

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

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EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Following the decision of principle of the European Council of 5 and 6 December 1977 that a European Foundation should be created, the Commission has identified four main areas on which more specific decisions will be required - on the scope of the Foundation, its objectives, its structure and financing, and finally the legal basis on which it should be constituted. The Commission feels that a decision on the last of these points, the legal basis for the Foundation, should follow rather than precede broad agreement on the three other points. The attached communication, therefore, deals with these three and leaves the legal basis open for later discussion.

The Commission is persuaded that a European Foundation should be fairly sharply focussed, and that it should be reasonably modest in its financial and staffing implications. It also believes that the Foundation should have both autonomy and flexibility if it is to cooperate effectively with private and public bodies. Furthermore, it is persuaded that it should avoid duplication with existing Community programmes or other organisations active in the same fields, and the communication has been drafted with this firmly in mind.

The principal suggestions, therefore, of the Commission arising out of the report which it passed to the European Council in December are as follows:

First, that its activities should be concentrated within the present Community and the applicant countries.

Second, the Foundation should take as its priority the creation of exchange and other contact programmes for those groups and individuals who would not normally have the opportunity for intra-Community activities.

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The Commission also proposes that such programmes be closely linked with the provision of improved language training.

Third, the role of the Foundation would principally be indirect, that is it would initiate programmes rather than manage them directly.

In this way the Commission believes that a realistic but imaginative start can be made for a foundation which in Mr Tindemans' words can make European integration "a matter for all of us" by "promoting greater understanding among our peoples".

Scope and Objectives

1. The objective of the Foundation shall be to extend opportunities for contact between the peoples of the Community so as to develop greater understanding of the European Community, and the rich diversity of the European heritage.

2. The Foundation shall promote contacts between persons from all parts of the Community and the countries who have requested accession. It shall foster personal and group contacts based on professional, vocational, social, cultural and leisure interests.

3. The Foundation shall support schemes to this end including those which may involve residential courses, summer schools, job-to-job exchanges, voluntary service assignments to another Member State and town and area twinning arrangements. It shall also support initiatives to form or further develop associations which bring people together with a view to extending mutual understanding and establishing collaborative projects. It shall provide support to those working in the media, whose activities have a special contribution to make to the Foundation's objectives.

4. To further these ends, the Foundation shall support the provision of the necessary language learning facilities.

5. In the pursuit of its objectives, the Foundation shall ensure that its activities do not overlap with and are complementary to those being undertaken by other organisations.

The Foundation shall avoid any duplication with Community programmes.

6. In the initial period, priority shall be given to creating opportunities for young people, notably early school leavers, and young workers. The Foundation should also give priority to those who are disadvantaged, as for example, the handicapped.

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Structures

7. The Foundation must have maximum flexibility. Its tasks will include promoting a great many government or private initiatives and maintaining close contacts with organizations of various kinds. It will have to manage and use for these purposes not inconsiderable resources and it is therefore particularly important that it should be neutral, which in turn implies that the Foundation must enjoy the highest degree of autonomy, particularly as some of the resources it will have to manage will be of private origin.
8. The structures of the Foundation should be light and its administrative arrangements modest.
9. The composition of the Foundation's bodies will have to reflect three factors:
 - (i) the Foundation's Community character (this would be emphasized if some of the members of the governing bodies were appointed by Community institutions in accordance with a procedure to be decided);
 - (ii) the Member States' active participation (this implies appointment of members by the Member States);
 - (iii) the need for the Foundation to be both balanced and independent (some members should be chosen, by common consent and on their own responsibility, by the members appointed by the Member States and the Community institutions.
10. The Foundation's authorities could be as follows:
 - the Council of the Foundation,
 - the executive committee,
 - the President of the Foundation,
 - the Secretary-General.

The Council would be the Foundation's governing body. It would have to take the main decisions and draw up the multi-annual programme. It should meet at least twice a year. It would have to appoint the President of the Foundation from among its members, and the executive committee responsible for seeing that the programme is carried out. The executive committee would have to have at least nine members, in addition to the President.

The Secretary-General would be responsible for directing the Foundation's day-to-day activities in accordance with the directives issued by the Council of the Foundation and the executive committee. He would be appointed by the Council.

11. The act bringing the Foundation into being will have to fix the number of Council and executive committee members and their term of office.

The seat of the Foundation will be

12. An essential matter will be determining an order of priority for the Foundation's operations. This can only really be done by means of a programme, which the Foundation will have to draw up, in the first stages of its existence, in accordance with a procedure to be decided.

Financing

13. The Foundation will operate principally by granting subsidies or aids to projects or measures carried out by appropriate organizations.

Its financial contributions should, as far as possible, do no more than supplement contributions from other sources, particularly from governments, private individuals or other Foundations.

14. In accordance with Mr Tindeman's proposals, the Foundation is to be financed by resources of three kinds:

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(i) a contribution from the Community Budget, ideally of 5 million EUA the first year, 10 million EUA the second and approximately 20 million EUA thereafter;

(ii) government subsidies;

(iii) private contributions, from, for example, other Foundations - these could only be accepted if they did not carry obligations that would be incompatible with the Foundation's tasks.

15. A clause in the constituent act providing for exemption in all Member States from national taxes for private contributions to the Foundation would undoubtedly encourage such contributions.

16. Whatever the nature of the constituent act, the financial management of the Foundation will have to be subject to control.