



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 08.03.2004  
COM(2004) 158 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION**

**Interim evaluation of the Youth Programme 2000-2006  
(covering the period 2000-2003)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1.</b>	<b>Reasons for the evaluation .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2.</b>	<b>Aim of the report.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3.</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	1.3.1. Information sources.....	4
	1.3.2. The key evaluation issues.....	5
<b>2.</b>	<b>OVERALL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRAMME .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.1.</b>	<b>Background.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.2.</b>	<b>Aims.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.3.</b>	<b>Developments in the youth field since 2000 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH PROGRAMME.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3.1.</b>	<b>Overall preliminary considerations.....</b>	<b>8</b>
	3.1.1. General and specific aims .....	8
	3.1.2. The operational aims .....	8
<b>3.2.</b>	<b>Consistency between the programme and the overall situation .....</b>	<b>9</b>
	3.2.1. Relevance of the aims to the problems addressed.....	9
	3.2.2. Conclusions .....	10
<b>3.3.</b>	<b>Operational aspects of the Youth programme .....</b>	<b>10</b>
	3.3.1. The descriptive elements.....	10
	3.3.2. Summary of positive experiences and problems.....	10
	3.3.3. Assessments of the operational aspects.....	12
	3.3.4. Conclusions .....	13
<b>3.4.</b>	<b>Action 1 - Youth for Europe.....</b>	<b>13</b>
	3.4.1. Framework .....	13
	3.4.2. Implementation.....	14
	3.4.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action .....	15
	3.4.4. Conclusions .....	16
<b>3.5.</b>	<b>Action 2 - European Voluntary Service .....</b>	<b>17</b>
	3.5.1. Framework .....	17
	3.5.2. Implementation.....	18
	3.5.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action .....	18
	3.5.4. Conclusions concerning Action 2 .....	20
<b>3.6.</b>	<b>Action 3 - Youth initiatives.....</b>	<b>22</b>
	3.6.1. Framework .....	22
	3.6.2. Implementation.....	22
	3.6.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action .....	23
	3.6.4. Conclusions .....	25
<b>3.7.</b>	<b>Action 4 - Joint actions .....</b>	<b>26</b>
	3.7.1. Framework .....	26
	3.7.2. Implementation.....	26
	3.7.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action .....	27
	3.7.4. Conclusions with regard to Action 4 – Joint actions.....	28
<b>3.8.</b>	<b>Action 5 .....</b>	<b>28</b>
	3.8.1. Framework .....	28
	3.8.2. Implementation.....	28
	3.8.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action .....	30
	3.8.4. Conclusions .....	31

<b>3.9.</b>	<b>Actions with third countries.....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.9.1.	Framework .....	33
3.9.2.	Implementation.....	33
3.9.3.	Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the actions .....	35
3.9.4.	Conclusions concerning actions with third countries.....	36
<b>4.</b>	<b>OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5.1.</b>	<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1.1.	Recommendations covering all the actions.....	41
5.1.2.	Recommendations concerning action 1.....	45
5.1.3.	Recommendations concerning action 2.....	45
5.1.4.	Recommendations concerning action 3.....	47
5.1.5.	Recommendations concerning action 4.....	48
5.1.6.	Recommendations concerning action 5.....	49
5.1.7.	Recommendations concerning the Partnership Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on European Youth Worker Training.....	51
5.1.8.	Recommendations concerning actions with third countries.....	51
<b>5.2.</b>	<b>Summary of recommendations .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>ANNEX 1.....</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>ANNEX 2.....</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>ANNEX 3.....</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>64</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Reasons for the evaluation**

This report meets the requirement, under Article 13 of Decision 1031/2000/EC<sup>1</sup>, to monitor and evaluate the Youth programme. It was brought forward by a year with the agreement of the Member States so that its conclusions and recommendations could be taken into account by the Commission when preparing to present a draft legal basis for the future generation of programmes in the field of youth.

In order to ensure that the evaluation is as exhaustive as possible, this report incorporates the impact studies presented by the Member States and the countries participating in the programme, the external evaluations carried out and the results of seminars and thematic working parties organised by the Commission to make an overall mid-term assessment of the programme.

### **1.2. Aim of the report**

The outcome of the report can be used to fine-tune the current Youth programme and as a reference for preparing the future programme in the field of youth.

### **1.3. Methodology**

#### *1.3.1. Information sources*

This report incorporates information from various sources. It was compiled by the Commission from various contributions made over the last six months and in accordance with meta-evaluation principles.

The impact studies (see Annex 1) presented by the Member States and the countries participating in the programme are in line with the Commission's methodological guide (see Annex 2). These studies were prepared under the responsibility of the national authorities by external experts with the support of the national agencies.

The impact studies were backed up by a series of specific studies to assess the programme as fully as possible and make operational recommendations.

The information sources are as follows:

- In the main, the reports prepared by the Member States and *the countries participating in the programme* on the impact of Actions 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the Youth programme
  - Evaluation of the national agency provisions in 2002
- Analysis of the implementation of the provisions relating to the responsibilities of the Member States and the Commission concerning the national agencies for the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth programmes

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 117, 18.5.2000, p. 1.

- Seminar on “Evaluation of procedures” for the Youth programme in March 2003  
The seminar was attended by representatives from a cross-section of beneficiary organisations (46 from 21 programme countries) and external experts, to discuss and assess the current procedures and tools of the programme.
- Meeting of experts on Action 3 in February 2003  
This meeting was held with the national experts and the national agencies to assess the effectiveness of Action 3 of the programme, which is new (initiative projects).
- Inter-Committee Group on Action 4, July 2003  
This group finalised the evaluation of this action, which enables joint activities to be carried out with the Socrates and Leonardo programmes.
- Working party on Action 5, May 2003  
Action 5 comprises support measures and required more searching analysis in view of its variety.  
The Action 5 evaluation workshop was attended by 20 external experts (including youth workers, representatives of NGOs and beneficiaries of large-scale projects) who, in workshops with representatives from the COM, the National Agencies, SALTO and the Technical Assistance Office, assessed the current Action 5 and developed proposals for the development of Action 5 in the short and medium term and its possible role in the future programme in the field of youth.
- Evaluation of the third-country cooperation strand  
An external evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme was carried out between June and September 2001. Third-country cooperation (except Euro-Med) was the subject of an external evaluation carried out between March and September 2003 and an evaluation seminar with beneficiaries and National Agencies held in February 2003.
- External evaluation of the Partnership Programme between the Council of Europe and the Commission on European Youth Worker Training.

### *1.3.2. The key evaluation issues*

The evaluation focused mainly on:

- the internal and external relevance of the programme;
- the impact of the programme on the immediate beneficiaries;
- the impact on systems (national administrations, legislation and policies);
- operational mechanisms;
- performance in respect of each action.

## **2. OVERALL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRAMME**

### **2.1. Background**

The Youth Community action programme was established by Decision No 1031/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council on 13 April 2000.

It pursues the activities developed by the three generations of the “Youth for Europe” programme since 1988 and the “European Voluntary Service for Young People” since 1998.

Towards the end of the 1980s, development of the first youth activities at Community level was focused on “youth exchange schemes” aimed at making young people aware of the realities of European life through a non-formal educational approach.

One of the benefits of the “Youth for Europe” programme when it was launched in 1988 was its contribution to implementing the policy of dismantling obstacles to the free movement of persons and promoting European citizenship. These initiatives coincided with the added momentum the Single European Act gave to the European project, the conclusion of the single market and the desire to create a genuine awareness of being European.

There was a qualitative change in the programme in the mid-1990s when Voluntary Service, which became European Voluntary Service in 1998, was introduced. This enabled young people to acquire skills at European level in a non-formal environment and to make a direct contribution to society.

The introduction of European Voluntary Service also had a direct impact on the systems of support for youth activities, both on networking at European level for the NGOs looking after young volunteers and on the Member States, which were adjusting to the advent of this new activity.

This new initiative came at a time when Europe was launching its strategy to combat unemployment, in which lifelong education and training played a fundamental part. It was also a time when many Member States were turning their thoughts towards voluntary service, since compulsory military service was gradually giving way to professional armies.

Another significant change came in the 1990s with the gradual opening up of the programme to countries outside the EU, especially acceding countries, EFTA countries and the countries of the Mediterranean basin. Here too, the programme evolved in keeping with major developments in international policy.

Youth cooperation with third countries under the YOUTH programme and Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme is a continuation of previous Community programmes/actions which have been in place since 1992. Starting with the countries of central and eastern Europe, the CIS, the Maghreb countries and Latin America, cooperation was extended in 1995 to all 12 partner countries of the southern Mediterranean basin, some countries of south-eastern Europe, and to Africa on a pilot basis. A specific programme for the Mediterranean partner countries with substantial co-funding from the MEDA budget heading was launched in 1999.

As one can see, the development of Community youth initiatives has kept pace with the process of European integration since 1988.

## 2.2. Aims

The Youth programme, which is being implemented under Decision 1031/2000/EC, continues along the same lines as and with the same goals as the two previous programmes “Youth for Europe” and “European Voluntary Service”. It has four main aims in supporting informal education activities.

In order to meet these aims, the programme has been allocated 520 million euros for 2000 to 2006. It is also open to acceding countries and EFTA countries that are members of the EEA.

## 2.3. Developments in the youth field since 2000

It was the adoption by the Commission in 2001 of the White Paper on “A new impetus for European youth” that enabled cooperation on youth to really get off the ground. The White Paper was the product of wide consultation at European and national level of governments, public authorities, researchers, people active in this field and young people themselves, which enabled arrangements for cooperation in the youth field to be structured.

The process led the Council to adopt the framework for European cooperation on youth in May 2002 which defined specific priorities (*participation, information, voluntary activities, greater understanding and knowledge of youth*) upon which the Member States decided to develop an open method of coordination.

The work to promote European cooperation on youth has created a framework for activities in this field and, as a result, is leaving its mark more and more clearly on the financial instrument.

Implementation of the open method of coordination led, in November 2003, to the Council adopting<sup>2</sup> common objectives on *participation* and *information* which are as follows:

### *Common objectives on participation*

- Participation by young people in civic life
- Greater participation by young people in the machinery of representative democracy
- Support for various forms of learning on how to participate.

### *Common objectives on information*

- Access for young people to information services
- Quality information
- Participation by young people in the shaping and dissemination of information

---

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 295, 5.12.2003, p .6.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH PROGRAMME**

#### **3.1. Overall preliminary considerations**

##### *3.1.1. General and specific aims*

The general aims of the programme are derived from the legal basis for the programme, i.e. Article 149 of the Treaty on education, training and youth and specifically paragraph 2, which provides that action by the Community shall be aimed at “*encouraging the development of youth exchanges and exchanges of socio-educational instructors*”.

The four specific aims of the programme are given in Decision No 1031/2000/EC:

- a) to promote an active contribution by young people to the building of Europe through their participation in transnational exchanges within the Community or with third countries so as to develop an understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe and its fundamental common values, thus helping to promote respect for human rights and combat racism, antisemitism and xenophobia;
- b) to strengthen their sense of solidarity through more extensive participation by young people in transnational community service activities within the Community or with third countries, in particular those with which the Community has concluded cooperation agreements;
- c) to encourage young people’s initiative, enterprise and creativity so that they may take an active role in society and, at the same time, to stimulate recognition and the value of informal education acquired within a European context;
- d) to reinforce cooperation in the field of youth by fostering the exchange of good practice, the training of youth workers/leaders and the development of innovative actions at Community level.

##### *3.1.2. The operational aims*

In order to meet the specific aims the programme is broken down into five different activities:

- Action 1 – Youth for Europe
  - 1.1 – intra-Community exchanges of young people
  - 1.2 – exchanges of young people with third countries
- Action 2 – European Voluntary Service
  - 2.1 – intra-Community European Voluntary Service
  - 2.2 – European Voluntary Service with third countries
- Action 3 – Youth initiatives
- Action 4 – Joint activities



- Action 5 – Support measures
  - 5.1 – Training and cooperation of those involved in youth policy
  - 5.2 – Information for young people and studies on young people
  - 5.3 – Information on and visibility of measures
  - 5.4 – Support measures

The programme's operational aims are clarified by describing the measures to implement the specific aims set out in Decision No 1031/2000/EC as follows:

- support for the transnational mobility of young people;
- support for the use of information and communication technologies in the field of youth;
- support for the development of cooperation networks at European level permitting mutual exchange of experience and good practice;
- support for transnational projects to promote citizenship of the Union and the commitment of young people to the development of the Union;
- promotion of language skills and understanding of different cultures;
- support for pilot projects based on transnational partnerships designed to develop innovation and quality in the youth field;
- development at European level of methods of analysis and follow-up of youth policies and their evolution (e.g. databases, key figures, mutual knowledge of "systems") and of methods of disseminating good practice.

### **3.2. Consistency between the programme and the overall situation**

#### *3.2.1. Relevance of the aims to the problems addressed*

As regards the programme's internal consistency, the various levels of aims, overall, specific and operational are structured harmoniously, except for the two operational objectives: "support for use of information and communication technology in the field of youth" and "promotion of language skills and understanding of various cultures", which are specific rather than operational aims.

As regards the programme's coherence within the global context, one can say that it is partially geared to current reality, especially since the setting up of the framework for European cooperation on youth. Since the first generation of the Youth programme, it has developed gradually to meet specific needs which have arisen. Adopting the framework for European cooperation makes youth an independent and structured strand of policy. The general aims of this new framework should therefore take priority in the programme and in particular should take account of new priorities such as *participation, information and greater understanding of youth*, and also innovative aspects of *voluntary service* which have emerged since the draft Constitutional Treaty was adopted.

In general, the internal consistency of the programme is satisfactory. Within the global context, however, it does not entirely meet the real needs of the present. This does not mean that the programme is inconsistent with the situation but that it does not factor in new elements which have emerged as a result of cooperation in the field of youth.

### 3.2.2. *Conclusions*

The programme's aims are established by the legislature in the Decision. Within this framework, some leeway must therefore be sought to adapt the programme to changes in the situation. The future programme will be able to take into account the framework for cooperation on youth more easily. The new legal basis should also be sufficiently flexible to enable gradual adjustments to be made to accommodate future developments in cooperation on youth.

## 3.3. **Operational aspects of the Youth programme**

### 3.3.1. *The descriptive elements*

The management of the Youth programme, largely decentralised to National Agencies, is based on standard administrative procedures which are, in principle, adhered to by National Agencies within all Programme countries. As part of the interim evaluation of the Programme, a questionnaire on Procedures was sent to all beneficiary organisations, through the network of NAs. The aim was to receive beneficiaries' feedback on whether or not the current procedures and tools applied in the overall administration of the Programme were sufficiently transparent and efficient to facilitate access to the Programme. The questions focused on access to the Programme, the application, decision-making and reporting processes, and the grant financial rules.

### 3.3.2. *Summary of positive experiences and problems*

The following key messages emerged as a result of the consultation process:

*Programme's image (information and publicity):* The quality of information on the YOUTH programme, through documentation, national and regional events as well as the internet, has greatly improved and has become more young people-friendly over the last few years. However, the User's Guide lacks clarity and should be produced in a more user-friendly style and format and not be amended on an annual basis.

The lack of visibility exists mainly at political level.

*Access to the Programme:* A majority of organisations have easy access to their National Agency. However, lack of proximity to National Agencies does hamper access to the Programme for small and local organisations, especially those based in remote urban and rural areas. Those National Agencies, however, which have a network of regional and/or local information points are more accessible to, and therefore supportive of, smaller and more isolated organisations.

*Coherence in implementation of the Programme:* Applications are treated fairly by National Agencies and there is satisfaction with the rate of approved projects. However, divergent decisions taken by National Agencies do cause problems for the applicant partner organisations. This problem especially occurs in the case of split-funding projects, where each leg of a project is assessed by a different National Agency, and there is no prior inter-agency

consultation. Therefore there is a need for a more transparent, coherent and consistent selection and decision-making system throughout the Programme countries.

*Application process:* The current schedule of five application deadlines (three deadlines for third country cooperation projects) meets the needs of most beneficiaries.

The application forms are designed for use by expert youth leaders and youth workers but are not suitable to all categories of young people. Some of the questions require too many details for projects which are in the stage of preparation.

Within this context the application process for micro-projects (bilateral/trilateral projects = split-funding) versus macro-projects (multilateral projects with at least four partner organisations = single application to NA usually in host country) was discussed. Both application procedures had their supporters: smaller organisations were mainly in favour of micro-projects, whilst larger organisations favoured macro-projects.

Euro-wide youth NGOs also recommended simplifying the application process to allow application for a series of projects within the framework of various Actions rather than for single short-term projects.

In cases of rejected projects, reasons for rejection should be outlined in detail to facilitate and encourage re-application.

*Financial rules:* The system of flat rates and fixed amounts is a fair grant-awarding system and more user-friendly than the former percentage-based funding. However, it does not allow for flexibility in the case of very disadvantaged groups, such as marginalised groups of young people who find it difficult to attract co-funding.

*Payment of grants:* In principle, selection decisions and the advance payment of grants (75%) should reach beneficiaries at least a month prior to the project start date. However, the late arrival of selection decisions and payment of advance grants in some of the Programme countries and from the Commission for projects assessed and selected centrally, result in some cases in projects being either cancelled or postponed or in a change of partners and participants, which cause serious problems for the project organisers and their partners.

*Evaluation process:* Beneficiaries are expected to submit the final report within two months of the end of the project period. The National Agencies and the Commission (in the case of centralised projects) evaluate content and achievements and assess the financial statement prior to processing final payment of the grant. However, feedback and comments on the outcomes of projects are not usually communicated to beneficiaries. Follow-up meetings and evaluation and dissemination of good practices are an essential part of the development of youth work and structures.

*National Agency Provisions:* an analysis of the implementation of the National Agencies' provisions conducted in 2002, the results of which were approved by the Programme Committee, shows that the operational mechanisms and the framework of responsibilities they establish largely functioned satisfactorily. Although applying them in practice posed something of a problem in some cases, albeit very few, the experience gained has certainly shown that they have, by and large, worked well. As a result, the current version of the text will remain in force for the entire period of validity of the programme's legal basis.

### 3.3.3. *Assessments of the operational aspects*

The outcomes of the procedures seminar can be assessed as follows:

Programme's image: The User's Guide outlines the YOUTH programme's aims and objectives, the eligibility criteria as well as the application process in all the major languages of the Programme countries. Most of the National Agencies produce user-friendly and colourful documents, usually on each Action, which address a young audience and thus provide the relevant information in a simple and easily understandable way. Some of the websites are also interactive and adapted to a young audience. All NAs should be encouraged to produce documentation and information tools which appeal to and attract the attention and motivation of young people.

However, the Programme's aims are not always disseminated to relevant governmental authorities, especially at regional and local level. Therefore such a lack of information makes access to co-funding and to local authority support difficult and often impossible.

The National Authorities, National Agencies and the Commission have an important role to play in raising the Programme's profile at political level. This process could be facilitated through the promotion of partnerships with and among local authorities. Events such as 'European Youth Weeks' also have an important role to play in raising awareness of the Programme at national and local level.

Access to the Programme: Accessibility and proximity to beneficiaries at national, regional and local level are important aspects of the Programme. Following the example of the regional arrangements which exist in some, and are piloted in other, countries could facilitate reaching, as well as making the Programme more accessible to, all young people.

Coherence in implementation of the Programme: Despite the standard system of procedures, some National Agencies have to adapt them to their national requirements and/or available resources. A certain lack of transparency arises especially in the case of grant decision-making when national priorities are taken into consideration in addition to, or instead of, European priorities. To keep a certain amount of flexibility, it is important therefore that National Agencies ensure a coherent balance between both European and national priorities, as well as maintaining an ongoing dialogue and consultation with partner National Agencies.

Some of the NAs are in favour of keeping the split-funding process as it helps them assess the volume of activity on the basis of applications received whilst in the case of multilateral projects, if not informed, they are not aware of the number of organisations involved as partners in projects hosted in other countries. However, inter-agency consultation should become compulsory in the case of split-funding decisions.

Funding of projects: Applications for multi-action long-term projects could result in the simplification of the application process and thus minimise payment delays. Through such a system of application, youth organisations could apply for a series of actions rather than for each individual project. Longer-term projects could raise awareness of the Programme as well as motivation at local level and could thus attract additional funding.

However, the limitations of smaller organisations and disadvantaged groups must not be overlooked; in these cases, micro-projects play a major role.

Evaluation process: It is essential for beneficiaries to receive an assessment of their project not only at the time of application but after completion of the activity. Sharing of experiences and good practices should be facilitated by the National Agencies as well as the Commission. Project outcomes should influence the Programme and have an impact on national youth policies and structures. Resources should be made available to facilitate evaluation seminars at national as well as European level.

#### 3.3.4. *Conclusions*

In summary, the following is a list of recommendations which resulted from the evaluation of the current Programme procedures:

- An enhanced political visibility for the Programme.
- Regional and local information relays or contact points to increase proximity to beneficiaries. To provide a supportive approach, during the promotion, application and evaluation processes of the Programme, especially in the case of marginalised young people.
- A simpler and administratively less cumbersome application process. Promoting and supporting multi-action projects, but without dismissing small-scale projects.
- More transparent criteria and decision-making process as well as a more coherent and balanced implementation of the European and national priorities throughout the Programme countries.
- Facilitate access to the Programme for the disadvantaged, and for young people from third countries, by introducing a more flexible grant-awarding mechanism.
- Annual evaluation meetings for beneficiaries at national and European level as well as within regional clusters of countries.

### 3.4. **Action 1 - Youth for Europe**

#### 3.4.1. *Framework*

The specific aims of Action 1 are defined in the annex to Decision 1031/2000/EC establishing the Youth programme as follows:

“The Community will support mobility activities for young people provided that the activities in question last at least one week, are carried out on the basis of joint projects within the Community and involve groups of young people aged in principle between 15 and 25 years and legally resident in a Member State or a third country (for exchanges with third countries, the mobility activities will involve at least two Member States).”

These activities, based on transnational partnerships between groups of young people, involve their active participation and are designed to make it possible for them to discover and become aware of different social and cultural realities and to encourage them to participate in, or initiate, other activities at European level. Particular attention is paid to participation by young people for whom it is their first European activity, by young people with fewer opportunities or by small or local groups without experience at European level.

Bilateral group mobility receives funding if this is justified in terms of the target group or a specific pedagogical approach and only for exchanges between Programme countries.

Activities designed to strengthen the active involvement of young people in group mobility projects may receive funding under this action, particularly in the case of activities which provide young people in question with linguistic and intercultural preparation prior to their departure.

### *3.4.2. Implementation*

#### *a) Overall assessment*

Action 1 contributes to the education process of young people, mainly through exchanges, by encouraging them to become aware of the diversity of cultures, equal opportunities, and combating exclusion, racism and xenophobia.

It encourages stronger partnerships at all levels between the Commission and the Member States, at the level of the National Agencies responsible for implementing the Action and at the level of the groups of young people who must prepare, and be involved in, the projects.

Action 1 contributes to the informal education of young people, making them aware that they are actively involved in the construction of Europe and thus fostering a better understanding of European diversity.

#### *b) Operational mechanisms*

Bilateral exchanges are a suitable instrument for a first experience of Europe for a youth organisation or for groups of young people with fewer opportunities. For the latter, it would be better to reduce the length and the content of projects to tailor them more closely to their needs.

Multilateral exchanges have a real European intercultural dimension. However, finding partners for exchanges is a problem. The partnership is essential but the role of the various partners is not always clear, especially with regard to sharing the financial and organisational responsibilities. It is important for the young people to be properly supervised and for them to play an active part throughout the project. On this issue, the Member States said it might be possible, if the programme permitted it, to reduce the age of access to give 13 or 12-year olds the opportunity of participating if they were mature enough.

In general, participating in an exchange scheme motivates young people to take advantage of other opportunities offered by the Youth programme or other European programmes, such as Socrates or Leonardo. Bridges between the programmes are beneficial.

The impact study shows that there is a demand for recognition of the value of the action and that participants should be given a certificate of participation in the exchange scheme.

As regards implementation of the exchange projects, the Member States mention that it would make sense if the length of the projects was extended to cover the time devoted to preparation and evaluation of projects.

### *3.4.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action*

79.1 million Euros were allocated to Action 1 for exchange schemes between 2000-2002 in the Youth budget. 167 298 young people participated in the 8 467 projects financed by the Commission. The proportion of multilateral projects was 30% in 2000 and went up to 40% at the end of the year 2002, in keeping with the aim the Commission had set itself.

#### *Impact on young people*

The impact study showed that, for the acceding countries, Action 1 offered young people an opportunity to visit European countries which had not been open to them before.

As regards bilateral exchanges, the impact study stressed that they were particularly useful for young people with fewer opportunities, such as young people from Roma minorities or living in isolated geographical areas as well as for youth organisations experiencing their first encounter with Europe.

For other young people, the programme is focused on multilateral exchange schemes. Conducting an international experiment is an experience which is rewarding but which requires proper supervision. Exchanges of young people also contribute to practising other languages and to intercultural learning. Finally, they are a way of developing tolerance and mutual respect, of opening minds and encouraging communication.

Another advantage of mobility is that it gives young people a greater awareness of their role as European citizens. This awareness is a valuable attribute which young people can use to good effect in the labour market. However, it should be noted that whilst this form of non-formal education is not a problem for young people with high-school and/or university educational backgrounds, sound preparation is required for disadvantaged young people before the exchange takes place.

As regards multicultural learning and personal development, young people who have been on an exchange scheme are often keen to organise an exchange scheme themselves or to turn to more individual projects which offer scope for creativity. Moreover, the majority show greater involvement in local community activities.

Finally, access to the programme for young people from disadvantaged environments is particularly beneficial as the bilateral exchanges offer them their first European experience. It should also be noted that the programme, and especially exchange schemes, can have a very positive effect on physically and mentally disabled young people.

#### *Impact on the socio-educational players, organisations and local communities*

As far as the impact of Action 1 on youth workers is concerned, one can say that this action has demonstrated the importance of high standards on their part, the need for specific training for international intercultural exchanges, the usefulness of networking competent organisations in the field of youth and of exchanging good practice, and the importance of language skills.

As regards youth organisations, it can be said that, in general, they adopt the annual priorities set by the Commission and the National Agencies but that they make a special effort in respect to the quality of the projects and their regional character.

As youth workers involved in multilateral exchanges have learned the ropes by practical experience, demand has emerged for good practice to be disseminated, which requires a greater effort to be made on this front. Youth organisations are overworked, especially with their activities being concentrated on the school holidays. In some Member States, the municipalities resort to their networks of twinned towns to develop exchanges.

A structured system for partner-finding, networking of youth organisations and decentralised structures able to offer young people the opportunity of setting up exchange projects, do have an impact on this action of the programme.

Within Action 1 (Youth for Europe exchanges) of the Programme it is recommended that in the case of organisations with international experience, priority be given to multilateral projects (involving at least four Programme countries). Therefore, restricting bilateral exchange projects to new and less experienced or disadvantaged youth groups does not motivate local youth groups and organisations with a constant turnover of membership. The organisation might not be new to the experience but it is a new experience for the participants. For smaller organisations working with disadvantaged groups, the administration, organisation and management of projects with multiple partners is considered too demanding.

The multiplier effect of exchange projects on local and regional communities has been striking, increasing interest in Europe and encouraging the setting up of new youth organisations.

#### *Impact on policy, legislation and institutions*

The Youth programme is an inspiration for the Member States, which often support identical projects outside the programme. Moreover, decentralisation of the programme, which is becoming increasingly widespread in national agencies, is having a multiplier effect and is making the programme more accessible to all young people.

As regards the acceding countries, the experience of youth exchange schemes is relatively new as previously there was no real opportunity to participate in international exchanges.

The Commission's annual priorities are complied with and often tally with national priorities. However, it would be advisable not to set too many priorities, nor should any national priorities be set which are either mutually incompatible or incompatible with European priorities.

#### *3.4.4. Conclusions*

Exchanges of young people offer young people of various nationalities the opportunity to get to know each other easily in an environment enabling them to explore common themes and discover various cultures.

The fact that this action is almost entirely decentralised in the Agencies has helped to make the programme more accessible and more appealing to young people.

The quality of the projects is constantly improving as a result of more in-depth work at the level of the organisations, other partners and project promoters.

The Agencies provide information and training for project promoters and organise information and training seminars.



Nevertheless, improvements could be made, specifically:

- A greater effort should be made to establish quality partnerships, especially for multilateral projects. The National Agencies should play a more important role here.
- The National Agencies should work more closely with each other to offer a better service to partners, which is all the more important for bilateral projects whose funding depends on several National Agencies.
- It should be possible to shorten projects for groups of young people with fewer opportunities.
- The minimum age for participating in an exchange could, in some cases, be reduced to 12-13.
- Young people who have participated in an exchange scheme should be given a certificate of participation in a European activity.
- Exchange projects should be extended to include time for preparing the project, running it and making an evaluation of the lessons the participants learned from it.
- It should be possible to build bridges between actions by means of longer “relay” projects.

### **3.5. Action 2 - European Voluntary Service**

#### *3.5.1. Framework*

The Annex to Decision 1031/2000/EC establishing the Youth programme sets out the specific objectives of European Voluntary Service; in particular it is stated that EVS is open to young people aged in principle between 18 and 25 years. Young volunteers will undertake an activity based on solidarity, with the view to acquiring social and personal abilities and skills, while at the same time contributing to society. To this end, young volunteers will participate, in a Member State other than the one in which they reside, or in a third country, in a non-profit-making and unpaid activity of importance to the community and of a limited duration (12 months maximum). European voluntary service is based on a partnership and shared responsibilities between the young volunteers, the sending organisation and the host organisation. The Commission attests with a certificate the participation of young people in European voluntary service.

With regard to Action 2.1, intra-community European Voluntary Service, the same annex to the legal basis stipulates: “The Community will support transnational projects (for a limited period ranging in principle from three weeks to one year) which involve young people, actively and personally, in activities designed to help meet the needs of society in a wide range of fields which constitute at the same time an experience of informal education with a view to acquiring social and cultural skills. These projects are designed to bring young people into contact with other cultures and other languages and to experience new ideas and projects in a multicultural civil society...”

Several priorities have been introduced: the development of the short-term strand in order to facilitate access for young volunteers with fewer opportunities and to ensure their tailor-made support; the introduction of voluntary activities as a new element in existing partnerships and/or the creation of new partnerships; the involvement of organisations which have not yet

participated in EVS; the inclusion of new areas and innovation; and the contribution to local development.

### *3.5.2. Implementation*

#### *a) Overall assessment*

European Voluntary Service (EVS), first set up as a pilot programme in 1996, is part of the Youth programme (2000-2006) and is allocated approximately 25 million euro per year. It is thus one of the major Actions of the Youth programme. Each year it allows around 3 500 young people from the participating countries to spend between 6 and 12 months abroad. A short-term EVS strand has been introduced specifically for the target group of young people with fewer opportunities. But EVS also funds larger projects with up to 60 volunteers in different host placements, and in 2002 a concept of collective voluntary service has been developed to allow the deployment of even larger numbers of volunteers on the occasion of major events, e.g. in the area of sports.

#### *b) Operational mechanisms*

The large majority of EVS projects are managed by the National Agencies. This concerns mainly individual long-term EVS projects (so-called one-to-one projects with one volunteer), but also individual and group short-term projects for young volunteers with fewer opportunities, which might last between 3 weeks and 6 months. At centralised level, two project formats are managed: Europe-wide projects, involving many partner organisations and volunteers in different host placements, and individual placements in secretariats of European Youth non-governmental organisations. A procedure for the accreditation of EVS host projects in programme countries has been established on the basis of Host Expressions of Interest (HEIs). This accreditation is required prior to the introduction of a grant application and shall ensure transparency and quality of the host projects. Furthermore, an SOS Volunteer Helpdesk at the Technical Assistance Office is at the disposal of interested people, volunteers, organisations and National Agencies and carries out communication and advisory tasks.

### *3.5.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action*

Between 2000 and 2002, the total grant amount under EVS was 66.5 million euro (2000: 20.7 million euro; 2001: 23.9 million euro; 2002: 21.9 million euro). The number of submitted projects has grown steadily since 2000 (by 15% from 2000 to 2001, and by 21% from 2001 to 2002). 17 703 EVS hosting and sending projects were financed (2000: 5 423; 2001: 5 754; 2002: 6 526). The total number of EVS volunteers was almost 10 000 over these first three years (2000: 2 798; 2001: 3 430, 2002: 3 432) with growth peaking at 23% from 2000 to 2001. Their number seems to remain stable now at around 3 500 volunteers per year. In this context, it is worth noting that around 6 000 approved host placements for individual volunteers in programme countries are available in the EVS online database.

#### *Impact on young people*

European Voluntary Service is a decisive step in the lives of the young volunteers: the active involvement in the project and the decision to live, learn and work for up to 12 months in a foreign country. Due to its predominantly individual and long-term nature, EVS generally produces an impetus in personal development and a considerable gain in self-confidence.

Very often the impact is also reflected in changed personal educational or professional aims. Back home, former EVS volunteers often think and act in a more open, tolerant and helpful way. Another important multiplier effect is that former volunteers are more likely to participate in other non-formal education activities or to encourage peers to do the same.

EVS clearly allows young people to acquire new personal, social, intercultural and technical skills, which can help to increase their employability. The well-established and smooth-running system of certification is seen as very important in this regard. The overall satisfaction of volunteers with EVS is generally high.

#### *Impact on youth workers, organisations and local communities*

New and inexperienced organisations have systematically been involved and were able to create new transnational and local partnerships. Their regular voluntary or youth activities mostly reap major benefits in terms of quality development, innovation and internationalisation. Many organisations confirmed that without the YOUTH programme they would have to reduce considerably their international youth work.

As local authorities are considered as eligible hosting or sending organisations, the YOUTH programme is often a leverage for starting international activities in municipalities or complementing existing activities through a transnational volunteer project.

In some programme countries, the role of strong, experienced networks or coordinating organisations is remarkable. On the one hand, these organisations and networks can make available considerable experience and expertise to the benefit of the other partners. On the other hand, there might be fewer incentives for an active involvement of all partners, and in a few cases the added value and profile of EVS is hard to recognise.

Some organisations commented that the funding level for EVS volunteers has put considerable strain on them and that their usual volunteering programmes can hardly compete with that.

Youth workers involved in the management of EVS projects acquire new skills and competences. Most quoted are organisational skills, solidarity, creativity, a stronger sense of responsibility, strengthened international experience and intercultural competence, fund-raising and entrepreneurial skills.

With regard to local multiplier effects, an interesting simulation was done in the United Kingdom: EVS hosting and sending organisations maintained that each volunteer impacts on average on 600 people, meaning that in the UK alone, where 700 volunteers are sent abroad and hosted, EVS reaches out to 420 000 persons. Other countries refer to sectoral multiplier effects; for example when a few orphanages in one country start hosting volunteers, many more orphanages will feel motivated to do the same.

#### *Impact on policy, legislation and institutions*

The impact of EVS on policy, legislation and institutions is difficult to trace in terms of cause and effect. It cannot be determined precisely whether it was the YOUTH programme which caused changes in national policy, legislation and institutions. However, it is clear that there is an important cross-fertilisation between national developments on the one hand and impulses resulting from the YOUTH programme and the White Paper on the other hand.

In countries where there is no national youth policy, or a lack of voluntary service traditions, the YOUTH programme's influence on the development of national youth policy and voluntary service is particularly strong.

Some countries described recent changes in the systemic environment, such as an increased awareness of EVS in national administrations and certain legislative adaptations in order to increase the compatibility and European/international dimension of national voluntary services. In those countries which have chosen to regionalise the administration of the YOUTH programme or to set up regional multiplier or advisory networks, there is a strong institutional impact: regional authorities and bodies have been created and assist in monitoring, information and advisory tasks or even in selection procedures. However, it remains to be seen to what extent effective implementation and common criteria of the programme are ensured in these cases.

Even though the legal basis of the present YOUTH programme encourages Member States to reduce mobility obstacles, many problems linked to the legal, fiscal and social protection of volunteers, visa-related questions, the recognition of non-formal learning, etc. persist. A legal status for volunteers exists in only a few countries.

The certification of the non-formal learning experience under EVS by means of an EVS certificate, signed by the responsible Commissioner, is valued positively. The same is true for the recent streamlining of the certificate procedure. EVS is the only Action under the YOUTH programme where such certification is provided for. However, the existence of this certificate does not yet lead to a systematic recognition of competences and skills.

European Voluntary Service has also contributed to increased national awareness of the situation in other European countries and at European level. The First European Conference on Civic Service and Youth, held on 28/29 November 2003 in Rome, was the first step in exchanging information and best practice between national civic services and youth policy departments at European level, and the intention is to continue this process in 2004.

Finally some countries highlight a certain disproportion between the relatively high cost related to EVS and the rather low numbers of EVS volunteers per year. In addition, the mostly individual nature of EVS limits its impact and visibility.

#### *3.5.4. Conclusions concerning Action 2*

There is no doubt that European Voluntary Service should be maintained as a crucial and recognisable Action under the future programme. Systematic further development is recommended in order to increase its accessibility, user-friendliness, impact, visibility, effectiveness and efficiency.

- It is recommended that longer or more intensive preparatory measures (preparatory visits, training, language courses) be introduced.
- More emphasis should be put on a strong partnership, including the involvement of the volunteer. Additional support or systematic involvement of other partners, e.g. mentors or ex-volunteer associations, might be helpful for quality development and achieve higher sustainability.

#### *More user-friendly EVS – instruments, procedures, formats*

- EVS needs to be lighter in terms of procedure and formal requirements.

- The period from project idea to implementation needs to be shortened.
- A more intense follow-up and/or evaluation phase could become part of an EVS project and possibly also integrate what has been “Future Capital” so far.
- Decentralisation of the “host expression of interest” procedure and a generally faster and less cumbersome accreditation and application procedure are recommended.
- The establishment of minimum quality standards for host projects, which is independent of Community funding, could be a decisive step towards promoting EVS as a quality label and role model for transnational volunteering.
- Whereas EVS should remain decentralised, it is recommended that certain complementary project formats would need to be maintained at centralised level in order to allow for innovative, multilateral, collective, cross-action or multiannual activities.

### *Accessibility*

- It is recommended that the accessibility of EVS should be improved.
- It should be examined whether, how and when EVS could reach an annual number of 10 000 young Europeans.
- Young people with fewer opportunities should remain the main target group and EVS needs to be developed further in order to accommodate their needs.
- It is suggested that an 18-30 age limit be introduced, while allowing this limit to be lowered in exceptional cases, although there is no general consensus on this issue.
- It is also recommended that EVS remains open to small, inexperienced and local organisations, which might need special support and training too.

### *Funding*

The mutual financial interdependence created by the split-funding system is starting to put the smooth running of EVS at risk.

- Any alternative to split-funding should be considered, but this should not result in abandoning the joint responsibility of the project partners and National Agencies.
- Sponsoring of EVS projects, zero-grants, a labelling system without Community funding, shorter project duration and reduced funding levels per participant are also suggested.
- Some NGOs proposed that the introduction of a flat-rate-like mobility voucher for volunteers, students and trainings be examined.
- Preparatory and evaluation/follow-up activities should receive stronger support.
- The principles of flat rates, fixed amounts and cofunding in EVS are seen as positive and should be maintained.

## *Recognition*

- It is recommended that continued EVS certification should go hand in hand with an increased recognition of EVS as a non-formal learning experience at all levels, e.g. through legislation, voluntary agreements, stronger links with the Europass or a bonus system, which facilitates access to formal education and employment.

## *Legal framework*

Important impulses are expected from the Open Method of Coordination in the field of voluntary activity by young people. EVS is expected to help achieve some of the objectives of the “youth voluntary activity” priority of the White Paper.

- Special attention will therefore need to be focused on removing mobility obstacles in Member States.
- In the majority of European countries there is no specific legislation, status or policy concerning volunteers. This is generally considered a major mobility obstacle, as it leads to the treatment of volunteers as paid workers, students or trainees and to the taxation of their pocket money, the loss of social security benefits or difficulties in obtaining residence permits.

### **3.6. Action 3 - Youth initiatives**

#### *3.6.1. Framework*

The specific aims of Action 3 are defined in the Annex to Decision 1031/2000/EC establishing the Youth programme as follows:

“In order to encourage initiative and creativity amongst young people, the Community will support projects in which young people actively and directly participate in innovative and creative schemes and in schemes which focus on the social commitment of young people at local, regional, national or European level. These projects will allow young people to develop their initiative and to put into practice activities of their own devising in which they play the key role. The Community will support initiatives designed to help young volunteers to make the best possible use of the experience they have gained during their period of voluntary service and to encourage their active integration into society. Those initiatives taken by young people after completing their European Voluntary Service will allow them to launch and promote activities of a social, cultural, socio-cultural and economic nature and/or aim at their personal development. Priority access will be given to those young people most in need. Support will aim at encouraging extension of these projects to include similar initiatives conducted in other Member States in order to strengthen their transnational nature and greatly expand exchanges of experience and cooperation between young people. This aid may include organising meetings of young promoters of Europe-wide initiatives. Financial aid may be granted towards the effective establishment of stable, transnational partnerships between such projects”.

#### *3.6.2. Implementation*

##### *a) Overall assessment*

Action 3, the most recent action of the Youth programme, experienced some teething troubles when the programme got under way. Both the users and the National Agencies found the

action, with its three strands (youth initiatives, networking projects and Future Capital, difficult to implement. Despite the efforts made to harmonise the rules through the User's Guide, it was interpreted and developed differently in the various countries involved in the programme up to 2002. For this reason, the Commission organised seminars to discuss and evaluate Action 3 in 2002 and 2003.

The impact studies and the two evaluation seminars showed that, overall, the initiatives were developing well in most of the programme countries. They had opened up the programme to a larger public and often to groups to disadvantaged young people.

However, the concept of the networking projects was obviously not clear enough. In 2003, the Commission clarified the criteria in the User's Guide and increased the lump sums. It also opened up access to all interested young people, whereas up to 2002 it had been reserved for previous beneficiaries of group initiative projects.

Future Capital enables young people who have carried out European Voluntary Service to organise a project on their own as an extension of their voluntary service. This part of the programme, which differs from group initiatives and networking projects, appears to be out of place in Action 3, and so far the opportunities it offers have largely been neglected by young people.

#### *b) Operational mechanisms*

The impact study showed that the lump-sum system had proved itself to be effective and should be maintained in the future. In order to facilitate access to Action 3 for all young people, several countries asked for the grant application forms and reporting arrangements to be simplified further.

Decentralising the management of Action 3 was beneficial, particularly in respect of increasing flexibility and the support mechanism for young people who were launching or running a project. Some countries proposed going one step further and devolving project management.

Some countries said that the accompanying measures under Action 5 should be used more systematically to support Action 3.

In the same vein, several countries wanted the role of the intermediate and relay organisations supporting young people preparing an Action 3 project to be reinforced. The quality of projects was shown to improve if guidance for young people and sound supervisory arrangements for the projects were in place.

#### *3.6.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action*

19.4 million euro were allocated to Action 3 for Young People's Initiatives and Future Capital between 2000 and 2002 under the Youth budget. 58 954 young people took part in the 3 314 projects financed by the Commission.

#### *Impact on young people*

The impact study showed that Action 3 contributes to meeting the general and specific aims of the Youth programme. It enables young people not only to design their own project in accordance with their ideas and convictions and in line with their own aims, but also to implement it themselves. In this way, they embark on a process of informal and non-formal

learning which teaches them to take decisions, assume responsibilities, plan a project and bring it to fruition. This is a collective learning process for the group initiative and networking project strands, whilst in Future Capital it is an individual learning process. It is particularly in the group initiative and networking project contexts that young people develop projects which promote participation and active commitment in society. In assuming an active role in running the project, they are made aware of the values of democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cultural diversity and the dangers of social exclusion, racism and xenophobia.

At a more individual level, carrying out Action 3 projects enables young people to acquire skills which are allied to occupational skills, such as communication, negotiation and argumentation, project management and financial management, computer skills and knowledge of languages. At the same time, they acquire more self-confidence and learn to work in a team to plan a project, solve problems and develop skills which are more social in nature.

Another question which arises is change in the age limit. Developing group initiatives or networking projects is a very complex activity and difficult for people aged between 15 and 20 to carry out. In general, it is young people of around 25 who present Action 3 projects.

The impact study showed that this experience of non-formal learning is not recognised or validated at regional and national level, which detracts from part of the programme impact.

One of the strengths of Action 3 and its group initiative strand is its accessibility to young people “in difficulties”. It has proved a valuable instrument in a strategy of social inclusion to promote access to such young people.

Group initiatives and networking projects form gateways to other actions in the Youth programme. The majority of projects are proposed by new groups which hitherto have never participated in the programme. For many young people, the local project is the first stage before going on to a “more sophisticated” activity involving cooperation with foreign partners. In this respect, Action 3 enables young people to be integrated in the programme and the public to be diversified.

We have been told that the number of young people involved in the “Foundation for the Future” strand is very small. In many countries, none of the appropriations allocated for this action have been used. It is also expensive in per capita terms without having produced any really convincing results so far.

#### *Impact on youth workers and organisations*

As regards the impact of Action 3 on youth workers, the Youth programme in general and Action 3 in particular enhance the quality of their work and give a European or even international dimension to youth work. Social and youth workers must acquire international cooperation skills and find networks of partners abroad to be able to supervise Youth programme projects. However, we should bear in mind the fact that Action 3 has less of an impact on youth workers than the other actions of the programme because the group initiatives are devised by young people themselves. However, the quality of the project improves when young people are guided and counselled by youth workers. Unfortunately, the multiplier effect is not always ideal, since not all the youth workers who have participated in a project really use this experience for the benefit of future projects.



### *Impact on policies, legislation and public administrations*

Group initiatives and networking projects are, in general, projects which do have a certain profile and give an opportunity to municipalities to get to know young people and to become aware of their concerns and aspirations. In this respect, they contribute to the feeling of being part of Europe at local authority level.

On a more general level, the Youth programme has contributed to making not only political decision-makers but also public opinion more aware of themes relating to European youth policy at national, regional and local level. The White Paper on youth played a key role in this respect but Youth programme projects have also helped to give visibility to the 'Europe of Youth'. This is particularly true of group initiatives which often have a high local profile.

This action has had such an impact that some countries contribute their own funds to support a larger number of projects.

#### *3.6.4. Conclusions*

In conclusion, one can say that the aims of Action 3 are mainly met thanks to **group initiatives**. Their impact on young people can clearly be seen in terms of personal development, sense of identity (self-confidence, flexibility, independence, initiative and responsibility) and an open-minded political stance (practical approach to Europe, a feeling of belonging to Europe). This strand of Action 3 should keep its place in the future programme.

The **networking projects** give a European and intercultural learning dimension to group initiative projects. In this respect, they may be seen as more ambitious than group initiative projects. After a difficult start, they increased in number and quality in 2003 thanks to the support measures instituted for this action by the Commission and the National Agencies.

These two types of action should keep their place in the programme: the group initiatives because they largely promote social integration and the networking projects because they reinforce the European dimension of Action 3.

The group initiatives and networking projects can make a genuine contribution to reinforcing the non-formal and informal educational dimension of the Youth programme. They can constitute a valuable tool for implementing the top priorities of the White Paper on Youth, namely active participation, independence, information, social integration and employability.

As regards the **Future Capital** strand, the results are less conclusive. The small number of projects conducted so far has not had enough impact to justify upholding this strand in Action 3.

As regards the future development of the action, the national authorities consider that:

- the action should be developed along the lines of active participation of young people, non-formal and informal learning and social inclusion;
- the target group should basically be young people with fewer opportunities;
- bridges should be created between all the actions to meet young people's needs;
- bridges should be created between non-formal and informal education and vice versa;

- the Youth programme should complement the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes and other policies, in particular culture, sport and employment policies;
- the achievements of non-formal and informal education need to be recognised (certification of skills at the end of the project as with the Europass experiment (Leonardo da Vinci programme) or the pilot *personal record of achievement* tested by the UK National Agency;
- it should be possible to extend the age limit for Action 3 to 30;
- support for Action 3.1 (group initiatives and networking projects) should be reinforced, particularly by using Action 5 to offer contact seminars to prepare networking projects.

### **3.7. Action 4 - Joint actions**

#### *3.7.1. Framework*

The specific aims of Action 4 are defined in the Annex to Decision 1031/2000/EC establishing the Youth programme as follows:

“Having regard to the need for a flexible and creative approach as a precondition for cooperation between sectors, Community aid may be granted for the actions referred to in Article 6 of the Decision and for activities to be undertaken jointly with other Community schemes relating to the Europe of knowledge, in particular Community programmes in the field of education and vocational training.

(...) Those projects will cover a range of schemes from a number of different sectors including youth. They may be funded in a complementary manner by a number of different Community programmes and may be implemented by means of calls for joint projects.

Appropriate measures may be adopted to promote, at regional and local level, contact and interaction between those participating in this programme and in programmes dealing with vocational training and education. In this context, activities increasing awareness of the opportunities provided by the Community to young people may be supported.”

Given this rather vague and abstract legal basis, the Commission has so far opted to implement joint actions through calls for proposals.

#### *3.7.2. Implementation*

##### *a) Overall assessment*

Joint actions are mainly implemented by calls for proposals under the three programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth. The first call for proposals was organised in 2001, which is why the Commission now only has very few projects which could be evaluated. Six projects were selected in 2001 with contracts being signed in March 2002. Three of these projects are on “Creating qualification gateways: a system for transferring lifelong training credits”, two projects on “Counselling and guidance services” and a single project on “Multidisciplinary and e-learning centres”. In 2002, fifteen projects were selected with contracts being signed for fourteen of them in March 2003 using deferred appropriations. Three of the projects are aimed at developing the theme of guidance and counselling at local level ("Local guidance networks"), six projects deal with "Social integration of target groups"

and five with "Active citizenship for young people". In 2003, sixteen projects were selected in July and contracts will be signed before the end of the year. These projects are on the themes of "Active citizenship for young people" and introduce the topics "Integration of the disabled" and "Validation of non-formal and informal education".

Given the fact that the 2002 projects have just started up, there are only six projects which can currently be subjected to in-depth qualified assessment. Critical mass has not yet been reached and it is therefore too early to say anything meaningful about their results.

However, we can already take stock of the experience of joint actions in terms of organisation. This new action had some teething troubles but has the merit of having made programmes open themselves up more to other programmes, to engage in a process of discussion on common themes and to cooperate and coordinate with one another. In administrative and financial terms, despite the harmonisation problems, rules, common procedures and models of standard contracts have been developed.

Finally, joint actions have allowed the Commission to test a new system for monitoring projects. Even though projects are managed by the lead Directorates for a given theme, the contact partners of other Directorates were associated for the first time with the thematic monitoring of the project. This new approach certainly contributed to a certain amount of openness and innovation in the projects and has created new networks amongst the project promoters.

#### *b) Operational mechanisms*

After the first three years of implementation of joint actions, the administrative and financial procedures adopted have proved to be cumbersome and complex, particularly with regard to the decision-making procedure. An inter-committee group on joint actions was formed, made up of 18 representatives of the three programmes without decision-making powers. This group meets once or twice a year but only lays down guidelines. For a decision to be made on Action 4, the matter has to be brought before the programme committees (Youth, Leonardo and Socrates) by a written or oral procedure and the European Parliament must exercise its powers of scrutiny.

#### *3.7.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action*

According to the opinion of the inter-committee group on joint actions, their current aims are realistic and meet a genuine need. Large-scale pilot or "laboratory" projects can enable ambitious aims to be achieved. However, it is questionable whether the action should be restricted to these major projects and whether it would not be more useful to enable smaller projects to be funded within the framework of joint actions in order to involve the youth sector. This would also enable the total number of co-funded projects to be increased.

In their present form, joint actions appear a little too inflexible. The selection criteria are relatively stringent and leave little scope for very high-quality projects whose only weakness is not entirely meeting the criterion of transsectoral cooperation between education, occupational training and youth. Experience has shown that applicants for joint action projects often resort to somewhat artificial means in an effort to prove that there is cooperation between the three sectors. It might be more useful to limit the requirements to partnerships involving two sectors and to be more demanding with regard to the criteria of innovation, methodology and impact.

Another option suggested would be to give promoters more freedom to choose the theme for a joint action project. Several members of the inter-committee group asked for the theme to be left completely open to allow project promoters to realise their own ideas as long as they contributed to achieving the action's aims.

A greater effort will need to be made to validate joint activities and to ensure they are still visible alongside major programmes.

The final question is whether a call for proposals is the best way of implementing joint actions. At this stage it is too early to say anything conclusive. However, calls for proposals might usefully be complemented by other types of activities such as studies, partnerships at various levels and actions to disseminate good practice, raise awareness or promote communication.

#### *3.7.4. Conclusions with regard to Action 4 – Joint actions*

Action 4 got off to a difficult start and the main recommendations are as follows:

- Procedures should be simplified.
- The inter-committee group should have a more specific mandate and decision-making powers.
- The selection criteria should be made more flexible so that any activity which is deemed to contribute to achieving the action's aims can be financed.
- A strategy for communication, information and validation of results needs to be developed to give joint activities a high profile.
- The existing website and the compendium of projects funded could be improved.

### **3.8. Action 5**

#### *3.8.1. Framework*

The objectives of the Action are defined in the Annex to Decision No 1031/2000/EC on the Youth programme. This action focuses mainly on:

- training of and cooperation with those involved in youth policy;
- information for young people and youth studies;
- information and visibility of measures.

#### *3.8.2. Implementation*

##### *a) Overall assessment*

Action 5 offers beneficiaries and National Agencies a variety of forms of training and co-operation activities with the aim of assisting the development of the other Youth Actions and strengthening European youth policy.

Evaluators within the framework of the impact study and the 'Action 5 evaluation workshop' with youth workers in 2003 perceive the Action as improving the access of young people to

the other Actions especially by developing youth workers' skills, by creating and sustaining partnerships and networks and by increasing the self-confidence and motivation of participants. The Action is seen as a very valuable tool for informing young people about the Youth programme priorities.

In many countries, Action 5 is a major instrument for developing national youth policy in its international context with a direct impact on the quality of national youth work. By linking the local and regional to the European level, Action 5 introduces innovative elements into youth work on the spot with considerable potential for multiplier effects.

While there is general agreement about the Action's strong role in fostering tolerance and cultural diversity, its impact on inclusion is reported but should be further strengthened. Further action is needed, with regard to very disadvantaged young people and especially in the case of young people living in remote and rural areas.

Beyond Action 5 as specified in the User's Guide, a yearly call for large scale projects within Action 5 enables beneficiaries to work on main Youth priorities like inclusion and anti-racism within the framework of long-term projects focusing on innovation in training, co-operation and information. Outcomes of large-scale projects receive positive feedback. The main issue for reinforcement with regard to large-scale projects and the Action in general is the visibility of projects and the dissemination of best practices.

#### *b) Operational mechanisms*

Evaluators state that Action 5, compared to its aims, is an effective instrument with its main strengths in training effects, networking, motivation and “youth empowerment”.

With three different strands - programme countries, third countries, National Agency Training and Co-operation Plan - and nine activities, “Support Measures” is one of the programme’s more complex actions. Its complexity is seen both as a productive element in stimulating project ideas as well as rigid in limiting room for manoeuvre at application level.

Although beneficiaries find it easier to handle the shorter-duration Action 5 activities, which last several days or weeks, they emphasise the need to also have long-term activities of up to one year to initiate and sustain projects and networks in the field of training.

Evaluators mention that Action 5, which had its main focus on supporting Actions 1 and 2, should also be used for Action 3. They underline that greater emphasis should be put on the quantitative evaluation of Action 5 follow-up projects.

Programme countries tend to welcome steps taken to decentralise the Action inside the country. Several of them underline the fact that decentralisation leads to more transparency and proximity. Especially for young people with fewer opportunities and, more specifically, those living in remote rural areas, the availability of contact persons in their region is crucial.

The introduction of the flat-rate system for most Action 5 activities received unanimous approval from beneficiaries, who find it easier now to estimate and budget for the costs of their projects. The change allowed beneficiaries to focus more strongly on the content. Nevertheless, a number of beneficiaries ask for a 100% refund of travel costs, especially for third country projects and projects involving a larger number of participants from candidate countries.

### *3.8.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the action*

In the period 2000-2002, 32.3 million € were committed for Action 5.1. projects. The 4 031 projects funded involved a total of 91 610 participants - youth workers, young people and representatives of NGOs.

Out of the 174 applications submitted for the first three calls for large-scale Action 5 co-operation, training and information projects, 34 large-scale projects have been selected and implemented.

#### *Training, quality, networking, innovation, access*

Access, training, quality, networking and innovation are described as strongly interlinked elements.

Action 5 'training' allows for a "personal quality development process" of participants who acquire skills and competencies in international youth work especially in the areas of tolerance, inclusion and participation. In several countries, Youth training is one of the rare possibilities for youth workers to receive training. Peer education is seen as an essential element of Youth training.

Trained youth workers are enabled to create, contribute to and sustain 'networks', which themselves lead to a continuous exchange of experiences, possible innovation and the creation of new projects. Effective networking is seen as indispensable for bringing innovation to the operational level. A wider and efficient use of IT, publishing best practice projects and other websites is seen as a possibility for overcoming the communication gap regarding innovation.

The role of Action 5 in giving access to the programme and its openness to all young people are very much appreciated. The wide range of different activities is perceived as being well designed to prepare and improve the quality of projects within Actions 1-3. Former participants in Action 1-3 projects often come back to Action 5 and, in such a way, multiply their experience.

While the contribution of Action 5 training measures to the other Actions is nearly unanimously acknowledged, reports deplore the fact that the quantitative evaluation of Action 5 follow-up projects in the form of youth exchanges or EVS projects is rare.

#### *Impact on young people*

The impact of Action 5 on the personal development of young people is widely discussed and appreciated. The Action helps young people to develop their creativity and own initiatives, to get the skills and self-confidence to set up projects and to be financially responsible for them. Action 5 is said to improve motivation, language and communication skills, competencies in group dynamics and conflict management, and to contribute to a European consciousness.

Involvement of young people in the planning, preparation and implementation of the project is important, as this creates ownership of the project by young people. Training and peer-education are seen as essential tools for ensuring this involvement.

#### *Impact on youth workers, organisations and local communities*

The Action has a considerable impact on **youth workers** with regard to "quality awareness" and "expertise" in the Youth programme's priorities. Qualification measures lead to a further

professionalisation. As youth work differs a great deal from country to country, the setting of international standards is seen as an important step to continuously improved quality.

Beyond developing capacities concerning horizontal Youth priorities, Action 5 is reported as being specifically effective in improving practical youth work skills such as team building, awareness of different pedagogical approaches, working methods and presentation techniques. Contributions highlight the Action's role in motivating youth workers and in helping them to understand the relevance of their own work. Through comparison at international level, Action 5 also leads to a "healthy competition among peers".

With regard to **organisations**, the important role of Action 5 in establishing new partnerships and extending existing ones is underlined. Bilateral relations become tri- and multilateral, partnerships become more balanced and less dominated by one organisation and they often continue outside the Youth programme. For many organisations, Action 5 introduces for the first time "network thinking" into youth work. For smaller organisations in particular, it is important to widen their range of contacts.

Action 5 contributes to the professionalisation of youth organisations and encourages comparison between organisations themselves not only with regard to different nationalities or cultures but also types of organisation and working styles. The Youth programme and Action 5 bring "continuity, predictability and structure to transnational co-operation and introduce grass-roots level work into it".

The impact of Action 5 on **local communities** happens at several different levels:

- Youth organisations - municipality: "Establishing closer contacts with people employed in the municipality could promote the clubs' and organisations' development and result in a larger political and economical spillover effect." Participating groups and organisations often strengthen their co-operation with local authorities, stabilise their co-operation with the municipal youth affairs departments and put more focus on international activities in general.
- Participating organisations can motivate youth organisations from the same community to start international youth work themselves.

### ***Impact on policy, legislation and institutions***

Although the impact of Action 5 on national, regional and local policy is stated in general terms, few examples of concrete effects are given. There is general agreement, however, that these policies and European policy should complement each other.

In some cases, European youth and youth work policy seem to replace youth policy at national, regional or local level. The strongest impact reported concerns the municipal level (see above). Involving municipalities and also local politicians proved to be fruitful and contributes to moving their focus more to international activities. It helps to overcome prejudice and racism at local level.

#### ***3.8.4. Conclusions***

Concerning the future development of the Action, evaluators emphasise the further development of youth work and youth policy in Europe with a focus on White Paper objectives and on creating and strengthening networks of co-operation at

European/national/regional/local level with a higher profile at local level, where young people with fewer opportunities can in particular be reached more easily.

#### *Youth policy - youth work - priorities*

- In some cases, European youth policy and youth work seem to replace youth policy at national, regional and local level. There is general agreement that youth policy and youth work approaches at the different levels should complement each other.
- Setting international standards in youth work could contribute to continuously improved quality in youth work.
- The programme should have the possibility of financing youth research-related projects both with regard to the Youth programme itself but also in the wider sense of youth.
- The Action's impact on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities needs to be further strengthened.

#### *Structure of the current Action*

- The Action's complexity is seen both as a productive element but also as limiting room for manoeuvre at application level.
- Certain Action 5 activities should be used to prepare not only Actions 1 and 2 but also Action 3.

#### *Selection process, decision making, feedback and follow-up*

- Youth workers would like to be more involved in the selection process and better informed about who is involved in the decision making process.
- Participants would like to be given clearer reasons in writing why their projects were rejected, to be able to improve the quality of their next application. After the end of their project, they would very much like to get feedback on the quality of their work.
- The quantitative evaluation of Action 1, 2 and 3 projects resulting from an Action 5 project should be strengthened.

#### *Visibility - networking - transferability*

- Better dissemination of best-practice projects by publishing them more widely on different websites and the use of the full potential of the network involved (National Agencies, Regional Centres, SALTOs, Council of Europe).
- Further decentralisation within the programme countries could lead to more transparency and proximity, fostering especially the inclusion of those living in remote areas and young people with fewer opportunities in general.



### **3.9. Actions with third countries**

#### *3.9.1. Framework*

Four geographical priorities for Youth third country co-operation have been defined by the Commission and the programme Committee: as first priority, the countries neighbouring the enlarged EU, i.e. the Mediterranean basin (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Israel, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta) , South East Europe (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine), and, as second priority, Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay, Venezuela).

Third country cooperation under the Youth programme aims at promoting universal peace, dialogue, tolerance and solidarity amongst young people. The main objectives are furthermore to build long-lasting and solid partnerships, as well as to promote the exchange of youth work expertise and know-how between non-governmental and governmental structures in the EU and third countries. Activities involving third countries should give participants a better understanding of their respective situations and cultures and help them explore their identities. They are also intended to contribute to the development of the voluntary sector and civil society in the partner countries, and to make it possible for partners in third countries to gain experience in the field of non-formal education and to contribute to the development of youth work and associations in those countries.

The overall objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth programme are to improve mutual knowledge, understanding and dialogue between youth in the Mediterranean partners and in the EU and to stimulate young people's active citizenship, in particular by young women, within their local communities and youth NGOs contributions to their country's public life. The specific objectives are to provide informal intercultural learning opportunities for young people, to provide training opportunities for youth workers and youth leaders, to exchange experiences and good practices, to promote the development of non-profit-making structures, to improve co-operation with civil society as an element of democratic reform, to inform youth NGOs and to promote greater understanding between the cultures of the 27 Euro-Mediterranean partners and a better perception of each other, as well as to increase the participation of Mediterranean partner NGOs in Youth NGO transnational networks.

Three of the five Youth programme actions are open to cooperation with third countries: Action 1 (Youth for Europe), Action 2 (European Voluntary Service) and Action 5 (Support Measures).

#### *3.9.2. Implementation*

##### *a) Overall assessment*

On average, around 8% of the annual Youth budget has been allocated to co-operation between the 30 programme countries and 42 third countries. In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth programme, the Youth budget has been substantially supplemented by funds from MEDA.

The third country cooperation strand of the programme has registered a comparatively high demand in relation to the available funds. On average, the rate between number of

applications and number of approved projects was around 55%, which is a lower ‘success rate’ than the one registered in the programme countries’ activities.

The European added value of the Action lies in its contribution to a European foreign policy and the promotion of a positive perception of Europe in the world, as well as the recognition of a Europe based on values of democracy and solidarity and its contribution to the creation of a European identity and to the opening up of cooperation with countries with which not all Member States may have bilateral agreements.

*b) Operational mechanisms*

The implementation of the Action relies almost exclusively on micro-projects. Although cumbersome and demanding in terms of human resources, this approach has been confirmed as the most suitable one for ensuring proximity to the citizen and accessibility to small grass-roots organisations and groups which characterise the youth field. Larger-scale cross-action multi-annual projects, such as youthNET and the Balkan Youth Project, have succeeded in increasing visibility and accessibility in third countries, as well as contributing to building partnerships and networks. They are valid but should not replace micro-projects.

Due to the large number of small contracts, management of the action has been gradually decentralised to National Agencies. This management mode has the advantage of being closer to the users and in principle speeding up the selection and contracting process, albeit to the detriment of the coherence of external relations actions. Another disadvantage is fragmentation into small budgets, which creates contradictions between promotion and capacity to satisfy demand. On the other hand, positive effects are expected in terms of increased promotion and visibility thanks to the activities of the NA. Decentralisation is also gradually contributing to a more active involvement of those Programme countries, which had registered few or no projects with third countries when the budget was distributed centrally.

Part of the Action (projects by European NGOs and projects submitted by organisations in the southern Mediterranean countries) has remained centralised (managed by the Commission), and problems with delays in contracts have not been completely reduced.

As far as project management is concerned, only organisations from the Mediterranean partner countries can become lead applicants and coordinators of projects in the framework of the Euro-Med programme, while organisations from other third countries have to apply via their European partners.

Know-how and working tools have been pooled by two Resource Centres established at National Agencies (Euro-Med and SEE). These Resource Centres have proved valid instruments for promoting information, visibility and access to the programme in third countries.

The current funding mechanism, i.e. the flat-rate system, has proved more user-friendly than a percentage funding. However, it is more rigid and does not allow specific situations in third countries to be taken into account. Also, the calculation of final payments is complicated in the current system, mainly due to different rates applicable per country and the combination of percentage of real cost with flat rates within one project.

As far as instruments and criteria are concerned, it has been found that some of the current criteria do not fully correspond to the needs of young people/organisations, e.g. the requirement for exchanges to be multilateral (at least four partners, or five in the case of

participation by a pre-accession country) was considered too demanding for many organisations/groups. The upper age limit sometimes represents an obstacle to the participation of young people from certain third countries. The requirement to work with partners from the same geographical region was felt to be too restrictive by National Agencies as well as by organisations and young people, and a mixing of regions within one project was recommended.

### *3.9.3. Analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the actions*

18.6 million € were committed for third country cooperation between 2000-2002 from the Youth and MEDA budgets (13.7 million from Youth and 4.9 million from MEDA). 41% of the funds were allocated to cooperation with the Mediterranean region, 34% to the southern and eastern neighbouring regions (SEE 14%, CIS 20%) and 25% to Latin America. Around 18 000 young people and youth workers/representatives of NGOs benefited from the Action by participating in one of the 850 supported projects. The programme has reached an almost equal number of participants from the programme countries (53%) and from third countries (47%).

In 2001 and 2002, the Action succeeded in absorbing more funds than initially allocated at the beginning of the year due to good performance in terms of the number of high-quality projects submitted and approved.

#### *Impact on young people*

The concrete achievements so far are significant impacts on young people in terms of intercultural learning, personal development and active participation in society. The Action has succeeded in improving mutual understanding between young Europeans and young people from outside Europe. It contributed to a recognition of a Europe based on values of solidarity and support, particularly in areas of conflict.

Youth Exchanges have proved to be especially effective in promoting intercultural understanding and European awareness within a wider target group through the impact on the local communities hosting the exchanges, whereas EVS has registered a stronger impact on the personal development of individuals.

#### *Impact on youth workers, organisations and local communities*

The Action, mainly through the Support Measures, has also made a significant contribution to capacity building and networking of youth workers and youth organisations/structures. Organisations benefited from an exchange of experience and from new contacts, often leading to the establishment of sustainable partnerships with a view to future cooperation.

However, the fact that organisations from third countries cannot apply for funding themselves, but only via a European partner (except Euro-Med Youth), has prevented the full potential of the impact on participants from third countries from being realised, as cooperation is not fully based on an equal partnership.

The Action has succeeded in raising awareness at local level of the values of non-formal education and intercultural learning; it has increased mutual knowledge about the other countries' cultures and thereby contributed to fighting cultural prejudices. It has also had an impact on the development of the voluntary sector and civil society in the programme countries and in third countries.

A number of differences have been noted in the implementation of the programme in the different regions. Action 2 (EVS) proved to be especially difficult to implement in South East Europe and in the Mediterranean region because of the lack of tradition and/or negative perceptions of voluntary service due to historic reasons. Latin America continued to be the region where contacts and projects were most easy to implement. This region therefore ranked second, after the Mediterranean region, in terms of volume of activities. It was a popular destination for hosting projects, whereas projects with South East Europe and the CIS were more frequently hosted in the programme countries due to certain difficulties related to visa and administrative procedures, logistics, bank transfers etc.

In addition to the above-mentioned impacts registered in all regions, the Euro-Med Youth Programme has achieved important further results: the establishment of national structures in the southern Mediterranean countries, which have contributed greatly to increased visibility and accessibility; and the triplication of funding through the MEDA budget line, which has facilitated a quantitative and qualitative increase of projects implemented as well as the possibility for organisations/groups from the Mediterranean partner countries to apply. A specific training strategy has been implemented by SALTO Euro-Med which has further contributed to increasing the quality of projects and to creating new partnerships.

In the other regions, the visibility of the programme has been found to be relatively low and organisations find it rather difficult to access the programme. The creation of the Resource Centre for South East Europe in 2002, however, has done a good deal to improve this situation in the countries of the Western Balkans.

#### *Impact on policy, legislation and institutions*

Thanks to complementary funding provided by MEDA in the framework of the Euro-Med Youth programme, National Coordinators, nominated by the respective Ministries, have been established in the Mediterranean partner countries. The involvement of the authorities has helped the programme to gain political importance and visibility, as well as have a more direct influence on national youth policy and systems. The more critical aspect of this system, however, is the increased control of the programme by governments and occasional conflicts of interest between national policy and programme philosophy.

In other third countries, national authorities are not involved in the programme at all, which constitutes a major weakness due to the subsequent lack of structural and policy impact. This hampers sustainability and results in lack of political support and co-funding, low visibility and lack of support for the implementation of the project activities (facilitating visas, partnerships etc.).

Visa and residence permits continue to constitute a major obstacle to third country cooperation. Any further development will depend on whether solutions to this problem can be found.

#### *3.9.4. Conclusions concerning actions with third countries*

The validity of Youth cooperation with third countries has been strongly confirmed by the stakeholders involved. It has furthermore enhanced the links and cooperation between the EU and its southern and eastern neighbours as well as Latin American countries and thus contributed to constructive and dynamic relations with these countries.

Aims and objectives have been confirmed as being extremely relevant and should continue in the future. However, the current legal basis does not make sufficient reference to the general and specific aims of third country cooperation.

- More efforts have to be made to enhance the visibility of the Action and to improve access for organisations based in third countries.
- More efficient dissemination of results and information to local organisations should be implemented.
- The model of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme should be transferred to the Balkans and the CIS, by creating regional subprogrammes based on complementary funding by external budget lines and establishing national coordinating structures. In line with the recommendation to multiply the Resource Centres, a CIS Resource Centre is being established in September/October 2003.
- In addition to their active participation in the programme, the organisations in third countries should be enhanced by giving them the possibility of submitting applications and become leading partners in the projects.

It has to be underlined, however, that any further development of third country cooperation will depend heavily on progress made to facilitate the issue of visas and residence permits, which currently still constitute a major obstacle to youth mobility.

- It has been strongly recommended that action be taken with a view to raising awareness with the relevant embassies/consulates, and to continue providing assistance by issuing support letters outlining the non-formal educational character of the programme.

Some considerations should be made concerning the geographic scope of the Action. There is less agreement on favouring Latin America over African or Asian countries. Young people and organisations as well as representatives of some of the Member States have shown a strong interest in cooperation with other regions which were considered just as relevant for providing young people with opportunities to develop mutual understanding and solidarity.

- A widening of geographical reach has therefore been recommended.
- Although recommended by the evaluations, bilateral exchanges should not replace multilateral ones in order to safeguard the European added value of the Action. They might however become eligible under certain conditions, such as for small organisations new to the programme or for countries with two or more ethnic groups.

As far as administrative and financial procedures are concerned, the current mechanisms have proved to be relatively adequate and should be continued. However minor adjustments to third country realities could be considered:

- Increase the grant for third country participants' travel costs to 100%.
- The current system of 'micro-projects' could be complemented by a more long-term approach, i.e. funding larger multi-annual projects which would be useful for enhancing visibility and allow longer-term planning.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the terminology ‘third countries’ has been called into question as it triggers the association with ‘third world countries’.

- It has therefore been recommended that the terminology be changed. Terms like ‘international cooperation’, or ‘cooperation with partner countries’ were considered more appropriate, as they would convey a more positive connotation.

#### **4. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME**

The YOUTH programme, which is the subject of this evaluation, is a programme in which implementation has achieved “cruising altitude”, and although the evaluation comes a year earlier than the deadline laid down in its legal basis, it provides a general view of results with regard to its management, achievements and impact.

This evaluation includes the results of impact studies by countries participating in the programme, some external evaluations and various specific seminars. These various results are consistent with each other and enable “proposals” to be presented with a view to improving the programme.

The evaluation of the YOUTH programme, although it comes at the end of the fourth year, is generally positive. The aims set by the programme will in all probability be achieved if the programme continues on track: active contribution by young people to the construction of Europe through participation in transnational exchanges, solidarity measures for young people, initiative projects, and strengthening cooperation.

Implementation of the programme, which is largely decentralised, is also the subject of a consensus approach, as sought by the Commission, between the different players in the field.

A number of the recommendations set out below have been put forward following this evaluation with a view to further improving the implementation of the programme in order to achieve these objectives most effectively.

The various actions under the programme have their own dynamics, which give rise to expectations. A number of comments are not aimed directly at the programme but at its environment, as is the case with the question regarding the difficulty of obtaining visas for young people from third countries, or the question of recognising experience acquired in the context of the programme, which depend largely on specific legislation being adopted in other fields.

Paradoxically, some of the weaknesses identified by the evaluation are also indicators of the programme’s success, in that they indicate clearly that beneficiaries have new expectations or new requirements.

As far as participation to the programme is concerned, it can be underlined that between 2000 and 2003, 52% of the participants were young girls and 48% boys. This balance is more or less the same for Actions 1 and 3, whereas for Action 2 (European Voluntary Service) there is a larger participation amongst girls who represent 72% of participants against 28% for boys. This latter aspect was in the past explained by the fact that the EVS was less attractive for young boys who were compelled to fulfil an obligatory military or civic service in most Member States. With the progressive suppression of such obligation, a re-balancing of participation of both sexes should be observed in the near future.

With regard to **programme management**, the main questions centre on the transparency and coherence of procedures, particularly for the selection of transnational projects, the simplicity and flexibility of those procedures and the need to bring the programme closer to beneficiaries by supporting them in preparing their projects. Resolving these difficulties is of particular importance, as these questions are linked to access to the programme and are a potential source of frustration or incomprehension.

The evaluation of projects, feedback of information to beneficiaries and the recognition that the European Union can give to the activities carried out are also seen as positive elements for the programme.

**With regard to action 1**, the evaluation shows that the programme objectives have been achieved and that the action is operating satisfactorily. This action plays a particularly important role in the context of the programme as it is the one with the highest number of beneficiaries. It provides a significant European added value through its multilateral exchanges and its impact on young people with fewer opportunities and on small organisations. One of the main comments concerning the exchanges of young people is the need to continue to improve the quality of projects, particularly by having the National Agencies play a more important supporting role. Another important aspect identified is the desire on the part of the players concerned to be able to factor the preparatory phase into the length of the project, and to have a phase for taking stock of achievements. This arises from the willingness to assess the projects globally and demonstrates an approach aimed at improving the quality of projects.

**Action 2** is without doubt a flagship measure for the programme. European Voluntary Service is easily identifiable and has a high impact. It is also the most demanding action in terms of implementation. The evaluation shows that this action is also functioning satisfactorily. The main comments highlighted relate to the willingness to improve the quality of projects and procedures and to increase accessibility to the service for young volunteers. Questions linked to the recognition of experience acquired by young volunteers under the programme, or to the need to remove obstacles to mobility for volunteers, are of particular importance in developing the action. However, these two aspects are not directly linked to the implementation of the programme, but are determined by the context within which the action is implemented. These questions will only be resolved in part with assistance from other fields such as education and internal affairs.

**Action 3** presents three distinct strands. Group initiatives, networking projects and Future Capital. The first two measures are complementary, as the first enables young people to create their own projects and the second gives them a European dimension. These measures also complement the programme as a whole because they have shown their capacity for creating structures in the field to enable the development of non-formal education activities for young people, drawing particular inspiration from the priorities defined by the White Paper on Youth. From this point of view the action is sufficiently flexible to enable the implementation of projects in phase with the most recent developments in political cooperation. As far as Future Capital is concerned, the results are not as good. This measure, intended primarily to enable young people to implement projects following their participation in voluntary service, should probably be better integrated with the follow-up to EVS.

With regard to **action 4**, the evaluation highlighted the difficulties arising from implementation. Without calling into question the merits of actions establishing bridges between the fields of education, training and youth, and although the reduced number of projects approved to date does not yet make it possible to validate this type of action, it turns

out that action 4 suffers from tripartite management, which involves particularly complex procedures. The results of the evaluation should therefore lead us to an in-depth discussion of alternative methods of implementing multi-disciplinary measures.

**Action 5** is an original action under the programme, intended to support the quality of youth organisations, in particular through training and networking measures, promote cooperation activities within the youth field and implement innovative pilot projects. The evaluation shows that the programme's objectives in this field have been achieved and that this action is relevant to the creation of a favourable environment for the development of youth activities in general and the programme in particular. Improvements to this action should in particular enable it to provide support for all the actions under the programme and to play a more important role in highlighting them through profile-raising measures and the dissemination of good practice.

**The "third countries" action** is not a stand-alone action within the programme. The various "third countries" actions come under actions 1, 2 and 5 of the programme. The achievement of programme objectives with regard to third countries is confirmed by the evaluation. One of the main points to which the evaluation draws attention is that relating to access for the programme to new geographical areas. This shows on the one hand that the action is operating satisfactorily, but also that there is a demand for strengthening it. This aspect is also highlighted by the willingness to raise the profile of these actions both within and outside the programme. One of the difficulties identified for the "third countries" action, and one which is similar to that facing action 2, relates to the obstacles to mobility for beneficiaries, particularly with regard to obtaining visas or residence permits. Resolving these questions, as noted previously, depends to a large extent on the context in which the action is implemented.

The overall programme, and each action individually, deserves a higher profile and exploitation of the results obtained, taking account of their impact on young people, organisations and national policies.

Finally, the evaluation made it possible to identify a series of 52 proposals for improving the implementation of the programme. In some cases, these are aimed directly at the programme, particularly for questions which may be linked to implementing procedures. In others, these proposals only concern the programme indirectly, but are addressed more specifically to its environment, particularly with regard to removing obstacles to mobility.

In either case, these proposals will be followed up with a view to improving the operation of the programme, but will also be taken into account when the Commission draws up a proposal for a new programme in the youth field.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Commission took the option of setting out the various recommendations in detail, in order to permit clear identification of the points arising from this evaluation. A summary of the recommendations is set out in paragraph 5.2. The programme evaluation is generally positive, from the point of view both of financial execution and of its impact on young people, youth organisations and public administrations. Some weaknesses are also identified and correspond to the recommendations set out. For all recommendations, the Commission outlines its initial response.



The recommendations in this report will be followed up from 2004 by a working party on evaluation (GTE) to be implemented by the Commission.

## **5.1. Recommendations**

These recommendations are reproduced below with comments from the Commission concerning the way in which they will be followed up.

### *5.1.1. Recommendations covering all the actions*

**1. The age limits applied to the programme give rise to much debate. Although there is no consensus on this question, it is recommended, following the actions, that the age for access to the programme be adjusted up or down.**

- The 15-25 age limit is laid down by the legal basis of the programme and cannot therefore be amended.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis, in particular by opening up the programme in modular fashion to young people aged between 13 and 30, depending on the type of action.

**2. It is recommended that young people with fewer opportunities be the programme's main target group, and that it be more closely adapted to the specific needs of this group.**

- The Commission considers that the programme should remain accessible to all young people without discrimination.
- Some specific groups, particularly young people with fewer opportunities, may be considered in modular fashion to be priorities in the implementation of actions.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis.

**3. With regard to the implementation and follow-up of projects, it is recommended that measures to assist in the preparation of projects be strengthened, particularly for small organisations and those with no prior experience of managing Community programmes, and that better follow-up of projects is ensured.**

- The Commission considers this recommendation to be fundamental, particularly for actions 1, 2 and 3.
- The Commission recommends that the National Agencies use action 5 to assist with and prepare projects.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis, particularly by making provision for the National Agencies to decentralise some of their support measures (see recommendation 4).

- 4. Regional and local information relays or contact points should be set up to increase proximity to beneficiaries and to provide a supportive approach during the promotion, application and evaluation processes of the Programme. They can be especially useful where marginalised young people are targeted.**
  - The Commission believes that accessibility and proximity to beneficiaries at regional and local level are important aspects of the Programme, which could be generalised in accordance with national specificities, as long as this does not imply the decentralisation of financial management.
  - A supportive approach can also positively influence the quality and outcomes of projects.
  - This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis, particularly by enabling National Agencies to decentralise some of their tasks.
  
- 5. A simpler and administratively less cumbersome application process, but without dismissing small-scale projects.**
  - The Commission will consider the possibility of simplifying the application process, taking particular account of management constraints and the specific needs of the different measures and actions.
  - In order to simplify the processes, on-line applications and new forms are being developed by the Commission.
  
- 6. More transparent criteria and decision-making process as well as a more coherent and balanced implementation of the European and national priorities throughout the Programme countries.**
  - The Commission recognises this difficulty; the Working Group will analyse this question.
  - The Commission recommends a better connection between National Agencies, in particular using the Youthnet site, as a way to improve the implementation of the European and national priorities throughout the Programme countries.
  - The Commission believes that the selection criteria and decision-making process should be transparent to applicants and recommends the use of assessment grids as applicable at the centralised selections and by some of the National Agencies.
  
- 7. Facilitate access to the Programme by introducing a more flexible grant-awarding mechanism when appropriate.**
  - The Commission believes that too much flexibility would reduce the Programme's transparency and coherence.
  - The Commission would consider for each action whether a well argued and justified flexibility could be introduced.

- The Working Group will discuss options for flexibility which could be applicable to travel costs and pocket money.
- 8. Annual evaluation meetings for beneficiaries at national and European level as well as within regional clusters of countries.**
- The Commission believes that feedback on the quality of projects is important to organisations, youth workers and young people.
  - More regular evaluation meetings will be organised at European level and the Commission recommends that regular evaluation meetings be organised at national level. Where relevant, and possible, it would recommend and support the dissemination of project outcomes and of examples of good practice.
- 9. Youth workers would like to have more transparency in the decision-making process in selections and to be more involved in the selection of projects.**
- The Commission considers that the selection committees (national agency or Commission level) should be open to "youth workers".
  - The Commission will examine ways of improving information at European and national levels on the selection committees and on the decisions they take (see recommendation 10).
- 10. Participants would like to be given clearer reasons why their projects were rejected, in order to be able to improve the quality of their projects.**
- The Working Group will analyse a way of improving information to promoters justifying the rejection of their projects.
- 11. It is recommended that a certificate be issued to young people and youth workers who have participated in a project, as is the case for EVS, recognising skills acquired during participation in a project.**
- The Commission, on the basis of the EVS certificate and good practice in the Member States, will recommend to the national agencies that they phase in a system from 2004 for issuing certificates to young people benefiting from programmes.
  - This recommendation will be taken into account in the future legal basis in order to include the obligation to issue a certificate to beneficiaries of the programme.
- 12. As obstacles to mobility hinder the implementation of the programme, it is particularly recommended that appropriate measures be taken, especially in order to facilitate the obtaining of visas by beneficiaries of the programme.**
- The Commission considers this question to be very important, particularly for the actions involving third countries.
  - The level of political commitment with regard to the removal of obstacles is insufficient. The Commission will take initiatives in this field to raise

awareness of this question in the Member States participating in the programme.

- The absence of a status for volunteers is also an obstacle to mobility. This question should be considered within the framework of the open method of coordination.
- The need to remove obstacles to mobility will be reaffirmed in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis.

**13. After the end of their project, the project promoters would like to receive feedback on the quality of their work.**

- The Commission considers that it is important to provide project promoters, both at centralised and decentralised level, with information concerning the final evaluation of the project outcomes. This issue will be tackled by the Working Group.

**14. It is recommended that "labelling" be used to support projects which are not funded, but are similar to those funded under the programme.**

- The Commission considers that the Member States could use the models of good practice from the Youth programme for labelling.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis.

**15. The creation of longer-term bridges between different actions should be possible.**

- The call for projects launched by the Commission in 2004 within the framework of action 5 is intended to enable implementation of projects integrating a number of actions under the programme. These types of measures will be repeated in 2005 and 2006.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis.

**16. Enhanced visibility for the Programme.**

- The Commission considers that the visibility of the programme should be improved towards policy makers.
- The Commission further considers that the visibility of the programme should be reinforced towards social partners in order to underline the way in which the programme has contributed to young people's active citizenship, to their sense of solidarity, to their spirit of undertaking and to their employability.
- The Commission believes that activities already organised during the European Youth Week in September 2003 greatly helped raise the profile, as well as promote a wider awareness, of the Programme at European, national and local level.

- The Commission is considering the organisation of a similar event in 2005.

#### *5.1.2. Recommendations concerning action 1*

### **17. It should be possible to reduce the length of projects for groups of young people with fewer opportunities.**

- The legal basis of the YOUTH programme lays down that exchange activities should last at least one week; this cannot be changed.
- Nevertheless, the working Group will examine the possibility of making certain adjustments concerning the length of projects, in order to facilitate the participation of young people with fewer opportunities.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the Commission proposal for the future legal basis.

### **18. The quality of projects and partnerships should be improved.**

- Improving the quality of partnerships is important, and the quality of projects depends upon it.
- The Commission considers that the national agencies should involve themselves more in assisting with seeking and establishing partnerships.
- The Commission intends to establish, through the TAO, a follow-up for partnerships, particularly multilateral ones, of organisations which have been partners in an action 1 project.

#### *5.1.3. Recommendations concerning action 2*

### **19. The core quality elements of EVS (partnership, service-learning balance, training/support etc.) should be maintained and systematically developed further. Additional support for preparation and follow-up and systematic involvement of other partners are recommended.**

- The strengthening of preparation, support and follow-up activities, and the roles and responsibilities of the various partners, are questions to be tackled by the Working Group.
- The Commission considers that the experience of young people who have taken part in EVS should be put to good use, and to this end it intends to renew its support for networks and associations of former European volunteers from 2004.
- In the proposal for the future legal basis, the Commission could integrate Future Capital into the EVS action, in order to enable young people who have taken part in EVS to use their newly-acquired experience and skills for better social integration.

### **20. Clear definition of the target group and the volunteer profile is recommended. Reviewing and increasing the flexibility of funding rules and procedures with regard to the inclusion of young people within EVS is needed.**

- The Commission considers that EVS should be open to all young people. It is not primarily intended for young people with fewer opportunities.
- EVS should be open to young people regardless of their qualifications.
- Particular effort should be devoted to young people with fewer opportunities, in order to provide them with access to EVS also.
- The Commission will review the rules in 2004 within the framework of the Working Group in order to take better account of the specific needs of young people with fewer opportunities and to facilitate their participation in EVS.
- The Commission considers it appropriate in certain cases to take into account certain specific skills of young people wishing to take part in EVS, if the nature of the voluntary action concerned justifies it.

**21. The decentralisation of the assessment procedure of Host Expressions of Interest (HEI) and an overall faster and less cumbersome accreditation and application procedure are recommended.**

- The decentralisation of HEIs is under examination. The Commission will draw up proposals in 2004.
- A more quality-oriented accreditation of host placements will be envisaged.
- A European on-line database of approved host projects will be maintained and its user-friendliness improved.
- It is also envisaged that the number of approved host placements will be expanded.

**22. EVS projects are transnational partnerships where funding depends on two national agencies, in the sending and host countries respectively. According to some Member States, it should be possible to introduce alternatives to this type of shared funding in order to avoid a situation where a project cannot be carried out owing to the failure of one of the national agencies to provide funding.**

- The Commission plans to study alternatives to shared funding during 2004 within the Working Group.

**23. The individual character of EVS should be preserved; other formats can only be complementary.**

- The Commission will continue with pilot experiences of collective EVS.
- The Working Group will examine ways of giving EVS a more collective character in order to increase the number of volunteers and the impact and visibility of EVS.
- The Commission proposal for the future legal basis could include, in addition to individual EVS, a collective EVS, while keeping a balance between the two formats.

**24. The number of volunteers involved in EVS should be increased.**

- The programme budget is defined for the period 2000-2006. In this context, there is little leeway for increasing the number of volunteers.
- However, the Commission will propose to the Working Group in 2004 an examination of the possibilities for flexibility in EVS, for instance in terms of standard rules, with a view to increasing the number of participants.
- This recommendation will be taken into account in the proposal for the future legal basis for youth. A labelling system could make it possible to recognise as EVS, voluntary service projects funded under national or regional programmes.

*5.1.4. Recommendations concerning action 3*

**25. It would seem worthwhile linking Future Capital to EVS.**

- This change cannot be envisaged under the current programme. However, the Commission will take this recommendation into account in its proposal for a new legal basis in the youth field (see also recommendation 19).

**26. The action should be developed on the basis of active participation by young people, non-formal and informal learning and social inclusion.**

- The Commission has reoriented the action, particularly following the seminars held in 2002 and 2003 on this question.
- The Commission also envisages using action 3 as the main instrument for participation by young people, following the launch of pilot projects for participation in 2003 and 2004.
- This action is an instrument of the strategy for the inclusion of young people in the programme. The Commission plans to identify specific indicators for improving follow-up of the contribution made by this action to this objective (2004-2006).

**27. Support for action 3.1 (group initiatives and networking projects) should be strengthened, particularly through the use of action 5, to offer contact seminars to prepare for networking projects.**

- Contact seminars, to enable young people who have already carried out a youth initiative project to establish networking projects, were organised in 2002 and 2003. Seminars of this type will continue in the coming years.
- The 2004 version of the Youth programme User's Guide lays down that action 5 will support activities under action 3.
- The Commission will propose the creation of monitoring indicators (2004-2006) in order to improve networking follow-up.

#### 5.1.5. *Recommendations concerning action 4*

It is still too soon to evaluate the results of action 4. Only a very limited number of projects have so far been implemented. The results of this evaluation therefore relate only to aspects of the implementation of the action.

#### **28. Procedures applied to joint actions should be simplified.**

- The Commission considers that the "inter-committees" group for joint actions should have a more specific mandate enabling it to provide the Commission, on behalf of the three committees, with an opinion on the annual themes and project selection procedures, without the need to formally put the matter before the three committees afterwards.
- In 2004, the Commission will study the possibility of simplifying administrative procedures involving the various Commission departments.
- In the new generation of programmes, the Commission will propose flexible bridges between programmes.

#### **29. More account should be taken of youth in joint actions**

- While it is true that the projects selected in 2001 originated primarily from large organisations which were not very representative of the youth field, the themes in 2002, 2003 and 2004 give significant emphasis to themes specific to youth, such as active citizenship for young people. The Commission intends to pursue this approach for 2005 and 2006.
- The beneficiaries of projects selected in 2002 and 2003 originate in part from youth-related NGOs.
- The Commission is of the opinion that the participation of beneficiaries from the world of youth in joint actions may be improved through greater involvement by national agencies in informing potential candidates.

#### **30. The selection criteria for joint actions should be more flexible.**

- Joint action projects are projects with either a structuring effect (definition of new approaches, etc.) or a laboratory function (experimenting with new approaches, etc.). They are limited in number and the criteria need to be defined accordingly.
- The call for proposals should be clear, structured and transparent. It would therefore appear difficult to launch calls for proposals which are totally open, as some would wish.
- The Commission, in contrast, is of the opinion that the requirement for compatibility between all the fields contributing to the joint actions is excessive (currently: education, training and youth) and could in certain cases be limited to joint actions between two fields.



**31. A strategy for exploiting joint actions should be developed.**

- The Commission is of the opinion that communication concerning joint actions, information on calls for proposals and exploitation of the results of the first projects should be strengthened.
- The Commission is of the opinion that better use should be made of the multiplier effect of joint actions.
- The Commission will carry out measures to this end (website, meetings between beneficiaries and national agencies, etc.).

*5.1.6. Recommendations concerning action 5*

**32. The focus on quality and capacity-building in youth work has to be maintained.**

- The Commission considers it necessary to further strengthen quality in youth work.
- Action 5 projects at centralised and decentralised level, Action 5 large-scale projects, the SALTO Resource Centres and the Partnership Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on European Youth Worker Training will be used to achieve this goal.
- These measures shall be accompanied by active networking and the dissemination of best practice projects, involving young people wherever appropriate to guarantee a continued link to and feedback from them.
- In this context, the Commission envisages organising a new "Bridges for Training" event in 2004 to gather the major players involved in training.
- The Commission, within the framework of the future legal basis, could propose a specific measure relating to support for "Youth Work".

**33. Action 5 should continue easing access to the Programme for all young people.**

- The Commission considers that special attention has to be paid to better targeting young people with fewer opportunities and those living in remote rural areas by strengthening information and communication activities at local and regional level (see recommendations 3 and 4).
- Specific aims related to these target groups will be included in the work programme for 2004. Synergies with the SALTO Resource Centre dealing with the inclusion of young people within the programme will be intensified in this respect.
- In addition, the full potential of face-to-face communication and information technology shall be used to reach a wider range of young people in general and to provide them with in-depth information about YOUTH programme priorities.
- The programme finances the Eurodesks, and the Commission is shortly to establish a Youth portal to support information measures.

- This recommendation will be taken into account in the proposal for the future legal basis.

**34. Simplified and more flexible action 5.**

- The Commission considers that the complexity of Action 5 is seen both as an advantage (the activities are positively seen as creative proposals for project formats) and a relative disadvantage, as the number of activities and the criteria applied are in some cases understood as being restrictive in nature.
- In the short term, the Commission considers that project formats will not be changed in order to stabilise procedures and understanding.
- In 2004, the Working Group will analyse possible ways for increasing flexibility.

**35. The need for continued support for innovative activities.**

- The Commission considers that innovative projects, in combination with an appropriate dissemination of project results, represent an important part of the added value of youth projects at European level.
- The Commission intends to launch between now and 2006 calls for large-scale projects on an annual basis to support capacity-building and innovation with regard to international training and cooperation in the field of youth work.
- The Commission will take this recommendation into account in the proposal for the future legal basis.

**36. The impact of action 5 on other programme actions should be monitored.**

- The Commission proposes to define an indicator in 2004, in order to improve monitoring of the impact of action 5 on other actions.

**37. Youth workers ask for a support activity focused on youth policy issues and, more specifically, youth research.**

- In 2004, the Council should adopt common objectives concerning "better knowledge of youth". This will enable the Commission to draw up a plan concerning actions linked to research in the youth field for 2005-2006.
- The Commission could introduce a specific measure concerning research within the framework of the future legal basis for the youth field.

**38. Quality standards at European level for youth activities should be defined.**

- The Commission will organise meetings for exchanging good practice on this subject (2004-2006).
- Cooperation between the Commission and the Council of Europe will be oriented towards defining quality standards.

5.1.7. *Recommendations concerning the Partnership Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on European Youth Worker Training*

**39. The management structure should be clarified, especially selection and decision-making procedures within the framework of the Covenant**

- The Commission considers that a clearer definition of the responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in the Covenant and wider communication, by means of the internet and publications, of selection and decision-making procedures will contribute to the quality of the Covenant.
- The Commission will pay special attention to the efficient use of the competencies and tools at the disposal of the Partnership, e.g. by strengthening the network of trainers who participated in the Covenant's training measures.
- These issues will be reinforced in the New Covenant with the Council of Europe in the field of training which the Commission intends to set up in 2004.

**40. A more integrated approach concerning the different stakeholders involved in the training of young people**

- The Commission will ensure that the synergies between the different stakeholders, activities and tools involved in the Covenant are reinforced at all levels. This will be done in particular by involving the National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres more closely in the Partnership Programme within the existing Training Strategy.
- The Commission will also aim to use, wherever appropriate, the synergies between the three different partnerships (Training, Research, EuroMed) with the Council of Europe.

**41. A greater focus on the dissemination of results and practices is desirable.**

- The Commission will strive to strengthen the multiplier effect of the Covenant both by putting greater focus on the multiplier network and by increasing synergies and cross-references between all publications within the context of the Covenant.
- It will ensure that training modules and other tools are presented in such a way that these products can be transferred to and used at national, regional and local levels. The Commission will look into the possibilities of involving youth workers at grass-roots level in this process.

5.1.8. *Recommendations concerning actions with third countries*

**42. It was recommended that the funds for co-operation with third countries should be increased**

- This recommendation could be taken into account in the 2004-06 budgets, as well as in the new programme.

**43. It was recommended that the number of Resource Centres be increased**

- This recommendation has already been implemented, with the establishment of a Resource Centre for the CIS in addition to the ones already operating for South East Europe and Euro-Med.

**44. A greater effort has to be made to enhance the visibility of the Action and to improve access for organisations based in third countries.**

- The Commission took measures during 2003 to implement this recommendation, particularly by establishing a Resource Centre for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), launching the Euro-Med Youth Platform and holding a ‘Youth in Action’ week to promote the programme, one priority of which was cooperation with Mediterranean partners.
- For 2004, the Commission envisages implementing events such as conferences, seminars and meetings between administrations and young people’s organisations.
- There will also be improved promotion of the work of the Resource Centres, in particular through improvements to the website.
- The Commission could envisage the creation of an action specific to third countries within the framework of the future legal basis.

**45. More efficient dissemination of results and information to local organisations should be implemented.**

- The Commission considers that this recommendation will be partially implemented by establishing the Resource Centre for the CIS and extending the work of the Resource Centres for South East Europe and Euro-Med.
- Larger-scale multi-annual projects could also contribute to this objective, as has been shown by pilot projects for the Balkans (‘youthNET’ and ‘Balkan Youth Project’).
- The Commission intends to propose a priority aimed at the CIS countries and the south Mediterranean basin for the call for projects for action 5 in 2005.
- In the context of Euro-Med, the establishment of the Euro-Med Youth Platform will facilitate the dissemination of information to local organisations.

**46. The model of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme should be transferred to the Balkans and the CIS by creating regional sub-programmes based on complementary funding by external budget lines and establishing national co-ordinating structures.**

- The Commission is in the process of examining the possibilities for establishing this type of programme in 2005 for the two regions mentioned above. This will depend in particular on the financial and managerial resources which could be allocated to this end.
- The Commission will ensure, in the draft of the future legal basis, that provision is made for different programmes to pool their resources, typically for actions similar to Euro-Med Youth.

- 47. A widening of geographic reach is recommended.**
- Given the limited resources, the Commission considers that one option could be to adopt, in the new legal basis, a modular approach of opening the programme to a wider range of countries, starting with the Wider Europe Countries.
  - For more distant regions, co-operation would focus on youth workers/multipliers and co-operation on certain priority themes would be encouraged.
  - A Working Group of National Agencies to be established in 2004 will analyse whether such a thematic approach could be introduced during the present programme.
- 48. It was recommended that a combination of regions within one project be allowed.**
- The Commission considers that this recommendation contrasts with the recommendation to establish regional sub-programmes using the Euro-Med model, and that it would not be appropriate to combine neighbouring regions for possible co-financing through external budget lines.
  - As far as other countries are concerned, the Working Group will examine the possibility of adopting a thematic, rather than geographical, approach.
- 49. The evaluations recommended making bilateral exchanges eligible.**
- This is not possible under the current legal basis, which requires a minimum of two Member States in addition to third countries.
  - The Commission considers that the multilateral nature of exchanges is an important element in ensuring the European added value, but recognises the value of bi- or trilateral exchanges in facilitating access by local or small-scale associations with no experience at European level.
  - The Working Group will examine the possibility of introducing trilateral exchanges during the current programme, in order to facilitate participation by two or more ethnic groups from the same country.
- 50. Increase the grant for third country participants' travel costs to 100%.**
- The Commission considers that the implications of this proposal need to be studied by the Working Group.
- 51. The organisations in third countries, and their active participation in the programme, should be enhanced by giving them the possibility of submitting applications and becoming leading partners in the projects.**
- The Commission considers that this possibility will depend on the availability of appropriate national structures.
  - These conditions could be created under regional sub-programmes established using supplementary funding.

**52. It is recommended that the terminology be changed. Terms like ‘international cooperation’, or ‘cooperation with partner countries’ were considered more appropriate, as they would convey a more positive connotation.**

- The Commission will take this recommendation into account in the proposal for the future legal basis.

## **5.2. Summary of recommendations**

To sum up, the mid-term evaluation of the Youth programme highlights the following recommendations:

1. Better targeting of the programme towards its audience, i.e. all young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities.
2. Improving assistance for beneficiaries and projects, in all phases, through measures on a local scale and of high quality.
3. Simplifying procedures and making them as flexible as possible, bearing in mind the target audience.
4. Increasing transparency and coherence in the implementation of the programme, particularly at decentralised level.
5. Increasing the quality of work through project evaluation with feedback to the beneficiaries and recognition of the activities carried out.
6. Developing voluntary activities in both qualitative and quantitative terms.
7. Opening up the programme to more third countries.
8. Anticipating developments through the implementation of innovative projects and by carrying out the necessary studies.
9. Giving the programme and each of its actions a profile and exploiting the results obtained.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The mid-term evaluation of the Youth programme was organised in such a way as to involve all players in the programme: national administrations, national agencies, youth organisations, youth workers and researchers.

It was carried out by combining a variety of evaluation methods: reports from countries participating in the programme, evaluations of particular systems, meetings of experts, working parties and external evaluations.

Its conclusions are useful and are along much the same lines. On the one hand, the Youth programme is appreciated. Its objectives are largely achieved and its implementation, the result of a consensual approach between the various players, is appreciated. On the other hand, given youth trends, the political cooperation implemented in the youth field and the

difficulties inherent in this type of programme, the evaluation concludes with a set of recommendations to be implemented.

In this document, the Commission has adopted a position on these recommendations and undertakes to implement them in whole or in part, some during the second part of the current programme between now and 2006 and others within the framework of its proposals for a new Youth programme from 2007.

**ANNEX 1**

Methodology used for the impact study

in the countries running the Youth programme

<b>Impact study carried out by an external firm</b>	<b>Internal impact study carried out in cooperation with the national agency</b>	<b>No reply</b>
Germany	Austria	Portugal
Belgium (Dutch-speaking)	Belgium (French-speaking)	
Spain	Belgium (German-speaking)	
Hungary	Cyprus	
Ireland	Denmark	
Lithuania	Finland	
Luxembourg	France	
Poland	Greece	
United Kingdom	Italy	
Iceland	Latvia	
	Liechtenstein	
	Netherlands	
	Slovakia	
	Czech Republic	
	Romania	
	Slovenia	
	Estonia	
	Sweden	
	Norway	
	Bulgaria	
	Malta	



## ANNEX 2



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture  
Youth, Civil Society, Communication  
Youth

EAC/D1/JK/NV/AP/JM/LV/HC D(2002)

# **Impact study on Actions 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the YOUTH programme with regard to the preparation of the future generation of programmes in the field of education, training and youth**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In view of the preparation of the future generation of programmes in the field of education, vocational training and youth, the European Commission proposed a framework for this preparation within the context of the youth field (see note EAC.D1/VG/12-D(2002)24639).

The purpose of the current document is to specify what is expected from programme countries in implementing the evaluation of actions planned within this framework, in anticipation of the impact analysis requested in Decision No1031/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 April 2000 establishing the YOUTH programme.

Due to the timeframe, it is proposed to concentrate this exercise on:

- (1) An analysis of the extent to which the general objectives of the YOUTH programme and the more specific objectives of the different actions of the programme have been achieved, in terms of having an impact on young people, organisations and policies, legislation and institutions;
- (2) Recommendations for the future generation of the programme.

A quantitative evaluation of the existing programme is not required as such data are already available.

Programme countries are invited to follow the proposed structure and to give feedback to the European Commission on the different topics covered by these guidelines.

## **2. SCOPE AND TIMEFRAME OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This document is addressed to the National Authorities of programme countries. The assessment covers the YOUTH programme since 2000. References to or comparisons with evaluation results, trends, achievements or challenges of the predecessor programmes would however be welcome. The assessment concerns only the YOUTH supported activities under Actions 1.1, 2.1, 3 and 5.1 in the programme countries. For actions 1.2, 2.2 and 5.1.2. (third country co-operation) the Commission has launched a separate external evaluation.

**National Agencies are invited to send back the final results to the Commission** (DG EAC, YOUTH Unit D.1, rue Van Maerlant 2, B-1049 Brussels) by 30 June 2003 in English, French or German.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The choice of the appropriate instruments and approaches will be left to the National Authorities, taking into account the guidelines of this document. National Authorities are also free to externalise some activities to be carried out.

The focus of the consultation should be on quality and impact of the YOUTH programme. This qualitative assessment should be based on existing material available within National Agencies and ideally be complemented by case studies, interviews and life stories of young participants and organisations. It could be helpful to create working groups or to hold seminars at national level in order to gather information and to compare results. It is considered as essential to draw on the opinions and experiences of the young people formerly involved as participants in YOUTH projects.

For each action of the YOUTH programme (1, 2, 3 and 5), National Authorities from programme countries are invited:

- To assess the impact on young people, youth workers, organisations and local communities, policies, legislation and institutions (see chapter 7)
- To assess the effectiveness of the instruments (see chapter 8)

And more globally:

- To make recommendations for the future (see chapter 9).

### **4. THE ROLE OF NATIONAL AGENCIES**

The National Agencies are the main actors in the implementation of the YOUTH programme at national level, and their contribution to this exercise is therefore essential. The National Authorities must nevertheless remain fully responsible for the assessment throughout the process, but could draw on the National Agencies' experiences and existing information in the collection of data and information. The National Agencies have at their disposal statistical material, reports from projects, on-site visits, seminars, evaluation meetings etc., and could also provide support and input in the additional collection of data.

### **5. GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE YOUTH PROGRAMME**

The following objectives of the YOUTH programme are spelled out in the Decision No. 1031/2000/EC establishing the YOUTH programme:

- To promote an active contribution by young people to the building of Europe through their participation in transnational exchanges within the Community or with third countries so as to develop understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe and its fundamental common values, thus helping to promote respect for human rights and to combat racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia;

- To strengthen their sense of solidarity through a more extensive participation by young people in transnational community-service activities within the Community or with third countries, in particular those with which the Community has concluded co-operation agreements;
- To encourage young people's initiative, enterprise and creativity so that they may take an active role in society and, at the same time, to stimulate recognition of the value of informal education acquired within a European context;
- To reinforce cooperation in the field of youth by fostering the exchange of good practice, the training of youth workers/leaders and the development of innovative actions at Community level.
- To ensure that all young people, without discrimination, have access to the activities of this programme. The Commission and the Member States shall ensure that special efforts are made to assist young people who, for cultural, social, physical, mental, economic or geographical reasons, find it more difficult to participate in relevant action programmes at Community, national, regional or local level, as well as to assist small local groups. The Commission shall accordingly take account of the difficulties faced by these target groups, thus contributing to combating exclusion.

In addition, the Decision stresses the necessity of providing equal opportunity for young men and women in society.

## **6. SPECIFIC AIMS OF THE YOUTH PROGRAMME**

- support for transnational mobility of young people ;
- support for the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the youth field ;
- to promote citizenship of the Union and the commitment of young people to the development of the Union ;
- promotion of language skills and understanding of different cultures ;
- support for pilot projects based on transnational partnerships designed to develop innovation and quality in the youth field ;
- development, at European level, of methods of analysis and follow-up of youth policies and their evolution and of methods of disseminating good practices

## **7. PRIORITIES PER ACTION**

### **7.1. Action 1**

- To offer young people opportunities for mobility and active participation,
- To include young people for whom it is their first European activity and small-scale or local groups with no experience at European level,

- To focus on multilateral group-mobility activities,
- To fund bilateral group mobility if this is justified in terms of target groups (young people with less opportunities) or specific pedagogical approach,
- To provide the young people with linguistic and intercultural skills,
- To develop projects related to the fight against racism and xenophobia.

## **7.2. Action 2**

- To involve young people actively and personally in unpaid and non-profit making activities designed to help meeting the needs of society in a wide range of fields,
- To provide the young volunteers with an experience of informal education with a view to acquiring social and cultural skills and enhance their employability,
- To implement voluntary service projects in a spirit of partnership and shared responsibilities between the sending and hosting organisations as well as the volunteer,
- To provide short-term voluntary service and specific support and training for people with less opportunities and to help them to integrate gradually in long-term voluntary service and/or other Actions of the YOUTH programme,
- To introduce voluntary service activities as a new element in existing partnerships and/or create new partnerships between organisations/associations/structures active in the social, cultural, youth or environmental fields,
- To involve organisations which have not yet participated in EVS,
- To include a new area of activity, or have innovative features,
- To bring an added value to the local community and support its development,
- To provide volunteers with a document (certificate), which attests the participation as well as the experience and skills acquired in Action 2.

## **7.3. Action 3**

- To encourage young people's initiative, enterprise and creativity,
- To foster young people's active participation and integration into society through the development of common initiatives at local, regional or national level,
- To promote young people's social and cultural skills in order to enhance their employability,
- To extend youth initiatives to similar initiatives conducted in other Member States/programme countries through networking projects,
- To strengthen the European dimension of the youth initiatives,
- To involve disadvantaged young people,

- To develop projects to fight against racism and xenophobia.

#### **7.4. Action 5**

- To contribute to giving further training to persons involved in youth work, particularly those planning to take part, or taking part, in schemes directly involving young people in Actions 1, 2 and 3, the aim being that such schemes are of an appropriate high quality,
- To develop activities with a particular focus on exchange of experiences and good practice which are designed to facilitate and promote the establishment of sustainable transnational partnerships and networks between those active in the field of youth work,
- To disseminate and promote the results of good quality projects and activities,
- To contribute to experimental, innovative activities implemented through the shared efforts of participants from differing backgrounds,
- To improve the access of young people to the programme and to enhance their initiative and active participation in society,
- To investigate those factors which hinder the social integration of marginalised young people into society,
- To develop projects to fight against racism and xenophobia.

### **8. IMPACT AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT TO BE ANSWERED FOR EACH ACTION**

#### **8.1. Impact on young people**

1. With regard to the general and specific objectives mentioned above, what is the estimated impact of the actions on young people after three years of implementation of the YOUTH programme?
2. With regard to the annual priorities ?
3. With regard to the multicultural learning of young people, the acquisition of new social and personal abilities and skills thus enhancing personal development and, if any, employability of young people?
4. With regard to an increased involvement of young people in society and a decreased likelihood of being involved in risk behavior?
5. With regard to the access of all young people to the YOUTH programme, organised, non-organised and with less possibilities?

#### **8.2. Impact on youth workers, organisations and local communities**

1. With regard to the general objectives and specific aims mentioned above, what is the estimated impact of the actions on youth workers, organisations and local communities after three years of implementation of the YOUTH programme?

2. With regard to the annual priorities?
3. How did the participation in action-supported projects influence the day-to-day practice of youth workers, organisations and local communities?
4. With regard to introducing new elements to existing partnerships, and /or creating new partnerships between organisations/associations/structures?
5. With regard to reinforcing transnational cooperation in the field of youth through best practice, exchange, training and development of innovative actions?
6. What kind of multiplier effects have been noticeable with regard to organisations and local communities?

### **8.3. Impact on policy, legislation and institutions**

1. How did the Action affect national, regional, local policy, legislation and governmental institutions?
2. Is there a distinction between the European Action and various national or regional actions of the same kind? Is the European Action complementary to national schemes?
3. To what extent and how did you respect the annual Action-specific priorities from 2000-2002? To what extent have priorities from 2000-2002 been relevant to attaining the programme objectives? Which national priorities did you add?
4. For voluntary service, is there a legal status for volunteers in your country? How do you estimate the recognition of the certified non-formal learning experience and skills acquired in EVS projects by employers, educational institutions and the state?

### **9. EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUMENTS**

1. To what extent the current instruments within each action are appropriate to meet the objectives and the priorities of the actions (bilateral and multilateral exchanges, long-term and short-term EVS, group initiatives and Future Capital, support measures)?
2. Does the participation in one action motivate young people to participate later in another action of the YOUTH programme?

### **10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME GENERATION**

#### **10.1. General**

1. With regard to those aspects and/or activities that have been particularly successful in the current YOUTH programme? Which specific objectives and priorities would you recommend to maintain for the future programme? Which kind of specific objectives and priorities would you recommend to introduce in the future?
2. Do you see new historical or social challenges that should be tackled by the future programme?

3. Which instruments, administrative or procedural aspects would need to be adapted for the future YOUTH programme in order to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency?
4. Which alternative would you recommend to the present practice of micro-project management based on project selections? Please indicate details of a possible support, selection and monitoring mechanism.
5. Would you be in favour of a greater involvement of local, regional and/or national authorities in the management and/or funding of the YOUTH programme?
6. To what extent could a systematic and public co-funding of the YOUTH programme, either globally at national level or more specifically at regional or local level be a solution to cope with the increasing demand for funding from applicants' side?
7. To what extent would it make sense to rethink and possibly extend the co-operation with international organisations?

**10.2. Action-specific recommendations**

1. How could the general and Action-specific objectives be better achieved in each action?
2. How could the impact on young people, local communities and organisations be increased by the different actions of the programme?
3. How could the impact on policy, legislation and institutions be improved, also with regard to the recognition of non-formal learning?

### **ANNEX 3**

- Interim evaluation of third countries cooperation of the Youth Programme 2000-2002: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index_en.html)