

Le Magazine: When it was first suggested that Romania take part in Youth for Europe, why do you think the prospect of cooperation was especially attractive?

In Romania, the socio-economic crisis has been a determining factor in the education crisis. Young people are generally trapped in orthodox educational structures. Youth for Europe offers them an alternative kind of education which shifts the emphasis away from merely imparting information. The programme also provides access to existing structures for young people in difficulty, rescuing them from economic and social isolation.

What was done at the start of negotiations with Romania to facilitate its participation in Youth for Europe?

We developed a strategic plan for the programme. It comprised the creation of the Romanian Centre for the promotion of European Cooperation in Youth – our national agency, EUROTIN – in 1995, logistic and financial support for implementing programme objectives, and use of facilities at the Ministry, including its database. Support was also granted for a separate programme database.

What has been done to encourage the young to further social commitment, and foster dialogue between governmental and non-governmental structures concerned with their activity?

The creation of a Consultative Council of youth NGOs and government representatives provides for transparent programme selection procedures and quantifies aims in terms of their efficiency, and human and financial resources management. Working groups, seminars, placements and exchanges have extended the capacity of young people for leadership, and given them greater self-confidence. Social and civic life have been enriched by this activity and the dialogue between governmental and non-governmental structures intensified in the interests of greater democracy.

How far will young people be left to shape policies meant to benefit them? Will they be able to state clearly their own priorities and needs vis-à-vis Youth for Europe?

The non-governmental National Council for Romanian Youth is an active party in dialogue, ensuring that projects are appropriately implemented. A common agenda for youth affairs at local level involving NGO branches and local authorities includes a legal basis for youth work and policies, and provision to support the priorities and needs of young people in Youth for Europe. The role of the Ministry is solely that of mediator.

hones its competitive edge

How have attitudes to Erasmus (Socrates) developed in the Hungarian higher education community since you first knew you would be taking part in the programme?

Our higher education institutions were very enthusiastic because they viewed the transition from assistance under Tempus to the competition of Erasmus as a great challenge. Our 36 institutional contract applications are evidence of this. Besides the universities, the smaller colleges are also very well represented, and view Erasmus as an opportunity to catch up with institutions that have benefited strongly from Tempus.

Compared to Tempus, Erasmus is indeed very competitive. How do you think you are best equipped to meet this challenge?

First, I think Hungarians are a friendly, hospitable people – that's important. Second, successful educational or scientific cooperation thrives on combining different intellectual approaches. In a small country, we are naturally proud of our achievements, but I do believe there is a unique talent for mathematics and scientific creativity in the national psyche. As contemporary examples, take 1994 Nobel prizewinner in chemistry Gyorgy Olah, computer guru and Intel chief executive Andrew Grove who, as András Grof, left Hungary in 1956, or Dr Antal K. Bejczy who developed the control system linking the NASA ground coordination centre to the space vehicle in last year's mission to Mars. Thirdly, since 1990, Hungary, like other Central and Eastern

European countries, has undergone profound socio-economic changes attracting considerable inward investment and attendant academic interest among business management students and specialists. The Budapest University of Economics is now a magnet for foreign students from the USA and Japan as well as Europe. Fourthly, the stimulation of this changing environment is an incentive to learn more about our cultural and historical past, which can best be done in Hungary itself.

However, exchanges cannot flourish without good accommodation and hosting for incoming students. For such questions, we have a network of Erasmus coordinators – one per institution – with whom we are in regular contact. After a meeting in Budapest to help them prepare their institutional contract applications in September 1997, we visited six provincial universities in a country-wide campaign.

Tempus and Ceepus have already led to us welcoming over 3,000 students in the last seven years. Under the Erasmus institutional contracts we expect upwards of 500 incoming students a year. At last September's meeting, we drew attention to the accommodation issue and explored possible approaches. Before submitting applications, institutions also conducted local surveys of decent student housing. Because of student demand for the Budapest universities, the problem will be keenly felt in the capital, so a seminar on this subject is planned there for May.

How quickly will you diversify the subject areas in Erasmus institutional contracts, beyond the Tempus priorities of business studies, engineering and languages?

We discussed this matter with the Commission in February 1998 and will be attempting to do so from next year. Engineering technology accounted for 25% of our Tempus commitment and stands at 11% in the institutional contract applications for 1998/99. In the next round of applications we shall invite universities to consider partnerships in important fields like architecture, medicine and the natural sciences which, so far, have been relatively under-represented in the contracts?

What impact do you think the participation of higher education institutions in Socrates will have on the teaching of foreign languages and attitudes to foreign language learning in Hungary?

Clearly, through both Erasmus and Lingua, Socrates is set to further foreign language learning in our country, as indeed it must if Hungarians are to shake off their linguistic isolation. Our institutions must develop foreign language courses, both for Hungarian and incoming Erasmus students. Through Lingua, they should also train more foreign language teachers to pass on this interest to schools where, hopefully, it will be taken up in Comenius too. All round, involvement in the programmes should create the demand to fuel such initiatives.

How do you think participation in Socrates will ease the accession of Hungary to full membership of the European Union?

The anticipated progress in foreign languages I have just mentioned will, of course, be crucial. But another key consideration for Hungary is networking. Because the EU and its institutions are so big, they often have to work on the basis of personal relations. I once saw an apt comment in a Dutch newspaper – "smaller nations should be smarter!". As a small nation, Hungary will have fewer representatives in the Parliament or Commission once it joins the Union, so we shall need connections to help achieve our goals. In the meantime, grass-roots cooperation in Socrates, not to mention our personal dealings with its Brussels administrators, will help to develop these contacts.

A B C D E F G H I J
 K L M N O P Q R S T
 U V W X Y Z

Management of education systems



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Parents

have more of a say

Parents throughout Europe find themselves increasingly involved in the management of education systems, at an advisory, or sometimes even decision-making level. How does this trend translate in real terms? Here are the main findings of a study, entitled *The Role of Parents in the Education Systems of the European Union*, recently published by Eurydice. It covers the 15 European Union Member States as well as the three EFTA/EEA countries.

All EU and EFTA/EEA countries have developed policies in favour of the involvement of parents collectively within their education systems. This is mainly illustrated by the creation of different representative bodies at school level.

The forms of representation vary between countries. In most countries, at all levels parents have minority representation and comprise less than half of the members. Parity with other groups is rare and can be found at *Länder* and district level in Austria (*Kollegien der Landesschulräte* and *Kollegien der Bezirksschulräte*) and at school level in the Flemish Community of Belgium (*Participatie Raad*), in Spain (*Consejo Escolar del centro* in private, grant-aided education), in Italy (*Consiglio di interclasse*), in the Netherlands (*Medezeggenschapsraad*) and in Austria (*Schulforum* and *Schulgemeinschaftsausschuß*).

Bodies with a majority of parents' representatives are even rarer. Only the Danish *Skolebestyrelse* and Scottish School Boards, which both operate at school level, have this characteristic.

However, parents can also decide to set up their own representative bodies to have their voice heard as a social group. This is the case in some countries which have created councils exclusively made up of parents, such as in the French Community of Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. These councils have an advisory role that can go beyond school level and in some countries it can even run up to ministry level.

Advisory or decision-making involvement?

The role of parents expresses itself through the powers given to the bodies where they are represented. At central, regional or local level, councils with parent participation are mainly of an advisory nature. Parents' representatives have the right to be informed and give their opinion. However, some exceptions should be noted, such as the Austrian collegiate assembly of federal authorities at *Länder* or district level, whose powers involve adopting decrees and directives in the field of education; parents' representatives sitting on these committees have full voting rights.

It is at school level that decision-making powers emerge. The kinds of decisions taken by most participatory bodies in schools throughout Europe refer to matters of internal and day-to-day management, such as fixing school hours, the organization of extra-curricular activities, the control of school expenditure or maintaining good parent-teacher relations.

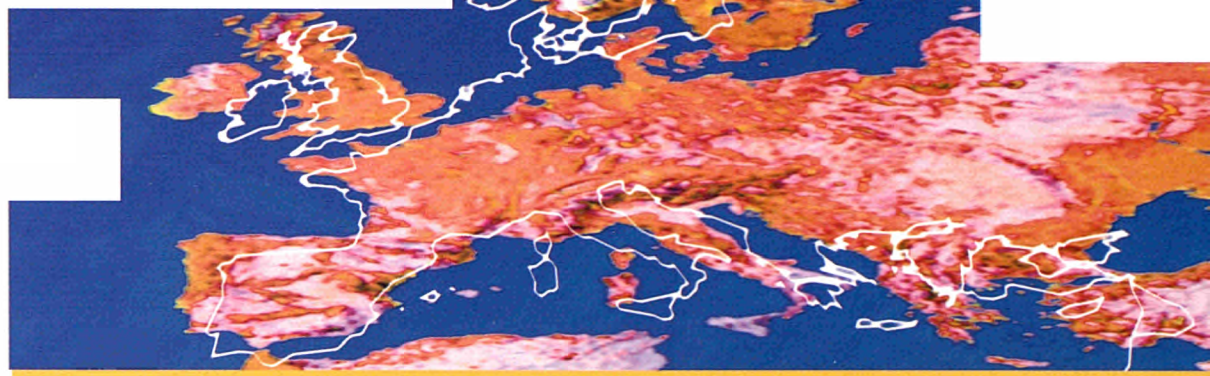
Nonetheless, a second type of decision-making exists that goes beyond the organization of daily school life. These are decisions linked to the allocation of the school's budget, the number of teachers to be employed and their recruitment, as well as establishing the curriculum and teaching methods. Parent participation in these sorts of decisions is not widespread and only half of the countries studied - Denmark, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, the United Kingdom (except Scotland), Liechtenstein and Norway - have entrusted them, at least in part, to school councils with parent representation. We should stress the important role played by parents in the Danish school council, where they hold main responsibility for the decisions adopted, as they are in the majority. In Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom (except Scotland), parents also take part in the election and dismissal of the school head, but their representation is minor. The Governing Bodies in England and Wales and the Boards of Governors in Northern Ireland are also responsible for personnel and resource management as well as setting the school's general objectives.

Training

In response to the need for information that parents increasingly express as part of their functions, most EU and EFTA/EEA countries organize and offer training courses and seminars specifically designed with parents in mind. Such training can, depending on the country, either be financed by public authorities (Flemish Community of Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), private or local initiatives (French and German communities of Belgium, Germany, Greece and Austria) and sometimes by the parents' associations themselves, as is the case in Spain and Ireland.

Education seen to benefit from parental involvement

The concept of family/school partnerships has received support from European associations of parents, teachers and pupils. An example is the declaration jointly signed in Copenhagen on 24 November 1996 by the European Parents Association and the *Comité syndical européen de l'éducation* (CSEE/ETUCE), which emphasised that collaboration between parents, teachers and administrative staff is a factor in good quality education and training. Another confirmation of the value of parental involvement came from the "Parents as Partners" conference organized under the British Presidency of the EU in Edinburgh on 26-7 February this year, which included a presentation of various strategies and methods that have been developed to encourage the participation of parents and make the most of their contribution to raising school standards.



Round-up of education reforms in Europe

Spain

Plan for the improvement of public educational establishments by the Ministry of Education and Culture

At the start of the 1996/97 school year, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) launched the Annual Improvement Plan for public MEC schools. The instructions regulating the development and implementation of these plans were issued, covering both conceptual aspects and matters of organization and of recognition for the Plan as a whole.

The Plan was carried out in 263 public schools that voluntarily agreed to participate. Of these, 211 have successfully developed their first Annual Improvement Plan. The 25 best plans will receive a supplementary allowance of a million pesetas for the development of new annual plans.

Following an evaluation carried out in 1997/98, it can be stated that the results of the first edition of the Plan are satisfactory. Their application has encouraged centres to identify those areas which need improvement and the goals for improvement have been formulated taking into account the following characteristics: they must be concrete, open to assessment and take place within a set time period.

As a result of this positive experience, a second, more extended edition of the Plan during the 1997-98 school year will double the number of supplementary allowances for the schools with the best plans.

Greece

The Supplementary Tutoring programme (*Prostheti Didaktiki Stixiri*) has recently been announced by the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs, Gerassimos Arsenis. This programme aims at offering extra tutoring to the pupils in the first year of the *Lykeio* with learning difficulties and helping these pupils to meet the requirements of the recently established new type of *Lykeio*, the *Eniaio Lykeio*.

The fundamental goal of the *Eniaio Lykeio*, which will gradually replace the existing types of *Lykeio*, is to provide equal educational opportunities and make the best use of pupils' competencies, inclinations and personal interests.

The programme commenced in March 1998 and will last for 13 to 15 weeks. It is estimated that 34,000 pupils in the first year of the *Lykeio* will participate in it on an optional basis.

The subjects on offer are the following: ancient Greek, modern Greek, mathematics, physics, chemistry and foreign languages. The maximum attendance per pupil is 10 hours per week. Teaching will take place during the regular timetable as well as on Saturdays.

Each school will be responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the teaching part of the programme. The teaching provided will be on an individual basis and adjusted to the needs of each pupil. The programme will cover each pupil's travelling expenses and food costs.

The teaching staff and the unions of both parents and pupils will have the entire responsibility for the administration of the above programme, which is expected to expand later to the two other years of the *Lykeio*.

Austria

Career guidance made compulsory

Preparing pupils in ample time for their careers is becoming ever more important. This is why career guidance will be made compulsory in the seventh and eighth years of Austrian schools in the coming school year.

Of the three types of schools attended by the age group in question (academic secondary school - lower level, general secondary school and special school), career guidance has so far only been offered as an optional practical course at general secondary schools.

As of 1998/99, career guidance will be introduced as a non-optional practical course (with compulsory attendance but no marks) in the third and fourth years of lower secondary education. Teaching periods will total 64 (32 in each year).

Implementation can be handled flexibly. Alternatives to fixed classes are blocked periods or cross-curricular schemes. Schools can set priorities in line with regional interests. Under the provisions for school autonomy, they are also free to start career guidance earlier and/or to give the subject more emphasis.

Career guidance as a subject is intended to enable the pupils to pursue their life and career effectively by embarking on the appropriate educational paths, whilst being made aware of the labour market, the world of work and the levels of income involved. To achieve these aims, cross-curricular projects and contacts with a considerable number of firms are being envisaged.

Finland

In 1996, the Finnish educational authorities started a five-year national project to diversify modern language teaching. This also aims to develop methods of language teaching and assessment on the basis of lifelong learning.

The aim is to increase the number of students who study French, German, Russian, Spanish or Italian. At the moment, every pupil attending a comprehensive school (*Peruskoulu/Grundskola*) studies one foreign language and the second national language as compulsory subjects. As the first foreign language for the majority of students (approximately 90%) is English, there is a clear need for diversification. The starting point is to make students choose another language as an optional language, preferably at the age of 10 or 11. The goals in studying this language are the same as for the first foreign language.

Other school sectors have also set new goals for diversification. Another rapidly growing area of great interest is bilingual education, where English is the most popular language of instruction.

The central themes in addition to diversification are: language and culture; communication between people from different cultures; the European dimension; and cooperation between Finnish and foreign schools (within the EU and also in the Baltic States and Russia). Also of importance are: bilingual education; use of new technology; development of the curriculum; development of teaching methods and new trends in assessment (including portfolio, self-assessment, testing of oral skills and testing adults' language skills).

The Finnish National Board of Education has chosen 39 pilot municipalities and over 260 pilot schools or institutes, which have set their own goals for diversification and the development of language teaching.

The project is supported by extensive in-service training programmes for teachers at universities and by seminars for pilot school teachers, material production (textbooks, handbooks, videos, national tests for assessing oral skills) and by research programmes. Schools express great interest in establishing contacts with foreign schools and organizing visits to foreign countries.

Sweden

Integration of pre-school education in mainstream schools

The government is at present working on the integration of pre-school education in mainstream schools. The aim is to develop the pedagogical activities in pre-school as well as in compulsory education. As a consequence of this integration, parts of the Social Services Act concerning child care will be transferred to the Education Act. The National Agency for Education (*Högskoleverket*) will henceforth be responsible for the supervision, monitoring, evaluation and development of pre-school activities and day centres for school-aged children.

Another consequence of this integration is that the special activities for six-year-olds have become their own school form within the public school system, as so-called pre-school classes. It will be compulsory for municipalities to provide pre-school classes, but attendance is voluntary.

A joint mission statement for educational activities in pre-school classes, compulsory education and day centres for school-aged children will also improve the conditions for integration. Such a statement, in the form of a joint national curriculum, is currently being drafted in the Ministry of Education and Science. The pre-school curriculum shall build on the present principles and values for pre-school and on the school curricula. Learning through play and the development of children's language skills are central issues.

United Kingdom

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, following a period of consultation the *School Standards and Framework Bill* and the *Teaching and Higher Education Bill 1997/98* were presented to Parliament.

The *School Standards and Framework Bill* proposes a range of measures intended to raise standards in schools, including limits on class size for 5- to 7-year-olds; the setting up of Education Action Zones; the role and responsibility of local education authorities; and intervention in schools which are causing concern. In mid-February, the government announced £22m funding to be used to reduce class sizes in primary schools.

The *Teaching and Higher Education Bill* provides for the establishment of General Teaching Councils in England and Wales; the development of a professional qualification for head-teachers; an induction period for newly qualified teachers; and new financial support arrangements for higher education students.

Iceland

New legislation on higher education

Two major laws concerning higher education were passed by the Icelandic Parliament (*Althing*) in December 1997. One is a law on higher education institutions, the other law concerns the Icelandic University College of Education.

The law on higher education institutions sets the general framework for the operations of higher education institutions in the country. Their independence is to be increased and they are at the same time made more accountable. This includes greater independence in financial affairs, but a financial contract is to be drawn up between each institution and the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. The Minister also negotiates with the institution as to whether and to what extent they are to engage in research. The lines of administrative authority are clarified in the law and the influence of outside parties is increased as two external members are to take a seat on the governing committee of higher education institutions. According to the legislation, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture is to set rules on quality evaluation and certification of degrees. The law will be fully implemented over the next two years.

The law on the University College of Education allows for the merging of four colleges; The College for Pre-school Teachers, the College of Physical Education and the College of Social Pedagogy with the existing University College of Education.

The aim of the law is to strengthen the training of teachers in Iceland. Merging the four institutions into one and upgrading teacher training in all areas to university level are seen as reinforcing research in the field of education and improving the professional training of teachers. The new University College of Education will be fully operational with a new curriculum this autumn.

Liechtenstein

New approaches to organizing time at nursery school

As of the 1997/98 school year, nursery schools in Liechtenstein (*Kindergärten*) can restructure their teaching hours. The morning session can now be extended from two to three-and-a-half hours, whereby the children have an extra afternoon off. With the introduction of a 30-minute start-up period, the morning begins in a quiet and relaxed way. Children arrive at the *Kindergarten* one at a time or in small groups, giving their teacher enough time to greet each child individually.

The extended morning timetable changes the way in which class time is structured, creating more opportunities for methodological variation. It is now possible to spend more time on different activities and to work in depth in certain areas without being rushed. Special in-service training courses prepare nursery school teachers for these new approaches to organising class time.

The new scheduling of class hours means that children spend the entire morning at *Kindergarten*, as nursery school hours have to be coordinated with those of the school. Children at both levels are now being taught at the same time. This in turn meets with a demand that is widespread among parents.

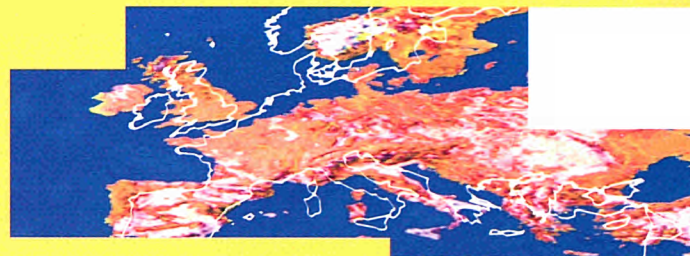
Norway

Reform in continuing education and training

The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs is preparing a White Paper on continuing education and training for adults to be presented to the *Storting* (Norwegian National Assembly) in 1998. The work is mainly based on the recommendations by a government committee, submitted to the ministry in October last year.

In its report, *New Competence - the basis for a total policy for continuing education and training for adults*, the committee recommends that the right to study leave must be established by law in order to ensure equal treatment. Other main recommendations are to open up the educational system, to give all adults who need basic education the opportunity to obtain this, and to establish systems whereby non-formal learning can be documented for use in the educational system and working life.

The committee sees the reform as a development process. Its long-term objective is to develop a broad understanding of good teaching practice and efficient systems for lifelong learning in which the whole of the adult population can take part. As the first step on the way to achieving this goal, the committee proposes a number of measures which can be implemented within a relatively short period of time.



Czech Republic

Standards for Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education

After *Standards of General Education* (1995 primary and lower secondary, 1996 upper secondary level) on 1 January 1998, the *Standard of the Basic Curriculum of Upper Secondary Technical/Vocational Education*, approved by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, went into effect as the first step towards standardization in this field. The Basic Curriculum was tested under the Phare programme for vocational education and training reform in 19 selected pilot schools. The Basic Vocational/Technical Education Curriculum is built around education levels and streams. These are defined according to the educational aims and characteristics of the content in particular elements of the basic curriculum.

The curriculum is divided into three parts:

- general education, which is the common core forming the sociocultural function of education (languages, social sciences, natural sciences, sports and artistic activities);
- core skills, which are essential for the personal, social and professional development of any pupil - these fulfil an integration role within the framework of the curriculum as a whole;
- basic vocational/technical education, which sets the bases of vocational education in the particular stream.

The core skills and general education are defined as being common to the whole spectrum of educational programmes.

The next step will be a professional standard, focusing on the individual fields of study.

Slovakia

New law on further education

In 1997, a law on further education was passed in the Slovak Republic. It is the first law which deals with the sphere of adult education.

The main reasons behind this law were:

- to link the school system with further education as part of the principle of lifelong learning
- to have a vocational guarantee when assessing further education institutions and their educational activities
- to establish the framework rules for financing further education.

Further education includes preparing the participant for another level of education, vocational education and training which enables the participant to be better placed in the labour market and finally 'leisure time' education, civil and other types of education which help to develop personal interests.

The bill differentiates between accredited and non-accredited education. The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic decides on accreditation on the basis of a proposal made by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for further education, which functions as the Advisory Board to the Ministry of Education in the Slovak Republic.

Accredited activities of educational institutions may receive financial support from different sources: participants, the National Labour Office budget (mainly for re-training) as well as employers' organizations.

Those in further education in accredited institutions are entitled by law to take leave from their work in order to undergo training.

Latvia

Education reforms

Some months ago, the Ministry of Education and Science prepared and adopted the Strategic Programme of Education Advancement called *Education 1998-2003*.

Recent priorities include the need to harmonize Latvia's education system with those of the European Union Member States, to adapt and update the educational system to meet challenges and the competitive pressure of the current labour market and to ensure the efficiency of investments by providing well-trained human resources.

The programme aims at four main targets: improvement of the quality of education; effective use of resources; access to education; and institutional development.

In 1997, Latvia launched the *Latvian Education Computerized System Project*. This project is carried out by University of Latvia and it is planned in three stages (1997-1999). The project involves computerizing education and its administration as well as providing electronic means for collecting information and creating an infrastructure for operating the whole system.

- **Stage 1** - 1997 was the first year with the launch of classes in computer skills in three secondary schools. The training of teachers and the computerization of subjects was organized.
- **Stage 2** - 1998. This involves promotional activities to create 38 regional centres for teacher training and the computerization of subjects at national level.
- **Stage 3** - 1999. All secondary schools will be equipped with computers and they will be connected in a single network and to the Internet.

After 1999, the process to make all schools in Latvia fully computerized will continue.

Slovenia

Changes in the existing system of education for children with special needs have started this year. This is necessary primarily because of a change in attitude towards the education of these children. The findings of Slovene research show that a rather high percentage of students in Slovene schools are children with special needs, especially children with learning disabilities, behavioural problems and emotional difficulties. Expertise-based programmes, suitable staff, space and other conditions should be provided for such children. It is therefore urgent to adopt more appropriate legislation. The government has prepared a proposal of a bill on placements of children with special needs allowing for more integrated forms of education for these children. Instead of a static placement scheme, placements based on each child's development and a new law will be based on the contemporary principles of mainstreaming the children, the gradual introduction of changes, equal opportunity taking into account the differences in children, the right to choose the school and type of education, possibilities for parents to become involved in the educational process, differentiated and individualized programmes and cooperation between various professions. In this way, it will be possible to identify each child's needs in a holistic manner and the monitoring of their progress will become more complex.

The above contributions were provided by the Eurydice national units in the countries concerned.



Further information

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How a Europass might look

Learning sans frontières

The Commission's proposal to promote European pathways for work-linked training and apprenticeships could be adopted by the Council by the end of the year. The proposal, which also includes the creation of a "Europass" for training, aims to promote European mobility for people following work-linked training while also improving the quality of training periods abroad.

Training significantly improves the chances of finding a job. This is the clear message of a European study carried out by the Commission and published in April 1997¹. The study includes some highly eloquent figures. In the new German Länder, for example, three-quarters of apprentices who follow training inside a company quickly find a job. For those who follow training outside a company, the figure is just 25%. The study also shows a wide variation in participation from one country to another. In Germany, Denmark and Austria, apprenticeships represent between 3% and 6% of the total labour force, which is 20 times the figure in countries such as Belgium, Greece and Portugal where participation is between 0.2% and 0.3%.

On 18 June 1997 the Commission adopted a Communication for "Developing apprenticeship in Europe"² on the basis of these study results. This sets out five strategic proposals to guarantee a more efficient acquisition of skills, the first of which is to increase the number of apprenticeship places by applying the system outside traditional sectors such as the building trade, motor trade or hairdressing. In future, there should be more apprenticeships in the services and increased participation by small firms. The Commission also proposes adding a European dimension by facilitating the mobility of apprentices and recognizing periods of apprenticeship worked in other Member States.

Mobility and equality

On 12 November 1997 the Commission adopted a proposed Council Decision³ for "The promotion of European pathways for work-linked training and apprenticeship". As its name suggests, this is not targeted exclusively at apprentice-

ships in the strictest sense. Any vocational training which includes a structured period of in-company training is seen as work-linked training. It also relates to all levels of training, including higher education.

The proposal for a decision also includes two additional elements. The first concerns the "European pathways". The aim here is to encourage student mobility and improve the quality of training periods spent abroad. This will be achieved by setting up a partnership between the student's home school or college and the receiving structure, i.e. the company, school or training centre in the country visited. The agreement reached between the two parties will stipulate the aims and content of these courses, the support given to the student, length of stay abroad, monitoring methods, etc.

The second element is the Europass-training document which is designed to accompany the student throughout his training "pathway". The document will be like a real "passport" with an official European Community heading. It will include the trainee's particulars, information on the vocational training followed at the home school or college and full details (complete with receiving organization stamps) of training periods abroad. These courses will be described in the host country language and then translated into the language of the country of origin and the holder's language if different. At each stage of training it will therefore be possible to identify what qualifications have been acquired in what occupations, irrespective of the country.

The Europass will therefore clearly present full details of periods of training abroad. A significant objective – even if it does fall short of the "mutual recognition" recommended by the Commission in its Communication of June 1997.

European pathways

The European pathways and the Europass will be voluntary schemes. This new system to encourage mobility and quality will of course respect the Member States' full responsibility in defining and organizing training systems. It will apply to persons following training under the Leonardo da Vinci programme (70,000 of them between 1995 and 1997) and all other persons following work-linked training. Another advantage of the Europass is that it will give some useful publicity for work-linked training and apprenticeships which have proved their worth in equipping young people to find jobs.

But this does not mean that all the problems have been solved. People of quite different status follow work-linked training and apprenticeships. They may be employees, students in higher education or school pupils. Although European legislation authorizes unhindered mobility for the first two categories, formal obstacles remain for young people still at secondary school. The various groups also face problems in the field. The European Commission would like to remove all these barriers and will be making the necessary proposals to this end.

The proposal on European pathways and the Europass is now with the Council. A favourable outcome seems likely as the Parliament has already given a positive opinion under the co-decision procedure. If all goes well, the proposal should be officially approved in December 1998. The Europass will then be ready for implementation on 1 January 2000.

4.3 million young people

According to DGXXII and Eurostat information sources (VET: collection of data on vocational training and education), 3.4 million young people in the 15 Member States are following work-linked training programmes and 3.5 million are following apprenticeship programmes. As 2.6 million are following work-linked and apprenticeship programmes, a total of 4.3 million young Europeans are therefore following work-linked training and/or apprenticeships.

¹ "The role of apprenticeships in increasing employability and job creation: the significance of apprenticeship training for the labour market." Study carried out by the Netherlands Economic Institute for the European Commission, April 1997 (Netherlands Economic Institute, Tel: +31 10 4538800, Fax: +31 10 2420120)

² COM (97) 300

³ COM (97) 572, OJ C 67 of 3 March 1998, p. 7



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1998

Leonardo da Vinci Direct contacts



Signing the 1997 Leonardo da Vinci project contracts in DG XXII:
Marta Ferreira, head of the unit responsible for implementing the programme, and Klaus Draxler, director of the vocational training policy directorate

The European Commission organized two information and contact days in Brussels, on 19 and 20 January, to help project promoters respond to Leonardo da Vinci's 1998 call for proposals. This "exchange" fair, aimed at establishing grassroots partnerships, proved a great success.

A surprise awaits the visitor entering the *salle des Pyramides*, beneath Place Rogier in central Brussels. No conference, no official speakers with the audience looking on, but an altogether different atmosphere. Wherever you look in this large hall, you see people coming together in small discussion groups and then breaking away again. Participants walk quickly from stand to stand, mobile phones in hand. Clearly everybody knows what they are looking for, what they have to do, and where they must go.

Thematic workshops are in progress in the small adjoining rooms, led by staff from the Commission's DG XXII and the Leonardo da Vinci Technical Assistance Office. The same subject is first discussed in French, then a little later in English. The same participants also often switch from one language to another as they establish contacts with project promoters from other countries. The workshop leaders simply give practical advice on Leonardo da Vinci's priorities and areas of activity or on how to best submit an application. Participants introduce themselves and explain the kind of partnerships they are seeking.

In the "language training" workshop, for example, a businessman announces he has developed a computer program for training organizations and companies which can be used to assess the language skills of staff in 25 positions where international relations are particularly important. The program is available in English, German and French. The task now is to extend the system for use in southern Europe and Central and Eastern European countries.

The "access to vocational training" workshop is particularly well attended. A training body working with disabled people is looking for a partner in the landscaping sector. "I can give you a few leads," says one official. "Take a look at what Germany has to offer, they are very active in this field."

The choice of method

Meanwhile, the *salle des Pyramides* remains as busy as ever. Whether gathering ideas, translating them into a more specific project or searching for the right partners, participants certainly have a choice of method. The stands of the national coordination units offer an initial country-by-country approach. In the middle of the hall there are large noticeboards, arranged by themes, like Chinese *dazibaos*. People can leave messages or their visiting cards on them, scribble a few words, propose meetings, etc.

At the stand of the Leonardo da Vinci partner search database, Finnish officials take an evident pleasure in explaining how this valuable contact structure operates. The database was created in 1995 and now contains details of several hundred partnerships under Leonardo. It was accessed no fewer than 1,800 times during the two contacts days at the *Pyramides*. In fact it proved so popular that eight new inquiry stations had to be hastily added.

Another stand offers specific assistance with setting up projects. One lady has just visited the stand with the suggestion of using museum infrastructures as a place of training for women seeking employment. A little later, German trade union and employers' representatives explain how they want to do something in order to improve training courses for young people in the motor industry.

A common experience and identity

These contact and information days, the third such event the Commission has organized, have clearly had a positive impact. With over 1,100 registrations, participation at this '98 event is up by nearly 100% on the previous year. An enthusiasm which is no doubt partly due to the fact that the '98 call for proposals is one of the last opportunities to participate in the programme's current phase (1995-1999). Another notable fact is the very active presence of the CEECs and Cyprus. Klaus Draxler, programme manager at the Commission, stressed their very real impact on Leonardo da Vinci in contributing a high level of skills and potential for innovation.

The 1997 Leonardo da Vinci contact days lasted four days. This year the European Commission opted for a two-day event, cutting down on the academic sessions and giving priority to direct grassroots contacts. It seems this change of atmosphere was much appreciated. Richard Walther, head of the Leonardo da Vinci Technical Assistance Office, welcomed the opportunity to establish more human relations within the programme. "That is how to achieve progress. Leonardo da Vinci is not just a mechanism. It is a common experience and identity."

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Creativity is catching!

A first series of eight thematic seminars has been completed under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Held in different countries, they helped participants to keep up to date with the latest developments.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme financed 2,272 transnational vocational training projects as a result of its first three calls for proposals between 1995 and 1997. At which point it became clear that support for a project must not be limited to financing alone but should also include its on-going development.

Leonardo da Vinci aims to become a European laboratory for innovation in the field of vocational training. This naturally implies a desire to see the projects keep up to date on the latest developments in methodological and technological applications.

This is why the Commission and participating countries decided to hold a series of eight thematic seminars in order to further develop projects financed in 1995 and 1996. The aim was to improve the overall quality of vocational training in Europe and to ensure that promoters are able to benefit from the experience of other projects in similar fields.

Many benefits

These seminars encouraged an exchange of information and opinions and the pooling of the best practices adopted by the partners in the various projects. Jean-Guy Moyersoen, coordinator of the *Master's degree in neuroradiology* pilot project, attended the Vienna seminar on training optimized by technology. His views reflect the general opinion. "The seminar was very instructive", he stresses. "I found it particularly rewarding to compare our project with others, in terms of working methods, technical approaches and problem-solving. Perhaps what most impressed us about these meetings was the potential to learn from each other's experiences."

Paving the way forward

The seminars also allowed many projects to prepare for the future. Everybody was able to present current projects, while the common themes gave rise to genuine project networking. New solutions were often found and sometimes considerable improvements made.

The Leonardo da Vinci Multimedia Centre was present at virtually all the seminars, presenting some of the best completed training products. These provided a quality standard with which current projects could compare their own work. Representatives of the Leonardo da Vinci programme were also on hand to offer participants their services and advice. The presence of experts on a range of subjects certainly stimulated the debates.

Sigurður Guðmundsson, who helped organize the Reykjavik seminar on language learning using information technology, gave a positive verdict. "The meetings generated new ideas and more original approaches. Apart from their scientific value, the seminars also stimulated great creativity".

The participation of decision-makers

Another notable point is that the seminars were attended by several training recipients who were not necessarily involved in the Leonardo da Vinci programme, such as companies, training bodies, local or regional authorities, and the social partners.

Transnational, national and regional decision-makers were also invited to attend the seminars. Their presence was particularly significant in the context of Leonardo da Vinci as it provided an opportunity to perhaps influence national vocational training systems. It also highlighted the investment

of the organizing country in the search for innovative methods. At the seminar in Tampere, Finland – on equal opportunities in the world of training and work – there was a specific workshop attended by all the decision-makers present in order to discuss the implications at national level.

Continuing on the Internet

Of course this search for creative solutions could not be completed in the space of two or three days of a transnational seminar. The Commission's services and the Leonardo da Vinci Technical Assistance Office therefore decided to set up thematic discussion forums on the Internet. These generally take up where the seminars left off, bringing the opportunity for continued dialogue. During an initial test stage they are to concentrate on four subjects:

- technology-optimized language learning, further to the Reykjavik seminar;
- multimedia applications for training purposes in connection with the Lisbon seminar;
- the dissemination of project results;
- managing and preserving the environment.

These forums are aimed at the professionals in each field. Access requires a password, available by electronic mail from: jane.massy@nety.eu.int

These first Leonardo da Vinci seminars have paved the way for a new form of project support. Rather than simply monitoring the work done, they are permitting the exchange of information and experiences and a joint search for inventive and innovative solutions.

The first eight seminars

In most cases the seminars, which lasted two to three days, were organized jointly by several of the Leonardo da Vinci national coordination units, the Commission and the Technical Assistance Office.

- **Multimedia: innovation and implementation**, Vienna (Austria), 23-24 October 1997
- **Language learning using information technologies**, Reykjavik (Iceland), 21-22 November 1997
- **Promoting mobility under the Leonardo da Vinci programme**, Heidelberg (Germany), 13-16 December 1997
- **Equal opportunities in vocational training**, Tampere (Finland), 16-17 January 1998
- **Strengthening the links between training or educational establishments and companies**, Manchester (United Kingdom), 22-24 January 1998
- **Education and training in the information society: the individual and learning**, Lisbon (Portugal), 5-6 February 1998
- **New approaches to accrediting skills acquired by informal means**, Dublin (Ireland), 19-20 February 1998
- **Leonardo da Vinci studies and analyses**, Rome (Italy), 26-27 February 1998

New ways

of recognizing skills



Further information

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In the White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*, the European Commission recommends moving towards a European system of accrediting skills. The various strategies which could achieve this aim are currently the subject of a debate, in which it is first necessary to clarify certain terms and concepts.

In order to become an active citizen and improve the prospects of finding a job, every individual should be able to acquire new skills at various places and at any age. But the success of such efforts depends upon recognition of all the skills acquired, not just the basic diploma and initial training.

This is one of the messages from the Commission in its White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*. Another is to propose a European system of accrediting skills.

This would certainly represent major progress. But the question is how to put the idea into practice. What form should it take and what means should be employed? This is currently the subject of an in-depth debate to identify the most suitable strategy. Should the emphasis be on formal systems of European skills accreditation? Or would a more flexible approach be better, one based primarily on national systems? The options remain open.

New contexts

Before moving forward in the debate, it is first necessary to clarify the vocabulary and concepts used in connection with what is a complex subject on which perceptions vary greatly from country to country. There is also a need to emphasize the contexts in which the current debate is taking place. National education systems used to be quite stable, but that is no longer the case. Socio-cultural developments, technological progress and competitiveness are bringing the need for new skills. At the same time, the training market is seeing rapid change with the development of informal systems of skills accreditation or validation. And in some countries, such as Spain, Italy and France, there is a tendency for competencies to be transferred from national to regional authorities, resulting in a further increase in the qualifications and diplomas awarded.

A matter of vocabulary

Skills acquisition, evaluation, accreditation, recognition. These often similar notions are not always understood by everyone in the same way, so clarification is necessary to avoid misunderstandings. The following definitions should help.

First acquisition. Skills and knowledge may be acquired through formal channels (within traditional systems) or informal channels (individually, using computer or telecommunication products and services, through work experience, etc.).

Then there is **evaluation**, which is required to verify the acquisition of knowledge. This can employ traditional methods (tests, interviews, file analysis) or new methods (data processing or automated methods, distance methods).

Accreditation comes after evaluation and serves to enable the individual to prove that he does indeed have the skills and knowledge he claims. This must be in the form of documents issued by a public or private organization or institution with sufficient prestige to subsequently ensure recognition.

Recognition concerns an individual (employer) or institution (school or university) other than the one which delivers the accreditation. On the job market and in the academic world, companies and universities are able to trust and accept as valid the accreditations presented.

A primarily national affair?

For skills to be recognized at European level, is it not therefore necessary to concentrate first on improving the skills accreditation systems within each country? Two developments are necessary. New open systems must be encouraged in order to accredit or validate all the new skills acquired in various ways. At the same time, traditional systems would benefit from changing so as to be able to take into account the many initiatives which spring up spontaneously in the informal market.

This dynamic would make it easier to increase information exchanges and understanding at transnational level, bringing transparency to skills, qualifications and accreditations. This increased mutual understanding would then help clarify what needs to be done at national level. Pilot experiences supported by the Commission under the Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes are already achieving progress in this direction.

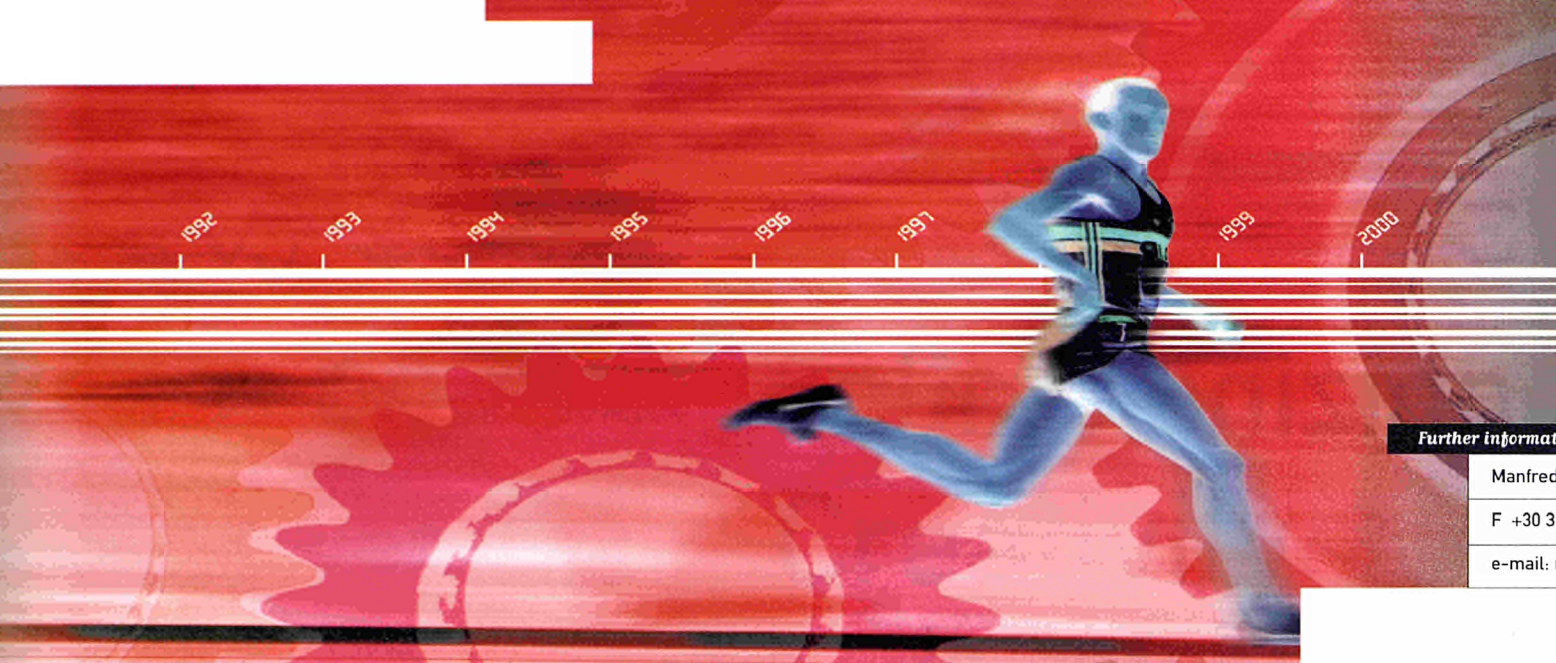
At a 'World Trades Fair' in Lyon, France

The pleasure of learning in a multicultural environment

Italian milling-machine operators, Spanish florists, German electro-mechanical engineer, French tilers... Young apprentices from four countries demonstrated a broad cross-section of skills at the 2nd Mondial des Métiers or World Trades Fair in Lyon, France, between 26 February and 1 March 1998. The event was organized by the Rhône-Alpes region, with the support of the European Commission.

So why did the AROM (Rhône-Alpes association for orientation and the promotion of trades) decide to organize this meeting of trainees? Mainly in order to demonstrate the importance of links between schools and firms and to provide an attractive showcase to help guide young school-leavers in their choice of occupation and promote opportunities for mobility throughout Europe. As the young visitors, accompanied by their teachers or parents, passed from stand to stand they were able to see for themselves other young people at work, whether stone-cutters or mechanics busy rebuilding a Formula 1 racing car. In this way they were able to compare received ideas and sometimes idealized visions of a trade with the realities of training.

"What are the job opportunities at the end of it?" The question was repeatedly put to the employers' representatives at the fair. "The textile industry is looking for candidates: we are encouraging work-linked training in particular, at all levels, from the basic aptitudes certificate to university graduate level," explained a local textile manager. "The industry



Further information

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Training, the new imperative

New lifestyles, longer lifespans, new technologies and global economic competition are changing our idea of what work is. We can no longer survive at work if we do not continually gain new skills. So vocational training needs to be attractive, relevant and valued by society, Cedefop's new report says.

Cedefop's first report on current European research in vocational education and training (VET), *Training for a changing society*, gives an overview of theoretical and methodological approaches in VET research as well as of findings and implications for policy and practice.

The point of departure is the complex relationship between vocational education and training, the economy and society, and the challenges which we all face in fighting unemployment, insecure work and social exclusion. Preventing these ills and preparing the workforce for the unpredictable requirements of the labour market require us to provide various forms of training, to develop versatile skills and to improve the way we assess learning, both formal and informal.

When we examine how VET has performed in the light of changes in the European supply and demand for skilled people, it becomes obvious that the pressures put on VET by demographic change, new technologies, work organization, etc., will increase. And as the resources available from the public purse and from businesses come under increasing pressure, maintaining education and training's importance also depends on whether it is possible to convince all those involved of its key role in ensuring social and economic progress.

Vocational choice and guidance, the transition from training to work, apprenticeship training and problems of the disadvantaged are further issues discussed in the report. One of the central findings is that owing to the changing values of work, enhancing the attractiveness of VET, achieving parity of esteem between practical and general education and training, as well as targeted measures to improve the

training and employment prospects of "people at risk" are essential prerequisites for a future-oriented vocational training, which is valued and relevant both socially and economically. In this context, key qualifications and competencies play an important role in enabling the individual to survive in an increasingly complex and dynamic society and in fostering innovation and social change. Their identification and transformation into curricula is discussed in the report as well as the question of how new media can improve self-directed learning through constructive learning principles. This applies both to formal and to informal learning processes.

The report concludes with a discussion of completed comparative research relating to the mobility of workers and trainees within the EU and the recognition and transparency of skills in the Community. The annexes contain a comprehensive bibliography and information on networks, institutions, legal and statistical bases and VET related European Union programmes.

The report is being published by Cedefop in English, German, French and Spanish and will in future appear biannually, alternately with the planned Cedefop report on VET policy in the EU.

is taking on insurance agents and brokers at the moment," was the message from the insurance employers' federation, indicating that there is a lot of scope for work-linked training in the services sector as well as in the traditional manual occupations. This was effectively illustrated by the 80 young apprentice journalists, sound engineers and set designers who produced a daily programme from the Fair's television set. In one programme, they presented the German, Hungarian, Spanish and Italian members of a European class at a new kind of apprentice training centre in Roanne, a pilot project encouraged by the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The apprentices convincingly conveyed their enthusiasm for learning a new trade in a multicultural environment – and in excellent French at that!

More than 92,000 people visited the World Trades Fair in the course of the four days. It seems that several gaps have started to close, such as the traditional distance separating young people from firms, the gap between manual and intellectual occupations and, finally, the geographical, language and cultural barriers between the regions which like to be known as "Four motors for Europe", namely Lombardy, Baden-Württemberg, Catalonia and Rhône-Alpes, which organized the event.

This original event closed with the awarding of a certificate of participation to the 150 apprentices who gave demonstrations at the fair. It may not yet be a "Europass", but its symbolic value was certainly not lost on the young participants.

Further information

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Vocational training reforms

Belgium

Construction sector – Framework cooperation agreement

The Belgian social partners have concluded a new collective labour agreement for the construction sector, running from July 1997 to June 2001.

It includes a substantial training drive, organized along four main lines:

Sponsorship

This system is designed to encourage companies in the construction sector to take on and train young people with a diploma with a construction option from a technical or vocational training school.

Construction apprenticeships

This specific industrial apprenticeship measure applies to unskilled job-seekers aged 18 to 21. The minimum period is 18 months and the maximum 24 months.

Training credits

This system is designed to promote vocational training among poorly skilled workers in the sector. The employer initiates the use of these credits for training hours, with a maximum of 40 hours a year.

Combined work and training scheme

This scheme allows the worker to attend training once a week. It is financed by the Belgian Fund for Vocational Training in Construction. Employers who use additional staff in order to maintain production during training days benefit from a reduction in the employers' social security contribution.

These four initiatives are being implemented under a framework cooperation agreement signed by the aforementioned Fund, the Community and Regional Office for Vocational Training and Employment (FOREM), the Walloon Region and the Confederation of Walloon Construction (CCW). An agreement of the same kind has also been signed with the Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB).

Source: FOREM (CIDOC) / VDAB (ICODOC)

Denmark

The education institutions of the 21st century

A statement by the education minister on the institutional structure of tertiary education in Denmark shows that it is characterized by many small institutions spread across the country. Today 195 tertiary education institutions exist, of which 12 are institutions under university legislation, 117 offer medium-cycle higher education courses (i.e. 3 to 4 year programmes for occupations such as teachers, librarians, nurses) and 66 supply short-cycle higher education. Of these 195 institutions, a total of 169 offer courses in only one occupational area.

In comparison with the other Nordic countries which each have only around 30 tertiary education institutions, with an average of 5,000-7,000 students, the Danish figure is only around 800. Some 80% of Danish institutions have a yearly student intake of less than 200 students.

The policy goal of the Danish government, that 50% of the age cohort should benefit from tertiary education, necessitates a serious discussion on whether the existing institutional framework can achieve this growth. The minister's statement presents two models for restructuring and streamlining the Danish tertiary education structure:

1 | Centres for further and higher education

This model proposes the integration of education programmes into centres for further and higher education (CVU), so that either vocational schools and medium-cycle institutions come together under one institutional framework, or only medium-term higher education institutions form umbrella institutions. Similarly, short-cycle higher education programmes could be absorbed into one institution formed by merging a number of medium-term institutions together. The 'graduates' from the new medium-cycle higher education institutions would receive bachelor status, whilst short-cycle higher education candidates would have the possibility of doing so after an additional one and a half years of study.

The purpose behind building up a new continuing vocational training (CVT) sector is to improve the quality of intermediary education and to innovate educational programmes through the establishment of interdisciplinary learning environments. This would also create an attractive, regional, vocational alternative to the bigger university cities and to academic studies.

2 | The university model

In this variant, an estimated 10 to 12 of Denmark's universities would join with medium-cycle higher education institutions, thereby offering universities the option of concentrating mainly on either academically oriented, or vocationally and professionally oriented education. The intermediate length courses in this structure would confer bachelor status on graduates, and short-cycle courses would give direct access to relevant medium-term and diploma courses.

The education minister expects that the restructuring will take place voluntarily within the next five to seven years, based on the institutions' own interests. The two models are ideal types, not final proposals, and many variations are possible.

A heated debate on this radical reform has started among the institutions.

Source: DA Information

Spain

The new National Vocational Training Programme

In March, the Department of Labour and Social Affairs' work programme included the presentation of the National Vocational Training Programme, which seeks to fully integrate the three existing vocational training systems: regulated training (education system), training for the unemployed (labour administration) and continued training for those already in work. The government plans to train more than two million people in 1998 within these training systems, at a total cost of Ptas 350 billion (ca ECU 2.1 billion).

The content of the new National Training Programme incorporates guidelines laid down at the Luxembourg Summit with the new National Employment Plan objectives (due to be presented in the second quarter of this year), which include the creation of a national qualifications system, the development of an integrated vocational information and guidance system and the planning of training initiatives.

Source: INEM

France

Vocational training reforms announced

Martine Aubry, Minister of Employment and Solidarity, has announced a major reform of vocational training, to be launched this year. The priority will be to develop a totally new organization of work-linked training which gives young school-leavers the chance to acquire vocational skills. This will take the form of training and qualification contracts.

The planned reforms also include access to qualification and training in companies, skills validation, the acquisition of qualifications throughout working life and measures to give job-seekers genuine opportunities to gain access to qualifications.

A flexible system is planned for companies enabling an employee to work overtime or give up holidays in order to accumulate hours during which he can then train. The minister believes that such a system has the advantage of favouring a fair distribution of the company's training effort among all employees.

The minister intends to concentrate on cooperation and collective bargaining in order to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

Source: Inf. Centre

Greece

Reforms at every level

Following the publication of *Education 2000 for Broader Horizons*, new and radical reforms are being introduced into the Greek education and vocational training system. The reforms cover all levels of education and are based on the principle of providing equal opportunities and free education to everyone through the public sector. These reforms, which aim at upgrading the quality of education, include the following:

- the abolition of the national examination system from June 2000
- the creation of new, flexible, optional study programmes in the Institutes of Higher Education
- the creation of an Open University
- the restructuring and upgrading of university and non-university higher education curricula
- the expansion of post-graduate study programmes
- increased support for technical and vocational training

United Kingdom

Setting training standards

Government-recognized National Training Organizations (NTOs) are being set up to replace nearly 200 industry training organizations and occupational standards bodies.

So far nearly 40 NTOs have been formally recognized, assisting nearly two-thirds of the UK workforce, a figure that by May 1998 is expected to have risen to 75 NTOs covering virtually all industry and service sectors.

The government believes that NTOs will allow the development of a more strategic, national approach to the way industry influences education and training. Crucial to the relationship between education and competitiveness, NTOs will also be responsible for identifying skills needs in their sectors as well as for more general educational need assessments. One specific task for NTOs will be to ensure that National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications are not only better promoted to employers but that they also meet both national standards and industry needs.

The National Council of NTOs will provide opportunities for the creation of networks and of dialogue on issues related to education, training and competitiveness. UK lifelong learning minister Kim Howells feels that such a network "will play a vital role in ensuring individuals and industries have the skills needed to be successful".

Organizations seeking to become approved NTOs must undergo assessment by an independent recognition panel which includes representatives of the social partners and the government.

Source: IPD

Further information

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- the upgrading of upper secondary education (Lycea)
- the introduction of comprehensive study programmes for primary to upper secondary education (Lycea) as well as new curricula for primary and lower secondary education (Gymnasio)
- the extension of pre-school education
- the introduction of new teacher training programmes
- the incorporation of a modern system to assess the performance of teachers
- the gradual abolition of the teachers' employment list.

Within the framework of the education reform, Technical Vocational Lycea (TEL) and Comprehensive Lycea (EPL) will be abolished or integrated into general education schools (Eniaia Lycea) offering three alternative pathways: theoretical, practical and technological.

Moreover, Technical Vocational Schools (TES) are being upgraded and renamed Technical Vocational Institutions. As part of the programme, the OEEK (Organization for Vocational Education and Training), which will serve as the spearhead for developing vocational training in Greece, will also be reformed and restructured.

Parliament has already approved legislation relating to the proposed Open University and to the radical changes to secondary education. The overall legislative programme should be completed and approved by the end of 1998.

Source: OEEK

Ireland

New organization to support human resource development in companies

Training for indigenous industry will be one function of a new agency intended to "rationalize and standardize services to Irish industry". The area of human resources, particularly those staff involved in training and re-training, is one of the key areas targeted for the new agency. Indigenous firms, the majority of which are small/developing companies, have had a mixed performance to date due to their dependence on high-cost traditional sectors resulting in poor profitability, combined with low investment in research, development and human resources.

At present the staff training needs of industry are under the remit of FAS, the Training and Employment Authority. The new agency will bring together the services to industry division of FAS with Forbairt, the development agency, and the Irish Trade Board. Between them they

currently administer at least 45 enterprise schemes. Assistance varies from business planning and finance to research and development, marketing and human resources. The government proposals aim to reduce the number of schemes and provide a single point of access to state support.

Detailed planning for this new agency has already begun with the appointment of a chairman designate and it is hoped it will be in operation mid-year (1998). It is expected to have an annual budget of around IRE150 million (ca ECU 188 million) and to employ approximately 1,000 staff. FAS, along with the employers' organizations - Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC), and Irish Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (ISME), which represents small business - has broadly welcomed the proposals.

Source: FAS

The Netherlands

Action programme for lifelong learning

In January the Dutch government approved the National Action Programme for Lifelong Learning, containing the key concept of employability, as well as measures ensuring its development.

The programme has its origins in the "Knowledge Debate", initiated by education, culture and science minister Jo Ritzen in March 1996. The aim of this national debate was to pinpoint the skills needed for the future. Its concluding recommendations were then disseminated through the national lifelong learning action programme, soon to be implemented.

Employability is viewed as increasingly important for employees and employers alike. Compared to the UK, Denmark, the USA and Germany, Dutch companies spend 50% less on employment training for their employees. The government should play a facilitating role in this improvement, not only for older employees but also for those school-leavers who lack the necessary qualifications.

The potential costs of the programme are detailed in three different financial clusters indicating the total amounts for each:

- in terms of the employability of those already in, or currently looking for, employment, the cost is shown as an estimate,
- the employability of teachers,
- the prevention of educational disadvantage and the reorientation of education towards lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning requires efforts from the government, social partners, employers, employees and job applicants. The government needs to adopt policies which encourage learning amongst the employed, disadvantaged groups and job applicants. Prevention, at the pre-school stage, is better than cure when it comes to combating educational disadvantage. Alternatively, drop-out levels could be reduced through the better registration of pupils or through counselling.

To meet these aims, teachers should themselves gain experience in the business community and a register which recognizes the professionalism of teachers should be established. A position as teacher will eventually become conditional upon registration.

The full text of the lifelong learning document is available free of charge, in Dutch or English, from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (tel. +31 79 323 2323).

Source: CINOP

Portugal

Social labour market

The Portuguese government has established a social labour market policy with the objective of integrating the unemployed into areas outside the normal labour market, e.g. support for families and schools and the improvement of the natural, urban and cultural heritage. The following are elements of this policy.

The schools-workshops programme intends to provide vocational training for the young unemployed, those looking for their first job and for the long-term unemployed. According to data provided by IEFP (Institute of Employment and Vocational Training), 115 training actions, involving a total of 1,365 trainees, were approved during May 1997.

The occupational programme enables unemployed people to feel useful within their society. It helps fight isolation and a lack of motivation as well as the sense of marginalization felt by many unemployed people. Data obtained at end of July 1997 indicate that more than 27,000 workers participated in such programmes. IEFP data relating to employability following such programmes, reflects the predominance of self-employment as the main objective of those participating.

Sheltered employment aims to provide training for the disabled so that they may develop their vocational skills. According to data from early 1997, there are 17 sheltered employment centres in operation, assisting 634 people.

Source: CICT

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How to build bridges between the players?

Open and distance learning is an excellent means of improving access to education and training. Since 1995, this innovative method has received full backing from the European Commission, principally through the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes. But what exactly is the Community trying to achieve?

Since 1995, the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes have made it possible to launch a series of cooperative projects for the promotion of open and distance learning¹, including the use of new technologies in traditional learning systems.

To support this concept, which includes educational multimedia, the Commission is bringing together all those working on ODL at European level in order to explore the potential of information and communication technologies and to develop methodologies for their use in training.

This European cooperation is aimed at promoting innovative educational and organizational processes, such as exploring the use of technologies to increase cooperation between pupils, teachers and trainers; supporting the training of teachers, trainers and managers; and developing strategies to improve the quality of multimedia products and services.

It also aims to improve access to education and training for all 'excluded' persons. These may be people living in rural areas or areas remote from places of training, or they may be disadvantaged by their social or professional circumstances or a handicap.

Projects funded since 1995² can be divided into three categories on the basis of the stated aims.

Improving the understanding of current innovations

Teams from several European countries cooperate on research projects, studies and pilot experiences in order to learn by working together on a common project. These projects offer an innovative alternative to the approach to training adopted by traditional educational structures.

Each team in each country carries out a study of the ODL scene according to a pre-defined method. They then hold a video conference to discuss their regional approach and the European dimension of the problems encountered.

The emphasis is on the process rather than the product, on "learning by doing". By analysing the processes, such projects provide instruction on the best way of training teachers and trainers in the correct use of technologies.

Other projects analysing the potential of virtual mobility stress the way in which technologies can complement physical movement across Europe.

In this process, good dialogue depends on the ability of teacher trainers to create situations for dialogue and interaction.

The development of information and communication services

European cooperation is expressed through the creation of human networks. To support this dynamic, the Commission has adopted a number of projects aimed at gathering, structuring and facilitating access to information.

One such project has developed a multimedia database (book, CD-Rom and summary on the Web) on European producers of educational software and multimedia training products, with details of who they are and the products offered.

Each of these publishers selects and provides a basic description of one or more products which it believes should be more widely known at European level.

The trainers and managers also find themselves facing the same difficulties and opportunities wherever they are situated in Europe. The role of European projects is to build bridges between the players in order to define common approaches, which makes the information and communication systems crucially important.

Designing pilot modules and developing methods

The design of pilot modules is a third key area for Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci projects in the field of open and distance learning. Once again, the emphasis is on vocational training processes rather than the products. This is reflected in the fact that the Commission's support is linked to the quality of the partnerships created for developing multimedia products and services.

The determining criteria for Community aid in the field of education are the quality of the European process or the exemplary nature of the approach.

Initial conclusions

It is difficult to describe in a few lines the extreme diversity of experiences and practices currently found at local or European level within groups looking at joint questions which extend beyond national borders.

The first conclusions which may be drawn are:

The quality of the teaching approach is the essential criterion for experiences analysed or developed at European level, whatever the level of learning.

The combination of work and learning is an increasingly frequent form of using technologies. Nevertheless, this requires command of the communication processes above all else. The technology must be transparent for the user and the social and organizational aspects are vitally important.

There are huge differences between the different kinds of electronic resources available. It is necessary to clearly distinguish between consulting data, finding information, gaining access to knowledge and actually learning.

The European dimension of experiences raises difficulties which are the source of analyses and recommendations. The diversity of languages and cultures are factors which must be taken more seriously into account in future.

The production of educational multimedia by the pupils themselves or by adults following training as part of a project-based approach proves very fruitful.

Participants in the field are becoming increasingly receptive to educational or training processes. All innovative projects give rise to multilateral cooperation which calls into question the traditional frontiers between schools, universities, associations, firms and local authorities.

Technology is not the cause of this opening up, but it is a catalyst for this kind of change.

The fields covered by the use of technologies and multimedia in the various countries constitute a series of icebergs, just the tip of which we see emerging at European level.

Ten or 20 years ago many people thought a critical mass of multimedia products was needed in order to trigger the "computer revolution". Today, it is simply a question of providing general access to the Internet in order to create "the information society". Nevertheless, the Community experience shows that what is most important is a critical mass of use and reflection on these uses in order to create a genuine "learning society".

¹ About 100 projects have been funded under Socrates and 150 under Leonardo da Vinci.

² Socrates funded 91 projects between 1995 and 1998, with an annual average financing of ECU 100,000.



Leeds, United Kingdom

The school that always likes

A second chance to learn

A European second chance school, the first of its kind in the United Kingdom, is up and running in the Seacroft district of Leeds. *Le Magazine* was there for the official opening and stayed on to investigate further. We report from this unique school.

Thursday 5 March, 11 a.m.

A festival atmosphere

With its 15-storey tower blocks, there is no mistaking the Seacroft district, even at a distance. Most of the people in this part of East Leeds live on the council estates where rents are lower than in the private sector. Over the years, the area has become home to the city's most underprivileged residents. It forms a pocket of poverty marked by crime and a general sense of insecurity.

Between 50% and 80% of Seacroft households are on benefit, compared to an average of 34% for Leeds as a whole. 70% of young people over 17 are no longer in full-time education (56% for Leeds overall) and 25% of 16-24 year-olds are unemployed, compared to 10% for the rest of the city. The people who live in this area are often branded as undesirable – the kind of reputation which can bring rejection from an employer for your postcode alone.

In July 1996, it was in the heart of this district that the Family Learning Centre decided to open its doors. It is housed in the former Foxwood Secondary School, a glass and steel structure typical of '50s architecture.

Today, Thursday 5 March 1998, everybody is crowding into the lobby of the Family Learning Centre for the official opening of this second chance school. European Commissioner Edith Cresson and David Blunkett MP, the British education and employment minister, arrive and enter what has been set up as a small press room for the day. "Between 10% and 15% of young people in Europe today leave school without a minimum of basic skills," the Commissioner stresses. She explains how this Leeds school is one of the first group of 13 pilot schools, supported by the European Commission: known as the "second chance schools", they are trying to find new ways of helping these young people. There are as many as 45,000 young people in the United Kingdom today who have left school without any qualifications at all, explains David Blunkett. The British government has made it a priority to give them a second chance.

1 p.m.

"Our philosophy is to say yes, every time," explains head teacher Chris Peat

The crowd gradually disperses. All the officials have left. Chris Peat, the enthusiastic young head of the Family Learning Centre, does not look like a traditional headmaster. After 13 years as a community worker in East Leeds, he knows this neighbourhood well. He explains how Leeds has recently experienced something of an economic boom, with the development of services centres and the creation of 18,000 new jobs. The problem is that the jobs have gone mainly to skilled people who moved in from outside the area. There has been little impact on unemployment in Seacroft. The people here just don't have the necessary training and experience. Close contacts in the field have convinced Mr Peat of one thing: "The only way of bringing new hope to people is through education and training."

Three years ago, he was one of the initiators of the "family schools" project which aimed to develop local partnerships between all the education players. This led Leeds City Council to set up the Seacroft Family Learning Centre with the specific aim of offering families living in the area the chance to return to education.

"Experience has taught us that the way to get young people interested in education is first to involve their parents." And the idea behind family learning? "It is to do our very best always to say YES. It is not easy for someone living in this area to decide to go back to school. If anyone contacts us, we accept them. Even if it's February and the course started in September."

When it opened in 1996, the Family Learning Centre handed out 25,000 information brochures in the area. This brought several hundred responses. To date, over 1,000 students have attended the Centre, which seeks to cater for all needs. All students follow basic courses in English and maths and acquire basic communication skills, such as how to work as part of a team. This can then be followed

– although it is not obligatory – by more specific or qualifying training at one of the project's three partner colleges – Thomas Danby College, Leeds College of Art and Design, Leeds College of Technology – or at Leeds Metropolitan University. The Family Learning Centre continues to offer students social and psychological support throughout their period of study.

The second chance school is to adopt the same method but concentrating on 16-24 year-olds with no qualifications. Chris Peat explains that the principal differences of the second chance school are the more tailor-made study programmes, the quality of the support and, of course, the European networking.

Now, in early March, the second chance school is welcoming a first group of 10 young people from Seacroft. This figure should quickly rise to around 50, and hopefully to around 300 in the longer term.

3 p.m.

John, 18: "I was dyslexic but the teachers just didn't want to know."

After the excitements of the morning, the young students are enjoying a moment's relaxation. We found them in a downstairs classroom. Failure at school, unemployment, hanging around with nothing to do... they all had a similar tale to tell. Damien, 21, left school six years ago. After which life became one long tribulation. With no work, he hung around in the street, started drinking and wound up a heroin addict at the age of 17. He committed a number of burglaries in the area, finally receiving an 18-month prison sentence. Now his life has taken on a new direction. He is training for qualifications which will enable him to find an office job.

John, 18, a pirate's scarf on his head, left school at 16. "I was dyslexic, but the teachers didn't want to know." He is taking a graphics course at the Family Learning Centre. "It was always my dream," he smiles.

The European Commission's support

Further information

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to say "yes"

Gary, 31, is the oldest in the group. His is rather a different story. He had a job, in the building trade. "But I was always at the bottom of the pile. I wanted a different life to that. My ambition is to become a social worker." Gary is pretty good at maths and helps his friend Michael when he has difficulties. In return, Michael helps Gary with his computer studies. They all agree on one thing: "We come to the second chance school because we want to and because we like it." What Michael likes most about it is that "they don't push you all the time". Tracy, who wants to become a nursery school teacher, likes the way "the teachers spend a lot of time with each one of us". Amanda agrees: "It's a more friendly atmosphere, you work as a group and help each other."

4 p.m.

Sue, a teacher: "We start with little things"

In the adjoining room, a small group of teachers (there are six at the centre in all) are busy with their various tasks. Stephen is responsible for organizing help in preparing for job interviews. He sees flexibility as the key: "We don't say to young people: this is what the second chance school is offering - if you are interested then contact us." There is no rigid framework. The length and form of training are tailored to the individual. "The important thing," adds fellow teacher Sue, "is to allow the young people to regain their self-confidence. We start with little things so that they can get a sense of achievement."

Friday, 9 a.m.

A moment of pride

Damien, Michael, John, Gary, Keith and the others proudly enter the Family Learning Centre. They have just been reading the many press reports on the previous day's opening ceremony. They were pleased to see how much space was given to their own stories.

10 a.m.

Action stations for the Internet report

It is action stations in the main classroom. Chris Peat has brought together all his teachers and the 10 pupils for a brief evaluation session. His first words are to congratulate the young people: "You did a great job!"

The head explains their first assignment for the day: to write down their experiences in the form of a report to be made available on the Internet to the other second chance schools which are partners in the European networks.

As the meeting ends, Michael and Gary take out their exercise books while Amanda concentrates on the computer screen. She is using a computer game based on motor racing in order to learn how to type sentences as fast as possible without making mistakes. She is oblivious to the conversations going on around her.

11 a.m.

Noni: don't call me "teacher"!

Sue is explaining to us how the partnership at the basis of the Family Learning Centre works in practice. "We get together once a fortnight with teachers at the colleges. The most difficult thing now will be getting them to adopt at their level the more individualized approach of the second chance school." The Learning Centre also has a role in establishing links with companies and finding work placements for students. The results in this respect have so far been positive. Several business managers with specialist knowledge of call centres, such as the Halifax Bank, have visited the project and seem very enthusiastic. "It is a question of progressively building up these placement opportunities," explains Sue. The centre contacts the private sector, the voluntary sector and local public services which offer opportunities in areas such as gardening, cooking or swimming instruction.

The teachers at the second chance school are highly motivated. Noni, another teacher, stresses the mix of skills they are able to contribute. "Some are trained teachers, while others have a background in social work. But they all have experience of working with the unemployed and know the problems they face. In fact we don't particularly like to call ourselves teachers, we think 'workers' is a better word."

At which point Michael looks up and decides to chip in. "Yes, she's right," he says forcefully. "This school is nothing like the ones we went to before." Gary, meanwhile, has started to dream out loud. "It would be great to visit other second chance schools in Europe. And what about a training course in Marseilles? But you'd have to learn some French for that... And that's something else..."

The second chance schools originate in an initiative by the European Commission's DG XXII (Education, Training, Youth) following the White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards a learning society*. Objective three of this White Paper is to combat social exclusion.

These pilot projects are aimed at young unemployed people who have left school without any qualifications or any of the skills necessary to find a job or gain a place on existing vocational training courses. The main aim is to offer them a wide range of opportunities to receive quality training which is adapted to their needs and which will culminate in their actually finding a job and thus rejoining mainstream society.

Five criteria

Most of the projects are located in less-favoured areas and all are required to satisfy five criteria:

- A broad partnership of local authorities, social services, voluntary associations and the private sector.
- A teaching approach which focuses on the needs, aspirations and abilities of the individual.
- A combination of study to achieve basic qualifications and practical training modules given by and in companies; support for young people until they find a job and beyond.
- A central role for the acquisition of skills in computing and other new technologies.
- An integrated approach and a force for bringing new life and activity to the area in their neighbourhood.

Synergies

The Commission's approach is based on a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, testing a new kind of educational establishment, i.e. second chance schools. Secondly, the networking of these schools using existing structures set up by the Member States. On the basis of this laboratory of ideas and new practices, the Commission wants to cooperate with the Member States in order to encourage new national measures which take into account the need to combat social exclusion. Practical examples of this are to be found in Greece, for example, where the parliament has just passed a new education act which includes the concept of second chance schools, and also in the UK which is currently setting up a national network of about 20 of these schools.

A few figures

The Milan Research Institute is working on a study comparing figures on the number of young people who drop out of school in the various EU countries. It is not an easy exercise. The differences in legislation on compulsory education in the various countries coupled with the absence of very precise figures makes comparison difficult. Nevertheless, the number of young people leaving school before completing compulsory education and without basic qualifications is estimated at between 10% and 15%.

Eurostat 1997 reports that 14.6% of 15-24 year-olds in the EU are neither working nor receiving any kind of education or training. 45.4% of this same age group leave school having got no further than lower secondary level. 56.1% of unskilled school-leavers of this age have a job, compared to 73.7% for those with a qualification.

13 schools

Since 4 November 1997, 13 second chance schools have opened or are about to open. They are in Marseilles (France), Bilbao and Barcelona (Spain), Catania (Italy), Halle and Cologne (Germany), Hämeenlinna (Finland), Seixal (Portugal), Nikea-Peristeri (Greece), Leeds (United Kingdom), Ribe (Denmark), Heerlen (Netherlands) and Norrköping (Sweden). In January 1998 these second chance schools were linked by an electronic network, co-financed under DG XIII's ISPO programme.





Further information

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Cash and questions: the euro school

From 1 January 1999 the euro will be an official currency in 11 EU countries, and from 1 January 2002 euro notes and coins are due to start coming into circulation. Learning about it at school is a good way to get ready for it.

In May 1997, at the Commission's invitation, European financial and other specialists attended a round table meeting on the practical aspects of the switch to the euro. They concluded that general public information on the euro was seriously lacking, noting in particular the need for an information campaign targeted at young people. So the Commission asked a group of external experts from various fields (teaching, communication, multimedia, consumer protection) to think about taking information action through the school system, how and when this might be organized, and the possible role of the Commission in supporting and supplementing the action of Member States.

In a report published last January, the group of experts came up with a number of key messages and practical recommendations, as summarized below.

Schools: the ideal place for information

In 1995, the 5 to 20 age group included about 73 million people in the European Union, almost 20% of the population, 69 million of them attending almost 320,000 schools. This working population of the future has a high potential for assimilating information, is largely in favour of the euro and is well placed to pass on information to their parents and grandparents.

Schools must clearly be central to any "proximity" social action, as teachers often play a vital role in relaying information to the residents of a city neighbourhood or country village. There are about 4 million teachers in the EU. The first job is therefore to provide them with the theoretical and practical information to ensure they are well informed, both as teachers and as consumers.

The classroom is a good place for debate. A place to openly discuss childrens' doubts and questions about the euro and

– through the children – the doubts of parents. A classroom approach to the problems has the double advantage of being removed from the commercial considerations of information transmitted by certain private operators and of treating the subject in much greater depth than is possible in a mass information campaign. On top of that, providing information on the euro in schools presents an ideal opportunity to increase pupils' knowledge of European peoples and their history, a step towards acquiring a sense of European citizenship. Schoolchildren could take this step with the single currency.

More pragmatically, the classroom is also the ideal place to learn how to cope in practice with euros. Not only will young people be able to learn how to make currency conversions and count in cents and euros, but they will also learn about the cost structure of goods, products and services.

The material produced for schools can also be used for other sections of the population, especially young people following training or apprenticeships who do not attend traditional educational establishments.

The group of experts agreed on the need not to treat the euro merely as the subject of information but of an important message. Although the approach can vary depending on the teaching methods adopted – some Member States may want to include information on the euro in lessons, while others may prefer to organize special "open days" so that parents can also attend – it is important for the euro to be *taught* and not be the subject of extra information which is simply *communicated*.

The list of countries initially joining the euro zone was drawn up in May, so teachers should already have been in possession of basic information by then. In any event, teachers must certainly be in possession of the information by the start of the 1998/1999 school year and continue to be informed throughout the period 1999-2001.

Community "value added"

The Member States will clearly play the principal role in this campaign, providing initial and continuing training for teachers, supplying teaching material and deciding the information strategy to be followed by schools. Some schools have already drawn up an action plan. The European Union, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity in the field of education, can nevertheless lend a significant "value added" to the information campaign. It can permit effective coordination between the national managers, favour the exchange of ideas and good practices, supply teaching materials and make available its instruments, including in particular – as it is a matter of providing education and training in the euro – the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes.

It is not "Brussels" which is seeking to use schools as an instrument of propaganda. It is rather that – as many teachers have themselves said – if there is one way of informing people about the euro without recourse to advertising and marketing, then it is through schools. The Commission – notably DG XXII, which is particularly concerned by anything to do with teaching – wants to help schools in this campaign, and therefore approved the conclusions of the experts' report in February. It is organizing a meeting of representatives of education ministers responsible for disseminating information on the euro, and the Commission has also submitted recommendations to the Member States.

If you are a teacher, trainer or other education professional and would like to teach children, adolescents or adults about the euro, the Commission's euro Internet site can help you find the information you need:

<http://europa.eu.int/euro>



Jonathan goes to school without stepping ashore

Travelling from port to port with his bargee parents, Jonathan is only able to attend school a few weeks a year. To help make up for what he is missing, he is taking part in a particularly innovative distance learning project involving virtual lessons on CD and electronic contact with his teacher. Four European countries, 16 schools and 180 travelling children are currently taking part in the scheme, launched by EFECOT¹ with the support of the European Commission.

Jonathan is five. Most children his age attend nursery school. But Jonathan is not most children. Together with his mother and father and little sister Cynthia, he travels from port to port on board the *Galjoen*, a 110-metre barge. If there is a nautical school at the port, then he attends that for a while and has the chance to mix with other children of bargees. He would like to go more often, but last year only managed about 60 days' school.

His parents' work often takes them to Rotterdam, Antwerp, Liège and Basle, sometimes travelling back up the Rhine. "It's not an easy life for the bargee," explains Jonathan's mother. "Our destinations change all the time. We can sometimes be travelling as long as four days without setting foot on dry land."

Next year Jonathan will be going to boarding school. But his parents are concerned at his lack of basic education. Will he be able to cope at primary school? Will he have more problems than his settled friends? His teacher gives him lessons to do while he is travelling on the boat and his parents help him with them when they can find the time. But sometimes a month goes by without his teacher being able to monitor his progress. And often he has to do all his exercises again.

Homework and TV

A few days ago some new gadgets appeared in Jonathan's cabin: a CD player and a remote control which looks like a joystick, both connected up to the television. It is all very simple. Jonathan just turns on the TV and a few seconds later the lesson begins. His mother helped him the first time, but now he does it all by himself, learning to do basic arithmetic, telling a circle from a square or reciting the alphabet.

The CD contains 25 lessons, with written and spoken texts, photos, drawings, cartoons and video clips. If an exercise is too complicated he just clicks on an icon and a virtual voice immediately explains the lesson. Jonathan finds it all great fun and really likes the freedom of choice it gives him. It is often he who decides he needs to do his "homework" again. At the end of the day, his tutor is able to check all his exercises using the modem link to the TV screen. Depending on how he has done, she may move on to more difficult lessons or offer additional explanations in order to clear up specific problems.

Since early March, several hundred children like Jonathan have been taking part in the same kind of experience in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom. The project was initiated by EFECOT¹, the European Federation for the Education of Children of Occupational Travellers, with support from the European Commission. Called TOPILOT, it is intended for children of bargees and fairground and circus workers. It works in partnership with 16 schools, with two groups of 10 pupils per school receiving the CD equipment in turn. The results in terms of what is actually learned and the effects on pupil motivation are being carefully studied throughout this trial period.

Older pupils can take part too

"It is a revolutionary system," explains Mrs Wijckmans, a teacher at the De Schroef nautical school in Antwerp. "Jonathan has not come to school for 10 days now, but I know what stage he has reached in his work." His parents share her enthusiasm: "There is a space reserved for us on the CD where we receive messages from his teacher and check what Jonathan has learned. The programme also includes exercises which can be practiced in everyday life. It really helps us a great deal." But this does not mean they see this new form of teaching as totally replacing school, but rather as a valuable extra aid.

The project is not intended solely for very young children and two programmes are available for travelling children aged 14 and over who are following vocational training courses. The first is aimed at developing commercial skills by presenting pupils with "real" professional situations in which they have to take decisions. The second is concerned with electricity, an important subject in the world of the circus and fairground. The aim is to teach students the basics of electricity and its use in practical everyday situations.

If the TOPILOT experience produces good results, EFECOT will be looking at the possibility of setting up a permanent network providing this type of training.

¹ EFECOT is a European federation which implements actions and projects to improve education and training for travelling workers. The aim is to create and promote teaching systems adapted to the special needs of travellers so that they are not excluded from the mainstream educational system. For further information please contact Kasper Peters or Lieve Hendrickx at :
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Eurodesk

Keeping young people informed

It is notoriously difficult to keep young people informed about Europe. One successful approach, backed by the Commission, is the Eurodesk network. Rooted in a Scottish initiative, this now links up youth organizations in 18 European countries which are directly responsible for providing information in a user-friendly way.

A little history

The initiative did not come from the top, but from the local level – from Scotland as it happens. Bob Payne, manager of Brussels Link, Eurodesk's European coordination centre, proudly recalls the network's origins. It was in the late 1980s. At the time, the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC), based in Edinburgh, was doing pioneering work in informing young people. The SCEC (an NGO financed by the local authorities) believed that the only way to effectively inform young people was to go out to them, by working with local associations, local media and schools.

Keeping young people informed is not an end in itself, but a means of helping them to become full citizens and to lead group projects, working closely with European partners. Yet it was at this European level that the problem lay. The SCEC organizers were aware that the proportion of young people in Scotland who benefited from exchange opportunities under European programmes was much lower than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. So what was the problem?

The coordinator of Brussels Link identified three kinds of obstacles. The first is that "young people do not know where to find European information." Although every Community programme has national offices, if young people are to avoid getting lost in a jungle of information they must be able to contact a central point before proceeding to a more targeted search. The second obstacle is that "European information is frequently off-putting" and must therefore be "translated into understandable language". The third difficulty is more general in scope: there is a need to "make young people want to be involved at European level" and to "develop a European awareness".

An exchange-based network

Eurodesk-Scotland was founded in 1990 to overcome these difficulties. It was immediately backed by the European Commission, which was very interested in pilot experiences which test new ways of informing large numbers of young people about Europe. Between Brussels and Edinburgh there was a meeting of minds and of ideas.

Eurodesk-Scotland proved an immediate success. "The week after start-up, we were already answering 300 information requests." The method soon spread to other parts of the UK, with Eurodesk offices for young people opening in London, Cardiff and Belfast, all linked up to Edinburgh.

DG XXII noted the project's success and suggested that other EU countries should link up with Eurodesk-Scotland and designate partner structures which would form a network. The Youth for Europe programme would be able to give financial assistance to the various national branches and for European coordination¹.

Eurodesk-Europe was thus founded in 1995, initially with eight participating countries. In 1997 and 1998 the network was extended to all 15 EU countries plus Norway, Iceland and Cyprus. In most of these countries the partners are structures specialized in providing information for young people. Their role is to transmit European information to a very broad public, working through regional and local offices, while at the same time providing young people with direct access, by telephone for example. Each partner is free to adapt the Eurodesk concept in the light of the specific national situation. The system operates as a network based on the exchange of information and cooperation between countries.

Retaining the human element

Brussels Link produces central information and coordinates the network. Its principal task is to supply and update a European database. The Brussels office produces summary sheets in English of the 130 or so European programmes of potential interest to young people and selects addresses and European bibliographical references. Each national office translates this basic information, adding specific information on its own country which is then retransmitted to the 17 partners.

This database is mainly intended for Eurodesk information providers in the 18 countries, although part of it should soon be available to young people through a European Internet site. But the opportunity for human contact will remain, either by visiting an information centre in person or making telephone inquiries. Eurodesk is the result of an effective mix of human contacts and technology – a unique feature which Bob Payne very much wants to preserve. "Eurodesk is not a technological project. It is a living network which uses technology to help people."

1 DG XXII supports Eurodesk through strand E1 of the Youth for Europe programme. This "information for young people" strand, a sector of activities aimed specifically at young people, supports projects based on the exchange of experiences and knowledge, the production and dissemination of information for young people and the networking of activities.

Each in their own way, Eurodesk's 18 national partners try to find the best ways of circulating European information. The following examples are taken from France, Finland, Italy and Germany. Although far from exhaustive, they nevertheless illustrate the different approaches and methods which are adapted to the situation in the individual countries.

France To inform, you must also listen

Located just a stone's throw from the Eiffel Tower, the Centre Information Documentation Jeunesse (CIDJ) in Paris coordinates Eurodesk for France. Its staff believe there is more to providing information on Europe than simply passing on raw data. You must take the time to listen, to really understand what the person is looking for and give practical information accordingly. To do this, it takes a real professional.

"I answered about 20 telephone calls yesterday. Like every afternoon, a lot of the calls were about mobility. From young people wanting to work or study abroad and who want to know about the recognition of diplomas or how to go about finding accommodation, etc. Shall I give you a specific example? There was one student who planned to study abroad under the Erasmus programme but realized that the European grant would probably not be enough. So he wanted to know if there was any other source of possible support. Well there is. I was therefore able to explain to him that certain regional or even general councils in France can provide a top-up grant." Claire Bostfocher works full time for Eurodesk. In the mornings she collects, processes and translates European information. In the afternoons she takes calls at the new Eurodesk telephone line, a special national line which is open to everyone¹.

Claire explains the importance of taking the time to really listen to the caller and find out exactly what it is they are looking for. "When a young person asks a question, as in the example of the Erasmus grant, we have to get them to specify their personal situation, where they are calling from and what exactly they want. We have to make the link between European information and national information."

A profession in itself

Bernard Charbonnel, responsible for international relations at the CIDJ and manager of Eurodesk France, makes a similar point: "Informing young people about Europe is a profession in itself, requiring very specific skills if you are going to do more than simply pass on general information."

Every year the CIDJ in Paris replies to around a million information requests. It is well staffed, with a team of experienced information providers and documentalists². For many years now there has been a European area in its reception lobby, providing mainly written documentation. But that is not enough. There is a need to go much further and to genuinely integrate European information in the day-to-day life of the CIDJ as a whole. "This is much more difficult than just setting aside a European area," admits Bernard Charbonnel. "A specific knowledge of European institutions and how they work is necessary if the information you give on Europe is to be of any practical use. This poses a problem for information-providers required to explain a cultural environment which is very different to that of their everyday experience. In addition to the problem of acquiring the knowledge, this is a source of particular tension."

Thanks to Eurodesk, the CIDJ now has a much more comprehensive European database. But

each information-provider still has to know how to use it effectively, which is why the Paris centre has launched a long-term staff training programme.

In the closest proximity to young people

The role of the CIDJ in France is twofold. It operates as an information centre for the Ile de France and at the same time as network coordinator for the 30 regional Youth Information Centres (the CIJs) located throughout the country. Twenty-two of these CIJs now have a Eurodesk service. The CIJD not only provides them with the Eurodesk Europe data bank but also – and this is a priority for Bernard Charbonnel – organizes training for staff who provide this European information. An initial training session was held in January 1998 and others are to follow. A guide to methodology is being published with this same aim. This will be distributed among the Youth Information Bureaux (BIJs), usually based in the town halls, and the Youth Information Points (PIJs) which usually operate within associations. There are 1,400 of these decentralized information offices in France, linked directly to the CIJ network. In this way the European information web is being progressively woven, in the closest possible proximity to young people themselves.

Every month the CIJs, BIJs and PIJs receive the Eurodesk France newsletter, published by the Paris centre. They also have access to the Info Mobil³ CD-Rom which contains very practical information on the various European countries. This project was also supported by Youth for Europe and was produced by Eryica, the European youth information and counselling association⁴.

Giving meaning to Europe

"Young people who contact us are looking for concrete information which is of immediate practical use," explains Bernard Charbonnel. "Most European programmes are not directly accessible to young people on an individual basis. It is generally necessary to go through organizations. We aim to provide this direct link between young people and Europe." This does not only present the technical challenge of transmitting European information which can be readily understood by the vast majority of young people. There is also the political challenge of ensuring that the Commission takes account of young people and their needs when drawing up its programmes. It is in that way that "we will give meaning to Europe," adds the Eurodesk manager.

¹ Eurodesk France: tel: 01 47 83 40 55.

² The CIJD is supported by the French Ministry of Youth and Sports.

³ Info Mobil provides practical information for young people seeking to travel to Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg or Portugal (and soon all 15 EU countries) for tourism, study or employment.

⁴ Eryica was founded in 1986. This European federation brings together the national networks of general centres and services providing information and advice to young people. Eryica reaches about 5,000 youth information centres in Europe. Several of Eryica's national correspondents are Eurodesk partners, such as in France, Spain and Portugal.



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Germany

A progressive network

How is it possible to circulate European information widely when there is no single centralized structure through which to reach young people? Eurodesk Germany is trying out an original system which takes account of the variety of situations in the field.

As Eurodesk in Germany enters its third year, the priority is decentralization. Central coordination was initially provided by two organizations: the International Visits and Exchange Service for Young People (IJAB) and the national Youth for Europe agency. Both organizations answer questions from young people about Europe, either by telephone (around 100 requests a month) or by Internet (consulted by around 800 young people a month). This is not a bad result. But it is nowhere near enough to reach the vast numbers of young people in a country the size of Germany. Unlike France or Spain, Germany has no structured yet decentralized information network for young people, but

rather many different bodies, active at the local, Land or federal level. As it is not possible to apply a single system when relaying information through these potential partners, flexible formulas which take account of the many different situations are the only solution.

Aware of this, Eurodesk has decided to progress in a number of stages, starting with a pilot project to study the best way of meeting young people's information needs. Six organizations representative of German diversity have been selected for inclusion in this test stage. They include a federal bureau specialized in information for young people, the head office of a Catholic youth movement and a cybercafé based in a cultural centre.

Ensuring that young people are well informed also requires a major effort to increase awareness as a first step to arousing interest and subsequently specific questions. This is why Eurodesk Germany attaches particular importance to working with the media. It has persuaded Germany's second TV channel to devote a special programme to the subject of European information for young people. It also inspired an article in a magazine distributed free of charge on all German trains. These initiatives soon produced a significant increase in the information requests received by the Internet or telephone.

Italy Two irons in the fire

Young people in Italy seeking information on Europe have a choice. They can contact Eurodesk Italy direct, either through a hotline number or by e-mail, or they can contact the 450 local youth information centres, which are linked to Eurodesk.

Eurodesk Italy operates at two levels. It has a national hotline which young Italians can dial from anywhere in the country for the price of a local call. All these calls are redirected to a call centre in Sardinia. In addition to following up these calls, the centre's staff are also in permanent contact with Brussels Link, the European coordinator. In response to ever growing demand, Eurodesk Italy has now also set up a Web site which young people can consult for summaries of the 100 or so European programmes likely to interest them. They can also transmit their precise, individual requests by e-mail, a method which is proving increasingly popular. Four out of 10 information requests are now received by e-mail.

Eurodesk also operates through the national network of youth information centres (Informa-giovani). The network was set up about 15 years ago and now has 450 information points for young people, located throughout Italy.

Most of these centres are run by private cooperatives specializing in youth work which have signed contracts with the local authorities. Staff at these centres can contact Eurodesk Italy at any time in order to obtain information requested by the young people who contact them. Eurodesk also keeps the centres regularly updated on any initiatives or changes likely to interest young people, notably through a liaison newsletter.

Most of these local information centres appoint one person with specific responsibility for European affairs. This makes it possible to provide a more personal response to young people's questions. By drawing on the information available at the Eurodesk, these "experts" on Europe are able to provide the most practical information possible.

A record is kept of all information requests handled by the national Eurodesk. This data bank then makes it possible to analyse both the nature of these requests and any discernible trends. In this way, Eurodesk Italy identified mobility programmes – Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, and Youth for Europe – as accounting for the lion's share of information requests.

Finland

The Internet and the telephone make the perfect combination

The Finnish Eurodesk did not want to build a whole new information system from the ground up. It preferred to lend a "Europe" or "youth" dimension to existing channels and networks.

Eurodesk Finland is managed by the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO), responsible to the Ministry of Education and with its head office in Helsinki. It was set up in February 1996.

During an initial stage, the CIMO conducted a major promotional campaign for this new information service, with press advertising, mailings and Eurodesk stands at student fairs.

The CIMO is not trying to provide information on European programmes by creating a whole new system but by making the most of existing networks and available channels. One example of this approach is the training Eurodesk organized for 80 youth workers under the Youth for Europe programme. These voluntary workers were shown how to hold small information sessions on European

programmes. Eurodesk also set up training for staff at 18 European information centres funded by the Foreign Ministry, with the aim of showing them how to better include Europe's "youth" dimension.

Of course Eurodesk also circulates information through its own services within the CIMO. Two special telephone lines have been set up in order to answer young people's questions. One, a freephone line, records their questions. The other permits a direct exchange. In 1997, 9,000 information requests were handled in this way. Young people can also visit the CIMO's specialist library which, thanks to Eurodesk, now includes an expanded "European information" section. The library received 9,000 visits last year.

April 1998 marked a major turning point when a part of the Eurodesk data bank came on-line. This technological advance will have a major impact in a country such as Finland, which has the highest density of Internet subscribers in the world. Schools, local youth centres and public libraries now have on-line access to information on Europe. But this does not mean the CIMO is going to attach any less importance to telephone services which offer the benefit of discussion and a one-on-one exchange. "Advice is a key element in the way Eurodesk seeks to provide information," explains Sari Lahtinen.



The integration train pulls into Brussels

1 | A wealth of initiatives

Wednesday, 28 January 1998. A strange kind of train, in all different colours, pulls into a Brussels station. It is the "Forum Train", chartered by the French *Fondation pour l'intégration républicaine*. Between 17 and 31 January this special train is making a tour of France, also taking in this short trip up to Belgium. At each stop it makes contact with local associations, sets up meetings and generally informs the public of its action to combat racism. The *Fondation pour l'intégration républicaine* was founded in 1993 by Kofi Yamgnane, an engineer of Togolese origin who later took French nationality and became a government minister before being elected to the National Assembly. The Foundation brings together leading figures from various fields of activity, together with a number of major public and private companies. Its aim is to mobilize as many forces as possible for the integration of immigrant populations. "Successful integration," explains Kofi Yamgnane, "is one which permits the free exercise of all skills and talents in the tradition of republican values." He believes a good integration policy must rest upon four "cardinal virtues": the cultivation of a memory of cultures of origin, better reception arrangements, an improved ability to live together, and the promotion of citizenship.

2 | From local level...

On the train, a team of young volunteers are running the show. Each carriage has been converted into an exhibition room with stands presenting the activities at each of the stops along the way: Toulon, Lyon, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Brest, Amiens and Lille all announce they are "strong and happy in their diversity". Strasbourg explains the benefits of the Youth Committee set up by the local council. "Citizenship," the stand announces, "means participating in the life of the community and working within it. It also means taking part in debates and keeping alive local democracy." A little further down the train there is the European Union carriage devoted to the DG XXII's youth, education and training programmes¹. Throughout the journey three young European volunteers have been welcoming visitors to the European area: Brigitte from Austria, Mary from Ireland and Astrid from Germany. Their enthusiasm is infectious. They are convinced that in future European Voluntary Service should be progressively opened up to young people from non-EU countries.

3 | ... to Europe.

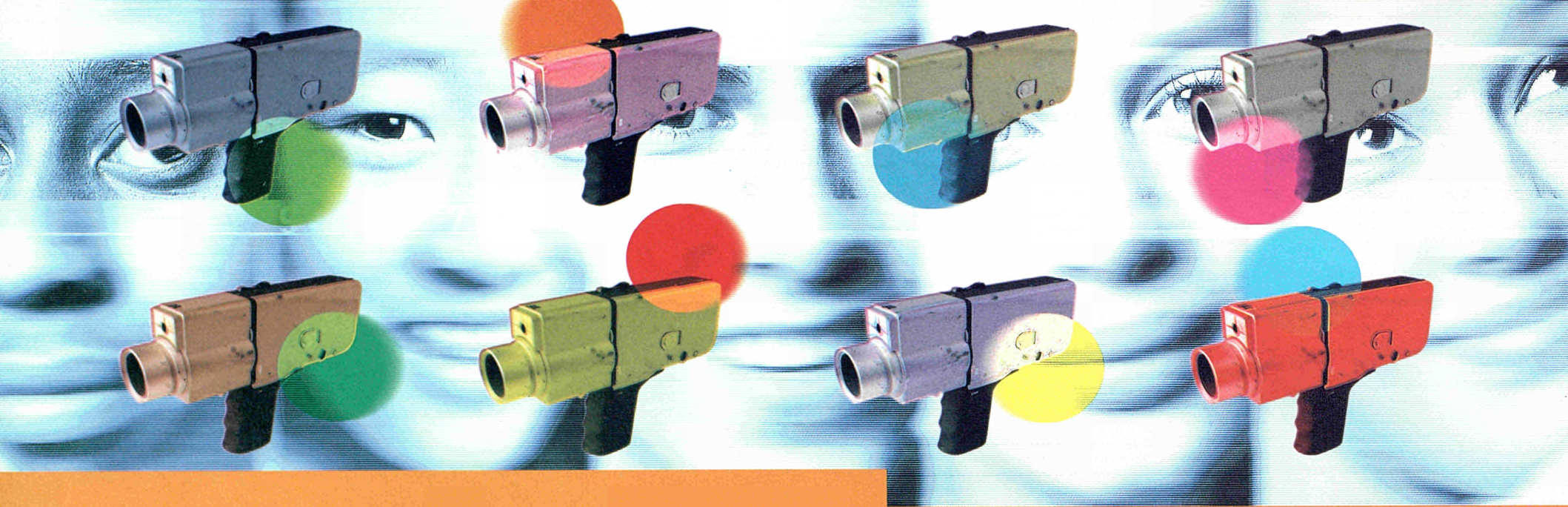
The trip to Brussels provided the opportunity to meet some influential European figures. At 4 o'clock, in one of the carriages laid out as a meeting room, a debate is just beginning on the subject of "Integration by young people". Bernard Franck, lecturer at the Catholic University of Louvain, Kofi Yamgnane, President of the *Fondation pour l'intégration européenne*, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Member of the European Parliament, and Edith Cresson, European Commissioner responsible for education, training and youth are all present. Edith Cresson stresses the various ways in which Community programmes – Socrates ("170,000 young people who travel to European universities"), Leonardo da Vinci, Youth

for Europe, Voluntary Service – make a practical contribution to creating a Europe of tolerance. Daniel Cohn-Bendit explains how immigration is "a painful break and not a simple trip" for the individuals concerned. He stresses that the only way to solve immigration issues without conflict is for "society as a whole to look at the problem, to embrace change". Kofi Yamgnane and Edith Cresson together stress the importance of access to knowledge as a crucial factor in integration, especially for immigrant women and girls.

¹ DG XXII provided financial support for the "integration train".

20 profiles of European experiences to combat racism

Following the 1997 European Year against Racism, DG XXII published a series of fact sheets presenting 20 innovative projects to combat xenophobia. They were all launched under Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci or Youth for Europe. The fact sheets are available in French and English and can be consulted on the DG XXII Internet site at: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22.html>. Copies of these examples of good European practices were widely distributed by the Forum Train at each of its stops.



Anti-racism

TV documentaries

The European Multicultural Media Agency offers young people a chance to show their talent for TV.



EMMA

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Four half-hour television documentaries against racism are being filmed in Europe this summer. They have been selected from proposals by young people who have never previously had their work broadcast on TV.

The winning proposals were chosen in May from some 60 entries to a competition launched by EMMA, the European Multicultural Media Agency, and organized by the International Broadcasting Trust in London in association with TV channels from five EU countries.

The competition was addressed to young people, aged 17-25, in the 15 EU countries, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Entrants were required to have some previous experience of making documentary videos, and submissions, in the form of a sequenced outline and/or a storyboard accompanied by a two-page summary, were particularly encouraged from those with an ethnic minority or recent immigrant background.

The idea of the EMMA initiative came up following the 1996 European Year against Racism and quickly secured support from the European Commission, where it is coordinated by the unit which manages the Youth for Europe programme and the European Voluntary Service scheme. Funding is provided by DG V and DG X as well as DG XXII (Youth for Europe, Socrates). Further support comes from the European Cultural Foundation, Levi's, The Olof Palme Memorial Fund and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

The TV channels involved are the BBC, France 2, RTP (Portugal), TELEAC/NOT (Netherlands) and UR (Sweden), who expect to broadcast the documentaries this autumn or winter. The winning entrants will make their programmes in their own regions or countries, in collaboration with experienced independent television production companies.

EMMA was conceived by Marion Vargaftig and Colin Prescod, who are managing the project in association with the IBT. They described the thinking behind their initiative shortly after the deadline for submissions at the end of March :

Where did you get the idea from ?

The European Year against Racism was obviously the basis of the project, but there were other considerations. There have been a number of studies and recommendations by leading European media experts in the last 10 years on addressing racism, xenophobia, nationalism and cultural pluralism, and a number of media prizes have been awarded for multicultural work in countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. But we felt more needed to be done in this area – hence EMMA – and in particular we thought it was vital for adolescents, especially those who suffer from xenophobic abuse in daily life, to have their say and get the chance to film their own scenarios.

So these documentaries will be particularly authentic, made by young people for young people among others ?

Exactly. EMMA also offers a unique opportunity to discover young talent, in both television and the cinema. By coming up with provocative new ideas in the follow-up to the European Year, the winners can raise genuine public awareness of the issues. Quite possibly they will go on to make the break into feature films and really raise the profile of a tolerant, multicultural society.

Where does EMMA go from here ?

We consider this documentary competition as a first step in getting EMMA more widely known. Our aims will always be to contribute to pluralism, tolerance and a multicultural society that respects other people's lives. However, we want to reach all age groups, not only adolescents, so we have established a database of more than 5,000 organizations in 18 countries – youth centres, leisure, cultural and documentary centres, journalism schools, colleges which offer film-making and media studies courses, film and video studios, etc. This adds up to an explosive creative potential to be tapped in future. EMMA can only get bigger.

The Youth for Europe programme targets the 15 to 25 age group resident in one of the 15 Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway. It covers a five-year period and in 1998 had a budget of ECU 26.5 million. Since the end of 1997, the associated Central and Eastern European countries and Cyprus have also been able to participate.

It offers five main kinds of actions:

- Intra-Community activities directly involving young people (Action A)
- Youth workers (Action B)
- Cooperation between Member States' structures (Action C)
- Exchanges with non-member countries (Action D)
- Information for young people and youth research (Action E)

National agencies have been set up by the Member States in order to help develop the programme. The programme is implemented by the European Commission, assisted by a committee of Member States' representatives which is chaired by a Commission representative.

Further information

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Youth for Europe 10 years on

A birthday message:

"This is just the beginning..."

Youth for Europe was launched in June 1988. 10 years ago already! A decade which has seen the programme go from strength to strength and win growing support. Right from the start, Youth for Europe sought to promote active citizenship and awarded priority to involving young people from deprived backgrounds. Its innovative approach has proved notably successful.

In June 1988, after a long and difficult gestation, the Commission's "Yes for Europe" (Youth Exchange Scheme) proposal was finally approved by the Member States in the form of "Youth for Europe". There was no such thing as an EU youth exchange at the time. In fact, the very terms "youth policy" or "actions in the field of youth" were taboo.

The situation in the Member States varied greatly in those days, in terms of the experience of youth exchanges and the development of the youth sector in general. Then the Commission came along with its demands for a certain quality, pedagogy and geographical diversification, plus access to the programme for all young people without distinction. It was at this point that Community cooperation proved so valuable, the network of national agencies in each Member State effectively managing the programme in the field. It enabled those in more privileged circumstances or with more experience to help others in more difficult circumstances. In so doing, the former were often led to seriously question some of their own practices and certainties.

Taking up its place alongside Erasmus, Petra, Comett and Lingua – all major programmes with well-established reputations – Youth for Europe had to prove its worth.

The emergence of a youth policy

In 1990, at the instigation of Mrs Vasso Papatandreu, the Commissioner at the time, the need for a youth policy and Community cooperation in this field resulted in the Commission Memorandum *Young people in the European Community*¹ and the European Parliament report on *Community policies and their impact on young people*². EU ministers responsible for youth policy attended a first formal Council at which they adopted a Resolution on *Priority actions in the field of youth*. Parliament then made a decisive gesture by creating a specific youth policy budget heading³ which covered Youth for Europe and the priority actions. In this way the Community was beginning to recognize that the informal education centres where young people could experiment, take risks, and participate in society are just as important to young people and their social integration as formal education and training structures. A whole new field was opening up.

At the time of preparing the third phase of the programme, the Treaty of Maastricht allowed the Commission to include in its proposal⁴ intra-Community cooperation policy in the field of youth, based on the new Article 126 of the Treaty on European Union.

This third phase has made it possible to bring together the various actions organized under the first two phases of Youth for Europe, under the priority actions and in part under the Petra (youth initiative projects) and Tempus (youth activities) programmes. This has produced a more streamlined and coherent organization of these previously dispersed initiatives and widened at European level the fields of learning, experimentation and innovation for young people, youth workers and managers in this sector.

Active citizenship

The first objective is to encourage young people to become full and active members of society and thus promote what is termed "active citizenship". This means developing an attitude in young people which leads them to take responsibility for organizing their own lives and to actively contribute to creating and developing society's fundamental principles of democracy, liberty and solidarity. Activities are centred on informal education and are rooted in the young people themselves rather than established systems. Priority is given to tools relating to the voluntary sector in the widest sense, extra-curricular activities and the initiatives of young people outside the world of work, school, the family, etc. Youth organizations are an excellent example of an active commitment to democracy which directly involves young people. Finally, Youth for Europe is the only Community programme to have laid down from the outset a minimum participation level for young people facing the most obstacles to participation and to have provided positive measures to see this is achieved. This marks significant progress in developing ways to integrate young people into society.

In brief

Social experimentation

Youth for Europe, a major component of the Community's action in favour of young people, is effective at three levels. It is a framework for social experimentation which can sow the seeds of more ambitious actions; a means of making young people more aware of European and transnational activities; and an instrument which stimulates the development of similar concepts and actions within the Member States through a multiplier effect. Its "periods of voluntary service" action is a perfect illustration of this. Since 1992, this action has supported a variety of activities and engendered discussions and exchanges of experience between the Member States which have permitted increased awareness of the potential and importance of actions of this kind at European level. Not least of its achievements is the creation of European Voluntary Service for young people, a completely new common concept.

In January 1996, Commissioner Edith Cresson, supported by the Parliament, Council and youth organizations, took the initiative of proposing guidelines for a European voluntary service for young people. The Parliament gave a clear political signal by creating a new budget heading to permit a pilot action. At the time of going to print, the Parliament and Council are shortly expected to adopt the European Voluntary Service programme for young people for the years 1998-2000, with a probable budget of ECU 47.5 million.

The inclusion of a voluntary service action in a Community programme concerned with cooperation policy in the field of youth has brought a new impetus to youth policy. Voluntary service has not only introduced the notion of individual participation and long-term transnational actions but has also established a link with Europe's socio-economic reality.

A new chapter

The Commission's recent adoption of a proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision establishing the Community action programme in the field of youth opens a new chapter in youth policy. One which reflects the new context for youth policy for the years 2000-2004, marked by the new direction given to Community action in Agenda 2000. The aim is to develop a knowledge policy in which cooperation in the field of youth serves to encourage active citizenship and promote innovative forms of participation. The EU now has considerable experience to draw on as well as increased awareness of the importance of cooperation in this field. The new programme incorporates Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service, thereby making it possible to consolidate and build on the experience acquired, to increase the sector's impact and to develop innovative actions at Community level from the year 2000.

It is by carrying out their own projects that young people take control of their own lives, which is what youth policy is ultimately all about.

Modern society discourages young people from taking risks or trying out new experiences, and extracts a high price for any mistakes. At the same time – and whether we like it or not – we have and will continue to have more free time than ever before. This makes youth policy more relevant than ever and the task facing Community cooperation consequently goes far beyond simply developing and managing a programme. It involves providing a way forward for a society in search of a new social frame of reference.

10 years of Erasmus

About 500,000 students, 10,000 teachers and 1,500 universities have benefited from the Erasmus programme (now part of the Socrates programme) since it was launched in 1987 by the small "Human Resources" Task Force. Students, teachers and representatives from European institutions attended its 10th anniversary celebrations in Brussels on the evening of 3 December 1997, at an event organized by the Erasmus Students Network (ESN).

"Originally intended to promote exchanges of university students, Erasmus has gradually become a major instrument in allowing higher education establishments to adopt a European perspective," Commissioner Edith Cresson said in her message to participants. In addition to student mobility, Erasmus now also supports actions ranging from the mobility of teachers to the joint development of curricula, and from the organization of intensive courses to the development of the ECTS system (designed to ensure the recognition of periods of study abroad) and inter-university thematic network projects.

Originally limited to the 12 EEC members at the time of its foundation in 1987, Erasmus is now open to 24 countries, including five Central and Eastern European countries.

The other half of science

An exhibition titled *The other half of science* is currently drawing attention to the subject of women who have made a valuable contribution to the history of science in Europe, yet have often remained in the background if not entirely overlooked.

The exhibition is available in the EU's 11 official languages and will be making a tour of secondary schools for at least three years.

It is designed as a teaching and training aid for teachers, an occasion for debate on equal opportunities in schools and perhaps also an encouragement for more girls to study science and technology subjects. The set of exhibition panels can be requested from the education ministry in each country.

The European Schoolnet

www.eun.org

The European Schoolnet (EUN) is a network of networks, supported by the Commission, designed to promote Internet use for learning purposes and to facilitate contacts between schools in Europe.

Linking national and regional networks in the EU countries, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, the EUN aims to become a multilingual gateway to Internet and provide schools with easier access to existing teaching tools and materials in electronic form. The keyword for EUN is facilitate.

Several contact areas are set up on the EUN Internet platform, for finding pen pals or partners for collaborative projects. In The European Virtual School, quality-assured links selected by teachers are offered and in the European Projects area it is possible to submit and/or be inspired by interesting European projects. By integrating the Web for Schools project in the EUN, educational material, a helpdesk and assigned teacher resources are now accessible for all schools. Discussion rooms, areas to share and compare experiences, to exchange educational materials to develop and to renew traditional subjects are all being developed within the Virtual Teacher College. A pilot interactive course on using the Internet was given this spring.

Many of these mentioned services are not yet fully developed, but a great deal of resources and effort will be put into this during the next two years. Make use of the platform and help shape the content!

Increased budget for Socrates programme

The Socrates programme will receive an extra Ecu 70 million for the two years it has left to run (1998 and 1999). This was formally decided on 23 February by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

While the additional funding will add a much-needed 20% per year compared with the current situation, it is by no means a luxury, since demand for participation in Socrates far outstrips the total budget available.

Following discussions with the programme committee, it has been decided to allocate the bulk of the extra funding to areas where more money is most crucially needed. These include notably the Erasmus grants for studying abroad, and the European school partnerships and in-service grants for teacher training under the Comenius chapter of the programme. The funds will also help to ensure genuine reciprocity in exchanges with the Central and Eastern European countries which, along with Cyprus, are now progressively joining the programme.

¹ COM (90) 469 final | ² 24 May 1991 (A3-0142/91)
³ B3-1011 | ⁴ Of n° L 87 of 20 April 1995





Tempus

bringing civil society on board

Tempus has been bringing the academic institutions of Central and Eastern Europe into the mainstream since 1990. But to help prepare for the imminent expansion of the European Union, it has now taken on a wider remit. It is to broaden its scope to include all types of organizations that make up civil society.

Further information

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The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 revealed higher education systems that bore the stamp of decades of communist rule in Central and East Europe. The universities were centrally managed, often through political appointees, and their potential contacts with broader sections of society were rigidly channelled through national authorities. Freeing higher education to play a pivotal role in the consolidation of democracy and economic modernization is now the main concern of the Tempus programme.

Since it began in 1990 as an academic exchange and co-operation programme, Tempus has stretched from Portugal to Mongolia and involved more than 2,200 higher education establishments in some 1,500 trans-European projects. Slovenian education minister Pavel Zgaga believes this constitutes "the largest university network in academic history".

The partnerships were initially created between departments rather than at the highest university management levels, and this deliberately bottom-up approach proved effective. Between 1990 and 1997 almost 100,000 international staff and study exchanges were carried out under Tempus, while tens of thousands of computer terminals have been installed. International contacts have brought new awareness of academic developments and teaching methods, curricula have been modernized, staff retrained and issues addressed in previously neglected academic areas.

From the establishment of strong academic links, the emphasis shifted in 1994 under the second phase of the programme, Tempus II, to matching the academic contents of the projects to each country's particular needs, set out

as 'national priorities' drawn up with the national authorities. Institutional reform became a priority as the need for new administrative structures became increasingly pressing. And a managerial clear-out had refreshed most of the higher education administrations, justifying a shift of attention up the university hierarchy.

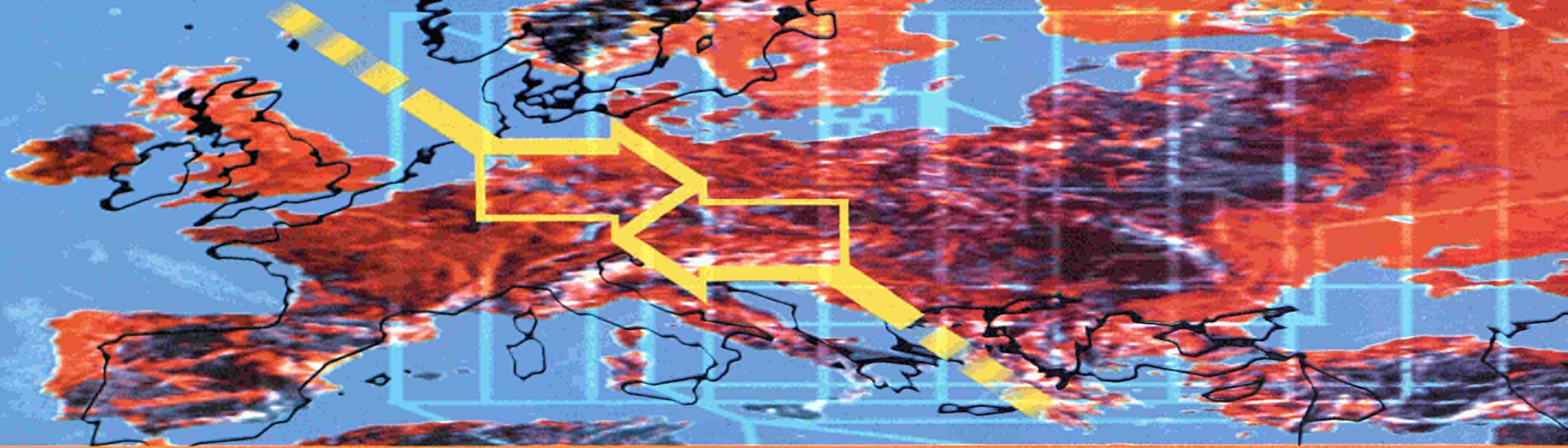
Reaching out into society

Then the prospect of the eastward extension of the EU brought a whole range of new issues to the agendas of the countries concerned. Some six months before the programme was due to start a two-year extension period (Tempus II bis), 150 delegates from education authorities, universities, the European Commission, the European Training Foundation and the Tempus offices of all 41 countries involved met in Portoroz, Slovenia, to consider the new dynamics of the programme.

The major topic of the Portoroz conference on 14 and 15 November 1997 was how Tempus can better contribute to the overall development of civil society. Partners such as NGOs, the media, trade unions, social services and professional associations will now be invited to actively join Tempus networks.

With the emphasis on institution building and the involvement of a wide range of agencies at the highest level, Tempus has moved on from its original groves of academe to help meet the broader challenges of preparing for a 21st century in which the old political, social and economic connotations of 'East' and 'West' Europe will finally have faded.





CEECs-European Union

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Closer international cooperation in education

The European Commission is putting forward ideas on future bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation in education between EU Member States and the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs).

The starting shot

It all began in Warsaw on 21 and 22 April 1997 at the first informal meeting between EU and CEEC education ministers. One of the conclusions of this interministerial conference was that the Commission should present a Communication on bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the EU and CEECs in the field of education.

In preparing the Communication, the Commission decided to employ the services of an expert to study the benefits of cooperation, principally in the field of higher education. The expert proposed a close examination of the many aspects of cooperation, not only Community action but also bilateral agreements between countries and interventions by international organizations.

The Commission's Communication summarizes the principal points of this analysis and also places the facts in a more political context. This text provides education ministers in the European Union and Central and Eastern European countries with an accurate picture of the current situation, on the basis of which they can launch new initiatives in full knowledge of the facts.

The principal findings

Chapter one of the Communication deals with the Community aspect of cooperation. The major player is shown to be Tempus, an assistance programme launched in 1990. But the Phare programme is also credited with major actions in the field of higher education, albeit of a more one-off nature. An interesting point is how both Tempus and Phare have tended to develop from assistance pure and simple to cooperation.

Two major events can be seen to have marked recent European action. The first is the opening up of the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe programmes to five associated countries (Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia). The second is the launch of informal conferences of education ministers. After Warsaw, a second meeting of this kind was due to be held in Prague on 25, 26 and 27 June 1998. It is an experience which is set to be repeated every year.

Community action has also broadened over the years. Originally mainly limited to university lecturers, cooperation has progressively widened to include all those involved in higher education in the CEECs, thus also students, the university administration, ministers, etc.

The Commission Communication also analyses actions by the OECD, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. Although these international organizations only have limited budgets for cooperation with the CEECs, they nevertheless conduct very effective actions (in the form of targeted studies, for example) which also contribute to change.

Bilateral agreements also constitute a very fertile field for cooperation. These country-to-country actions usually satisfy geographical and historical interests and have their roots in cultural and linguistic affinities. Certain common characteristics can nevertheless be identified, such as stronger support for the associated countries, and especially Hungary, which is particularly favoured. These bilateral actions based on specific rationales operate on a more flexible basis than Community initiatives.

Despite the fact that there is no formal pre-established cooperation between these various levels of cooperation, the Communication stresses that there is no major contradiction or overlap. The principal elements in fact interlock relatively well.

The principal proposals

Today there is a need to progress beyond the stage of "natural complementarities" and to establish more structured synergies between all those involved in cooperation with the CEECs. The Commission formulates precise proposals to this end.

An initial priority is to inform all the interested parties on a regular basis. Ministerial conferences are an ideal forum for this sharing of information, the Europa server could be used to communicate data on various initiatives, and it would also be useful to regularly update the in-depth study on which this Communication is based.

The second generation of Community programmes which will be launched shortly in the field of education and training will provide ample scope for new forms of cooperation based on a more flexible involvement of the players at the various levels. European support could be given to certain bilateral actions, for example, thus adding a Community dimension. Similarly, Community actions under Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci could draw more systematically on the expertise of international institutions. The Council of Europe, for example, has wide experience in the area of the recognition of academic qualifications, while the OECD has a demonstrated know-how in the sensitive field of quality control.

The moment has perhaps come, the Commission writes in its Communication, "to consider the possibility of the Community introducing a genuine external education policy in regard to the CEECs, of which access to programmes in the fields of education, training and youth would be just one aspect." An external education policy would provide a coherent framework permitting all kinds of cooperation, with the CEECs certainly, but also with other non-member countries. The European Union already has an external research policy. So why not have the same for the closely-linked theme of education?

Tempus

New priorities

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Institution building paves the way for accession

1998 brings a new, third phase in the development of Tempus. Between now and the year 2000, "institution building" is to be a priority for this Community programme providing assistance for higher education reforms in the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs). It is through institution building that the associated Phare countries must be able to prepare for EU membership under the very best conditions. But what is the reality behind this rather cryptic term?

Institution building in this case refers to the process of putting into place structures and human resources with the necessary management capacities to develop systems allowing partner countries to move closer together and to implement and reinforce the *acquis communautaire*. In a word, modernization. It is designed to assist these partner countries in acquiring modern institutional structures and in creating a stable society, thereby making it easier for them to join the European Union.

Institution building is aimed at a wide range of civil servants, politicians and members of the public, semi-private and private sectors with a key role in accession preparations. The idea is to encourage these target groups to adopt a culture geared to European integration by giving them the real opportunity to adapt to the new practices in accordance with the EU's regulations and decisions. At the same time, this process must create the conditions in which motivation, efficiency and professionalism can flourish.

What training?

Through Tempus, the universities are set to play a crucial role in the service of institution building by implementing continuing training programmes, contributing their know-how and drawing on their ability to cooperate very closely with the respective national and local authorities.

In the course of the various stages in its development since it was first founded in 1990, Tempus has acquired the necessary maturity and experience to manage such institution building. This Community programme has helped achieve a change of mentality among teachers, students and, more recently, university administrative staff, all of whom have progressively acquired a wider knowledge of the European Union and a greater awareness of the need to adapt.

In the field of administrative management, Tempus has supported many projects for the development and implementation of new curricula as well as the founding of a university department in public administration. Tempus has also been very active in the fields of agriculture, banking, employment, languages, law, tourism and the media.

A strong academic potential

Through institution building, Tempus is now to make available to the national and local authorities in the associated countries its strong academic potential in sectors including public administration, finance and taxes, insurance in the widest sense, quality control, European law, continuing training for employees of SMEs and the environment.

Training centres will be set up at the universities for people in a wide range of careers – national, local and regional politicians, ministerial, local and regional civil servants, the representatives of chambers of commerce, trade unions, companies, NGOs and the media, etc.

A large section of higher education is likely to be directly concerned by the institution building projects. Examples are technological universities which have long organized all kinds of training, agricultural colleges and university departments of environmental studies, political science, law, economy, geography and history, and national public administration colleges.

In the context of the chosen subjects of study, the training programmes in institution building will seek to transfer a range of additional elements relating to:

- communication, innovation, efficiency, and adaptation to the new conditions;
- languages and information technologies;
- general knowledge of the European Union and an awareness of European citizenship;
- specific knowledge in the chosen field of speciality;
- and, above all, general motivation.

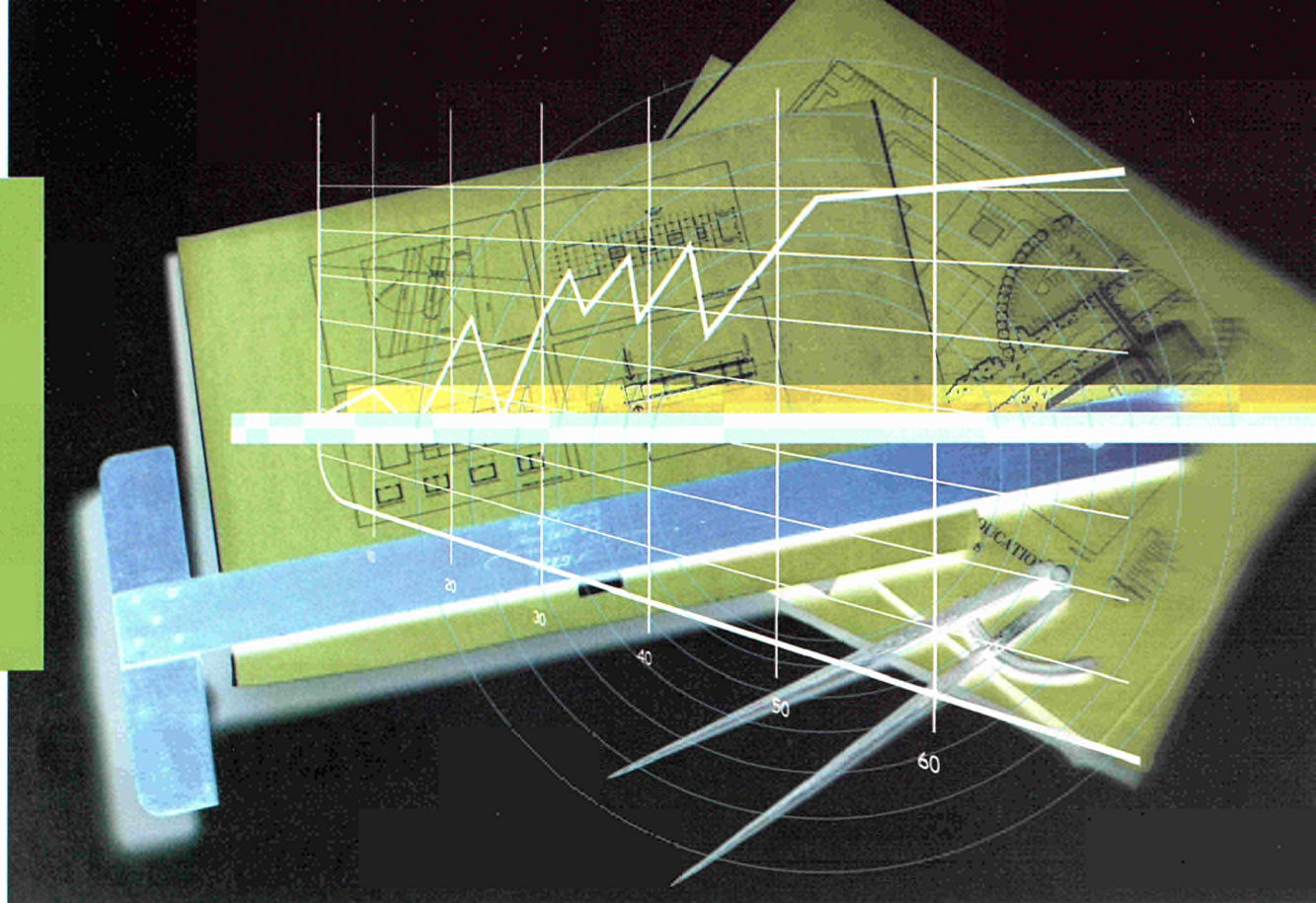
A new dimension

For most universities, the Tempus institution building projects will acquire a new dimension by virtue of:

- the importance awarded to training people who are already in a career;
- concentrating on a genuinely multidisciplinary approach. For example, departments or faculties of law, public administration, computer science, languages and sociology will all be involved in the customs reforms project;
- encouraging universities to leave their ivory towers and forge links with ministries and national trade unions, for example, and to play an active part in the changes in society and the building of its new foundations.

Fortunately, the universities in the CEECs will not be alone in facing these challenges. They will be able to count on their colleagues from the European Union who will provide them with experts and the support of the Tempus national information offices.

**Tempus/Phare
in the run-up
to the year 2000**



Impact studies draw a detailed family portrait

Further information

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In each of the Phare countries, high-level independent experts have been drawing up impact studies. The results are now available. All in all, they present an encouraging picture of the changes in higher education which Tempus has helped bring about in these 12 countries. They also present useful lines of inquiry for when the time comes to decide on the programme's future strategy.

There have been previous studies to assess the effect of Tempus on restructuring higher education in the Phare countries¹ since this European programme was launched in 1990. But they were essentially quantitative in approach, presenting facts and figures on the number of projects undertaken and the number of participating universities. The impact studies, on the other hand, provide a qualitative analysis. In each Phare country, a high-level expert, generally from a university, was charged with carrying out the study.

The results are now available². They provide an overall and generally positive picture of the concrete impact of Tempus. The various national studies all stress how the programme – the first to establish links with the academic community in the Central and Eastern European countries after the collapse of communism – has served as a catalyst. They also highlight how flexible Tempus has been over the years in adapting to the various rates of development in the eligible countries. In Hungary, for example, which is one of the most advanced in terms of higher education reforms, Tempus concentrated on helping universities to restructure as administrative and institutional entities. Whereas in Albania, a country with considerably more ground to make up, the Community programme focused more on restructuring curricula as a necessary first stage.

Valuable lessons

This family portrait drawn by the national experts does not simply assess the changes triggered by Tempus. It also proposes lines for strategic reflection when the programme completes its third phase at the end of the 2000-2001 academic year.

The experts' conclusions support the choice of a different approach depending on the country. For the two non-associated Phare countries (Albania and the FYRM), the task for Tempus should be to concentrate on supporting projects linked to the curricula. With the five countries in the strongest position for initiating accession negotiations (Estonia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia), the emphasis should be on institution building. Universities in these countries must be encouraged to train their administrative staff to be better able to adapt to the new situation they will soon find themselves in. Finally, in the "intermediate countries", which are set to be part of the second wave to join the EU (Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia), Tempus should continue to concentrate on supporting reforms in university management.

The impact studies also provide valuable lessons for the organizers of the Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes for European cooperation, which are now open to five Phare countries. The findings will allow the protagonists to better target their interventions on the basis of a global view of the strengths and weaknesses of the systems of higher education in each of the countries.

¹ There are at present 12 Phare countries: Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and the FYRM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

² The impact studies will be the subject of national monographs, available in English, to be widely distributed from September 1998 by the Tempus national offices.

Russian universities:

learning to earn



Many Russian scientists have emigrated, but useful skills and products remain. A Dutch business school is using the Tempus framework to market Russia's technological innovations in the West. Success depends on building allies within the bureaucracy and keeping higher management informed.

The boggy Neva delta on which St Petersburg is built is not the ideal place to build an underground railway. The tube is leaking and no one is likely to fix it, not even at the Politechnicheskaya station, which serves as a waiting-room for travellers on the city buses. Because Russia is broke.

And Russian universities are broke. Government research contracts have practically dried up. Turning to industry is scarcely the answer, since most of Russian industry is also broke. Yet Western companies are showing interest. "In terms of technology, Russian universities still have a lot to offer", says Pieter Den Hamer of the TSM Business School in Enschede, Holland.

Together with the Groupe ESC Graduate Business School in Grenoble, TSM is using Tempus to develop a coordination unit for technology transfer and contract research at St Petersburg State Technical University – the Centre for Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship (CITE).

Vadim Korablev, the university's vice-rector for international cooperation, explains the background: "Russian universities have little experience of contract research and the commercial exploitation of technology. The only industrial partners we ever had were the state-run giants of the Soviet era. That experience is useless now. We know that research carried out at our universities is in demand in the West, and we need money in quantities unavailable from the federal budget. So TSM Business School is helping us build up familiarity with European Union practice: how to inform the outside world about our activities, how to sell newly developed technology, how to protect our intellectual property, how to coordinate contract research within our university, etc".

Aiming high

Cooperation with universities in Tacis countries is often a trying experience for Tempus coordinators. Pieter Den Hamer feels that "the Russian university structure is unprepared for Western approaches. Management and strategies change at the drop of a hat. The status attached to academic cooperation with the West, the university hierarchy and the conservative principles of academic seniority also complicate things. In addition, rectors and vice-rectors are bottlenecks in the flow of information. Much of the communication with the project partners in St Petersburg is channelled through the vice-rector's office. Initially it was possible to circumvent the university bureaucracy and get activities quickly off the ground. With time, that process has become increasingly laborious".

Nonetheless, he does not believe in the bottom-up approach. "Instead of aiming low, you have to generate support from the higher management; only in that way will there ever remain a trace of your activities after the end of the project period. From early on we have dragged the university's top managers out to Holland. Everyone has to be aware of what you are doing. We also try to keep as many faculties as possible involved in the project. In that way we build up loyal cells throughout the whole of the university. Building a large team of reliable people is vital to overcome the consequences of the inevitable brain-drain".

That problem at least appears to have become less urgent at St Petersburg State Technical University. According to Dmitry Piotrovsky, the local project coordinator, the exodus to the private sector has passed its peak. "The only true geniuses still roaming the university corridors are a handful of inveterate scientists who live and die for their research. They wouldn't be able to tell a rouble from a dollar even with an electron microscope".

At all events, in St Petersburg, the project partners have successfully established a technology transfer centre. Pieter Den Hamer: "We started by asking the whole of the university to submit projects which they felt were marketable in the West. We received 120 replies and selected five, which are very interesting. One of them, for example, is an electric motor without carbon brushes, well developed and very saleable".

The first contract in the bag

A Russian delegation was trained in negotiating techniques, the five projects were packed into a briefcase and together they were sent to Grenoble, where interested companies were tracked down. The trip was a huge success. "Much to our astonishment, a contract has already been signed for that motor". The Russians were only slightly disappointed when they learned that the briefcase would not be filled with dollar bills before their trip home.

Software production is another area which the project has been following closely. Vadim Korablev confirms that Western companies are interested in Russia's experience in software development, and Pieter Den Hamer mentions a Dutch company, developing software for the agricultural industry, that is thinking of moving the time-consuming upgrading process to Russia.

Hopefully, the early contacts will in the long run develop into sound commercial relationships. The cooperation between Enschede, Grenoble and St Petersburg suggests that there is enough potential left for Russian universities to earn their own living. Meanwhile, their organizational structures and readiness to accept an academic revolution will be key factors.

Only the future will tell whether technology sales can help keep St Petersburg State Technical University afloat. If all goes well, the first financial injections will give the Russians a chance to win themselves a deserved position on the world market. If all fails, in five years from now a French delegation might be knocking on the doors of St Petersburg's town hall with a brushless electric pump to drain the urban tube system.

*Ard Jongsma
Journaliste*

expo '98

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Vasco da Gama Tower



SONY

The directorates-general under the authority of Commissioner Edith Cresson are presenting European cooperation in education, training, research and innovation at Expo'98.



Interactive computerized animation lets visitors browse through the achievements of EU programmes



The Cyber Island in the EU pavilion



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