

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(90) 378 final

Brussels, 1 August 1990

THE YOUTH FOR EUROPE PROGRAMME

ANNUAL REPORT 1988/89

(presented by the Commission)

THE YOUTH FOR EUROPE PROGRAMME

ANNUAL REPORT 1988/89

1. The Youth for Europe programme was adopted following the Decision of the Council of the European Communities N° 88/348/CEE of 26 June 1988, which covers an initial period of 3.5 years, from 1 July 1988 to 31 December 1991, with an estimated budget of 15M ECUS.

2. STRUCTURES AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. The Youth for Europe programme concerns young people aged between 15 and 25 years, residing in one of the Member States of the Community, who wish to participate in a bi- or multilateral gathering. The decision of the Council of the European Communities, in setting the parameters of the Youth for Europe programme, defines the type of exchanges eligible for support : the main objective is to promote exchanges which
 - are conceived and organised by the young people themselves;
 - bring together young people from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds;
 - involve particularly young people from regions of the Community where, until now, few opportunities to meet young people from other countries have existed;
 - take particular account of young people whose personal circumstances have, until now, prevented them from participating in existing exchanges.
- 2.2. The main objective of the Youth for Europe programme is to increase the number of youth exchanges involving all of the Member States, while qualitatively improving the exchange mechanisms.
- 2.3. The Decision also clearly states that exchanges must have a duration of at least one week with "an explicitly educational purpose, expressed in the form of a coherent project" (annex point 2. A. of the Council Decision).
- 2.4. This means that Youth for Europe supports programmes targeted at a specific public with a clearly defined theme using methods which are suitably adapted to the length of the exchange, as well as to the number of participants envisaged.

3. THE ACTIONS

3.3. The Youth for Europe programme provides for various actions aimed at developing and achieving its general objectives :

Action A : financial support for youth exchanges;

Action B : support for the organisation of short study visits for youth workers from the European Community Member States;

Action C : support for non-governmental organisations for the setting up and development of a youth exchange infrastructure;

Action D : support for structures designated by the Governments in each Member State, as responsible for the implementation of the Youth for Europe programme;

Action E : support for training courses for youth workers, particularly on a European level.

3.4. An estimated budget of some 15 million ECUS is foreseen to finance these actions until the end of 1991.

4. THE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

4.1. The Youth for Europe programme is implemented by the Commission in accordance with the Council Decision. To this end, the Commission works in active collaboration with the Member States, each of which has set up structures competent for Youth for Europe : decisions on the programme are taken at Community level, its implementation is decentralised and the Commission is responsible for the overall coordination.

4.2. In this respect, the Commission receives technical and logistical support from an external technical unit, the ECYEB - European Community Youth Exchange Bureau.

4.3. The Council Decision of 16 June 1988 set the launch date of the Youth for Europe programme as 1 July 1988. Given the explicit commitment to decentralised implementation of the programme, the Commission had to start by concentrating its efforts on the support to be given to the development of viable structures to ensure that, from the beginning of 1989, as many young people as possible from all Member States were able to benefit from the Youth for Europe programme. The designation or establishment of competent structures in each of the Member States being exclusively the responsibility of the respective Governments, the Commission's first task was to translate the Council Decision into criteria and directives so that the operational phase could commence.

- 4.4. At the end of 1988, a joint discussion was held with the National Agencies on the Commission's proposals regarding the various criteria and directives for Actions A to E. At the same time, this first meeting served to establish the basis of a communication and interaction system for inter-agency work.
- 4.5. The particular structure of the Youth for Europe programme - a Community programme the implementation of which is decentralised - means that close and regular cooperation between all the National Agencies and between them, the Commission and the ECYEB is indispensable. To this end, the Commission organised 3 seminars during 1989, which allowed the Agencies and the Bureau to become acquainted.
- 4.6. These meetings also provided an opportunity for a mutual exchange of information on the specific features of youth policy in the various Member States and on the practical problems encountered when implementing the Youth for Europe Programme.

5. THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 5.1. The Council Decision stipulates - article 4 (points 2 to 7) - that, the Commission shall be assisted by a committee of an advisory nature, in the implementation of the Youth for Europe programme. This committee comprises two representatives from each Member State, designated by the Commission on a proposal of the respective Member State. A representative of the Council of Europe and a representative of the Youth Forum of the European Communities also participate as observers. Some of the directors of the National Agencies are also members of the Advisory Committee, which allows close communication to be maintained. It was very important for the Commission to ensure that this committee was involved from the outset in any major decision-making, consulting it sufficiently in advance of the final discussions with the National Agencies on the criteria and general guidelines.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND FIRST RESULTS OF THE ACTIVITIES WITHIN ACTIONS A, B, C, D AND E

6.1. **Action A : Direct support for youth exchanges**

- 6.1.1. For the support of youth exchanges in 1989, National Agencies received a budget divided between the various Member States according to the factors outlined in the Council Decision. The start of the operational phase was foreseen for the beginning of 1989.
- 6.1.2. However, it should be noted that, in certain Member States, the preparatory period needed was much longer than in others. The reason for this was that some countries had a longer tradition and therefore more experience in bi- and multilateral youth exchanges and it was therefore possible for them to fall back on structures already established in the youth sector.

6.1.3. The delays which held back the launching of the activities can therefore be explained not only by the time it took to designate the National Agencies (decisions were taken over a period of time), but also by the fact that, in many cases, it was first necessary to identify youth exchange structures capable of running exchange projects according to the objectives of the Youth for Europe Programme.

6.1.4. The statistics available at the time that this report was written indicate that, in 1989, nearly 20.000 young people participated in youth exchanges supported by the Agencies within the framework of Action A of the Youth for Europe programme.

6.1.5. Evaluation and Perspectives

6.1.5.1. At this stage, the following points have been raised :

The National Agencies are asking themselves the extent to which the programme is effectively reaching the young people targeted in the Council Decision - those who are disadvantaged for various reasons. In 1990, the emphasis will be placed on this aspect in particular and on ensuring greater variety and a better regional balance for access to youth exchanges.

6.1.5.2. All the National Agencies are attempting, on the one hand, to put into practice the general guidelines laid down by the Commission as regards the implementation of the objectives of the Council Decision, whilst trying at the same time to take account of the specificities of youth policies in their respective countries. In practice, contacts between National Agencies concerning current or forthcoming youth exchanges, are so voluminous because of the ever-increasing number of grant-applications, that the information exchanged and the consultations are reduced to a minimum of precise factual indications. This minimum content, coupled with differences stemming from the national context, has sometimes created problems in comprehension between Agencies. Thanks to regular meetings - and, above all, thanks to three presentation seminars (see 4.5.) -, the representatives of the National Agencies have progressively familiarised themselves with the particular situations in the other Member States.

At the end of the period covered in this report, a well tried and tested communication system had been established between almost all the National Agencies. This situation quite clearly influences the quality of projects supported, which is considered to be satisfactory or good by most of the National Agencies.

6.1.5.3. The fact that the exchanges have, for the most part, been developed with youth workers, has certainly had positive repercussions. The youth worker to participant ratio ranges from 1 to 7 and 1 to 10. It will only be possible to give a reliable assessment of the overall effects resulting from the participation in youth exchanges in the framework of the Youth for Europe programme, once a systematic external evaluation is carried out. First steps in this direction are planned for 1990. It should be noted that, overall, the Youth for Europe programme has generated an enthusiastic response from young people in all the Member States, and that the grant-applications submitted to the National Agencies represent in total at least three times the financial means available to them - in some countries, the difference is even greater.

6.1.5.4. Given the extremely short launching phase and the fact that the National Agencies have, in general, limited their information efforts, most of the Agencies as well as the Commission consider the development of the Action A activities to be a major success.

6.2. **Action B : Short study visits for youth workers**

6.2.1. This action should be considered as being directly related to Action A. These short study visits for youth workers in a Community country other than their own, aim :

- to enable them to get to know the particular situation of the host country in terms of youth policy;
- to allow them to make contacts with youth organisations and youth groups, and, if possible;
- to lay the foundations for joint exchange projects.

6.2.2. For 1989, the Commission has allocated a total of 400 bursaries, of which each National Agency receives a quota. The Agencies were responsible for the recruitment and the selection of the participants, and for their preparation, as well as for the in loco organisation of the study visits themselves.

6.2.3. This programme also had to be launched very quickly, because the publicity for the first visits, the selection and the preparation of the participants, coincided with the period when the National Agencies were establishing themselves.

6.2.4. On this matter, the Agencies point out that the short study visits that they have organised, have required a large amount of intensive work.

6.2.5. Most of the programmes for these visits were of a thematic nature, ie. the hosting National Agency concentrated on particular aspects relating to youth policy in the host country in order to give participating youth workers sufficient knowledge for developing future exchange projects.

6.2.6. Evaluation and Perspectives

6.2.6.1. Action B is considered extremely useful, both by the National Agencies and the Commission and, in most cases, the positive effects have been felt directly in Action A exchanges in terms of the diversification and the reduction in regional inequalities : more than 90% of those who participated in these programmes in 1989 expressly advised their colleagues to participate as well, because of the immediate benefits, not only for the planning of future exchanges, but also on a personal level. This is mainly due to the fact that the short study visits usually involve a multilateral group. For most participants, it is a new experience of intercultural life and work for a limited period of time, as well as a chance to obtain supplementary information on youth policy in other countries and to draw comparisons.

- 6.2.6.2. Another effect of these visits did not, at first, receive much attention : the structures, the youth groups or organisations preparing the hosting of a study group gain important experience in terms of meeting young people from other countries; the hosting, the pre-selection and preparation of information and finding a solution to language problems etc., are also part of an important learning process for youth exchanges.
- 6.2.6.3. Furthermore, these initial contacts can have a motivating effect on the hosting group, encouraging them to participate in future study visits in other countries, or to become partners in future youth exchanges.
- 6.2.6.4. The Action B programmes will be continued throughout 1990. The Commission has again provided 400 bursaries. In the future, particular emphasis will be placed on an intensive preparation for the participants, to enable them to draw maximum benefit from the proposed visits. To this end, it is also necessary to ensure participants are selected on the basis of the proposed themes and of the opportunities for applying the experience gained on a professional level.
- 6.3. **Action C : Support for non-governmental organisations for the setting-up and development of a youth exchange infrastructure**
- 6.3.1. The Action C grants are available for organisations which are represented in at least 6 Member States, work in the youth field and wish to expand their activities in European youth exchanges. The financial support offered by the Commission is limited to the launching of the infrastructure during the first two years : the grant for the second year is only paid if the continued existence of the infrastructure is guaranteed without Community support.
- 6.3.2. In 1989, the Commission received 14 applications, of which 5 were accepted, after consultation with the National Agencies concerned.
- 6.3.3 Evaluation and Perspectives
- 6.3.3.1. Given that the decisions for the allocation of Action C grants were only taken during 1989, and that, in some cases, the contracts lasted into 1990, there is no precise information as yet on the activities of the youth organisations that received grants.
- 6.4. **Action D : The National Agencies**
- 6.4.1. It is the decentralised nature of the Youth for Europe programme that has resulted in the role and tasks of the support structures called "National Agencies" : in keeping with the Council Decision and the general guidelines set out by the Commission, they are competent for information, advice, training and, on the administrative front; for the projects and decentralised activities within the framework of the Youth for Europe programme (see also points 4.1., 4.3. and 4.4.).

6.4.2. This report outlines the activities of the Agencies as regards the joint work with the Commission and directly linked to the implementation of the Youth for Europe programme as a Community programme. The following comments consider some of these aspects in a more detailed manner.

6.4.3. Infrastructures of the National Agencies

6.4.3.1. In article 7 of the Council Decision, Member States are simply invited to designate or to choose structures capable of implementing the Youth for Europe programme. More detailed procedures are not given. As a consequence, the types of organisation and the legal structures of the National Agencies are very varied.

6.4.3.2. The common characteristic of the National Agencies is that they were designated by Government Departments responsible for youth and/or international relations. Some Agencies are directly part of ministerial structures, others are youth institutes run by the Government, or youth exchange bureaux receiving grants from the State. It should therefore be concluded that, for the most part, Member States attach a certain political importance to the Youth for Europe programme.

6.4.3.3. The Council Decision foresees that a part of the budget be reserved for the National Agencies in order that they may carry out their tasks in the field of information, advice, training and administration. This support for the infrastructure does not cover 100% of the costs, as this would remove from the programme the particular feature of decentralised implementation in partnership with the Member States.

6.4.3.4. During 1989, the Member States contributed to costs to various extents. The grants were allocated with the aim of helping Agencies cover extra costs - staff, materials - incurred through the work necessary for the implementation of the Youth for Europe programme.

6.4.4. Evaluation and Perspectives

6.4.4.1. Various indications seem to confirm the theory that as youth exchange activities in a particular country increase, so does the supplementary financial contribution made by that country. This is less the case for staff costs - all National Agencies complain of having too high costs and too few staff - than for the extra costs linked to the exchanges themselves or to the need for a supplementary infrastructure : usually existing work structures are used. As far as the extra funding allocated by the Commission for the acquisition and maintenance of technical installations is concerned, it should be noted that, for the period covered by this report :

- in 1990, all National Agencies had installed adequate computerised facilities to deal with applications and the other administrative tasks;

- telefax facilities have ensured that all Agencies are able to respect the very short deadlines established for consultation and coordination work;
- all National Agencies are well enough staffed to ensure a full-time service for their public.

6.4.4.2. The Commission, along with the National Agencies and in collaboration with external experts, is currently examining the possibility of installing an electronic mail system, which would improve communication between Agencies, the Commission and the ECYEB.

6.5. Information

6.5.1. According to the priorities in the Council Decision, one of the most important tasks of the National Agencies was to develop information material for the Youth for Europe programme designed to interest young people, and to distribute this information in such a way that it reaches especially those young people who, until now, have received little or no information on youth exchanges, and who have not participated in such activities. Such information should of course also be distributed to youth organisations experienced in youth exchange, as this experience is much needed to improve the exchange mechanisms. Youth groups not belonging to existing structures were targeted in particular; local authorities were to be encouraged to participate; the information policy was to be adapted to cater for the potential public, to cite only a few examples of the steps to be taken.

6.5.2. In this context, the Commission can only play a very general role, in that it cannot take account of all of the different aspects of each Member State in conceiving an information policy. The Commission has therefore published a general description of the Youth for Europe programme in all of the official languages, which is available to all Member States, Agencies and participants in international gatherings.

6.5.3. Evaluation

6.5.3.1. The national and international structures in the field of youth policy are very varied. In the field of international youth work, for example, considerable financial support, under bi- and multilateral conventions or agreements, has existed for many years in some countries, and youth mobility is therefore already well established. In these countries, Youth for Europe is therefore used primarily to identify existing gaps and to offer possibilities to those who are not targeted by youth associations, or who, until now, have refused to participate because they had a completely different conception of youth work ("direct" work by the young people themselves, support for subsidies, etc.). The inherent aim of the Youth for Europe programme to target young people who have rarely or never, participated in bi- or multi-lateral exchanges, has been taken very seriously by all the Member States.

- 6.5.3.2. However, the first year of implementation has highlighted various shortcomings which should be acknowledged. Some National Agencies have pointed out that Youth for Europe should be considered as an additional resource to counter the problem of the marginalisation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Several National Agencies have also brought up the incompatibility arising from the desire to include, on the one hand, young people with no previous experience of exchanges, and on the other hand, to fulfil the educational requirements : youth groups with rather undefined structures often have nothing to offer other than their motivation and their commitment. They rarely have any experience in the organisation, implementation and evaluation of youth exchanges. Furthermore, youth workers working within such youth groups are far less likely to be qualified than their counterparts working in larger youth organisations. In the light of this situation, an attempt has been made, using more specific information materials, to encourage such groups to get involved and to set up new cooperation mechanisms : for example, organisations experienced in the field of European youth work have made themselves available to new youth groups seeking advice about staff and structure. In some cases, this required adopting a whole new approach.
- 6.5.3.3. In other cases, Youth for Europe has given young people not belonging to an organisation, the opportunity to participate in youth exchanges for the first time. In these cases, the problem encountered was more one of trying to reduce regional imbalances within the same country, and to find a way of ensuring that new information is evenly distributed, while at the same time taking account of the fact that National Agencies have tried to target certain groups and avoid a large-scale information campaign, because of the limited budget available for Action A.
- 6.5.3.4. By the end of the period covered by this report, it should be pointed out that all the National Agencies had developed information documents relative to the Youth for Europe programme : folders, brochures, practical guides, video clips, radio advertising, etc., and as a result, despite its short existence, Youth for Europe is well known in the Member States.
- 6.5.3.5. Although this situation is commendable, it does, however, create difficulties for the Agencies : the improved information service has led to a rapid increase in grant applications. The problem is not merely a question of insufficient financial means - even though some countries feel the effect of their rather restricted budget - but also one of many applications being incompatible with the Youth for Europe criteria. Again it has become clear that it is difficult present the necessary information in a text clearly without giving rise to misunderstandings.
- 6.5.3.6. The Agencies also spent much time and money on advice and information days and seminars, with the aim of clarifying the specific objectives of Youth for Europe, of studying them with a particular public, and of adapting them to the number of applications. When these events were of a supra-regional nature, the Commission and the ECYEB were often represented. Both the Commission and the Agencies consider that this type of advice work should be stepped up.

6.6. **Action E : Training and further training of youth workers, especially at European level**

6.6.1. The Youth for Europe programme aims explicitly to improve the quality of exchanges, particularly on an educational level. Action E therefore foresees support for the training of youth workers, priority being given to training courses bringing together participants from two or more Member States, in matters related to youth exchanges. After having consulted the Advisory Committee and coming to an agreement with the National Agencies, the Commission defined this activity on two levels : on the one hand, the National Agencies were invited to carry out training and further training courses in relation to their own analysis of needs; the Commission accepted that formulas of this type be included in the National Agencies budget and integrated them into their grant planning. On the other hand, the Commission needs to ensure that, while respecting the differences between the Member States in the specific field of youth, the quality of youth exchanges can be measured in terms of a comparable standards in the not too distant future.

6.6.2. It is therefore necessary, despite the variety of methods and didactic approaches, that the fundamental elements and the main themes which, to varying degrees, play a role in all types of training or further training, are relevant to youth workers within the framework of the Youth for Europe programme.

6.6.3. Evaluation and Perspectives

6.6.3.1. The National Agencies' priority during the period covered by this report was to establish their structures and to develop the appropriate information documents. In most Member States, therefore, the training and further training courses have not been run in a satisfactory manner to date. Having said this, however, some National Agencies, due to previous work in this field or to cooperation with other bodies, managed to run courses lasting for between one and three days, for youth workers operating at local, regional and national level.

6.6.3.2. The sums foreseen in the 1990 provisional budgets of the National Agencies for these activities have been greatly increased.

6.6.3.3. As far as the multilateral training programmes are concerned, the Commission has taken the following initiative : in 1989, it supported seven programmes :

- five of these were run by European non-governmental organisations;
- one was organised by a regional body;
- one was organised by a National Agency in cooperation with a permanent training body.

- 6.6.3.4. One of these programmes brought together participants from four countries, the others were held with youth workers from between six and twelve countries. These programmes enabled 245 youth workers to follow a good quality training course.
- 6.6.3.5. The Commission having committed itself to encouraging high quality youth exchanges at Community level, has proposed to National Agencies that a European working group be set up, which would be responsible for the development of the pilot projects for multilateral training. The Agencies responded favourably to this proposal, and each one designated a representative. The European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe is also represented. The ECYEB is responsible for the overall management and coordination of the work.
- 6.6.3.6. In 1989, this working group carried out the necessary preparatory work, about which the Advisory Committee was also informed. During the first term of 1990, three pilot seminars were held with the participation of all 12 Member States (in Denmark, Greece and Italy).
- 6.6.3.7. In autumn 1990, the experiences gained and the conclusions drawn from these seminars will be evaluated, and the results will be made available to all the National Agencies and any other interested parties, to serve as an example and encouragement for further activities.

7. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. It can therefore be concluded that the Youth for Europe programme has been successfully launched and has generated a good deal of enthusiasm among young people in all the Member States, and this despite its extremely short launching phase. The political and educational objectives of the Programme have been translated into concrete youth exchanges, though it is true that improvements could - and in some instances must - be made in one or two areas. With the development of complementary actions to youth exchanges, it is hoped that Youth for Europe will serve as an example for other future activities in the field of youth at Community level. However, the Commission (and the National Agencies) share the concerns voiced by the European Parliament in its resolution of 16 February 1990 on the real possibilities of access offered by this programme to young people. This partly reflects - given the period necessary for the launching of the programme - concern about the extent to which groups and categories of young people who previously were unable to take part in exchanges, have access to the programme.
But these concerns also reflect the fact that the demand from young people is far greater than that allowed for by the operational objectives that have been established.
Agreeing with the concerns expressed by the European Parliament, the Commission is therefore conscious of the fact that, in the present situation, it will be able to respond to the expectations of young people as far as the Youth for Europe programme is concerned.

ISSN 0254-1475

COM(90) 378 final

DOCUMENTS

EN

17

Catalogue number : CB-CO-90-395-EN-C
ISBN 92-77-63137-6

PRICE

1 - 30 pages: 3.50 ECU

per additional 10 pages: 1.25 ECU

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities
L-2985 Luxembourg