COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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MEMORANDUM

on

OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING

in

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

(presented by the Commission)

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Background

1   The importance of Open Distance Learning for the European Community
     was recognised by the European Parliament when it adopted a
     resolution on the Open universities in the European Community on July
     10 1987[1]   Arising from a number of requests which the Parliament
     addressed to the Commission in the context of this resolution a
     preliminary document defining priority areas for Community action in
     Open Distance Learning was prepared[2] and on May 24 1991 the
     Commission approved a report on Open and Distance Higher Education in
     the European Community[3]

2   At the initiative of the Irish presidency on May 30 1990 the
     Council discussed the possibilities for Community actions in the
     field of Open Distance Learning and requested the Commission to
     prepare proposals for such actions in close consultation with the
     Member States

3   The establishment of a national experts group whose members were
     nominated by the Governments and who represented the sectors both of
     education and vocational training in the Member States has provided
     the opportunity to consider national priorities in Open Distance
     Learning and to indicate areas where Community action in accordance
     with the principle of subsidiarity would be warranted

4   This memorandum details the importance of Open Distance Learning in a
     broad range of education and training activities for the Member
     States and for the European Community   It refers to actions in this
     area already and shows how Community programmes complement and are
     complemented by actions in the Open Distance Learning field being
     taken within the context of existing Community programmes   It
     indicates a need for policies and actions at institutional and Member
     State level which would extend the scope power and application of
     Open Distance Learning and refers to areas where a sharing of
     experience and expertise and possible joint actions at European level
     could be taken with benefit within the framework of the creation of
     transEuropean infrastructural networks for vocational and
     professional training

Investment in Education and Training - A Community Priority

5   There is a growing conviction that the European Community must invest
     heavily in its human capital if it is to be in a position to confront
     and master the challenges of the coming decades   This conviction has
     been born of the imminence of the completion of the internal Market
     requiring for its success a whole new range of skills in management
     communication and organisation   The measures taken by the Community
     in relation to the learning of languages and the promotion of
     mobility during training are designed to foster these skills

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(1) Doc A2 - 69/87
(2) Distance Education and Training
    Commission Staff Working Paper
    SEC (90)479 7 March 1990

(3) Open and Distance Higher Education in the European Community Report
    from the Commission SEC (91) 897 Final 24 May 1991

6   The advances in science and technology and their application to
     enterprise administration and to daily living serve to reinforce
     this conviction These advances are rendering the skills and
     knowledge of the existing workforce obsolescent at an increasingly
     rapid rate leading to a need for frequent retraining They are also
     bringing about a shift towards an increasing knowledge content in
     work as industry becomes increasingly knowledge-based and knowledge-
     driven As an consequence of this shift there is a perceived need
     for an upgrading of the qualifications of the labour force
     Education and training are seen as prime determinants of economic
     success and fears are frequently expressed that investment in
     research and development and in technological improvement may not
     yield the expected returns without an accompanying effort in the
     development of human resources [4]

7   Such an effort would also be warranted in order to remain competitive
     in the global market The evidence available would indicate that the
     Community s major trading competitors in the developed world are
     concentrating very heavily and to a greater extent than in Europe
     on improving the skills and knowledge of their existing and potential
     labour force

8   The demographic position in the European Community wherein the
     numbers of young people available to renew the labour force over the
     next two decades are declining also gives cause for concern In
     these circumstances the economy cannot rely on new recruitment for
     the necessary injection of new knowledge and new skills and must look
     also to an increasing extent towards upgrading the qualifications of
     the existing workforce

9   An increase in the rate of participation in the active labour force
     from among groups hitherto underrepresented must also be sought A
     particular example of such a group would be women wishing to return
     to the labour force after some years exercising family
     responsibilities It will be necessary to provide training so that
     such groups will have access to skills and knowledge of a kind which
     will be in demand on the labour market

10   The last decade has been marked by significant skill shortages in the
     Community even while unemployment continued to rise This apparent
     paradox is the outcome of a fast rate of job destruction/job creation
     in an economy undergoing rapid transformation and modernisation In
     the midst of this change it was evident that the better educated and
     qualified who could more readily adapt to changing work
     requirements enjoyed greater job stability and higher living
     standards It is in the light of such a situation that the Community
     is proposing a right of access to continuing training for workers in
     companies[5]

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(4) Skills Shortages in Europe   Irdac Opinion (Industrial Research and
    Development Advisory Committee of the Commission of the European
    Communities) November 1990
(5) Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers
    Article 15

11 The dependence of new enterprise on qualified and skilled manpower for its success is a major consideration in the context of structural policies For this reason the structural funds have strongly supported training and retraining measures in the regions of the Community and in areas where traditional industries are undergoing significant economic restructuring Actions of this kind are likely to assume an increasing importance in rural areas as a result of evolving agricultural policies

12 All of the foregoing factors argue compellingly for

- increasing the level of qualification of new entrants to the workforce

- updating and upgrading the qualifications of the existing workforce through continuing education and training

- providing training of a kind which will lead to increased rates of participation in the labour force among hitherto underrepresented groups

- securing a greater synergy between education and training and economic life so as to ensure the relevance balance and capability of application of skills and knowledge

13 The achievement of the foregoing objectives calls for more varied more open and more flexible structures of education and training These structures would need to be designed in accordance with the needs of clients and to be adaptable to their employment social and educational circumstances Open Distance Learning is seen as a key component in the creation of such structures

The Potential of Open Distance Learning

14 By Open Learning is meant any form of learning which includes elements of flexibility which make it more accessible to students than courses traditionally provided in centres of education and training This flexibility arises variously from the content of the course and the way in which it is structured the place of provision the mode medium or timing of its delivery the pace at which the student proceeds the forms of special support available and the types of assessment offered (including credit for experiential learning) Very often the openness" is achieved in part at least by the use of new information and communications media

15   Distance Learning is defined as any form of study not under the
      continuous or immediate supervision of tutors but which nevertheless
      benefits from the planning guidance and tuition of a tutorial
      organisation   Distance learning has a large component of independent
      or autonomous learning and is therefore heavily dependent on the
      didactic design of materials which must substitute for the
      interactivity available between student and teacher in ordinary face
      to face instruction   The autonomous component is invariably
      supported by tutoring and counselling systems which ideally are
      provided at regional/local study centres and to an increasing extent
      by modern communications media   Because open distance learning is
      meant to be adaptable to the pace of the student the material is
      generally structured in units or modules geared to specific learning
      outcomes

      The presence of a strong autonomous component in Open Distance
      Learning is very much in keeping with the ideas current in higher
      education of making students more responsible for attaining their own
      learning objectives

16   The achievements in the field of information and communication
      technologies (ICT) have contributed to the rapid development of open
      distance learning
      The advent of telecom services such as data networks and access to
      on-line databases had a revolutionary impact on the way in which
      information can be stored and retrieved   A growing information
      services market world-wide is featuring now many products and
      services
      The development of videotext services across Europe (Minitel in
      France Prestel in the UK various services in Spain Italy and
      Portugal etc) has given the possibility of low cost data access to
      the large public while at the same time totally new services have
      emerged based solely at the new technology of telematics   At the
      same time new products based on ICT present the user with numerous
      possibilities especially for the use of training purposes
      Interactive multimedia technologies make interaction possible with
      the trainee without the direct and constant intervention of a human
      tutor

17　The extraordinary potential of Open Distance Learning arises from the freedom it enjoys from constraints of time place and pace This endows it with an extensive flexibility which makes it readily adaptable to the needs of the consumer It has particular appeal to the working population as it can be geared to make minimum intrusion into the requirements of the job Training leave can be taken with particular regard to the needs of production and the use of Open Distance Learning enables the value of such leave to be maximised Open Distance Learning can be used on its own or as a component of other learning systems It can be used by individuals widely dispersed or by concentrated groups It can reach across the boundaries of regions countries and continents It has an extremely wide range of application either on its own or in conjunction with conventional education and training systems [6]

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(6) Full Interactive multimedia technologies use normally a well-tempered personal computer workstation which may be boosted to a full Interactive multimedia machine with the addition of an audio processor card Interactive video and Image manipulation mechanisms via Graphical User Interfaces Optical disc technology (laservision and compact-disc) offers low costs mass data storage while at the same time it features characteristics like high quality sound and Image Thus Videodiscs are currently used in many interactive multimedia training applications around Europe while CD-ROM (Compact-Disc Read-Only Memory) is also a competitive cost-effective alternative Digital Video Interactive (DVI) is needed when a standard business PC is to form the basis of a multimedia training system CD-I (Compact Disc – Interactive) is a unique new system designed for the consumer and the training markets of the 90 s Capable of handling image texts sound and graphics CD-I offers also an excellent media for language handling since it features a unique 16-sound channel possibility CDTV (Compact Disc Televison) is another multimedia system aimed at low cost applications Last but not least Satellite Television is capable of delivering not only linear but also interactive training materials which may be encoded and recorded on magnetic storage media then decoded and ready-for-use One has also to stress that the development of new software tools is expected to greatly enhance the possibilities of the present and future multimedia hardware

18 The following areas of education/training provision are identified as ones where Open Distance Learning can play a highly significant role

- extending opportunities of access to and participation in education and training at all levels

- strengthening the education/training infrastructure of less favoured regions and of remote areas by extending the range of training available in institutions and directly to individuals and groups

- creating trans-European networks for training and hence creating a greater cohesion of the European education and training systems using clearing houses" and "transfer points" for exchange in the field of open distance learning

- providing continuing education and training for the workforce

- improving the quality of training programmes through the incorporation of external high quality inputs and by utilising multimedia competence

- consolidating partnerships in training both within and between Member States and as between institutions and industry

- supporting the reconversion and innovation of education and training in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

- delivering advanced training and disseminating the results of research

- making available a European dimension in the education/training of those who do not have the opportunity to spend a period of study abroad and in particular providing such a dimension in the inservice training of teachers

- teaching about the European Community its laws institutions and policies on a world-wide basis

- providing Europe-wide education and training programmes on a competitive basis

The Position of Open Distance Learning in the Member States

19 During the past two decades major efforts have been made to promote Open Distance Learning as a means of education and training particularly for the adult population These efforts have resulted in some countries In the creation of Open Distance Learning facilities as departments attached to existing university level institutions In others such as Spain the United Kingdom Germany the Netherlands and Portugal separate and independent open/distance teaching universities were established The size and sophistication of these systems differ widely as does the extent to which they are integrated with institutional educational structures They are described in detail in the Commission s recent communication on this issue The principal public developments in the Open Distance Learning areas have been at the level of higher education and advanced training offering main courses principally of university degree level and updating courses of an advanced technological nature to postgraduate students already employed in enterprise

20 In some Member States specialised institutions and national associations for applying Open Distance Learning in the field of vocational training are playing an important role in meeting skills needs

Examples of these are FUNDESCO In Spain FUNDETEC In Portugal and CNAM and CNED In France An important development is the creation of training partnerships between enterprises and institutions for vocational training using Open Distance Learning methods In the overall however there is little evidence of serious public development in the application of Open Distance Learning to levels of basic education or to vocational training at the non-advanced levels[7] There is considerable private enterprise interest in the development of multimedia packages in the area of non-advanced vocational training and these packages can be used in an Open Distance Learning mode Their principal usage is in large enterprise and in multi-branch firms in the services sector Available information would indicate that the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) In Open Distance Learning as in continuing education remains to be developed

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(7) With the exception of Portugal where the National TV provides for basic education on the 5th and 6th levels

21   Over the last decade a number of European-based organisations have
     become the focal points for development in the Open Distance Learning
     field   The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities
     (EADTU) is representative of these establishments in twelve European
     countries   EUROPACE is a group of high technology companies and
     universities developing satellite-based continuing training
     EUROSTEP is an association of users of satellites in education and
     training programmes   Channel e   is a television service
     delivering satellite broadly educational and informative programmes
     while carrying-out a number of research tasks on technical
     specifications   SATURN brings together open and distance teaching
     univesities and enterprises   notably certain SMEs   There is also an
     Association of European Correspondence Schools (AECS) that represents
     in particular the private providers of distance education   These
     organisations have been stimulated by the Commission in the context
     of existing Community programmes aimed at promoting greater
     cooperation in education and training   The activities of these
     organisations would reinforce the impression that many Open Distance
     Learning developments are directed at higher level studies

22   There are aspects of Open Distance Learning that are penetrating
     conventional education and training structures to an increasing
     extent   In particular   the development of cheaper hardware and more
     powerful software tools have meant that multimedia and networking
     approaches   which characterise Open Distance Learning   are being
     increasingly adopted as teaching tools in many different types and
     levels of education and training establishment or will be soon
     within its reach   The didactic principles underlying Open Distance
     Learning of carefully structuring course content into units or
     modules relating to specific learning outcomes are also engaging the
     attention   particularly of higher education institutions   They see
     in this approach a means of making students more responsible for
     their own learning and of creating course structures which would
     answer to the needs of increasing permeability   facilitating the
     mobility of students between courses   institutions and countries and
     catering for growing numbers of continuing education students   There
     are some instances of distance teaching being applied to making
     external inputs of high quality into conventional teaching
     programmes   Notwithstanding these developments the level of
     integration between Open Distance Learning and traditional
     educational structures is not very strong and the mixing of these
     different modes as part of an overall approach to supplying education
     and training needs is not much in evidence   The emergence of the
     common ground and common interest already outlined could
     nevertheless   be instrumental in bringing about a desirable level of
     integration

23 The restriction in the level and range of Open Distance Learning
   opportunities also constitutes a serious problem   It is most
   important that such opportunities be extended to cover the needs and
   priorities of Member States enterprises and individuals   Given the
   heterogeneity of the populations to be catered for in education and
   training and the variety of modes by which this will be necessary a
   more extensive provision in the areas of science technology
   business studies and languages would appear to be required   This
   provision would need to embrace levels lower than that of a
   university degree   The important technician area which is in the
   frontline of technological change at an operations level must be
   catered for at least at upper secondary level and particularly
   within the framework of continuing education and training   So too
   must the craft area where multiskilling has become the typical
   response to changing production requirements   Non-advanced further
   education and training on an Open Distance Learning basis also needs
   widespread development to cater for workers who are seeking to update
   their skills or to improve their qualifications within the context of
   educational leave   Member States who are endeavouring to strengthen
   their provision of basic education by increasing participation at the
   upper secondary level and by extending the range of studies
   particularly by incorporating vocational and technological
   components may find in Open Distance Learning a way of solving some
   of their problems

24 There is a very wide variety of actors involved with Open Distance
   Learning and it would seem likely that this range will be extended in
   the future   They will come from different levels and types of
   educational institutions from training institutions within the
   employment sector   from publishing companies   from the social
   partners and from enterprises who are producers transmitters and
   consumers of Open Distance Learning products   To meet the various
   needs for coordination more than one body for this purpose should be
   envisaged Major efforts of coordination will be required to give
   structure and standing to Open Distance Learning within the regions
   and the Members States to maintain standard and quality and to
   ensure complementarity between the roles of public and private
   enterprise in this area   Substantial initiatives will be required in
   assessing the needs and demands for Open Distance Learning in
   developing the necessary delivery systems and their accompanying
   technology in providing the counselling tutorial and interactive
   support that students require in their studies and in ensuring a
   level of recognition in terms of credits and qualifications which
   would be on a par with those achieved through conventional studies
   and which would take account of experiential learning   The formation
   of partnerships between institutions and enterprises the creation of
   networks involving producers and consumers the formation of

consortia for the delivery of total training packages   the creation
of advisory structures for SMEs and for sectors which would also have
responsibility for the assessment of training needs and the
commissioning of the necessary training   all of these are strategies
which would support the permeation of Open Distance Learning in an
effective and economic manner

25   Much remains to be done also in clarifying Member State policies
     towards the financing of Open Distance Learning   Primary questions
     regarding the rationale for and the level of public subsidy need to
     be resolved as does also the balance of any such subsidy between the
     producer and the consumer   Equality of opportunity would appear to
     imply that those who wish to avail themselves of educational and
     training opportunities through Open Distance Learning should not be
     disadvantaged as a result of this choice   Social policy
     considerations may well dictate the terms under which Open Distance
     Learning is made available to groups such as the unemployed   people
     suffering from disability   people residing in remote areas   or
     workers whose livelihood is under threat   It is important that Open
     Distance Learning should find a place in any training policies
     envisaged to support industries undergoing transformation due to new
     technology or to help the regions catch up in terms of knowledge and
     skills as a development strategy   The manpower situation in the
     coming decades may well produce an environment where a mixture of
     work and training   with components of Open Distance Learning   may be
     much more the norm for many young people

The Interest of the European Community In Open Distance Learning

26 The Interest of the European Community In Open Distance Learning
    arises from a recognition of the contribution which it can make to
    the achievement of the objectives of education and training policies
    In the Member States and In the Community as a whole and the extent
    to which this contribution can be enhanced by cooperative action
    There are a number of characteristics of Open Distance Learning which
    make It amenable to cooperative action   First of all there is the
    cost structure where the development and production of courseware and
    the establishment of delivery systems and of supportive facilities
    for students require relatively high Initial Investment   Notably in
    the Community regions with a less-developed educational
    Infractructure substantial Investments might be needed for this
    purpose like the establishment of demonstration and student support
    centres and of telecommunication networks However once fixed costs
    are met the marginal costs per student are rapidly decreasing
    Economies of scale are therefore an important consideration in Open
    Distance Learning and the more widespread the use of the materials
    the more economic the operation becomes   Cost Is also related to the
    rate of obsolescence of material and It Is important In the design of
    courseware that obsolescence can be corrected for without unnecessary
    discard

27 Open Distance Learning Is In some respects Independant of national
    boundaries and this can contribute to the enlargement of the
    potential market and thus assist the economies of scale   It Is also
    an Important consideration In relation to the inclusion of a European
    dimension In the education and training provided   The quality of
    Open Distance Learning provision can gain appreciably from a sharing
    of expertise and a pooling or licensing of resources as between
    Institutions enterprises networks and Member States   In the larger
    European Internal Market there will be competition between Open
    Distance Learning providers and this can also lead   In certain
    circumstances   to an Improvement In the quality of product

28 The Community s Interest In Open Distance Learning Is accentuated by
    the completion of the Internal Market where the four freedoms of
    movement of goods services people and capital are guaranteed under
    the provisions of the Treaty   The freedom to offer services across
    the boundaries of Member States has strong Implications for the
    Internationalisation of Open Distance Learning and for the
    development of a transnational market In Open Distance Learning
    products and services   The measures announced In the Commission s
    Green Paper on Satellite communication[8] could have the effect of
    Improving access to European telecommunication systems for public and
    private Open Distance Learning providers as well as for consumers

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(8) Towards Europe-wide systems and services   Green Paper on a common
    approach In the field of Satellite Communication In the European
    Community COM (90) 490 20 November 1990

The encouragement of exchange of experience the provision of information about Open Distance Learning products and services the translation and adaptation of materials movement towards standardisation or compatibility of systems harmonisation of copy and exploitation rights the joint creation of products - all of these factors would support the development of a Europe-wide market in Open Distance Learning It is important that local structures and support facilities for students should not be tied to local or national producers in such a way as to inhibit the operation of such a market While a free market would promote competition between Open Distance Learning providers in Europe it raises also the question of quality assurance and the protection of consumers in this field who purchase services across the boundaries of Member States

29   Mutual recognition of qualifications achieved through Open Distance Learning will also be an important issue in order to facilitate mobility for further study and employment and in particular on account of the international nature of the market The general directive on mutual recognition of qualifications leading to a registered profession[9] is based on completion of a course of at least three years duration At first sight this use of course duration as a central factor in according mutual recognition seems to pose a problem for Open Distance Learning where the mastery of a set of learning objectives is the criterion for completion and where credit for experiential learning can form part of the assessment However in actual fact the general directive is compatible without the need for amendment with Open Distance Learning in that it makes provision for recognition between Member States not only of professional education and training of at least three years duration at higher-education level but also of all other types of education and training which are recognised by the Member State in which they are offered as being of an equivalent level and confer the same rights in respect of the pursuit of the regulated profession concerned [10]

30   In order to promote a balanced development of education and training systems in all regions of the Community and hence to create a greater cohesion of European education and training systems the Commission has defined Open Distance Learning as one of the priority projects for a Community action programme on trans-European networks [11]

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(9) Council Directive 89/48/EEC of 21 December 1988 on a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years duration   OJ No L 19 of 24 January 1989   p 16
(10)   cf last paragraph of Article 1(a) of the Directive
(11)   Towards Trans-European Networks For a Community Action Programme COM (90) 585 final 10 December 1988

Complementarity of Open Distance Learning with existing Community Programmes

31 As part of Its efforts to promote initial and continuing education
the Commission has viewed Open Distance Learning as an activity which
complements a number of existing and ongoing Community programmes
Its relationship to these programmes Is as follows

32 ERASMUS[12]

This Is a programme of Interuniversity cooperation and mobility
When first conceived the programme envisaged a study abroad period
for 10% of all students as a means of providing a European dimension
In their education Open Distance Learning Is seen as one means of
providing a European dimension for the remaining 90% and in
particular for teachers on an inservice basis It can also provide a
means of reaching adult and part-time students The ECTS pilot
programme which Is part of ERASMUS Is concerned with the mutual
recognition of qualifications and could be of value in addressing the
problems of recognition and equivalence arising within the Open
Distance Learning area

33 LINGUA[13]

This programme Is designed to support the efforts of the education
and training systems In the Member States in Increasing the
linguistic competence of young people and employees all over Europe
Given the extensive use of Open Distance Learning In the language
field it Is clear that It has the potential to make a major
contribution to the objectives of this programme on condition that
quality standards are kept up Specific contributions could be
envisaged In preparing students prior to spending a period of study
abroad In extending the teaching and learning of the lesser taught
and lesser used Community languages

34 COMETT[14]

Within the COMETT programme Open Distance Learning has been employed
as an Important means of delivering continuing training In advanced
technologies The programme has a clear strategy for developing
models for training partnerships between Open Universities and
Industry and Is supporting such partnerships on a pilot basis in the
provision of Europe-wide delivery structures and in the production of
training materials

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(12)   OJ No L166 25 06 87 p 20
            OJ No L395 30 12 90 p 23

(13)   OJ No L239 16 08 89 p 24
(14)   OJ No   L013 17 01 89 p 28

35 <u>TEMPUS</u>[15]

In the TEMPUS programme for the development of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe the Open and Distance Teaching universities are developing cooperative ventures such as the establishment of European study centres in the major cities of Central and Eastern European countries[16]

36 <u>EUROTECNET</u>[17]

This programme provides for actions concerning changes in initial and continuing training policies arising from identification of new skills needs in the workforce as a result of technological change Training methodologies based on Open Distance Learning will figure increasingly in this programme

37 <u>FORCE</u>[18]

The FORCE programme aims to support and complement the policies and activities developed by Member States to promote access to and participation in continuing vocational training It will also be concerned with the contribution that Open Distance Learning can make to innovative training approaches for adult learners in firms

38 <u>DELTA</u>[19]

Through the DELTA programme the Community has been pursuing research into the potential of technological development for learning purposes This research concerns in particular the cooperative development of advanced learning technologies It is also concerned with testing and validating the operation of these technologies in terms of securing higher standards compatibility and cost reductions which would make them available to the educational market at reasonable price

39 <u>THE THIRD FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT</u>[20]
This programme provides for six main activities within which are a number of specific programmes Continuing action in the field of distance learning will be supported within the action entitled Telematics Systems in Areas of General Interest Flexible and Distance Learning
Its aim is paving the way for the implementation of telematic networks through pre-competitive and pre-normative research and development

(15)   OJ No L131 23 05 90 p 21
(16)   The very recent (May) 1991 creation of the Budapest Platform
           for East-West collaboration on distance education may
           increase the opportunities for cooperation in this field
(17)   OJ NO L393 30 12 89 p 29
(18)   OJ NO L156 21 06 90 p 1
(19)   OJ NO L206 30 07 89 p 20
(20)   OJ No L 117/28 08 05 90

40 STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Within the framework of the Structural Funds Open Distance Learning
will contribute in particular to the Community Initiatives such as
EUROFORM[21] HORIZON[23] and NOW[22]

41 EUROPEAN OPEN UNIVERSITY

Recent years have seen the emergence of various proposals for the
establishment of a European Open University Given the substantia
investment already made in existing open and distance teaching
institutions and also the motivation which they have shown to
cooperate with each other the Commission supports the idea that the
aims and objectives of a European Open University would be best
achieved through networking amongst the existing institutions raiher
than by creating a new institution as such Consequently it has
supported them being the focal points for delivering open and
distance teaching In particular through a planned programme of
joint development of new European level courses as well as
collaborative actions for course and credit transfer amongst those
institutions

For exemple supported by several Community Programmes the European
Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) Is developing
open learning modules concerning European integration which are
suitable for incorporation into academic courses both of the Open and
Distance Teaching Universities and of conventional institutions

Specific Fields for Actions

Taking into consideration the specific role and responsibilities of
the Member States with regard to open and distance education and
training and the Community s concern to promote a balanced
development in this field in all parts of Europe the Commission has
defined positive developments that should be encouraged and promoted

42 Actions by Member States to reinforce the necessary training
infrastructures in the less favoured remote and rural zones of the
Community The increased utilisation of open and distance education
and training in these Community regions could improve considerably
access to education and training

Creation of local/regional study support centres has proven to be an
efficient tool aiming to

–   link distance teaching institutions with regional training
         consortia in particular for meeting training needs for local
         industry

–   introduce and demonstrate open and distance learning
         materials and systems to raise the awareness of the potential
         of open distance learning in local industrial circles

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(21)   OJ No C327 29 12 90 p 3

(23)   OJ No C327 29 12 90 p 9
(22)   OJ No C327 29 12 90 p 5

- provide learner support (s a counselling and tutoring) at local level for students particularly the personnel of companies lacking such support structures inside the company concerned

- distribute and deliver open learning materials (from national and international producers) on a local level

43 Actions at Community level to promote the development of a supply of open learning materials for Europe-wide delivery geared notably to the training needs of SMEs in particular in key sectors of industrial importance

Benefitting from and based on the experience and expertise of the COMETT programme and the Europe-wide COMETT UETP network but also exploiting the achievement of Member States in this field (such as the UK Open Tec programme) the Community should encourage

- pilot schemes in open and distance learning initiated by professional or industrial groupings for the benefit of company personnel such schemes may be based either on new training courses and materials or on the adaptation of proven existing course material to meet the requirements of the new target audience

- sectorally-focussed training actions in fields of strategic importance for the Community economy preferably as international joint ventures between distance teaching institutions and companies concerned

- schemes for the support and evaluation of model distance training developed by large companies for the benefit of supplier companies

44 Actions to encourage and to support transnational cooperation between current and potential providers of open and distance learning in order to promote wider exploitation of training products

In this regard the Community should encourage

- adaptation of such products to meet local requirements notably linguistic and cultural

- establishment of transnational tele-communication structures for information exchange and course delivery exploiting also the modern tele-communication and information technology such as satellite communication and telematic networks

- training measures directed at trainers in order to develop and to improve their utilisation of open and distance training methods so as to develop a case of good practice

       -    clearing-house activities designed for information exchange on open and distance teaching opportunities and products and the creation of databanks in this field for promotion of quality and standards of training products and delivery systems and for accreditation of open and distance courses and their evaluation

45   Specific actions within the ERASMUS programme concerning the promotion of distance teaching in the ERASMUS inter-university cooperation programmes (ICPs) aiming in particular at

       -    creating extra opportunities for students in Europe to add a European dimension to their curriculum by studying distance courses from abroad

       -    promoting collaboration between distance teaching universities and conventional universities in Europe for the development of common curricula

       -    providing opportunities for adults and/or part-time students (who are not able to move abroad for a longer period) to participate in the ERASMUS programme

       -    improving the quality of higher education by enabling external high level teaching expertise to be incorporated into programmes and by developing multimedia competence in higher education institutions

46   The Commission would also profit from aditional experience to be gained from these Community actions in order to take stock of the appropriate research and development applications involving the latest achievements in the field of technology-based learning making full use of information and communication technologies and establishing synergies with the different Community R&D programmes This cross-fertilising procedure would enable the Commission and the Member States to assist existing distance education and training centres in Europe in achieving greater interconnection in order to be able to get the most out of their experience

The Commission would also work towards promoting cooperative activities between the training education and R&D Community programmes in the field of common standards inter-operability of software and compatibility between the hardware systems and the training methodologies

47 The Europe-wide delivery of open distance learning courses in an open
    market urges for measures regarding the quality promotion and the
    consumers protection

48 The open market equally requires community measures to harmonize
    copyright and neighbouring rights Copyright provides a basis for
    intellectual creation To protect copyright is to ensure that
    creativity is sustained and developed In the interest of authors
    the cultural sector consumers the educational system and ultimately
    of society as a whole Neighbouring rights underpin these objectives
    in various ways particularly by guaranteeing a proper return to
    those who invest in the provision of these cultural goods and
    services

    The completion of the internal market requires that authors and other
    right holders will find an identical level of protection at least
    comparable if they wish to exploit their rights in other Member
    States Thus the conferring of a right and the practical management
    of that right are more and more closely bound up together

    The changes which technological advance has brought make it urgently
    necessary to strengthen the protection of copyright and neighbouring
    rights

    A series of legislative actions studies and other actions are
    currently being prepared [24] The main decisions and directives are
    to be adopted by 31 December 1992

    Conclusion

49 In drawing up this Memorandum the Commission has taken note of the
    views of the Education Ministers as expressed at the Council meetings
    on May 31 1990 in Brussels and on November 8 1990 in Siena It has
    closely considered the opinion and advices of the National Experts
    group on open and distance learning that had been established on
    request of the Council It has also benefitted from the studies made
    by experts on behalf of the Commission and from the studies and
    reports from the Council of Europe and of the OECD

    The Commission is convinced that open and distance learning could
    play a vital role to improve access to education and training for all
    European citizens On the basis of the discussions the Council and
    the Ministers in charge of education and training policies could
    request the Commission to undertake specific policies and actions in
    this field at Community level

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(24)   Green Paper or Copyright and the Challenge of Technology (COM
            (88) 172 FINAL of June 1988) and the follow-up to the Green
            Paper Working Programme of the Commission in the field of
            Copyright and neighbouring rights (COM(90) FINAL of 17
            January 1991)

COM(91) 388 final

DOCUMENTS

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