

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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BACKGROUND NOTE

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM FIGHTS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

First steps toward solving the problem of youth unemployment, a major concern for both Europe and the United States, were taken recently by the European Community in its education action program.

There are now some 2 million young people under 25 out of work in the nine-nation European Community, a more than 400 per cent increase since 1969. Youth make up 37 per cent of Europe's 6 million unemployed; in 1969 they were only 24 per cent of the total. In the United States, where 6.8 million are unemployed, young people under 25 presently account for 14.1 per cent of the total; in 1969 youth unemployment was 8.4 per cent of the total.

To counteract the situation in Europe, the Brussels-based Commission of the Community has begun a series of 17 pilot projects on aiding the transition of young people from school to work as part of its latest efforts in education.

The projects will focus on the pragmatic -- teaching and training youth to get and keep a job, stimulating the desire to work, improving vocational courses already being offered in secondary and evening schools, bettering the guidance and counseling services of community agencies.

Nearly all the projects include in-service training of teachers and some projects emphasize minority groups such as the handicapped or migrant youth.

The member states are matching the Community contribution of 11.5 million units of account* for three years to bring the projects' total funding to 23 million units of account. Funding is expected to increase as further pilot projects are added; eight more are to be announced in the spring.

The pilot projects account for about 3.5 million u.a. of the total Community education budget for 1978 of slightly more than 5 million u.a.

* 1 u.a. = about \$1.23 on 12 January, 1978

The remainder covers;

- * Publication of the first Handbook for Students on higher education in the Community;
- * 100 grants for 10-day study visits by specialists in vocational education and guidance to other member states; each grant is valued at about 1,000 u.a.;
- * 28 grants to promote joint programs and other cooperation among institutions of higher learning in the Community, to afford greater mobility to European students, mutual academic recognition and, in some cases, joint degrees;
- * 61 study grants for specialists in college and university teaching to examine how higher education systems in other Community countries work;
- * Group study visits for a week to 10 days for local and regional secondary school administrators, to study technical education in another Community country; about 300 school administrators are expected to benefit from the grants, at a cost to the Community of 300,000 u.a.

The study grants for teachers and administrators as well as the emphasis on promoting collaboration among Community colleges and universities are intended to improve contact among the educational systems of the nine member nations. In announcing the education program in Brussels last month, Guido Brunner, commissioner for education, pointed out that less than 1 per cent (30,000) of the 3 million Community students is now studying in another Community country. Further, there is more exchange of teachers and students between the United States and the Community nations than among the Community countries themselves.

Brunner emphasized the importance of the Community's being "something other than an economic one," and added that the three-year education program is aimed at giving "a democratic impulse to the breaking down of cultural barriers."

Publication of the students' handbook in particular is expected to make this easier. In any case, it is the first time that complete information on all European Community colleges and universities has been listed in one place.

Prepared by Dr. Manfred Stassen of the German Academic Exchange Service, the handbook gives general information on the higher education system of each Community country, its institutions and the types of degrees awarded, admission conditions, language requirements, fees and grants, as well as data on social elements such as social security and accommodation possibilities. It also lists where to write for further information.

The handbook, which is published in English, French, Danish, German, Italian and Dutch, may be ordered from the European Community Information Service, Suite 707, 2100 M Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037. It costs \$4.40.