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and the European Parliament

The 'Youth for Europe' Programme

Annual report 1991

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I INTRODUCTION

1. The 'Youth for Europe' Programme is an action programme for the promotion of youth exchanges in the European Community. The first phase of the programme was adopted for the period 1 July 1988 to 31 December 1991⁽¹⁾.
2. During the last year of this phase, the Council decided at the first meeting devoted to youth affairs to continue the action programme for a second phase lasting three years⁽²⁾.
3. The Commission gave its views on the development of the programme in two reports⁽³⁾. This report reflects the most significant results of the last year of the first phase and describes the progress of the 'Youth for Europe' programme during the whole of the first phase. A report giving detailed facts and figures for this first phase as well as for the first year of the second phase will be submitted in early 1993 in accordance with the Council Decision of 29 July 1991.

In any case, information available up to now regarding the implementation of the programme has brought out two salient points relevant to the programme's objectives :

- firstly, more than 70 % of the young people taking part in exchanges through the Youth for Europe programme were having their first taste of meeting and sharing experiences with young people of another Member State ;
- secondly, the majority of the young people benefiting from the programme were disadvantaged in some way, whether for socio-economic reasons or because of some handicap or because they came from outlying regions or regions with little to offer from a socio-cultural point of view (rural areas or closed societies).

This report is based essentially on information from the National Agencies and on the bilateral contacts which the Commission had with the delegations of each Member State between 2 September and 8 October 1991 with a view to taking provisional stock of the programme and preparing its second phase.

II STRUCTURE AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

4. The 'Youth for Europe' Programme is designed to provide a range of incentive measures to promote the development of youth exchanges in the European Community, by increasing the number of such exchanges in all the Member States and by focusing particular attention to the involvement of young people from regions where hitherto few opportunities to meet young people from other Member States existed.
5. The programme is designed, in particular, to allow the participation of young people whose personal circumstances have up to now prevented them from taking part in existing exchanges between the Member States.

(1) Council Decision 88/348/EEC of 16 June 1988, OJ L 158, p. 42.

(2) Council Decision 91/395/EEC of 29 July 1991, OJ L 217, p. 25.

(3) COM(90) 378 final of 1 August 1990 and COM(91) 355 final of 4 October 1991.

6. The programme is also aimed at improving the quality of these exchanges by diversifying the type of project, achieving a better balance between the Member States and providing youth workers involved in these exchanges with proper training.
7. The measures are targeted primarily at the 15-25 age group. Additional measures are provided for categories able to generate a multiplier effect - youth organisations, youth workers and any other body capable of playing a role in promoting and organising exchanges - so that young people can derive the maximum benefit from their participation in exchanges.
8. The first phase of the programme involves various actions designed to work towards and achieve its general objectives across the Member States.

Action A: direct financial support for youth exchanges.

Action B: support for the organisation of short study visits for youth workers.

Action C: support for non-governmental organisations for the creation and development of a youth exchange infrastructure.

Action D: support for structures designated by the authorities in each Member State as responsible for the coordination of the 'Youth for Europe' Programme nationally ("National Agencies").

Action E: support for training activities targeted at youth workers, particularly at the European level.

An estimated budget of ECU 15 million had been initially earmarked for the financing of the first phase of the programme. Appropriations available for the period covered by this report totalled ECU 6.5 million; the total budget for the first phase is around ECU 22 million.

III OPERATIONAL AND ADVISORY INFRASTRUCTURE

9. In accordance with the Council Decision, the 'Youth for Europe' Programme is implemented by the Commission which cooperates actively with the Member States for this purpose.

The 'Youth for Europe' Advisory Committee

10. The Commission is assisted in the implementation of the programme by an Advisory Committee composed of two representatives from each Member State, appointed by the Commission on the proposal of the country concerned. The Council of Europe and the Youth Forum of the European Communities are invited to attend the committee's meetings as observers.

11. The Advisory Committee met three times in 1991 in order to study the progress of the programme during the last year of the first phase and to prepare the second phase. The discussions focused chiefly on questions of programme evaluation as regards the use to be made of the results of initial and continuing projects for youth workers both at the European level and at the national level, and on budgetary issues. The Committee was also informed of the Resolution adopted by the Council and by the Ministers meeting within the Council on the priority actions selected in the context of youth⁽⁴⁾.

The National Agencies

12. 'Youth for Europe' was the first Community programme implemented and managed to a large extent on a decentralised basis. It therefore acted as a pilot programme for other Community programmes such as PETRA II. Under the terms of the Council Decision, the Member States are responsible nationally for the promotion, coordination and cofinancing of the projects and the accompanying measures. Each country is required to designate structures for this purpose (the National Agencies).
13. These structures were operational in most Member States by 1990 and this enabled the National Agencies to begin their work of implementing the objectives of the programme through a variety of activities. The essential task was to establish direct contact with young people in their own country and explain to them the fresh opportunities for exchanges available under the 'Youth for Europe' Programme and to encourage them to take part.
14. In relation to the first two years of implementation of the programme, the period covered by this report shows a marked change in the working priorities of the National Agencies. The general need for information on the programme fell in the Member States - with the exception of Germany where unification has resulted in a substantial rise in the demand for information and training - while the requirements in terms of qualified teaching consultancy and follow-up increased in all Member States.
15. The communication and cooperation network between the National Agencies and between the agencies and the Commission has grown and has operated fairly satisfactorily, which has meant that only one joint working meeting was needed in 1991 and that mainly concerned the practical aspects of the second phase. All other matters were dealt with through inter-Agency consultation, a process which is now well established.
16. In 1991, as in previous years, a thematic seminar was organised on one of the fundamental aspects of the implementation of the 'Youth for Europe' Programme. In June 1991, the UK National Agency, in conjunction with the Commission, organised a seminar in Gateshead on the problem of the access of disadvantaged young people to exchange arrangements and on the specific teaching approach required by this type of project.

(4) 91/C 208/01 of 26 June 1991, OJ C 208, p.1.

Those attending the seminar unanimously agreed that it had made a solid contribution to improving the quality of exchanges for disadvantaged young people, the priority target group of the programme, by throwing up criteria, teaching aims, methodological and didactic recommendations which were directly applicable by the National Agencies.

The European Community Youth Exchange Bureau (ECYEB)

17. For the purposes of implementing the programme across Europe, the Commission has, from the outset of the first phase of the 'Youth for Europe' Programme, been assisted by the European Community Youth Exchange Bureau.

IV PROGRESS AND RESULTS OF ACTIVITIES UNDER ACTIONS A, B, C, D AND E OF THE PROGRAMME.

Action A: Direct financial support for youth exchanges

18. Support is given to bi-, tri-, or multi-lateral exchanges lasting at least one week and involving young people aged between 15 and 25 years residing in a Member State of the EC. The projects must have an educational purpose and be theme-related. As explicitly stated in the Council Decision, this support is given in priority to youth exchanges which:

- are conceived and organised by the young people themselves
- bring together young people from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds
- include, in particular, young people from regions of the Community where few opportunities to meet young people from other Member States hitherto existed
- include young people who experience the most difficulties in being included in existing exchange schemes.

19. For the support of youth exchanges, the National Agencies in 1991 received a budget attributed to the Member States which was calculated according to the parameters set out in the Council Decision.

20. There is growing interest among young people for exchanges under the 'Youth for Europe' Programme. The number of requests for cofinancing for the Community as a whole is three times higher than the number of projects to which financial aid could be granted. The exchange projects submitted in 1991 on the whole comply with the conditions for the granting of financial aid. This is the result of the efforts made by the National Agencies to continually improve the quality of exchanges.
21. At the time of writing (February 1992), the total number of participants in 1991 had not yet been calculated. It will be given in the evaluation report mentioned in point 3. Estimates based on provisional reports from the National Agencies point to the involvement of some 30 000 young people, which means that 80 000 young people at least were able to take part in projects organised under the first phase of the programmes.
22. Thanks to the smooth operation of the cooperation network between the Member States, the improvements in the working conditions of the National Agencies have enabled the latter to concentrate their attention on disadvantaged young people and young people who hitherto had no access to exchange schemes and for whom the 'Youth for Europe' Programme represents the very first chance to take part.

Despite wide variations from country to country, the reports from the National Agencies show that the main beneficiaries of the programme in 1991 were young people undergoing vocational training and young people at work or seeking employment (over 50% of the total) rather than young people receiving general or university training.
23. The quest for a better geographical balance in exchanges between the Member States has been kept up. If this objective has only been attained in part this is due in some measure to objective obstacles. One of the problems is that the cost of travelling between certain Member States is extremely high and even if the level of financial aid granted is increased many disadvantaged young people would still be unable to meet that part of the cost not covered by such aid alone. Lack of knowledge of foreign languages is another obstacle which prevents young people from having contact with the young people from other Member States. The Council took this into account when adopting the second phase of the programme by putting the language aspects high on the list of priorities.
24. The diversification of exchanges is also one of the qualitative objectives of the programme; this can relate both to the scale of the projects (bi-, tri- or multi-lateral) and to the methods and themes envisaged. The content of the exchange programmes supported reflects the active participation of young people in their preparation and organisation. The reports received indicate that the recurring themes in the project have to do with the daily life of young people and the European dimension comes out in the resolve to get to know the situation of others and to work towards common perspectives.

25. As regards the type of project, many are bilateral, even if in 1991 there was a growing trend towards multilateral projects (approximately a quarter of the projects in virtually all Member States and as high as 50% in certain countries).

The predominance of bilateral projects can be accounted for by the inherent difficulties of multilateral projects: far higher costs, representing a substantial obstacle for Member States which have only a small budget; specific teaching requirements, including language tuition; practical difficulties which prompt young people to first seek experience within the framework of a bilateral exchange. This is particularly the case of young people having no experience of exchanges.

26. In this context, the National Agencies have stepped up their efforts to help groups of young people to seek appropriate partners abroad. One spin-off of these efforts has been to increase regionally and locally the number of groups of young people taking part in the programme.

Action B: support for the organisation of short study visits for youth workers.

27. Study visits are considered as a major complement to the implementation of action A. The 'Youth for Europe' Programme initially elicited a very broad interpretation of the objectives of the study visits. In 1991, irrespective of the interpretation of the Member States, study visits served primarily to give youth workers the chance to prepare exchanges by allowing them to meet potential partners and familiarising themselves with their working context. As these study visits always take place in multilateral groups, they enable youth workers to exchange views with their colleagues in other Member States on practical questions concerning youth policy, and to thus acquire additional experience and information.
28. In 1990/91⁽⁵⁾, the Commission allocated to the National Agencies 400 Action B bursaries, which once again fell far short of demand. According to the Member States, demand is three to four times higher than the bursaries available. The advantage of this is a selection of participants which is more consonant with the objectives of action B and the more systematic preparation of participants, the intention being to get these to subsequently serve as multipliers for the programme.
29. The interim assessments of action B made by the Commission and the National Agencies clearly indicate that these short study visits have become an inexpensive but extremely useful instrument as regards the quality of exchanges. Furthermore, these visits in 1991 involved an increasing number of youth workers regionally who traditionally do not play a major role in European youth exchanges.

(5) The administration of Action B follows the academic year.

Action C: support for NGOs in developing a youth exchange infrastructure

30. Under Action C, the Commission supports youth organisations represented in at least six Member States who wish to expand their youth exchange activities. The support is limited to the setting up of an international infrastructure during the first two years; for the second year, a grant is paid only if the continued existence of the infrastructure is guaranteed without Community support thereafter.
31. Out of the 20 applications received by the Commission in 1991, eight were selected for funding. Six of the beneficiaries applied for financing during the first year, and two for the second. The emphasis was laid on projects facilitating the access for disadvantaged young people (including the handicapped) to exchange schemes. This accounts for the selection of projects catering for the specific needs of disadvantaged young people and enabling this target group to take advantage of an inter-cultural experience.

Action D: support for structures designated by the Member States to coordinate the 'Youth for Europe' Programme - the National Agencies

32. Under the Council decision, the national agencies are responsible for information, consultancy, training and administration of grants for projects under the 'Youth for Europe' Programme.

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, Commission assistance merely tops up investment by a Member State. During the start-up phase of the programme, the setting up of an appropriate infrastructure and the purchase of communication equipment made it necessary for the Commission to make available additional appropriations. The overall grant for 1991 remained the same as for the previous year, as the 'Youth for Europe' budget is primarily intended to support the objectives of the programme.

33. The work of the National Agencies is described in detail in points 12-16 of this report. The main activities they have carried out under the programme are summarised below.
34. Advisor - a key element in the implementation of the programme.

Providing advice is first and foremost to provide educational and practical guidance to young people. This activity makes it possible to attain a quality objective at project level. In addition, the young persons benefiting from this advice are then able to take an active part in the preparation and organisation of exchange schemes. The advisory mission is thus particularly important for the systematic integration of disadvantaged young persons in exchange schemes.

The information part of the task, so essential during the start-up phase of the programme, focused more on regular contacts between the National Agencies and the groups of young people and the youth workers at regional and local levels and also involved facilitating their access to the information needed to organise exchanges.

35. The initial and continuing training of youth workers - an essential factor in the development and maintenance of the quality factor in exchange schemes.

Under the principle of subsidiarity and in order to respect the decentralised structure of the 'Youth for Europe' programme, the National Agencies have accepted their responsibility and given priority to "in the field" in-service training periods for youth workers who work directly with the young people concerned.

This "in the field" training ensures that the training of the youth workers caters for the immediate requirements and that priority is focused on activities targeted at those who daily work with disadvantaged young people and who wish to work with them until they can take part in an exchange scheme. This approach avoids lengthy organisational work and gives the programme maximum effectiveness since there is a direct link between training and the exchange situation itself.

36. Evaluation - an essential element in monitoring and guaranteeing quality.

The Commission and the National Agencies in 1991 examined and to some extent tested together various evaluation procedures. One of the aims of this evaluation is to provide common basic statistical data. Another aim is to better gauge the impact these exchanges have on young people. A jointly-decided approach for 1992 should make it possible to obtain the comparable information needed, taking due account of the specific situation in each Member State as regards working with young people.

37. Summing up, thanks to the National Agencies and their input, a very favourable environment has been created for the implementation of this decentralised Community programme; thus, at the end of the first phase, young people have the information and help needed, even at the local level, to adopt the 'Youth for Europe' Programme and make the best use of it in accordance with the wishes set out in the Council Decision. It would be very difficult to consider the financial assistance granted to the coordination structures, which is relatively small by comparison with the direct financing of exchanges, in terms of cost-effectiveness, particularly as the decentralised management of the programme requires close cooperation between these structures. The evaluation discussions between the Commission and the Member States have shown that in terms of youth policy, the results obtained are invaluable: in all Member States, the 'Youth for Europe' Programme has earned itself a place which can no longer be ignored.

The programme's flexibility and rapid adaptability to the needs expressed by young people, particularly by disadvantaged young people, are a stimulus to Community cooperation, both in the Member States which have a long tradition in the field of exchanges and therefore have appropriate means, as well as in those where exchange activities have no solid tradition.

Action E: support for training activities for youth workers, particularly at the European level.

38. In the initial phase of the 'Youth for Europe' programme, in-service training activities targeted at youth workers were mainly organised at the Commission's initiative. The Commission also saw to coordination by carrying out three pilot training periods in conjunction with all the National Agencies. In 1991 financial support was provided for training periods organised by the National Agencies and by European NGOs.
39. Priority has been given in this context to projects which took account of experience gained from pilot training periods and which were set in a multilateral context open to all the National Agencies. Out of the 13 applications received by the Commission, eight were accepted, half of these having been submitted by the National Agencies and the NGOs.

V OUTLOOK

40. In December 1991 the Commission discussed with the Advisory Committee and the National Agencies the procedures for the second phase of the 'Youth for Europe' programme covering the period 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1994. While the objectives remain essentially the same as those which featured in the first phase, there are significant changes of emphasis.
41. During the second phase, the accent will be even more systematically placed on the participation of disadvantaged young people. At least a third of the appropriations will be earmarked for them.
42. The scope of the programme will be extended to allow for the possibility of financial support for young people taking part in voluntary service activities. The Commission has defined, in conjunction with the National Agencies, the criteria for giving financial support on an experimental basis for the first two years of the second phase of the programme. Due account has been taken of the experience of the EC Youth Forum in this context. The Commission will decide on any follow-up to this type of activity after systematic evaluation of these voluntary service activities.
43. The training of youth workers will continue to be supported in the second phase of the programme. Support will go to activities at the European level and to financing pilot projects - particularly in the context of drafting of documents to prepare youth workers for their work with disadvantaged young people - while the Member States will as before be called upon to offer *in situ* initial or in-service training periods to those working directly with young people.
44. The Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers meeting within the Council on priority actions in the youth field, taken at the meeting of the Ministers responsible for youth affairs on 26 June 1991, provides the Commission with fresh scope for strengthening cooperation in the field of youth.

The Resolution defines four priority actions:

- * intensification of cooperation between structures responsible for youth work
- * information for young people
- * stimulating the initiative and creativity of young people
- * cooperation on the training of youth workers, particularly with regard to the European dimension.

Following a European Parliament initiative, a budget line has been adopted which will permit the granting of Community support for these priority actions in 1992. The Commission is now in a position to launch pilot projects in the different fields covered by these actions.

Youth for Europe Budget 1991 - 6,645,497 ECU

Distribution by Action

Action A	Financial aid for youth exchanges	4,510,497 ECU
Action B	Aid for organising short study visits - 400 grants of 900 ECU	360,000 ECU
Action C	Aid to non-governmental organisations for setting up and developing a youth exchange infrastructure	80,000 ECU
Action D	Aid for setting up and developing specific activities organised or financed by the National Agencies	895,000 ECU
Action E	Aid for training youth workers	200,000 ECU
	Technical Assistance	600,000 ECU
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>6,645,497 ECU</u>

Action A	Financial aid for youth exchanges (1)	Action B	Number of grants for the organisation of short study visits
Division by Member State		Division by Member State	
B/Fl	111,721		14
B/Fr	76,050		10
B/De	2,370		1
Total B	190,141		25
DK	149,498		15
DE	767,989		55
EL	228,544		50
ES	570,209		50
F	573,245		55
IRL	149,765		15
IT	678,247		50
LUX	106,768		50
NL	242,390		25
P	244,585		25
UK	609,116		55
TOTAL	4,510,497		400

(1) Grants calculated according to the parameters set down in article 2.A. of the appendix to the Council Decision of 16 June 1988 (88/348/CEE).