EDUCATION
TRAINING
YOUTH

Le Magazine

FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH IN EUROPE

Europe:
mobility or an obstacle course?

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Editorial

Let's talk about it

Directorate-General XXII is responsible for the implementation and day-to-day running of Community exchange and cooperation programmes in the areas of training, education and youth. As a result, it is in a position to see first hand the challenges which face the EU countries in these areas as they prepare the way ahead into the next century and the "information society".

Our job is not limited to filing away the results of this overview. Quite the reverse. Our function is to be dynamic, hence the initiatives which we have taken, in order to understand, evaluate, come to the right conclusions and move in the right direction.

In early 1995 a think tank of high-level experts was created to contribute their experience to the research and analyses required for the development of European cooperation in these areas. In 1996, we have had the European Year of Lifelong Learning and the Commission's adoption, at Edith Cresson's initiative, of the White Paper on *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*. In both cases, the aim has been to exchange information about good practices and raise a number of issues for debate.

Solutions, in all their diversity, do exist, if only because there is always a solution to be found. For my part, I can well imagine that in this jigsaw puzzle of participation, an important piece of the final picture might easily come from anyone affected by these issues, if only they have the opportunity to be heard. This is why I arranged for a discussion between the think tank and the departments of DG XXII, in other words between the "outside" of the house and the "inside".

I have always hoped that this open discussion would in some way find its way into *Le Magazine* and am glad this has now proven to be the case. I was especially struck by the contribution to the discussion by Edith Van Der Velden, reproduced in this issue's "Youth" section.

In conclusion, let me add that our readers' views are very welcome and if you would like to write to us, *Le Magazine* will open up its columns to you.

Thomas O'Dwyer

Thomas O'Dwyer

The need for m o b i l i t y

Removing the obstacles to the free movement of people has been one of the basic objectives of a European cooperation since the Treaty of Rome. The freedom to come and go is one of the fundamental conditions for the existence of a true "citizens' Europe". Without it, the idea of a European social area is meaningless. Equally, mobility is one of the responses to current economic change, in the wake of the establishment of the single European market and the globalization of trade, and its social consequences. Mobility is also necessary to facilitate European research, which has been disadvantaged by compartmentalization and the dispersal of effort, and thereby to build up the capacity for innovation that is sometimes lacking, notably in the high-technology sectors.

People throughout the EU are increasingly aware of this. Demand for mobility is constantly growing, as demonstrated by the success of Community programmes which have promoted transnational exchanges and movements of researchers, students, teachers, workers, unemployed people in training, and trainers. In 1987/88, 3,000 students and 745 teachers benefited from the mobility offered by Erasmus; these figures have grown to reach 170,000 and 14,000 respectively in 1995/96.

However, it has to be acknowledged that even today there are too many obstacles to mobility. Capital, goods and services move more freely within the Union than people, which does not have a positive influence on the attitude of its citizens towards the construction of the European Community. Such hindrances are encountered every day in the implementation of Community programmes for education, training and research, and act as a brake to development. This is supported by a great deal of anecdotal evidence, revealing where possibilities of training are not being taken up and opportunities for exchanges, communication and cooperation between students, teachers and researchers at European level are being lost. These obstacles to mobility particularly affect young people from more deprived backgrounds and the unemployed.

According to the Treaty on European Union, Community action should encourage mobility in the areas of education, training and research. It is with this in mind that the Commission has drawn up a Green Paper on transnational mobility. This document identifies obstacles to mobility and proposes some possible lines of action to remove them.

In the face of each obstacle – which is the subject of a concrete case study – the Green Paper proposes a line of action to be explored. As a result it is a concrete document, which will contribute usefully to the debate and to the concerted effort to address problems which touch the day-to-day lives of people in Europe. I hope this debate will be productive and wide-reaching in its effects.

Édith Cresson

Clearing the obstacles

Despite the principles of free movement in the EU, in practice there are still many obstacles in the way of students, researchers, trainees and young voluntary workers wanting to take up opportunities abroad. A Green Paper from the Commission looks at the problems and puts forward some ideas for solutions.

Studying, training, getting qualifications or acquiring work experience abroad are proving increasingly attractive in Europe, and there is growing interest in Community mobility programmes. Unfortunately, in some cases, the problems involved in going to study or on a training course in a foreign country can prove to be a real headache. This has to change – free movement of people is enshrined explicitly in the Treaty of Rome as one of the primary conditions for European integration.

This situation is also damaging because mobility helps to meet the challenges of economic change. Giving intelligence and skills full rein to move, allowing people to interact, to work together and thus develop, and enabling researchers to join forces, is essential if the European Union is to find the capacity for innovation which it sometimes lacks.

So, the Commission has decided to tackle the red tape and try to remove the obstacles that make mobility in education, research and training difficult, or even impossible. Hence the recent adoption of a Green Paper, with two aims: to make a detailed inventory of the obstacles and to put forward lines of action to be explored which may lead to solutions. Following the consultation period currently under way, the Commission will produce a summary report together with a set of recommendations.

Right of residence – a legal minefield

Candidates for company placements in another Member State, intending to follow a training programme leading to qualifications, run up against the greatest number of obstacles. Such young people, who are neither students, nor workers, nor officially unemployed (they do not receive unemployment benefits) encounter numerous difficulties related to the right of residence, and often find themselves having to give up on the idea of transnational mobility. Volunteers doing unpaid work in associations and receiving training through this transnational activity sometimes face the same problems.

The status of trainees and that of volunteers, therefore, needs to be recognised in the European Community. This is a matter for national authorities, but it has to be sorted out if the experimental European voluntary service programme, due to start in 1997, is to run smoothly. The Green Paper also aims to promote mobility for apprentices.

Right of residence also presents movement problems for nationals of non-EU countries who, as totally legal residents of the Community, wish to follow a training programme in another country. In this regard, the Green Paper refers to a Commission 'communication' of February 1994 on immigration and asylum, which stressed the importance of common rules, grouped into a legally binding instrument, in assuring the mobility of such nationals within the Union, for study or vocational training purposes as well as for other activities.

Finally, problems face the Community's grant-holding researchers, due to the various tax treatments applied in different Member States. Logically, the solution should be to apply a uniform tax treatment in every Member State, particularly in terms of the right to work and taxation. It is not right that part of the funds earmarked for the financing of Community research should end up in government coffers.

Social security

Another major obstacle to mobility is the problem of social security. This is a particular concern for unemployed people who risk forfeiting their rights, either temporarily or permanently depending on their home country, if they go abroad to receive training for more than three months. The solution is clear: their rights should be maintained for as long as they are receiving training in another Member State.

Similarly, the Green Paper calls for social security cover to be provided in the host country. This move would primarily affect students. At the moment, students are covered when they are insured by the social security system of a Member State as a worker (for example in Germany) or as a member of the family of a worker. In order to guarantee social security coverage in the host country, their status needs to be brought into line along with those of others receiving training – with those of workers, wage-earning or otherwise – or members of their family.

Here again, people on work placements and volunteers are affected. Their position is particularly difficult as far as mobility for training purposes is concerned. The only solution is for their status to be officially recognized within the European Community.

Many training activities do not lead to any official recognition or certification. In certain cases, students encounter real difficulties either taking exams in the host country, or having them recognised in their own country, or presenting them in their country of origin when they return. Sometimes, it is not just difficult but impossible. This represents an obstacle to mobility: returning home, some individuals can find themselves with no alternative but to repeat the training programme which they have just completed! It is urgent, therefore, to create an European qualifications area. Mutual recognition of academic and vocational qualifications could be developed through the adoption of a system for the transfer of teaching credits.

to mobility

The answer is up to the Member States

Confronting inequalities

All these proposals for action are important. However, they will not be enough in themselves unless they are accompanied by other, more general initiatives. The Green Paper therefore suggests reducing socio-economic obstacles as much as possible, for example by promoting the development of various mechanisms for assistance and financial support to mobility (benefits, grants, subsidies, loans, and so on). Co-financing with other partners (associations, unions, regional authorities, banks, etc) is also to be encouraged.

Mobility also requires the ability to speak at least one other language and a readiness to adapt to different cultures. The less training people receive, the more problems they will have in these two areas. The Green Paper therefore proposes the establishment of opportunities for short apprenticeships in closely defined contexts, in particular through national bodies which support Community programmes.

Finally, the Green Paper recommends improvements in the availability of information and administrative procedures. At present, information is not always efficiently distributed, interpreted and acted upon. In any case, it does not systematically reach the general public. The Green Paper therefore calls for every means available to be used. Furthermore, it proposes that training in Community law and its application should be organized for staff in national administrations who are responsible for dealing with EU programmes.

Reactions, discussions

After more than a year's work, the Green Paper has been issued. Edith Cresson presented it at a press briefing on 2 October, following its adoption by the Commission. Since then, it has been widely distributed for comment by all interested parties, institutional or otherwise. It is on the table of the Council of Education Ministers and elsewhere, and will be examined in the Council by other ministers concerned, even indirectly, by the issues it deals with. It is also under discussion by the consultative committees run by the Commission, the social partners, and by representative committees and bodies in the Member States. It is very important that the general public should have access to the Green Paper, which is a good example of the work the Commission can do to address everyday problems. In turn, provided people feel their concerns are being adequately addressed, they can become the institution's point of contact with their national authorities, so that a consensus may be reached, followed by decisions.

The offices representing the Commission throughout the EU, the national agencies responsible for managing Community programmes and initiatives, and bodies responsible for the decentralization of work in the capitals, will be able to make the Green Paper publicly available. It is also on the Internet (http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg22/lvhp.html), or on the Commission stand at relevant trade fairs and exhibitions.

A snapshot - no directives

The purpose of any Green Paper, and this one in particular, is to present an accurate snapshot of a given situation and propose solutions. In this case, nine lines of action are put forward for exploration, while others might emerge from the debate. At this stage, the Commission does not intend to deliver any sort of directive to the Member States. All the institutions concerned are free to pursue the routes proposed or to abandon them completely. In such an exercise, the principle of subsidiarity is particularly important. All Member States are in favour of improving mobility in principle, but their actions do not always correspond to declared intentions. This is particularly true in this instance, because when it comes to education and training, whenever a single brick is touched, the whole building can be affected.

Sensitive areas

No pragmatic overview of the obstacles facing mobility can be produced in a vacuum. The Green Paper has inevitably wandered into numerous sensitive areas. Therefore, one of the first observations to be made is that the obstacles in question hit young people from less well-off backgrounds and unemployed people hardest. Consider the example of unemployed people who, very often, lose their rights to benefits and social security coverage when they spend more than three months in another Member State for training. As a line of action, for example, the Green Paper proposes extending to unemployed people receiving training the Community law which allows people to seek work in another Member State for at least six months without forfeiting any rights. A simple, sensible solution, but one which is difficult to implement because it affects social security systems, which differ widely from one country to another. During these recessionary times, maintaining the stability of these systems is a major preoccupation in many countries. Furthermore, in the current economic climate, this proposal also scares many companies, and employers' federations will think twice before giving it their support.

A change in attitudes

Examples like these are legion, yet not every obstacle is listed in the Green Paper, which is based to a large degree on the situations faced by people receiving training in another country through existing mobility programmes.

Such as it is, this inventory already features ample material for a range of actions to promote mobility. Some solutions which can be found within the European Union should bear fruit fairly quickly; others fall to the responsibility of the Member States and will depend on cooperation between them. Finally, some solutions depend more than anything on a change in attitudes. Here again, the Member States need to take the lead. That said, public authorities are not the only parties involved. In particular, higher education institutions, youth movements, professional associations, the social partners and chambers of commerce can, if they wish, provide further impetus.

Debating the White Paper

The analyses developed by the White Paper and the new perspectives it brings to the concept of the learning society merit in-depth debate and discussion. As part of the general follow-up to the document, the Commission therefore decided to call "thematic" conferences on each of the paper's five objectives. This was announced in Venice on 2-3 February when education and employment ministers met to launch the European Year of Lifelong Learning.

The conferences each brought together 60 to 80 specialists, depending on the theme, who are widely known in Europe in their particular fields. Invited on the basis of proposals from the Member States or social partners, or their previous work for the Commission, they participated as independent experts, and gave their views as scientists and/or practitioners on the analyses developed by the White Paper and the guidelines for action which it sets out. The debates were introduced, led and summed up by the Commission.

The following is a summary of the themes debated during the first four conferences, not in chronological order, but in the order they appear in the White Paper.

Bringing schools and the business sector closer together

The modernity of the approach and of the concept of educational partnership between the school and the business which funds the apprenticeship programme was confirmed by the experts. This partnership between the world of training and the world of work results in an active, evolving pedagogy which calls for a diverse set of actions. Two elements of this partnership may be emphasised. First, the results will be better if there is a contract between the three parties involved: the apprentice, the business and the school or training centre. Second, the partnership can be the mainspring of cooperation in other areas. It was noted that the fields of cooperation are growing ever wider.

These partnerships are of tremendous value in an age when the world of work is evolving and the content of work is changing. This direct link, this active, on-going cooperation between the user of skills (the business) and the producer of skills (the school) represent a contemporary means of promoting the evolution of training and giving learners better access to the knowledge which the world of work demands. Given the characteristics of the learning society and the development of lifelong training, the pedagogical approach to apprenticeship appears to be eminently well-suited to the achievement of both objectives.

Educational partnership for apprenticeships has traditionally been confined to initial training. Now there is a need to move towards a diversification of apprenticeship, which forms part of the process of development of lifelong training.

Teaching and learning: towards the learning society

Expert opinions

Apprenticeship is a modern educational path, undergoing constant evolution. Several points were made in relation to this, and might form the basis of future actions: for example, there is a growing recognition among companies of how taking on apprentices can benefit them, a new factor which promotes the growth of apprenticeships. It is no longer a question of calling in the social responsibilities of businesses in accepting apprenticeships, but of arousing their collective and individual interest in economic terms.

Action against social exclusion
To combat exclusion and curb the process of marginalization, the White Paper encourages the Member States to promote experimental second chance schools and voluntary service for young people. The third thematic conference provided an opportunity to listen to the accounts of participants and pool their experiences.

Participants agreed that the paths set out by the White Paper were of great interest, but did not go far enough. Other aspects were felt to be important as well.

The debate on the introduction of new technologies as a means of combating exclusion is indicative of this feeling; although some were convinced of its worth, others felt that the tool needed something else to back it up.

Why not second chance schools? The participants warned against turning these schools into ghettos and some felt that prevention and cure should go hand in hand. But strengthening the resources of the first chance school, in other words everyone's school, does not exclude the possibility of setting up remedial mechanisms. Falling rolls should make it possible, with the same budgets, to strengthen initial training methods and dispense differentiated education from the earliest age.

However, it was observed, none of this can happen without parental involvement. They are the child's first and most important "socializing influences".

Teachers also need to be sensitized to these realities, and the position of non-formal education, such as youth movements, recognised and valued. This is particularly important among young people who view institutions with suspicion.

Finally, a majority of participants felt that young people from less-favoured backgrounds should be more closely involved in the battle against their own marginalization. Every time such young people have been consulted, they have put forward sound and imaginative ideas. As participants pointed out, they deserve our trust!

Proficiency in three Community languages
The thematic conference devoted to the fourth objective of the White Paper prompted a wide-ranging debate, which highlighted various achievements, but also raised a number of questions about language learning. The experts present at the conference supported the objective of learning three Community languages and confirmed the need to improve the quality of language teaching, while addressing the issue of demand. But they were also keen to add a number of comments, clarifications and, in some cases, the odd word of criticism.

A number of key points emerged from the two days of discussion. The first involved the questioning of the concept of "education of perfection". Comenius, in 1632, said that "languages should not be learnt to perfection, but as far as necessity requires." Some preferred the idea of "perfectibility", or indeed of lifelong learning, to this concept of perfection.

The second point was that priority must be given to learning centred on the needs of the learner. This is often the case already for the training of adults, but it was noted that this more individualized form of learning would also benefit from being developed at the level of initial training.

Without question, multimedia represents a fruitful path, but participants agreed that it should not be used without certain provisos. The quality and diversity of products must be monitored if the whole range of needs is to be fully addressed.

Another comment was that when a language is taught, it must not be cut out of its cultural context. It needs to facilitate comprehension between individuals. Fluency in three Community languages is all very well, but everyone should not learn the same two foreign languages. And the languages of migrants, and regional languages, should not be overlooked. It is important to preserve and respect differences.

Finally, the participants expressed their desire that languages should not become the preserve of an elite. A question arose in relation to this: how are we to ensure that the early learning of languages (from nursery school onwards) promotes equality of opportunity, and does not reinforce inequalities between children?

Concrete proposals were also put before the Commission. It was called upon to place great emphasis on the training of school teachers and trainers – those who teach are, after all, at the heart of the process. The Commission might also have a useful role to play in disseminating good practices or bringing innovative initiatives on line. On the same subject, a series of criteria were advanced which might help the Commission to award a "quality label" designed to promote innovation.

Treating capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis
"Ongoing training is a necessity, but it is going to cost more and more. In education, as in health care, someone will need to make some tough choices. What choices and on what basis?" This crucial question was posed explicitly during the conference devoted to the fifth general objective outlined in the White Paper: "treating capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis". The debates raised the following points.

"Training is a political investment. So the state needs to participate in its funding." This conviction was shared by all the participants, and there was general agreement on the fact that, for the past few years, states have been experiencing difficult financial situations, and can no longer shoulder the full cost of training on their own. It was also agreed that business needs to play its part as well. However, when it

> "Training is a political investment. So the state needs to participate in its funding."

came to how, and to what degree, business should participate, opinions were divided. A number felt that any citizen benefiting from training should bear some of the costs involved. Others were firmly opposed to this view, and felt that the state and companies should share this financial burden. Certain employers are already breaking new ground by demanding that in return for free training, the individuals who benefit from it should follow the course in their own time and that, when they return to the workplace, should make active use of their new qualification.

This formula holds water both for apprenticeship (between school and the first job) and for ongoing training. Participants underlined the principle that the first investment in training must lie with the school, for it is here where the foundations for lifelong learning are laid. These schools need public funding in order to survive.

Although the participants agreed that poor qualifications constitute a social risk in our society and that training is an investment, they remained fairly cautious about the ways in which this investment should be financed. Should certain social security funds be channelled into the world of education? Should companies be given the green light to treat expenditure on training as an investment in intangible resources? Approaches such as these were put forward, and it is obvious that much exploration lies ahead.
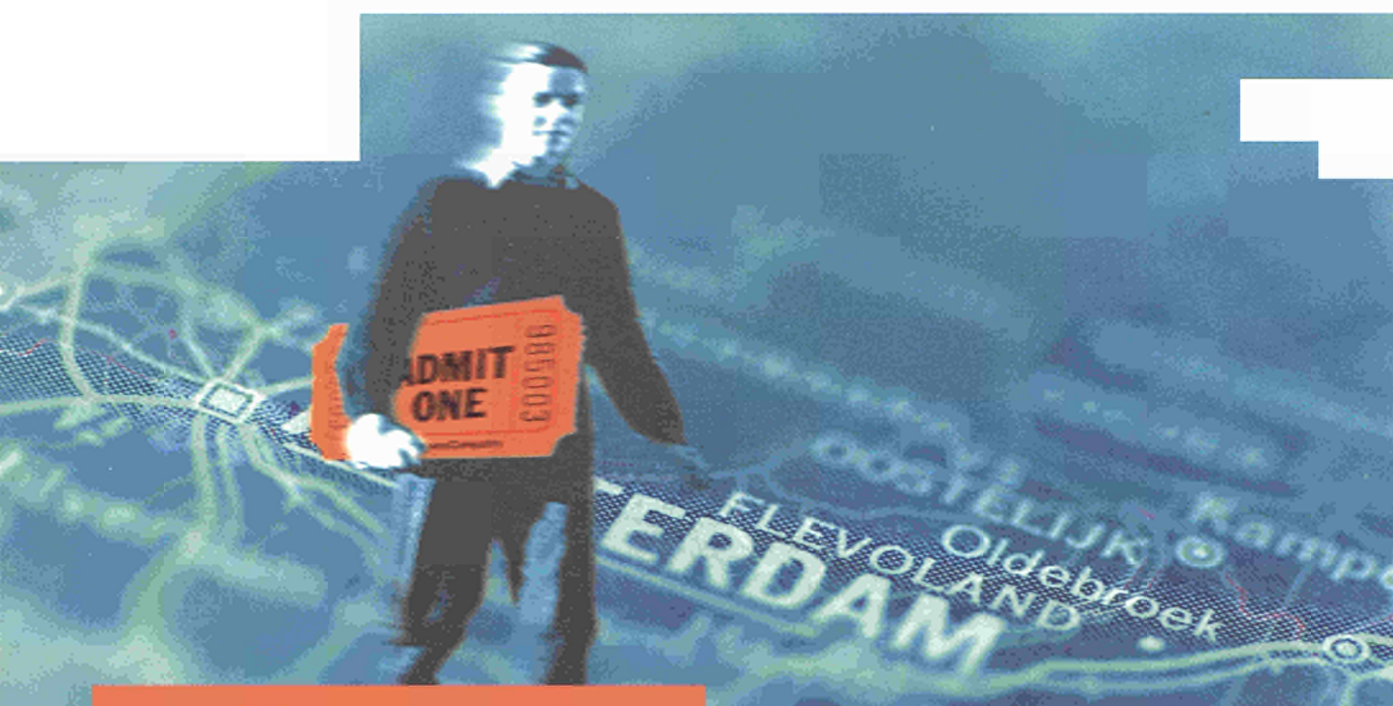
European action
to help young people without qualifications

The battle against the social exclusion of young people is a priority which the Member States and the European Commission share. As an experiment, the Commission will support a network of European cities which wish to reach out to young unqualified people, through a local partnership scheme.

In the European Union, between 7.5 and 10% of young people leave the educational system each year without obtaining any qualifications; and for these youngsters, the future appears bleak. Their lack of training means fewer options for integrating into the job market and into society. Most of them risk ending up without a job at all; many will find themselves marginalized and in precarious situations.

The problem is especially acute in urban areas, and if the young people living here were to lose all hope, the risk of a social explosion would increase dramatically. The Member States have set in place numerous mechanisms of their own to counter this problem. In the White Paper on teaching and learning, the Commission reasserts its determination to fight exclusion, especially among young people. A key aim of this document is to initiate a wide-reaching debate and inspire experiments which complement action at a national level.

The 1996 European Year of lifelong has proved to be a fertile breeding ground for debates and initiatives. The challenge for 1997 will be to extend these initiatives and set their parameters on the basis of an initial review. This is the thinking behind the Commission's wish to pilot the idea of "second chance" education, cited in the White Paper as one way in which youngsters experiencing major difficulties might be offered new hope through learning opportunities.

Second chance education offers new hope

The initiative is geared towards youngsters with no qualifications who are past the age of compulsory school attendance. If such young people are to be offered another chance at social and economic integration, then tackling education alone is not enough. Most of the individuals in question are faced with a range of challenges – in addition to educational and family problems, there are also difficulties related to health, housing, and so on. In order to help these people, a wide-reaching approach is essential. Durable partnerships are needed which bring together every player in the local area: teachers, parents, public and private contractors, local authorities, social partners, associations, etc. Offering youngsters a second chance is largely a matter of establishing locally-based initiatives.

Following the various discussions held in relation to the White Paper, and notably the thematic seminar in October 1996 on the exclusion of young people, certain experimental projects could be pursued. Through education and training, these projects would offer young, unqualified people a new chance at social and economic integration. The establishment of high-quality education provision and the mobilization of all local players affected, and companies in particular, would further assist this aim.

The proposed concept is sufficiently open to allow for the great diversity of social, economic, cultural and institutional structures in EU countries.

Networking the individual Member States' experiences should provide valuable information that will help focus resources and intentions.

Another network could also be put in place early in 1997, and this would be concerned with the existing mechanisms which are geared towards the social and economic reintegration of marginalized young people. These two networks would be interconnected to further multiply the opportunities for information exchange. Experimental projects in the first network would benefit from previously tried and tested mechanisms; while the latter would profit from the results of experiments carried out in the course of pilot projects supported by the Commission. This system should promote a mushrooming of good practices in the two key areas of action in the fight against exclusion: education and training.

An example of one such project supported by the Commission is the Youthreach programme in Ireland.
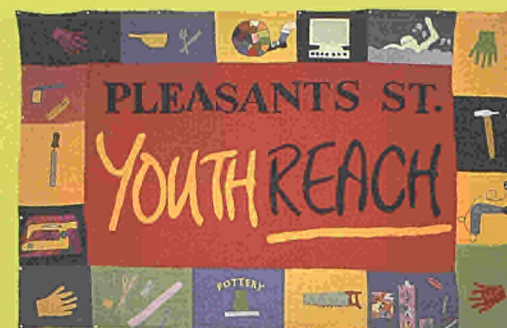
Youthreach

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YOUTH REACH

Building hope for the future today

In Ireland, about 3,200 young people will drop out of school annually with no qualifications or below 15 years of age, and a further 10,000 per year drop out, usually between 16 and 18, with only minimal qualifications. Youthreach offers early school leavers a second chance – a chance to recognise and develop skills that were often thwarted or ignored as they tried, and failed, to make their way through the traditional school system.

This innovative programme has been expanded nationally since it was established in 1988, and now gives hope to more than 3,500 disadvantaged young people each year. Homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse, violence or sexual abuse at home and trouble with the law all contribute to the disillusionment which often causes them to drop out of a system they don't understand, a system which in turn doesn't understand them and cannot respond to their needs.

Youthreach is a two-year programme of education, training and work experience involving an integrated response by education, training and community agencies to the problems young people experience. When it was launched, it mainstreamed the experience gained from the implementation of the Social Guarantee (EC Heads of Government, 1985) and the EC's 1st and 2nd action programmes on the *Transition of young people from education to adult and working life*.

"The aim of the programme is to help the trainees achieve their own goals in a challenging environment," says Youthreach coordinator Dermot Stokes. "Remember, education has been an arena of failure for them. In Youthreach we encourage participants to identify and use their strengths as a platform for learning. Of course, their difficulties in life usually extend beyond education and training. But the core skills they absorb on the programme can be applied in many circumstances."

Without a Leaving Certificate, usually achieved by the age of 18, a young person is cut right out of the system. Pathways to further vocational training are limited. The threat of becoming a statistic is very real – in Ireland, approximately 70 % of the long-term unemployed are early school leavers.

Youthreach is an attempt to break the circle of disadvantage. It offers young people a means to identify and pursue viable options for themselves and the opportunity to achieve certification.

"This process involves a considerable amount of personal development and exploration," says Stokes. "There is more involved than simply training for employment. Fundamentally, we want these young people to assume responsibility for their lives."

Contrary to the common perception of early school leavers as less capable, Stokes point out that 14 % of Youthreach participants are reported to be capable of exceptional work. In September, five trainees of the Bray and North Wicklow Youthreach mounted a photographic exhibit that attracted national attention. Photographer and class teacher Keith Ledbury described the work as professional and outstanding, noting that out of all the classes he's taught, the Youthreach trainees produced the best work.

"Working with these young people develops one's appreciation of concepts such as multiple intelligence and contextualised learning," Stokes says. "For example, some display an acute street-level entrepreneurial ability. Youthreach is about them recognising their potential and building on it."

Staff at Youthreach centres don't necessarily have formal qualifications. Their diversity and dedication is crucial to the programme's success. About half have a teaching background; others are youth service workers, social workers, vocational instructors or business people from the community who have valuable skills to offer. Each centre reflects its own economic, social, cultural and employment environment.

As Stokes explains: "All the centres are alike, yet all are different. Central to the programme are flexibility, innovation, and diversity of approach, based on an appraisal of the needs of the trainees and their communities by local management, course providers, the trainees themselves and their communities."

Building strong community partnerships is at the heart of the programme's success. Trainees are often referred by community and social workers, medical staff, and the local authorities. Youthreach staff and trainees are forging valuable links to work experience, training and perhaps employment with small business, industry, and other community-based organisations.

Youthreach is structured around two distinct phases: the Foundation phase is participant-centered, full time, and trainees receive an allowance for attendance, while the Progression phase, which usually includes linked work experience and a more intensive development of vocational skills, creates pathways to further training or employment.

The core curriculum concentrates on basic skills development and includes a wide range of subjects such as catering, woodwork and computer skills. Because the ability to communicate more effectively increases self-confidence, integration and teamwork are central. For example, the woodwork instructor uses wood as a medium for lifeskills development, and the lifeskills instructor liaises with other team members.

Sport and cultural pursuits are central to the programme. Trainees cooperate with the local arts community in a variety of media including drama, videography, glass work, sculpture, pottery, mosaic, mask making, batik, screen printing and much more. For example, several trainees at the centre in Enniscorthy are working alongside potters at Carley's Bridge to gather the clay, make the pottery and sell it to the public. In Dublin, trainees studying drama are involved with the renowned Abbey Theatre – they're helping write a play and stage it.

Dermot Stokes is under no illusions about the difficulty of the Youthreach mission. He sees educational problems as a watermark of disadvantage. "The environments in which the programme operates are complex and volatile, and months of progress can sometimes be derailed by completely unexpected external factors. What we try to do is maintain sufficient flexibility to react, and where possible, harness the momentum of the problem into the development process itself."

He cites a recent case where a highly successful trainee, who was a passenger in a stolen car, was killed when the car crashed. "The trainees and staff in the centre were devastated. The programme effectively became a group counselling process. They grieved, they were angry. They reflected, in the end, they accepted. Their new understanding isn't a hard skill, but it is a key life skill".

*"I realised I was a time bomb when
I was eight that was going to go off when I was 18".*

But Mr Stokes also believes Youthreach is doing much more than holding the line against disadvantage: "The numbers involved are relatively small, but they are important. Instead of leaving these young people to become a permanent underclass, we are helping them to find and express an identity. The hope is that they will not only find a niche in the labour market, but will also become net contributors to the democratic process."

A national framework for certification
Youthreach is jointly funded by the Departments of Education and Enterprise and Employment, operating through the Vocational Education Committees and FAS, the National Training Authority respectively. Together, they provide 3,975 places in over 100 centres across the state.

The European Social Fund is a significant supporter of Youthreach, providing

£4.45 million aid per year towards the cost of programmes for early school leavers. This provides funding towards the cost of 1,600 places out of the 2,450 places now being funded in 61 Youthreach centres in the education sector across the country.

"We are pioneering a new approach to the problem of early school leaving. The structural funds from the EC have allowed us to develop a structured tier of second chance education," explains Margaret Kelly, Assistant Principal of the European Social Fund Section of the Department of Education.

"We didn't want a quick fix solution to the problem of education, training, and unemployment. We wanted a coherent framework, where young people could learn at their own pace. A holistic approach is needed if they are going to be able meet the demands of the future. Youthreach provides that."

Under the Irish National Certification Authority, TEASTAS, set up in 1995, arrangements are under way for implementation of a comprehensive national qualifications and certification framework for vocational training. This will establish clear routes of progression to higher levels of education and training, closely match industry needs, and will be designed to give Ireland's young people portable skills that are recognised across the EU.

The National Foundation Certificate has been developed by the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA, which is to be incorporated into TEASTAS) to provide for those without qualifications. The certificate, which can be earned in modules, focuses on three core areas (communication, mathematics and personal effectiveness) and several electives.

Practical assessment is carried out locally in centres and external moderation by panels which includes representatives from industry ensures consistency with national standards. This certificate is designed to be the gateway to the various levels of qualification. At present, the NCVA is moving towards national implementation of Foundation Level of certification, having just completed a pilot of the certificate in 146 centres.

About one-third of trainees find employment, one-third move on to further training and education and one-third leave for personal reasons, such as becoming a parent or returning home to look after siblings, elderly parents and so on.

"At this stage, the foundation level certificate is not necessarily a passport to the job market and training opportunities because developments are still under way to develop national assessment certification at each rung of the national ladder of qualifications," says Kelly.

"Until the complete framework is developed, moving up to higher vocational qualifications will be difficult. It will take time to build credibility and acceptance of the certificate among training providers and employers. Once the national certification programme is fully implemented, it will ease this transition. Thanks to programmes like Youthreach, the barriers are coming down."

What do Youthreach trainees have to say?
A survey of trainee opinion in 1993 found the following:
- 92 % "obtained useful skills".
- 88 % learned how to get on better with people.
- Respondents were quite specific in identifying useful skills, including punctuality, communications skills, and so on.
- They all would recommend their friends to attend.
- 75 % would consider night school or further training.

What we all need is just a fair chance...
Open the door to a Youthreach centre and enter a different world. There is the unmistakable energy of activity, creativity, dialogue and laughter. The brightly decorated walls and corridors, thanks to the work of the trainees, are a welcome refuge from the streets, the drugs, and the ever-present, ever-tempting opportunity to go astray. There's a feeling inside these welcoming walls... the feeling of hope.

At Pleasants Street Youthreach centre in Dublin's South Inner City, coordinator Brendan Sheehan is just as enthusiastic about the potential of interactive multimedia as a learning tool and pathway to employment as he is about the art that comes out of the pottery class. Pottery is not only

taken as a craft activity but is also used as a key element in the centre's drama and video animation programme which, he is quick to point out, is recognised for its excellence by the country's leading animation training college.

In one room, a staff member is working with six boys in a hairdressing class. In another, boys and girls are in the woodwork shop, creating coffee tables, bedside tables or perfectly turned snooker cues.

"The flexibility which Youthreach affords is crucial. We can push the borders out on a subject and there is no end to what it can result in. Some of the skills trainees learn here may not be immediately tradable in the job market," he says. "What they do develop is a set of life skills that brings them to the point where they can take the next step."

At a North Inner City Youthreach centre, coordinator Colm Rock is proud of the vegetables in the back garden trainees have been so carefully tending and the finely crafted pieces created by the woodwork class. He is also proud of the trainee who went on to manage a shoe store, another who is a teaching assistant at the local Montessori school, and a trainee who took to desktop publishing and now gets contract work from Guinness Brewing Company.

When trainees are asked what they think about Youthreach, the answers are a dozen variations of "School just didn't work for me", "I get more help here", "The people care here", "It's the first time someone's listened to me", or, "I feel accepted here."

In a video produced by trainees, they speak more openly about their experiences. Simon describes himself: "I realised I was a time bomb when I was eight that was going to go off when I was 18." Through Youthreach, his love of art blossomed and he developed the skills he always had.

Joseph describes school as a prison. His worst experience was being forced to stand up in front of the class and read. The only way out, he says, was to hit the teacher. Two weeks before the Junior Certificate Exam, it was discovered Joseph suffered from dyslexia. He dropped out, joined Youthreach, and eventually completed a certification course as a barman. Now, he works at the pub next door to his home.

"The troubles I had at school helped me in later life to understand other people", he says. "Everybody isn't perfect, everybody has their difficulties. What we all need is just a fair chance".

A glance
at education reforms in Europe

Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, takes a look at the reforms in education in various European countries. This time, we include four countries in central and eastern Europe.

Greece

Upper secondary education

The *Ethniko Apolytirio* is the name of the national final secondary education qualification which will be awarded for the first time to pupils completing the third year of the *Lykeio* (upper secondary education) at the end of the 1999/2000 school year. Pupils will be about 18 years old.

The aims of the *Ethniko Apolytirio* are to inculcate into those who obtain it a high level of culture; to develop a variety of skills, such as a critical analytical and synthetic approach; to permit the selection and entry of its holders into the labour market and to post-secondary education and training, thanks to the highlighting of basic knowledge; and to establish a rational, modern, flexible and objective system for selecting students for higher education.

The main difference in comparison with the former system is that the pupil will sit an examination on all the material covered in the *Lykeio* and that this type of examination will make it possible to pay particular attention to pupils' powers of thinking, expression and analysis, and also to the critical and synthetic mind and the initiative reflected in their work as a whole.

Spain

New direction

Following the general elections held in Spain last March and the victory of the Popular Party, the new government has now introduced a change in direction for education policy.

The minister for education and culture – whose new ministry results from a merger between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture – will be focusing on two key issues: creating a harmonious link between the right to education and freedom of educational choice and, improving the quality of the education system to support the modernization of Spanish society. These general policy aims are being translated into a series of measures which include: promoting parents' freedom to choose their child's school, which involves giving greater support to private schools; initiating mechanisms to extend education free of charge to the second stage of pre-school education infants aged 3 to 6; introducing an overall evaluation of the education system; supporting policies to cater for pupils with special educational needs; promoting independent management for schools; and drawing up a legal framework for the teaching profession. The new government will continue to implement Spain's ongoing reform of the education system but with a flexible approach to its most controversial aspects.

The Netherlands

Introduction of information and communications technology in primary and secondary schools

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences is planning to present a position paper on information and communications technology (ICT) in primary and secondary education. The paper will describe the objectives and an implementation plan for public authorities and schools. The aim is to prepare pupils for a society where ICT is used in a wide variety of professional and social activities.

The educational objectives of ICT are to:
- promote independent and active learning;
- respect the differences between pupils; and
- offer a broad range of opportunities that reflect current demands of the working world.

A new and coherent ICT infrastructure needs to be set up, which entails developing software to support pupils, procuring equipment, developing training and support measures for staff members and creating an electronic educational network.

Austria

Changes in the timetable

The Federal Ministry of Schools and Cultural Affairs has issued a regulation which alters the curricula of schools in years 5 to 7 (in the secondary *Hauptschule* and *allgemeinbildende höhere Schule – Unterstufe*). These reductions in class hours become effective in the 1996/97 school year with three hours being cut from the first year lower-level *Hauptschule* and AHS timetable, two hours from the second year and one hour from the third year. Thus, the weekly timetable has been reduced by six hours overall.

With this measure, the ministry aims above all to reduce pupils' timetables at a key moment of transition between primary and secondary school. For many children, changing levels resulted in a "time shock" as the average of 25 hours a week that pupils were accustomed to in the primary school suddenly increased to 32 hours at the beginning of secondary school.

Within the framework of school autonomy, schools are free to choose where these timetable reductions are made. However, new fixed timetables have been established which apply in cases where no regulations governing school autonomy are in place.

Portugal

Pact for the future

In February 1996 the Ministry of Education submitted to Parliament and later to the general public a document entitled *Education Pact for the Future*, with a view to reaching agreement on measures to be taken at political and social level regarding the main problems in the field of education and training in Portugal. In addition to establishing a general basis of agreement, the document defines the guiding principles and strategic objectives which translate into a number of key commitments.

As regards relations between state, education and society, the document points to an increased participation by the different social

partners in the decision-making process and the implementation of education policies and defends the regionalization and decentralization of the system, with a view to guaranteeing a dynamic balance between the tasks carried out at central level and the development of local projects. Schools take pride of place in education policy, with their increasing autonomy making several patterns of organization possible.

The document also announces as strategic objectives the promotion of education and training as a continuing lifelong process, the professional development and increased responsibility of teachers, and the development of information and communication networks in order to increase the system's visibility and to mobilize public opinion on educational matters.

Finland

Foreign language teaching in Finnish compulsory schools

Finland is a bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish as its official languages. Although the share of the Swedish-speaking populace is small (about 6 % of the total population), a knowledge of Swedish has also been considered important for the Finnish-speaking majority. Both official languages are, however, not widely known or used outside the Nordic countries, so it is not surprising that the number of foreign languages taught in Finnish schools is exceptionally high.

Since the 1970s, a nine-year all-through school has provided the foundations of education. In these schools all pupils have to study two foreign languages. One of these is the other official language – Swedish for a Finnish-speaking child and vice versa. Since they belong to totally different linguistic groups, the knowledge of one does not help in studying the other. In effect, the second official language is a foreign language. In addition to Finnish and Swedish, pupils in the compulsory school are expected to know the basics of one of the major European languages. Approximately 90 % of the pupils opt for English, but in bigger schools pupils can also choose German, French or Russian instead.

This language programme concerns all pupils in compulsory education. It is, however, only a minimum, and those interested in studying languages must be offered an opportunity for the voluntary study of other languages as well. Some 40 % of such pupils have taken advantage of this opportunity. The most popular optional language is German, but others – French, Russian, Latin, Italian and Spanish – are also offered.

The teaching of a first foreign language begins usually in the third year of the compulsory school. Recently, the regulations have been relaxed allowing the schools to decide for themselves when teaching of a foreign language is to begin. Compared to earlier practice, no marked shifts have occurred so far.

Swedish-speakers in principle study according to a similar programme, Finnish naturally replacing Swedish as the second domestic language. In practice, virtually all Swedish children have chosen both Finnish and English. Hence their language programme, by their own choice, has been broader than that of their Finnish peers.

The language programme of the Finnish compulsory school is very ambitious. There is strong public consensus to the effect that versatile teaching of languages in school is imperative and that investing in it now is investing for the future. As members of a small linguistic group, Finnish young people need a good knowledge of foreign languages and this also carries other benefits. The possibilities of success in a foreign cultural environment increase, while a knowledge of languages broadens understanding of foreign customs and traditions and helps do away with intolerance.

Sweden

Major debate/reform in adult education

The Swedish Parliament has decided on an extensive expansion of adult education, starting on 1 July 1997 and continuing throughout the coming five years. The aim of is to reduce unemployment and increase economic growth. It will also be start of a renewed adult education system, as regards organization and content. To meet the need for increased knowledge and skills in working life, expansion will be undertaken in close cooperation between education administrators, employment agencies and the social partners.

A delegation appointed by the government heads the organization of the five-year expansion of adult education.

In addition, a commission appointed by the government has recently presented a report containing a strategy for nation-wide promotion of adult education. The Commission suggests that an overall goal should be formulated in relation to adult education, the citizens right to adult education should be widened, and the infrastructure required to educate adults should be strengthened.

The commission will continue its work until the year 2000 and has been given new responsibilities in connection with the five-year expansion of adult education; it will make annual reports, coordinate and suggest how to follow up the expansion. The delegation heading the expansion is obliged to cooperate with the commission in all essential matters.

United Kingdom
England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Primary and secondary education

In June 1996, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Secretary of State for Wales presented to Parliament a White Paper on self-government for schools.

This document proposes to extend self-government for schools and to extend choice and diversity:
- by increasing the percentage of the budget which local education authorities delegate to individual schools from 85 to 95 % in England, and from 90 to 95 % in Wales;
- by giving grant-maintained schools more power to introduce changes in their services in response to local circumstances (for example, by providing nursery classes or "sixth forms") without requiring approval from central government;
- by encouraging an increase in the number of schools which select all their pupils with reference to academic ability (currently less than 5 % do so); and
- by making it easier for other schools to select a proportion of their pupils by ability and aptitude. (At present, schools may select up to 15 % of their pupils without central approval. Under these proposals, this percentage will be increased to 20, 30 or 50 %, depending on the type of school.)

16-19 education and training

The Department for Education and Employment has issued a consultation document, entitled *Funding 16-19 education and training: towards convergence*. It is seeking the views of further education sector colleges, Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and the schools sector on the principles which should underpin the funding of 16-19 education and training. At present, 16-19 year olds who attend a school are funded on a different basis from those who attend a further education sector college, or who receive training through a TEC. The consultation is the first step in seeking to bring about greater coherence in the funding system.

Norway

Education reforms

Various reforms have been launched in the 1990s, mainly structural reforms aiming at consolidation of the system and reforms of the content of education from primary to higher education. Norway has a tradition of comprehensive schooling, including school administration, educational leadership and in-service training. The main reforms can be summarized as follows:
- reorganization of the management of the education sector in 1992;
- structural reforms in special education;
- consolidation of the system of higher education aiming at linking institutions of higher education together into an integrated "Network Norway" and creating a structural framework for increased cooperation and communication among the institutions;
- reform of upper secondary education in 1994, including the legal right to three years of upper secondary education for all young people between 16 and 19 years of age (reformed syllabi are designed as a series of modules; a follow-up service has been legally required for all young people who are neither in employment or at school);
- reform of compulsory education, including lowering the school starting age to six and extension of compulsory schooling to 10 years instead of nine, in 1997. A new set of curricula are being introduced from 1997.

A core curriculum (1993) contains the general principles for compulsory education, upper secondary education and adult education at primary and lower secondary education level and in industry.

Bulgaria

Education system in transition

During the last decade, the educational systems of most of the central and eastern European countries have undergone substantial changes. Bulgaria is no exception, and for several reasons. The entire process of change is closely related to the transition of the country to the market economy, as well as to the possibilities for integration within the European structures.

The legal framework for the implementation of reforms in the area of secondary education is the 1991 Education Act. The ideas and the principles for the development of this part of the education system on the threshold of the 21st century are clearly defined in *Education development in the Republic of Bulgaria* (1995/1996). According to this document, the basic trends of secondary education development are education enhancement, according to criteria of relevance and quality; universal basic training; elective training; native and foreign language teaching, etc.
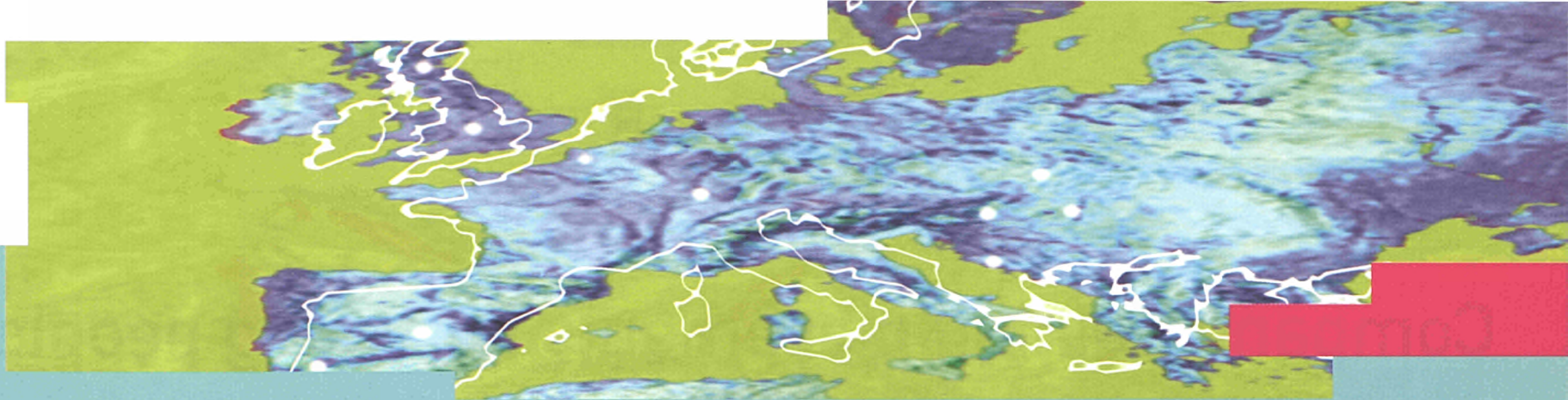
In the field of higher education, a new legal framework has been called for by the fact that establishments of higher learning need freedom, autonomy and opportunities for adequate development in serving the intellectual needs of the transition period. On 12 December 1995, the new Higher Education Act was adopted by the Bulgarian National Assembly. Its two main elements are:

the degree system – the implementation of the educational and qualification degrees of *Bachelor*, *Master* and *Doctor* offer multiple opportunities for professional development, adapted to present and future challenges, as well as to the European standards and criteria;

quality assurance and accreditation – for this purpose, a national system of quality control will be created, which will take account of the state requirements in higher education through the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency.

Now more than ever reforms in education are trying to respond to new conditions and are searching for ways to develop the future.

Czech Republic

Main developments in education, 1990-95
Over the past six years, the Czech education system has undergone an extensive transformation which is still under way. The first stage, completed in primary and secondary education in 1994, concentrated on increasing the number of places and extending the opportunities for free choice in education. The second stage is concentrating on improving the quality of education, strengthening the stability of schools, increasing the efficiency of the education system and broadening the educational opportunities for secondary school leavers.

The rapid increase in educational opportunities and the increased diversity of the courses on offer was conditional upon a number of fundamental changes:

- new types of education and schools (multi-year gymnasia, integrated secondary schools, post-secondary technical schools, and bachelor studies at university level);
- the emergence of non-state education and support for its expansion;
- a legal amendment concerning the financing of schools, whereby the amount of the grant awarded to each individual school from the state budget is directly related to the performance of that school, i.e. in particular, to the number of pupils it attracts;
- the increased autonomy and responsibility granted to the schools themselves.

Romania

Overhauling the education system
The reform of education in Romania started in 1990. The reform covers all aspects, components, institutions and processes of education. The main innovations are the following.

Pre-university education: the introduction of private institutions, the functioning of the pilot school units for basic and vocational education, making the last year of kindergarten attendance a compulsory preparation for the beginning of school attendance, more training profiles for secondary education, the organization of classes for particularly bright pupils, and alternative education and pedagogies.

Curricula and text-books: the liberalization of the education market (some 250 new schoolbooks, approved on the basis of inter-editorial competition, will be drawn up by the year 2000), the stress laid on the integrated teaching of scientific disciplines, the balance between compulsory and optional subjects, the introduction of religion into the curriculum, and the modular organization of some curricula.

Assessment: a permanent assessment mechanism at district and national levels, the preparation of national standards by subjects and levels.

Higher education: the introduction of mixed and differentiated financing according to the results, the type and level of education, financial autonomy, the autonomy of institutions in the planning and implementation of curricula, assurance of the flexibility and modularity of curricula in order to facilitate the mobility of students, and the introduction of a credit transfer system.

Slovakia

Social policy towards university students
Higher education in Slovakia has been developing very fast. Since 1990 three universities and 17 faculties, mainly teaching the humanities, have been established. In 1995 the number of students has been increased from 54 350 to 74 322, representing 20% of the whole population. The Ministry of Education is aware of the need for a policy in higher education to raise the number of students in different fields of higher education to 30% of the whole population.

In order to reach this target, new conditions have been created in legislation, development, the establishment of new higher education institutions (mainly non-state universities) and in the care of students

In the Slovak Republic, social welfare is derived from the Constitution of the Republic. The social and economic transformation requires changes in this area. In this context, the introduction of separate funding for the educational activities of higher education institutions and the social care of students is the most important task. The Ministry of Education has adopted measures to enable social scholarships to be provided for socially disadvantaged groups of student. Provision of these scholarships is based on a decree of the Ministry of Education on the provision of scholarships for higher education students.

A system of low-interest loans guaranteed by the state was introduced (decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic no. 5949/95-136-UP on material provision for higher education students in the form of loans). Students who meet the prescribed conditions can be provided with loans of up to SKK 20,000 per year (maximum SKK 100,000 for the whole period of study).

These legislative steps show the government's interest in the development of higher education and aim to alleviate the consequences for students of raising the indirect costs of study.

Company training placements for young people:
demand outstrips supply
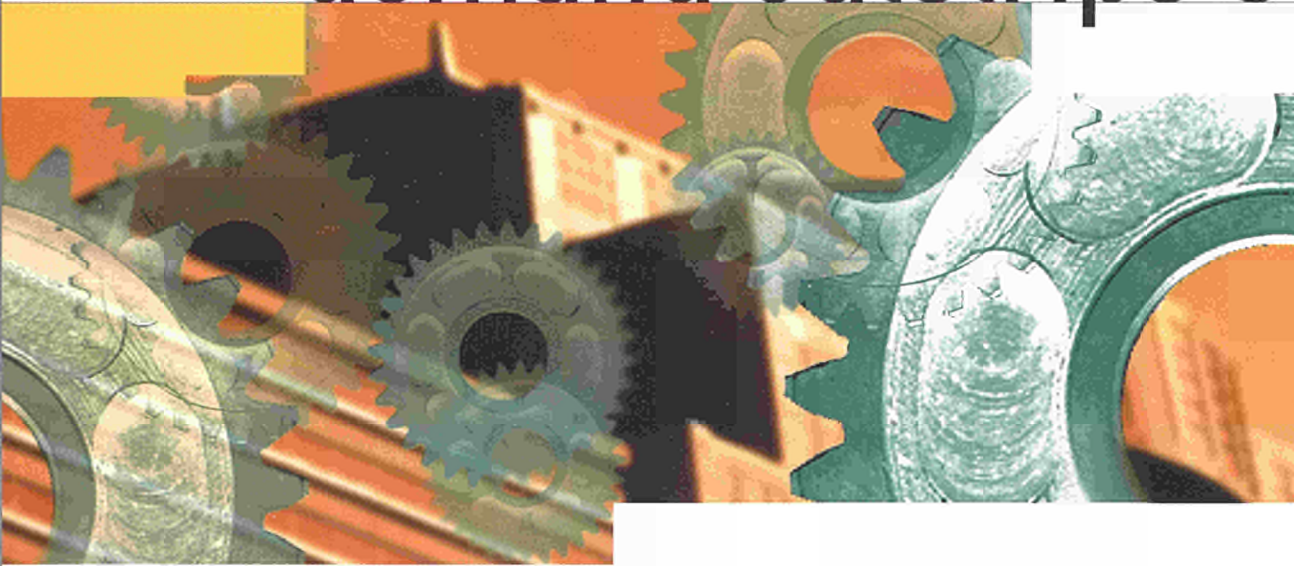
Increasing numbers of young people want to include a work placement in their vocational training.
Now companies are finding it difficult to take on more trainees for lack of human and financial resources.

Initial training programmes that include practical experience in a business environment are generally of higher quality, and are more likely to lead to future employment, than those that concentrate solely on academic concepts. The experience may take a number of different forms, from apprenticeship training to company placements, but the aim is always to assist the trainee's integration into the job market.

The formula has been so successful that companies, whatever their degree of involvement in the various national training systems, are finding it increasingly difficult to accept the growing numbers of applicants for training or vocational integration placements. This difficulty is apparent, both in countries such as Germany, where a structured participation between companies and education is favoured, and in those countries where training is more dependent on the education system and public authorities, for example in Spain and France.

An initial difficulty: reining in costs

Besides the ever-increasing number of applicants, companies are concerned about the difficulty of recovering the inherent costs of initial training, and this may explain their reticence about receiving trainees, apprentices or young people commencing work.

Decentralizing training skills is considered more efficient because it brings management closer to local realities. The regions also have responsibility for the reintegration of young people who have dropped out of the education system, have no qualifications and face a real risk of social exclusion. This year, incidentally, marks the 25th anniversary of Germany's vocational training law.

In France, the current priority is to relieve the state's budget by regionalizing the management of vocational training. Similarly, in Spain, the decentralization process is taking shape through a series of new laws designed to bring together two vocational training systems – one under the control of the education ministry, a system held to be more qualifications-geared, the other managed by the National Labour Institute and considered to be more practical and more likely to lead to employment.

A good return on investment?

In Germany, where the involvement of companies is fully integrated into initial training, there are problems of spiralling costs and a shortage of staff able to train young applicants for alternance training. The situation could become critical, which has prompted the German Chancellor Kohl to call for a round table discussion to try to convince employers of the worth of the system.

However, the increasingly acute challenges of productivity have led to a major restructuring of work and a sustainable mobilization of human resources in business. In companies that are undergoing rapid restructuring, it is increasingly more difficult to make a training manager available. The arrival of young trainees in a company at the same time as it is laying off workers is bound to cause tensions within the company, as these youngsters can all too easily be perceived as cheap labour. As a result some major German companies train several thousand youngsters each year, only a minority of which end up working for the company when their training is over.

Therefore, the return on the investment in terms of qualified workers for companies is difficult to measure, because some young people trained in a company might go on to work for a partner company, or for one of the company's sub-contractors, producing benefits that are hidden but no less real.

This situation is prompting companies to limit their contributions to the financing of apprenticeship training for young people, or to demand a financial input from the federal state.

However, following the round table discussions, and with increased support from the federal government, German employers are still committed to training, particularly in the former East Germany.

Quality counts

In certain countries, such as Denmark, the demand for work placements from young people is, happily, still being met by companies, thanks to a continuous, open dialogue between employers and the authorities responsible for initial vocational training.

As part of the 1995 plan drawn up by the education ministry to improve the quality of vocational training, Denmark is pursuing a policy of systematic assessment and integration of innovative experiments in the area of company placements for young people.

This provides a permanent, flexible link between vocational training institutions and companies, as well as a better match of the training needs of young people with the needs of employers, which leads to more direct access to employment.

Teacher training

In-Set in Europe

In-Service training (In-Set) for teachers and other educational staff is usually provided at a local, regional or national level. Under the Comenius programme, In-Set courses are now being developed at a European level, offering new training opportunities abroad.

Since the launch of Comenius in June this year, 128 projects have been selected and funded under the European In-Set scheme (action 3.1 of the programme). These courses bring together In-Set providers from different countries to create training materials and modules through transnational partnerships.

More than 2,500 teachers will be receiving grants during the programme's first full year of operation, until August 1997, to participate in 81 of these courses under Comenius (action 3.2). Offered in the 15 EU countries and Norway, the courses are being organized by 52 of the projects so far developed under action 3.1.

Each course lasts a minimum of one week and the maximum grant per participant is ECU 1,500. Their key characteristics are that they involve European teams of trainers and European groups of participants, in which no one nationality can exceed 25% of each group, with provision being made for the use of minority languages.

The content of the courses on offer is already very varied, ranging from *Writing an opera, Teaching computers* and *Teaching physics* to *Strategies for preventing early school-leaving* and *Introducing the European dimension and skill transfer between teachers from rural schools*. Nonetheless, they are all designed within a European context to address two broad thematic areas:
- raising school achievement, whilst particularly targeting children with special needs and capacities;
- developing teachers' abilities to introduce a European dimension into their school work.

Some courses focus on content, others on materials or methodology and tools; some will be subject-specific, others cross-curricular; some will concentrate on the individual classroom, others on the whole-school context. As with all good quality In-Set, the intention must be to relate course participation closely to the actual teaching context experienced by each participant. The course organizers therefore provide careful preparation and follow-up.

A catalogue of the courses is being published twice a year by the Commission, containing information forms completed by the course organizers, and distributed to all Comenius action 3.1 project coordinators as well as the programme's national agencies in each country. Action 3.2 is decentralized, i.e. the selection of a country's participants is made by its own national agency.

This extension of teacher training to the European level has already generated very positive feedback from participants, who appreciate the opportunity to share experiences – often for the first time – and acquire new skills within a transnational group of their peers. It is recognized as a unique opportunity for involving teachers and educational staff, working at a grassroots level yet on a European scale, in searching for and sharing solutions to the many challenges facing education.

In future, the aim is to create links with national In-Set provision in each country so that European courses can be integrated within national courses, particularly as regards recognition and entitlement for participants.

To increase the impact of European In-Set, the Commission and national agencies are also exploring ways of generating a multiplier effect more broadly within Comenius, notably within the European education projects developed by school partnerships under action 1 of the programme, and of using the feedback from action 3.2 to secure high quality in the modules and materials produced under action 3.1.

Multimedia

Primary and secondary schools in Europe remain very poorly equipped with multimedia computer terminals. How are children being prepared for the "information society"? The European Commission is launching a three-year action plan.

If young people are to break into new types of employment and have a real opportunity of integrating into working life, it is essential that they are able to handle computer technology by the time they leave school. It could be argued that pupils have all the opportunities they need to learn by themselves, for example, at home or in a cybercafe. But in reality, only a few privileged youngsters have such opportunities. The statistics prove it – only 2% of families in France have a computer with a modem, 5% in Germany and 8% in the United Kingdom. Multimedia terminals costing about ECU 2,000 are simply too expensive for most homes in Europe.

Schools face a heavy responsibility. The education system is responsible not only for imparting knowledge, but above all, for ensuring equal opportunity for all children. Therefore, it is up to the schools to make training young people in multimedia technology a priority. But there is a long way to before this opportunity becomes a reality.

Fewer than 1% of classes have a telephone line at their disposal

The overall number of computer terminals in schools remains very low. In 1994, the number of computers per 100 students stood at only 2 in Germany, and 3 in France and the Netherlands, compared to 10 in Sweden and 11 in the UK. Furthermore, in many cases, the technology is obsolete.

The problem often goes deeper still. A telephone line is needed to hook up to the Internet, yet fewer than 1% of European classrooms have a line at their disposal. In Ireland, for example, half of the primary schools in rural areas are not even connected to the telephone network.

Clearly, schools are falling behind in light of the demands of the information society. This gap needs to be closed quickly to avoid potentially problematic social fragmentation among young people.

The reasons for these inadequacies are many and varied. They are partly due to the poor preparation of teachers in the area of multimedia, and uncertainty about the quality and educational content of the software currently available. But the primary explanation lies in a lack of funding. Equipping a classroom with a multimedia terminal and keeping it running costs a considerable amount of money, particularly when education everywhere is being required to tighten its belt.

The various departments of the European Commission have worked out a few estimates. A basic set-up for a school (4 multimedia PCs, 2 printers, plus connection costs) comes to about ECU 12,000. Multiplied by 320,000, the number of

A political priority

With *Learning in the information society*, the Commission is responding to a call by the European Council in Florence in June 1996 to develop an initiative in favour of schools as part of the European Pact of Confidence for Employment. The plan also follows the resolution of 6 May 1996 by the European education ministers in support of promoting the use of educational techniques in partnership with the private sector.

in every classroom

Four lines of action

The European initiative consists of four principal stages:
- Promoting the interconnection of local, regional and national networks of schools.
- Encouraging the development and diffusion of educational "contents" of European interest.
- Promoting the training and support of teachers and trainers in the integration of technologies into educational practices.
- Informing all players about the educational opportunities offered by audio-visual and multimedia technology.

Back to school for switched-on classes

schools in Europe, this total is ECU 3.8 billion. Including the extra costs of connecting to more advanced networks (ISDN, for example), this sum goes as high as ECU 5 billion. This is a major investment: annual expenditure on education in 1994 amounted to ECU 360 billion across the European Union.

Public and private partnerships

The Commission cannot simply hand out this kind of money or take over the Member States' responsibility for education systems and policies. But it does have the means to create impetus, and give support to good practices at every level. This is the basic aim of the action plan for a European education initiative (1996-1998), entitled *Learning in the Information Society*, initiated by Commissioners Cresson and Bangemann.

As a priority, this plan is geared towards primary and secondary schools, in other words to establishments which represent the weak link in the education chain when it comes to the use of technologies. The Commission is not putting any extra money on the table for this initiative, but it will mobilize various Community resources through existing programmes, which are geared towards the development of "contents", education and training, and research.

Another key idea of this plan is the establishment of lasting partnerships between the private and public sectors, which the Commission intends to promote across the Member States. The public sector can hardly undertake all the costs of equipping and connecting Europe's 320,000 schools on its own. For telecommunications operators, the schools market is a godsend in a rapidly-expanding sector, so it is only natural that they should make a financial contribution to the investment. Various countries are already carrying out

interesting experiments in this area. In Germany, for example, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology recently launched a three-year initiative, with the financial backing of Deutsche Telekom, a three-year initiative designed to connect up 10,000 of the country's 52,000 schools. The Commission will publicize all these ground-breaking initiatives, large and small, occurring in EU countries.

The educational challenge

Alain Dumort, head of the "new technologies" section of DG XXII, sets out the new perspectives. The first challenge will be to link, on a Europe-wide level, the various networks which exist between schools To achieve this, the Commission, in the short term, will create an Internet site designed to help direct all the educational players towards relevant information on multimedia. Finally, in May of each year, open days should be arranged everywhere in schools.

Alain Dumort has a lot to say about this exciting subject. But there is one point in particular which he holds dear. With multimedia, he says, a major step has been taken away from the techniques of the 1970s and 80s. *"Now, it is the interface between people and not man and machine, which counts. Amongst other things, multimedia puts active teaching methods back in the saddle, methods which have been relatively marginalized in schools up to now."* One small example highlights the potential benefits. In the United States, a study was carried out on a sample group of 153 schools in Kentucky at the end of the 1980s. This showed that the introduction of computers into classrooms reduced by half the number of pupils who failed academically. *"Learning in the information society"* – isn't the effort worthwhile?

Information and communications networks offer new opportunities to boost educational exchanges between schools. In Europe, moves to connect schools to the Internet in particular have been launched with the support of public authorities and businesses.

Networks of schools already exist – and some have been around for several years, at local, regional or national level.

For example, since 1994 about 100 primary schools in Vercors, a mountainous region of the French Alps, have been exchanging information, work and ideas on "bushl networks". If they wish, schools that are connected to the Internet are open to other experiments on a national and international level.

The schools of the German *land* of Hessen, joining forces as part of the Kokos project, use information and communication networks to carry out comparative practical work on the state of the region's environment. Data on the quality of water or energy consumption is connected at various points by schools and distributed

The Schools Online network brings together 60 schools in the UK – 1700 pupils and 300 teachers – via the Internet. The educational exchanges revolve around the sciences and modern languages included in the curriculum.

ODIN, the Nordic School Network, is a good example of international cooperation between the schools networks of Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Set in place by the Nordic Council, the ODIN network makes available a body of information on the activities of schools, and offers a discussion forum.

Whether they are in the street, scout hut or local club, youth leaders are in direct contact with young people. In the third phase of Youth for Europe, the Commission is strengthening its support for their training. One of the lesser known elements of this programme aims to add a European dimension to the training of youth leaders, with the aim of changing practices and attitudes.

In the front line: European support for the training of youth leaders

Since 1988, when the Youth for Europe programme was launched, the Commission has paid special attention to the training of youth leaders. At the time, the idea was to help leaders to arrange exchanges between groups of youngsters. These training initiatives encompass every aspect of the project, from its preparation through to follow-up. In six years, more than 1,500 youth leaders have also been involved in more specialized training on issues such as intercultural learning, the fight against racism or working with young people from less-favoured backgrounds.

In addition to this, there were various initiatives between 1992 and 1994 as part of "Priority actions in the youth field", an initiative with its own budget heading, designed to complement Youth for Europe, following the vote on a resolution in the European Parliament. The approach in this area of training is more theoretical. The "priority actions" aimed to increase cooperation between Member States and strengthen the European dimension of the training of youth leaders, to increase the amount of work carried out on methodologies, develop teaching modules, and so on.

Then came 1995 and the third phase of Youth for Europe. Dispersion of actions and energies was no longer on the agenda – in the future, all young people's activities were to be integrated into a single programme. Youth leaders are now treated as a separate constituency, with a specific chapter, Action B, accounting for about 7% of the total budget of the programme devoted to them.

This category of youth leaders encompasses volunteers and professionals alike, and includes such diverse figures as youth club leaders, street teachers or people involved in the scout movement. While what this means in practice can vary widely from one country to another, a common thread links all these activities: direct contact with young people, especially those who fall through the net of other structures or who live in less affluent districts. These youth leaders are in a prime position to address young people directly. By supporting them, the Commission will make it easier for less-favoured young people to get involved with European programmes.

Greater flexibility

Action B is divided into two parts. The first part broadly contains the old mechanisms designed to facilitate and improve the quality of youth exchanges. The youth leader receives financial support from the Commission for a visit to another country, enabling them to identify worthwhile partners; for a feasibility visit designed to test the reliability of this partnership; and, finally, for the arrangement of the actual exchange of youngsters. At this level, a degree of flexibility has been introduced, under the "other activities" umbrella.

For example: The leader of a local association in a troubled district wishes to set up a European exchange project involving a group of young immigrant girls. Several long months may elapse between the initial idea and the initiation of the project. The danger is that during this waiting period, the group may fall apart, or lose its motivation. In order to address this problem, it might prove useful to arrange various events, to meet the parents, to re-engage the girls' interest... At present, European assistance is also possible for this type of complementary activity.

This first Strand BI (preparation of activities directly involving young people) falls within the remit of the national agencies responsible for Youth for Europe in the various Member States. But here again, things are on the move. Training for youth leaders has all too often been organized solely from a national point of view, that is, each country would set its own criteria and priorities. In May 1996, the European Commission organised a first meeting in Vienna between the national agencies on the theme of "how to involve youth leaders in the Youth for Europe programme". This meeting offered the opportunity, through an exchange of experiences, to define common action strategies and identify synergies between the different states.

Changing attitudes

Strand BII includes (in their broadest terms) the objectives pursued through the "priority actions" – developing and consolidating the training of youth leaders on a European level.

This stage, piloted directly by the Commission, is not designed to result in a wild proliferation of projects. It is banking on lever effects that will change approaches in the long term. This work is experimental and based on innovation.

The project set up on the initiative of the training centre for youth leaders in Brussels, the CFA, bears witness to this original approach. As its starting point, the initiative asked a question: how might youth leaders be trained in video-based information techniques? The CFA joined forces with a French partner, En-Jeu-Télé, which takes a critical look at the ways in which young people decode television pictures. A third body, the Centre for Popular Culture (member of an Italian network of anti-illiteracy associations) in the town of Ispica, Sicily, is also involved in the project. During a first meeting in Italy, the different policies on training in audiovisual youth leadership were explored, and a video featuring young Sicilians was produced, which also serves as a support for a more theoretical exercise. Starting with this initiative, step by step, a wider-reaching European training project is taking shape and coming up with new ideas.

This year, the Commission has financed 11 such projects. However, as Brigitte Degen, responsible for the training of youth leaders in DG XXII, points out, action B is too little known: it merits greater interest. From the first half of 1997, DG XXII will be taking things in this direction.

This being said, moving beyond a "simple exchange of words and texts" and incorporating the European dimension into the training of youth leaders is far from easy. Training is a market in which everyone is intent on protecting their territory, and changing attitudes inevitably takes longer than anything else.

"Our wish," says Brigitte Degen, *"is to develop opportunities for exchange and cooperation. The European idea needs to be spread much wider and taken up by people in their own way."*

From one shore of the Mediterranean to the other

Cooperation:
young people
show the way

Since 1995, exchanges of young people have become widespread between the European Union and 12 countries on the far shores of the Mediterranean. Central to these exchanges are projects designed to bring the Israeli and Palestinian communities closer together and open the road to peace.

What a combination! In October 1995, a group of young Palestinians, together with youngsters from Israel, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, met successively in Dublin, Londonderry and Belfast – an exchange which lasted 11 days. The idea was to come together to examine how groups of people living through conflict situations can overcome their differences through a better understanding of each other's traditions and cultures. In the course of this exchange, the participants played a role exchange game, with each individual putting his or herself in another person's shoes to try to find solutions to the conflicts. At the same time, visits were arranged to Catholic or Protestant organizations. Northern Ireland has embarked on a long process of peaceful rapprochement between its opposing communities, and as such has valuable experience to offer.

A dozen countries

This project, *Cultures in conflict*, was launched by an Irish association called Experiment in International Living. It received financial support from the European Commission as part of the Community programme Youth for Europe III, which explicitly includes a section devoted to exchanges with non-EU Mediterranean countries. Since 1995, when the latest phase of the programme swung into action, 12 states in the south and south-east Mediterranean (from Morocco to Turkey) have participated in youth exchanges. Amongst them, Israel and the Palestinian territories have recently inspired a wide range of initiatives.

A message of solidarity

In order to fully understand the context, a little history lesson is necessary. Over the past few years, relations between the European Union and countries on the far side of the Mediterranean have seen rapid evolution. Since the Berlin Wall fell and the former communist bloc embraced democracy, there has been some anxiety amongst the countries of North Africa and the Mediterranean coast that the European Union turn them away. But it has never been Europe's intention to close itself up in a fortress, cut off from its southern neighbours. Especially not where young people are concerned. It was important to send out a strong message of solidarity to Mediterranean countries outside the Community.

Since 1992, through the impetus provided by the European Parliament, youth exchange projects involving the European Union and the countries of North Africa have been promoted as part of "Priority actions in the youth field". Initially, only three countries were involved – Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. From 1992 to 1994, the Commission financed projects for the training of youth leaders in the form of visits designed to identify experts and exchanges.

New momentum

In 1995, a DG XXII delegation led by Alekos Tsolakis visited the Palestinian territories and Israel on a fact-finding mission. Contacts were established with Simon Peres and Yasser Arafat. The delegation met up with youth movements from both sides. A momentum was established which led, in the same year, to the creation of a common youth affairs organization for Palestinians and Israelis.

However, despite these various initiatives, cooperation with non-EU Mediterranean countries is still less developed than Latin America and the countries of Central Europe. And youth exchanges with the Mediterranean tend to be restricted to the southern, EU countries, which have strong historical and cultural links with North Africa. These initiatives, therefore, need to be pursued and intensified.

A Mediterranean Youth Forum

In 1995, events accelerated. The Youth for Europe III programme, while taking over the old "priority actions", increased to 12 the number of Mediterranean countries concerned.

In November, new impetus was given by the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Barcelona, involving the foreign ministers of the various states. This meeting culminated in a commitment to create a genuine Euro-Mediterranean youth exchange programme within the near future.

Early in June 1996, six months after Barcelona, those responsible for youth policies on both sides of the Mediterranean met for the first time in Amman, Jordan, where the idea of creating a Mediterranean Youth Forum was launched and the setting up of the Euro-Mediterranean youth exchange programme was discussed again. Most importantly, the needs being expressed in different countries were taken into account, but complicated issues remain to be clarified or resolved. For example, in a programme of this kind, how can youth organizations, NGOs which are not directly linked to the official parties in power, be brought into the programme; and, how do we ensure that parties of young travellers contain a mixed group of boys and girls – a fundamental principle for the Commission?

Please don't let me be misunderstood:
stepping up research on youth issues

Research in the field of youth is lagging behind other subjects in the social sciences or technology. The Commission is keen to close this gap and, in particular, promote European cooperation in this area. Youth for Europe III now includes research and 12 projects received financial support from the European Commission this year.

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With widespread recession and rising unemployment, more young people are finding themselves forced to live with their parents at an age when they should be establishing their own independence. Their parents, meanwhile, find themselves responsible for grandparents who are tending to live longer and need just as much support. Is there a risk that these trends will lead to a new variety of major conflicts between the generations?

Racist violence among young people is steadily growing throughout Europe. If effective solutions are to be found, it is necessary, among other things, to accurately assess the problem, investigate the role played by extremist groups, as well as determine the relationships between the social circumstances of young people and the increasing number of xenophobic incidents. Immigrant girls in particular often have difficulties with social integration and face discrimination in the areas of education and entry to the job market. What is the nature of this situation in the different Member States? What practical steps can be taken to address it?

A common thread of three examples of studies financed in 1996 by the Commission, as part of its Youth for Europe III programme, is that they have been carried out in partnership with at least three European countries. This research strand, which appears in chapter E 2 of the programme, did not exist in the first two phases. As for the other areas of Youth for Europe, this strand involves the 15 EU countries plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein and gives priority to disadvantaged youngsters or youngsters from less-favoured backgrounds.

Studies designed to get things moving

The activities of young people are manifold, dynamic and spontaneous. The idea that they can serve as a model for society is vigorously asserted by Edith Van der Velden (see page 21). But what is often missing is accessibility, a more theoretical framework, and a broader strategic outlook. In general terms, research and studies in the youth field lag behind other sectors and other disciplines. In particular, there is a glaring lack of cooperation at a European level. At best, partnerships grow between researchers, but only within neighbouring geographical areas – the Mediterranean or Germanic. This partitioning is unfortunate, since habits and cultures in the youth field differ greatly between northern and southern Europe, and there is obviously something to be gained from mutual understanding and collaboration.

In 1995, the European Commission earmarked a budget of ECU 500,000 for research projects within Youth for Europe III. There is no question now that these studies should be pursued in order to stimulate policies at national level States and guide the Commission through its various initiatives. This is one of the reasons why, through strand E 2, an emphasis is placed on the bridges to be built between scientific and political bodies. In the same spirit, priority is also given to information and the dissemination of the results of studies. For example, in order to obtain financial backing from the Commission, the authors of the research must indicate precisely how the data will be transmitted to governmental and non-governmental structures concerned with youth affairs.

The Commission, for its part, has pledged to widely communicate the ideas put forth and the data gathered. The messages will be published on the Internet, and in publications, but also through an entire network operation. An annual seminar is planned in order to promote exchanges between the various projects selected.

Priority themes

The first call for projects, published by the Commission towards the end of 1995, brought in 74 proposals from which 12 research projects were finally selected for this year. A rigorous selection process was essential. DG XXII was assisted by a scientific committee of independent researchers and backed up by both Council of Europe representatives and the Youth Forum.

A further call for projects, published in July 1996 and closed in October, after preliminary inspection, show great diversity and imagination and demonstrate how this strand of Youth for Europe III ties in with realistic expectations.

Despite this, the budget available across the Community remains modest. This is why the decision was made to target research on priority themes including the fight against racism, help for homeless youngsters, and the relationship between young people and the new media.

"Do you belong?"

This article is taken from a contribution by Edith Van Der Velden to the discussion between DG XXII staff and a group of experts on the theme of "Education and training to build citizenship". It is inspired by experience and activities both within the Member States and Community-wide and illustrates why actions such as the Youth for Europe programme work. The text was written as notes for an oral presentation. It is reproduced here in its original form, but translated into English.

You can't talk about education and training in neutral terms, nor can you avoid talking about them in terms of a project for society without reflecting on the power struggles that underpin our society, its value system and the role of standards.

Taken from the perspective of citizenship, education and training presuppose a particular concept of the citizen. When you are excluded, you find that you are no longer a citizen so much as a burden on society, no longer an actor so much as a spectator, no longer the subject so much the object. In other words, you no longer have the right to be heard. We know that in our societies, dominated as they are by the market and competitiveness, in order to be a subject, to be an active, fully-fledged member and therefore a citizen, you must have a job – a paid job. Otherwise, you are no longer entitled to your place at the table. And it seems that there is really nowhere else to go and sit, if not around that table. Only then will you be entitled to ask why, when you don't have what it takes to be integrated, you must also lose your right to dignity and to citizenship. Why is your status reduced to that of an object?

The social question

Exclusion touches, above all, on the socialization and humanization of our societies. Exclusion is a symptom, like the little spot on your skin pointing to an illness that you choose to ignore, and really requires diagnosis. Excluded people bear witness to the current absence of social thinking, in that they are deprived not only of wealth, but also and above all, of a voice and the recognition that is essential to a dignified existence.

In some societies, it is said that one's duty is to give one's life to the mother country, or devote everything to the future of the planet, or indeed prepare for eternal life and so forsake all worldly goods. In our societies, we are told that our duty is to fulfil our desires. The declared aim of TV advertising is to "create desire", and this is the message it sends out, in exactly these terms. All that is asked of you, if you are to serve today's society, is to have desires, including the desire to be stronger than your neighbour. Competition and pleasure are above all else.

Because of the way it operates, our society therefore sidesteps the issue of the absence of social thinking created by exclusion. The question of the social worth of property and activities is increasingly being left to market forces alone – in other words, to the golden calf of individual preference.

Therefore, if we are to deal with the question of exclusion in a discussion on citizenship-oriented education and training, we first must deal with a number of key issues. So on what basis, and in relation to what social project and what conception of the citizen, are we to design citizenship-oriented education and training, bearing in mind the fact that young people are one of the social groups most prone to exclusion?

A strange paradox

Any discussion on citizenship-oriented education also needs to reflect upon the position that young people actually hold in our societies. First and foremost, we need to ask whether their problems, values, modes of organization as full members of a group, and thus as citizens, have a rightful place in society in general, and in particular in education institutions, the urban environment or in the world of economics.

"You belong here" sings a rap artist. But nothing is less certain. The questions we are asking here relate, first and foremost, to whether or not society will continue to base young people's rights on the adoption of a model that is tending more and more to exclude them, and that they are rejecting. Next, how are we to view the prospects for this society where, as the statistics remind us, young people constitute a minority which is both more threatened by exclusion than any other, and is the social group upon which we are banking on to guarantee that our societies function healthily in the future?

This is a strange paradox, whose repercussions we have not yet begun to deal with.

There has never been as much talk about citizenship as there is today. Until quite recently, the only words we heard were profitability, productivity and competitiveness. Competitiveness and productivity are still on the agenda, more so than ever, but all of a sudden, those in charge of the worlds of politics, education and economics are taking an interest in citizenship, or at least in the state of its health. Has citizenship suddenly become profitable in the market sense, making it the focus of attention in the face of a stubborn recession which appears resistant to all the old remedies? This is as intriguing as it is worrying! What sort of citizenship are we talking about?

Just a stopgap?

For some policies, at least, it did not take a recession to prompt consideration of citizenship and the teaching of citizenship. These are policies geared towards young people, which have developed a number of initiatives, with the widest possible range of groups, with and for young people outside school and vocational training.

For decades now, their activities have been based on the implementation of educational approaches geared towards participation, initiative and responsibility, opening up a whole area of learning to democracy and promoting recognition of diversities and plurality of identity.

No, it is not a question, as some people still insist on believing, of creating a nature reserve where we stick disadvantaged or marginalized youngsters, but rather of a totally separate educational sphere which brings together all the young people in our society and introduces them to the complexities of social existence, which strives to reconcile individualism with the collective interest, freedom with solidarity. When young people organize a "project cafe" for children and young people living on the streets, while others, from four different countries, prepare and produce together an anti-racist show and take it on tour in towns and villages throughout the Union, a living citizenship is being learned, which must stand the test of day-to-day reality, most of the time in a multicultural society. They are actors, and not objects.

If it could be recognized in its own right, and not as a simple stopgap for youngsters facing a transition, this experimental laboratory working on new models for societies, learning and training which youth policies constitute could add an extra dimension to the debate which currently concerns us. This is a political choice.

Citizenship in schools is by its very essence shot through with conflicts and boundaries. How indeed do we reconcile the role of socialization for everyone with that of making human resources profitable in market terms? The boundaries must be recognized because it is here that other, complementary spheres of socialization and learning will be found. The activities of the youth sector are an essential component in this process.

Edith Van Der Velden

Leonardo da Vinci

New profiles, new perspectives

Initial impressions of the 1996 call for proposals

A look at the proposals submitted for Leonardo da Vinci this year highlights the major trends in vocational training projects across Europe.

The 1996 call for proposals for Leonardo da Vinci brought in 2,845 applications for transnational projects involving 23,282 partner groups.

The five priorities set by the Commission for this call appear to have resulted in closer targeting and a more precise orientation of proposals compared to those submitted in 1995.

A better understanding of the objectives of Leonardo da Vinci and the requirements necessary to carry through a high-quality transnational project has also developed during the programme's first year of operation.

A major preoccupation: employment and vocational integration

In general terms, the 1996 proposals correspond clearly to three Community priorities: the first (acquisition of new skills), second (bringing teaching or training establishments and businesses closer together) and third (combating exclusion) are particularly interesting because they deal with the issue of unemployment, which is the main preoccupation of the great majority of proposals.

Links, bridges, synergies – business opens doors to young people

Many of the proposals focused on the coming together of schools and universities on the one hand and business on the other – the objective of the second priority of the 1996 call. An intense interest in alternance training, as a way of helping young people undergoing initial training in their transition to working life, was at the heart of many projects.

Similarly, programmes geared towards the placement of students and young graduates in companies represent a valuable opportunity for the transfer of skills and technology from higher education establishments to the business world, and in particular to SMEs, whose infrastructures and methodologies are often all too limited.

Key skills for facing change

Enhancing the employability of young people and workers through improved vocational guidance, the subject of the fourth priority (investment in human resources), or through skills audits, is an objective of a growing number of projects. An additional objective is the acquisition of more flexible skills, "key" skills, which can be used in and adapted to

vocational contexts in a constant state of flux. For example, communications skills (learning foreign languages, ability to think methodically) are playing an essential role in the adaptation of the world of agriculture to the changing rural environment and the development of green tourism.

Personal services

The integration of poorly-qualified young people into the job market and the training of long-term unemployed people facing social exclusion are among the objectives of a growing number of projects. This trend fits in with the third priority of the 1996 call for proposals, and focuses primarily on local jobs and the social economy, following the example of training projects for home helpers and child minders.

It is also being noted that the principal sources of employment are continuing to expand in the general context of improvement in the quality of life, whether this means projects geared towards protecting the environment, monitoring green areas or strengthening home visit services for the elderly.

The important role played by the non-market sector in the training proposals is also worth mentioning. Both community institutions and public services with a social education or socio-cultural portfolio are involved in numerous projects.

Training validated and recognized

Another strong trend in the Leonardo da Vinci 1996 call for proposals relates to systematic research into the recognition and validation of the results of different training initiatives by national structures.

This is another essential dimension of the programme, as various transnational cooperation initiatives aim, amongst other things, to have an effect on training at national level. Consequently, active participation by public authorities as partners of transnational vocational training projects is undoubtedly a bonus.

Technology is the facilitator

More than ever before, the proposals in the 1996 call have highlighted a trend towards a more generalized use of information technologies and communications, not as a training end in themselves but as a means to unlimited access to information. The possibilities opened up by today's telecom-

munications networks represent a powerful stimulant to professional activity, just as modern techniques of image compression are opening up new horizons in three-dimensional modelling for industrial production and the simulation of operating conditions for parts or tools.

Complementary partners

A final trend in the Leonardo da Vinci 1996 proposals relates to transnational partnerships to run training projects.

The initiative for projects lies mainly with the service providers, in other words universities and training bodies, rather than with the targets of training, namely companies, trade or professional organisations, and the social partners.

Nonetheless, a positive development is emerging from the analysis of the 1996 call for proposals: although companies are relatively inactive as promoters of projects, their presence as partners is more marked than in the 1995 call.

In more general terms, the partnerships backing proposed Leonardo da Vinci projects in 1996 are broader and more diverse, highlighting a realization of the need to work upstream of the training process, with the requirements of business as the starting point.

Finally, the 1996 Leonardo da Vinci call for proposals left the door open to the involvement, without legal or financial impact, of organisations from the countries of central and eastern Europe, and the Baltic countries, as well as Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland. Although their involvement represented no more than 1% of the total number of partners, their participation added an important dimension to the programme,. Their first year of "silent" participation might therefore be viewed as a gentle breaking-in for the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

With a clearer picture of its priorities and intended targets, the programme is on track. The trends in the call for proposals in 1995 are being confirmed in 1996, but they have matured, sitting more comfortably in their socio-political context and perceiving more clearly the imperatives for innovation in vocational training and continuity of experience.

The virtual advantages of teleplacements*

* The concept of the teleplacement (as described in this article) may be defined as a work training and experience opportunity based on the integration of individuals into a virtual, interactive working environment, in which, for a given period, they complete a range of tasks and jobs backed up by supervision and regular advice.

The idea of teleplacements is to provide a virtual interactive working environment. It could open new pathways for people looking for their first professional experience, while benefiting young graduates, schools and businesses. The Commission is paying close attention to the concept.

Results of the selection of projects following the 1996 call for proposals for Leonardo da Vinci

A few key figures
Following the assessment process, 793 projects were selected on the basis of qualitative criteria, and their adherence to the five priorities defined by the Commission for the 1996 call; in other words, 27% of eligible projects were selected. The total amount of financing granted to the chosen projects amounts to more than ECU 112 million, representing an average allocation of ECU 141,500.

Projects selected
The 793 transnational projects selected following the 1996 call for projects for Leonardo da Vinci include:
- 582 pilot projects;
- 170 placements and exchange programmes;
- 41 pieces or research and analysis;
- 299 projects for procedure I;
- 494 projects for procedure II.

As regards the Community priorities for 1996, the selected projects may be broken down as follows:
- 291 projects, or 37%, for priority 1 (acquisition of new skills);
- 197 projects, or 25%, for priority 2 (bringing teaching and training establishments and the business sector closer together);
- 88 projects, or 11%, for priority 3 (combating exclusion);
- 118 projects, or 15%, for priority 4 (investment in human resources);
- 99 projects, or 12%, for priority 5 (access to knowledge through the information society).

Mr M is Scottish and lives in an isolated village somewhere in the Highlands. He has just graduated as a chemical engineer and is searching for a job. His professional ambition is to specialize in quality control for food products. In Berlin, a company working in this sector agrees to offer him some initial work experience. But Mr M has a problem. It would mean spending several months in the host city, paying for his own transport and accommodation. Apart from any other considerations, it is simply not possible financially. Fortunately, an alternative does exist. Thanks to his teleplacement, he can do the training in the comfort of his own home, using his personal computer, in a virtual classroom.

This story is fictitious. But it could quite easily become a reality. Recent advances in on-line technology, dropping communication costs and the extent of computer technology in the workplace all make "distance" training placements – teleplacements – a possibility. Ideally, they would incorporate an office teleconferencing system. At present, this is still fairly expensive, but other promising and less expensive facilities do exist, such as the Internet.

Multiplying opportunities
This new way of training offers numerous advantages. A young person wishing to add to his or her qualifications or acquire a professional specialization often has trouble getting onto the right track. Teleplacements, which are more flexible than traditional company placements, should make it possible to multiply various experiences within the same time frame. By comparing a number of opportunities, students or young graduates will make more informed decisions, thereby increasing their chances of getting a job.

The formula is just as attractive for schools and universities. Traditionally, these institutions have drawn a clear dividing line between practical and academic strands of teaching. With a teleplacement, however, it would be quite possible to integrate practical work more closely into a theoretical course. Classes could also be enriched with (virtual) experience within companies, enabling pupils to become more self-reliant, acquire greater autonomy, and so on.

Benefits to both sides
The teleplacement could also provide a useful preparation for conventional training in a company, leading to greater efficiency and more positive results. The case of nursing students is a good example. Before going into a hospital, where they often feel rather lost and isolated, they can – thanks to their teleplacement – familiarize themselves with how the institution is organized, through a practical simulated case. In other business situations, the teleplacement promotes a more congenial approach, increasing the opportunity to communicate with the different members of the company.

Businesses, meanwhile, have everything to gain. Imagine a Dutch multinational, looking to locate a subsidiary or an office in southern Portugal. How would it prepare for such an operation? How could it find qualified local staff already familiar with the culture of the company? These are difficult issues. By offering teleplacements to Portuguese people living in the relevant area, the multinational could lay the foundation to make its future move easier, and enhance its reputation among the local population.

Worth looking into
If the teleplacement is to achieve its full potential, it is also necessary to properly supervise the work done. The individuals responsible for virtual training will not only need a perfect grasp of new telecommunications technologies, they will also need to cope with personalized, individualized work with the trainees. They will be required to facilitate contacts with every department in the company's structure. They will act as leaders and as catalysts, both of which calls for a totally new type of skilling.

The European Commission is following the concept of teleplacement with great interest. Of course, there is no question of forcing teleplacements onto the Member States; for the moment, the priority is to investigate the idea. David Morgan, who has responsibility for this area in DG XXII's vocational training directorate, wants there to be no misunderstanding. "The teleplacement is not designed to replace conventional placements. Its main aim is to add to the opportunities opened up by placements. The teleplacement is not a magic potion. It is one possible means amongst others of promoting European mobility."

Further information

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Open and distance learning:
breaking down the barriers

The virtues of open and distance learning are recognized, but in practice, certain factors exist which slow the progress of this alternative type of learning. The European Commission is doing all it can to break down these barriers. A new approach is being promoted, based on integrated projects, which focuses on teaching contents, economics and technology.

The Commission this year published the results of two studies that examined a number of the principal obstacles slowing down the development of open and distance learning in Europe: the question of costs and the diversity of legal provision.

The first of these studies, commissioned by DG XII from Chris Curran of Dublin City University, ended in January 1995 [1]. The author notes how widespread this type of teaching has recently become in Europe. The 12 EU countries covered counted between them five open universities and more than 80 traditional universities practising this type of teaching, involving some 500,000 students. Open and distance learning are expanding exponentially, yet progress is being slowed by a series of economic brakes.

The Curran study concluded that although the fixed costs of this non-traditional teaching are higher, the variable costs are lower. In other words, beyond a certain number of participating students, open and distance learning can cost less. This difference can be significant. Thus (taking fixed and variable costs together), the big open universities shoulder a charge per student which is between one third and one quarter that facing the conventional system.

There remains the thornier question of small establishments, which face higher costs than their larger counterparts. The study reviews the various factors which may reduce these costs: the choice of programmes, media and techniques used. On the latter point, as the author notes, open and distance teaching establishments are still not profiting fully from the latest innovations in computers and on-line systems.

Better protection for the consumer

The second study was carried out in 1992/1993 by Olivier Remien [2], an expert in the field. This was a first attempt to analyse the legal situation of distance teaching within the internal market. It was concerned with service providers who offer services or products in other Member States. The analysis focused on the private sector, where the prospects for development appear most promising, and also where the diversity of national legal provision seems to bear down most heavily. Olivier Remien recalls the withdrawal by the Commission, in the 1970s, of a draft directive, following the negative position adopted by the Council. In this area, the Commission is unable to order the harmonization of legislation; but it can propose better coordination between respective national provisions.

The study recommends improvements in two priority areas: quality control and consumer protection. It goes on to review various specific points in which the situation appears deadlocked: checking and approval mechanisms for open and distance teaching methods, issues of advertising, unfair competition, the rights of contractors (right to withdraw, protection against abusive clauses, and so on). The final chapter suggests a number of Community measures which could resolve the various problems evoked.

An evolving concept

Have we progressed at all since 1993? Yes, but only slowly, explains Sergio Corti, a specialist in this field within DG XXII. "In legal terms, we are still coming up against numerous difficulties. On the other hand, the Commission has been able to work continuously in the area of quality – despite facing rapidly changing circumstances." The concept of open and distance learning has evolved considerably.

A new trend is being seen, as Mr Corti notes, marked by an increasing delimitation between the concepts of "open" and "distance", two concepts once bound closely together. Opening up learning means individualising teaching and introducing more flexible methods, but it now also means guaranteeing means of access to training at every point in an individual's life. Previously, distance teaching had been essentially defined by the absence of any direct link between the teacher and the person being taught. But the advance of the information society and the appearance of the latest pieces of technology, such as educational software, video conferencing, and so on, now make direct contact possible even at a distance.

Another recent change is the increasing number of traditional universities that are opening up to these new technologies without necessarily trying to make access easier for less-favoured social categories or individuals living in remote areas.

In this perspective, the Commission has given financial support to a project designed to create an on-line link between 25 of Europe's oldest universities, including Bologna, Coimbra and Louvain. As part of this pilot experiment, Italian author Umberto Eco delivered a lecture on the science of communication, retransmitted simultaneously (by satellite and video-conference) to the different universities, and on the course programmes of the universities taking part in the project.

An integrated approach

No fewer than eight Community programmes relate to technology and/or teaching, and each one tends to feel a little isolated from its neighbour. Hence the Commission's current desire to give priority to a different approach, based more on an integration of projects. One example is a particular aspect of distance teaching, concerning the design of classes. It is impossible to make advances in the production of new software unless some thought is also given to the quality of the teaching, or to the ability of teachers to use new tools. Conversely, problems of content can no longer be addressed without discussion of the more technical aspects.

It is in this perspective that, on the initiative of European Commissioners Edith Cresson and Martin Bangemann, a "multimedia educational software" task force was set up. This brings together representatives from Directorates General XXII, XII (research), XIII (new technologies), III (industry) and X (information). In the near future, the Commission will, through a joint call for proposals, be seeking projects which cover every facet of this area – education, technology, and economics. These projects should benefit from horizontal financing, which would be quite an innovation for the Commission.

A few key dates

- **10 July 1987:** the European Parliament adopts a resolution underlining the importance of open and distance learning.

- **12 November 1991:** European Commission memorandum on open and distance learning in the European Community.
  The concept is defined more clearly. The present state of play is summarized. The major challenges are set out: developing human capital, expanding access to education and training. A reference definition of open and distance learning is given.

- **7 February 1992:** the Treaty of Maastricht is signed. Article 126 (education) refers to the need to encourage open and distance teaching, while preserving the concept of subsidiarity.

- **1995/1996:** the Community programmes Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci support projects designed to improve open and distance learning, especially with respect to teaching contents.

- **2 May 1996:** resolution by Council on educational and multimedia software in the fields of education and training.

- **17 December 1996:** joint call for proposals by the Commission on education software and multimedia.

(1) *The potential cost-effectiveness of tertiary open and distance learning.*
(2) *Distance teaching in economic law and consumer law in the Internal Market.*
Both publications issued by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Leonardo da Vinci

Multimedia Centre now open

New technologies in the service of training

Educational software and multimedia CD-Roms are beginning to flood the market, but where do you go for vocational training products? One place to start is the new resource centre set up by the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

Little-known resources - potential to be tapped

Besides the thousand or so vocational training products produced as part of the former Comett, Eurotecnet, Force, Lingua and Petra programmes, the first vocational training projects supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme are beginning to produce their teaching materials, a great many of which make use of multimedia and communication technologies.

These products are aimed at young people receiving training as well as active workers, and cover practically every sector of economic activity.

For example, highly innovative products are available for training tourism professionals in foreign languages, introducing motor mechanics to different engine sounds, or training teams responsible for safety and medicine in the workplace in the treatment of different types of burns.

The Leonardo da Vinci Multimedia Centre provides training professionals with a number of work stations equipped with the latest multimedia technology, which enables them to obtain information and try out the best products supported by the European Commission since 1986.

Vocational training products rarely receive wide circulation, and there is often a lack of information for potential users. It is important for the various vocational training players in Europe to be informed about the most recent innovations, so that the products financed by the Commission are known and to avoid duplication.

A unique outlook on vocational training in Europe

All the products available at the Leonardo da Vinci Multimedia Centre have been tested and assessed. Although some of these products are still at the prototype stage, they respond to rigorous criteria in terms of technical quality, software architecture, ease of installation and use, content and methodological relevance.

Moreover, the grouping of these products into a single site provides a unique outlook on what transnational projects and synergy between different training players have been able to accomplish. New products will be continuously brought on stream, and there will be an ongoing selection of the most impressive and innovative ones.

An accessible laboratory of innovation

The Multimedia Centre is accessible by appointment for on-site consultation and demonstration of one or more of the training products featured in the catalogue, with the assistance of a specialist consultant. Space and the number of work stations and skilled staff available to help visitors are limited. Priority is therefore given to representatives of European structures and the main vocational training players in Europe.

The training materials available have been produced in video, audio, floppy disk, CD-Rom or CD-I formats. They are generally accompanied by printed documentation.

With the opening of its Multimedia Centre, the Leonardo da Vinci programme is reaffirming its role as a European laboratory for innovation, and its desire to support the diffusion of its most outstanding training products.

A few vocational training products

presented at the Hanover Fair, 22 - 25 October 1996

Network devoted to CAAD (computer-assisted architectural design)

Numerous software tools exist in the area of computer-assisted design for the architecture, building and environmental management sector. This project, launched as part of the former Comett programme, aims to create a network service for use by professionals in the sector, designed to place the most powerful and innovative tools at their disposal.

The network, set up as a members-only groupware, permits a rapid transfer of images and graphics from one work station to another via ISDN lines (integrated services digital network).

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E-mail: reinhard_rinke@caad-net.de

LINGUAMED

More than ever, the paramedical and hospital world is facing growing internationalization. In the nursing profession there is an increasing need for international mobility.

The LINGUAMED project, developed as part of the Lingua programme, produces training CD-Roms in German, English and Danish, for use by hospital staff. Everyday situations in the life of a clinic or hospital provide simulated cues for learning.

The presence of a voice recognition interface transforms this product into a real virtual language lab.

Youandi-Communication Network GmbH
Hasenbornsenke 84
D-66679 Losheim am See
T +49 687 29 10 24 - F +49 687 23 041
E-mail: 100046.1023@compuserve.com

Qualifying training for women on maternity leave

What can women do to better overcome the difficulties related to their return to the workplace? Do their skills still correspond to employers' expectations? How can they avoid being overtaken by economic and industrial changes?

One solution involves updating the commercial qualifications of women during their maternity leave.

This is the objective of the *Qualifying training for women on maternity leave* project, developed as part of the former Community programme Force, which aims to organize modular training in a number of SMEs in the German region of Wiesbaden, as well as in Spain and Italy. These continuing training modules are available in English and German. The linking of these companies to a network was the object of a NOW project.

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Bosnia-Herzegovina

A new Higher Education Reform programme will give the four universities in war-ravaged Bosnia-Herzegovina aid to rebuild their facilities and lay the foundation for mutual understanding, reconciliation and international cooperation. ECU 1 million has been allocated to this initiative for 1996-97. Bosnia-Herzegovina recently became a participant in the Tempus programme and this aid will also pave the way for a smooth and efficient transition into the programme. *Le Magazine* interviewed Professor Nedzaf Mulabegovic, the Rector of the University of Sarajevo and President of the Bosnia Rectors' Council.

Further information

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For three years, war ravaged Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the aftermath, its four universities are struggling to rebuild both physically and academically. Just as the conflict has separated people from their villages and cities, creating a fragmented population, it has left in its wake higher education institutions which represent associations of faculties rather than functional, organised communities. The University of Sarajevo (with campuses at Zenica and Bihac), the University of Mostar (divided in two campuses, East and West) and the University of Tuzla are in Bosnia, while the University of Banja Luka is in the Serb Republic.

"Universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the same situation as universities were in Europe after World War II, " says Professor Nedzaf Mulabegovic, Rector of the University of Sarajevo and President of the Bosnia Rectors' Conference. "So you can understand the urgency of our need, for help in reconstructing our universities."

Serious economic constraints prevent Bosnia-Herzegovina from dealing with this problem on its own. There is no functioning economy, nor does the state have the financial resources to enable its universities to produce the educated workforce so desperately needed to rebuild the country and its society. About half the country's university teachers left during the war and very few are returning, while many young people were prevented from participating in academic studies during the war.

"For the future prospects of our young people, we have to physically and academically revitalise our universities. We need to educate young experts for the process of renewal and construction, and make it possible for young people to take part in the development of democracy," says Professor Mulabegovic.

The universities of Sarajevo and Mostar are most in need of aid for rebuilding, rehabilitation of premises and laboratories, and staffing. This is particularly urgent in the coming winter months to prevent university facilities from further decay by repairing roofs, window panes and heating systems.

The universities also need assistance in creating structures and strategies for their future development. Emerging management issues and the question of university reform have been identified and discussed with a team from the Council of Europe, but not addressed in any depth. A pilot project, *Model of a Modern University*, was initiated at the University of Sarajevo during the war and similar initiatives have been launched at other universities. Now, an important first step, the European Commission is funding an ambitious Higher Education Reform initiative. The aims are to support university managers in a process of reform which will bring Bosnian universities closer to EU standards, as well as to enhance their capacity to relate effectively both with the external community on a local level and the international university community. The Commission hopes to enable the Bosnian Rectors' Conference to provide a forum for informed debate and cooperation for the benefit of all four universities. This voluntary organisation is not yet functioning as a representative body at the national or international level and will need organisational support.

The programme

The development of an international relations office, coordinated at the national level through the Bosnian Rectors' Conference, is a key step. Next, participating universities will develop a language learning centre, which will be provided with multimedia equipment as well as training and technical assistance for staff. A programme of intensive language courses, also coordinated at the national level, will be available to rectors, deans, and international relations officers. In addition, courses in modern methodologies of second language learning will be provided both within Bosnia-Herzegovina and the EU itself to university teachers and senior students of EU languages.

Other programme activities will include study visits to relevant institutions within the EU and CEE; the development and implementation of actions for new management strategies and for university reform; and the provision of equipment and software to support the new processes of planning, administration and language acquisition. A management unit will manage the programme, while the necessary technical assistance will be provided by sub-contracted agencies.

Professor Mulabegovic stresses the importance of creating the necessary infrastructure to facilitate international cooperation: "Existing infrastructure is either very modest or does not function at all. Technical equipping and training of the staff is critical if the universities are going to be able to participate in the Tempus programme."

He believes that Tempus is the only real way to reintegrate the universities of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the European university family. "It will facilitate scientific research into the priority problems facing the country and create partnerships with European universities, as well as helping us acquire modern scientific infrastructure and educate researchers, particularly young ones."
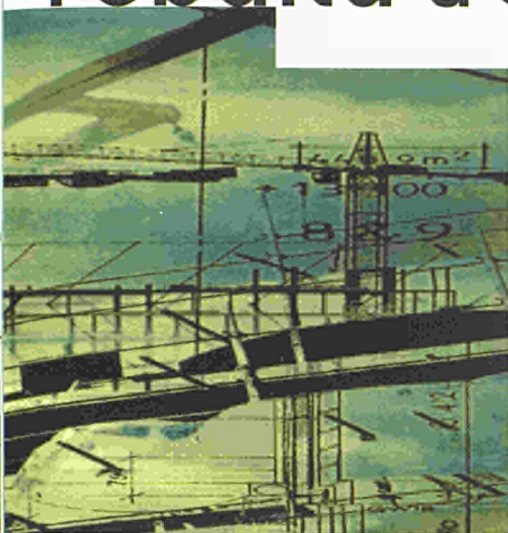
rebuild a shattered
university community

Universities... sources of democracy, tolerance and understanding

Against the backdrop of the current unpredictable political climate, there is also an expectation that the universities could play an important role in overcoming deep-rooted ethnic tensions and divisions.

There is no provision for any central responsibility for higher education under the terms of the Dayton Agreement and the Bosnia-Herzegovina constitution. Consequently, education is left to the two entities, which are fully autonomous in this regard. Under the constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, education is the responsibility of the regional cantons and higher education is not specifically mentioned. However, the individual cantons, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Neretva, Una Sana (Bihac) and Zenica-Doboj, do not have the means to cover the costs of the universities in their territories. Talks are currently under way to determine whether this task should be formally entrusted to the education ministry, which is meanwhile looking after university affairs on an ad hoc basis. In this context, the Higher Education Law of 1989, which now applies to the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, will soon be revised.

The Serb Republic has complete autonomy with regard to education on the basis of the Dayton Agreement. It has its own Higher Education Law, adopted at the beginning of the war in 1992, and its own education ministry. Before the September elections, the government of Pale took the position that no common institutions or activities would be possible until after the elections.

The European Commission's position is that international assistance should be linked to the observance of certain principles, such as the openness of the universities to all ethnic groups on the basis of equality, and even preferential treatment for minority nationalities; university autonomy and respect for academic freedoms; and the demonstration of concrete steps by the university to overcome intolerance.

"Universities are, by definition and academic tradition, sources of democracy, tolerance and understanding," says Professor Mulabegovic. "The first step is to connect the professors through working meetings, symposiums, and other forums to focus on the common issue of overcoming the serious consequences of the war."

He points to the exchange of documentation and relevant information, connecting to a united information system such as the Internet, and cooperation with mutual international partners as ways to bring the four universities together to foster understanding and create partnerships.

Other strategies for cooperation include joint summer schools on "neutral" ground, activating centres for human rights and creating centres for understanding and tolerance at the universities.

"In this sense, making international help and cooperation contingent on respect for the charter of European universities could be an unpopular, but possible measure," he says. "If these methods of cooperation are defined as we develop strategies for physical and academic reconstruction, they could realistically bring with them the elements of democratisation and openness."

For example, the University of Banja Luka is one Professor Mulabegovic strongly believes should take part in the Tempus programme, if it fulfills the requirements of the charter. He feels colleagues from that university are eager to participate.

Taken together, he believes these strategies will help the universities become more accessible to those who merit it, based on the quality of their work, rather than on their national affiliations.

A plea for understanding

Professor Nedzaf Mulabegovic knows that universities do not have the resources to provide their counterparts with significant financial aid. However, with the cooperation of the EU, West European governments, the United States and other countries, he believes resources could be raised to help rebuild his country's universities.

"I am asking governments to be our partners in the process of renewal and reconstruction. By helping us, they will help create the necessary conditions for quality education at our universities, and at same time, make a significant contribution to education and science on an international level," he says. "I see it is a human and academic obligation."

The European Commission's Higher Education Reform programme is a significant first step in this direction.

The University of Sarajevo

Currently, this university has about 11,000 students with an expected 15,000 by the end of this year. Created in 1949, it has 27 faculties, three of which are based in Zenica and one in Bihac. This university suffered extensive damage as a result of the war and the blockade of the city – five faculties were totally destroyed or occupied by the Serbs. About half the teaching staff left and the student body reduced from 20,000 pre-war to about 8,000 in 1995. There are 2,500 students at Zenica and about 1,500 at Bibac.

The University of Tuzla

This university, founded in 1976, has about 8,000 students enrolled in seven faculties. An International Relations Office has been set up at this campus and the Pro-Rector and Deans are focusing on language teaching and learning. There is a chronic shortage of teachers in this field. Last June, this university hosted an International Medical Congress with participants from 20 countries.

The University of Banja Luka

About 7,200 students are enrolled in nine faculties at this university, which was founded in 1975. Although the Rector has indicated that political changes should not affect the principle of openness at this university, it is nevertheless a State institution and requires the authorisation of the Ministry of Education in Pale to follow through with its commitment to cooperation with foreign universities.

The University Dzemal of Mostar-East

This university continues to operate with its former five faculties and has about 1,500 students. It claims to be the legal successor of the university founded in Mostar in 1977. Because all of its buildings were located on the west bank of the Neretva River, until recently, classes were organised in temporary accommodation. Now, the university has begun to renovate the premises of a former military camp. This university is in favour of a united city and a united educational system and would be ready to cooperate with the university centre in West Mostar if it was not restricted to the use of Croatian as the sole language of instruction.

The University of Mostar (West)

This university was established during the Croat-Muslim war in 1993 and is committed to promoting Croatian culture. Visiting lecturers from Croatian universities teach about 3,000 students enrolled in five faculties. The campus urgently needs staff upgrading as well as donations of books, journals and laboratory equipment. This university is supportive of joint projects involving participants from both areas of Mostar.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
back in the picture

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) rejoined the Phare countries in March 1996. This return signalled the end of four years of international isolation for the state created by the war and the tensions in this part of Europe.

Now integrated into Phare, FYROM should soon have a Tempus programme up and running. To help with this process, a delegation from the European Commission, accompanied by a representative of the European Training Foundation (ETF), visited the country in July and held high-level meeting with the vice-minister of education and the science minister, among others.

The discussions resulted in four major working priorities being set out, which correspond to the most pressing needs in the field of higher education: training in university management, language training, the setting up of international relations offices in each university, and the creation of a translation and interpreting centre.

During this visit, the Commission and the ETF participated in the first session of the country's Tempus national committee. It was generally felt that this created a positive impetus. Indications were also given of the prospects for the allocation of the ECU 2 million budget assigned to Tempus for 1996 and 1997: a sum which forms part of the overall budget of ECU 15 million for the national Phare programme.

South Africa

Helping South African education develop a new vision

Last year South African education minister Sibusiso Bengu asked for the assistance of the European Community, via his Dutch counterpart, minister Ritzen, in the new government's efforts to reform South African education and training structures. Commissioner Edith Cresson agreed to make Community expertise available and DG XXII, in consultation with colleagues in the directorate-general for development (DG VIII), requested the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at the University of Twente in the Netherlands to organise a workshop and undertake a study with recommendations for measures to improve management capacity and the aera of higher education.

The CHEPS immediately agreed to support the activities of South Africa's National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), established by President Mandela in 1995 to advise the education ministry on the goals, institutional structures and funding mechanisms for the entire post-secondary structures. Five task groups were set up to explore a broad vision for future policy.

On the basis of its own expertise and experience, as well as that of the European Commission, CHEPS, headed by Prof. dr. Frans van Vught and dr. Peter Maassen, has had a major impact on the work of the NCHE. Partly as a result of this input, work advanced successfully enough for the NCHE to complete its final report this August.

It can be expected that CHEPS, and through it various European experts on higher education, as well as the Commission and some 10 community education ministries, will be involved directly, amongst other things, in the development of the structures and capacity needed to implement the change processes proposed by the NCHE in its final report.

CHEPS presented its own work together with the first results of this study at a small seminar in Brussels in October, during which the NCHE also presented its main proposals.

At the suggestion of the South African authorities a joint EU/South African Conference on Higher Education and Training has been proposed, to be held in South Africa next Easter.

United States

Nine projects chosen

A cooperation agreement signed a year ago between the European Union and the United States marked the setting up of a programme of cooperation in the fields of higher education, vocational teaching and training.

Following a call for proposals for partnership projects, a shortlist of 27 joint proposals out of the 140 put forward were selected under an extremely rigorous procedure conducted by independent experts. The limited financial resources available – the EU contributes ECU 1.1 million while the USA puts $1.49 million into the pot – forced a second selection from among the 27 projects. Finally, nine projects were selected, which will benefit from financial assistance over three years. As specified by the initial criteria, each of these projects involves a minimum of three establishments on the American and European sides. This means that almost 80 universities and technical colleges on both sides of the Atlantic are participating in broad partnerships which also involve representatives from industry, professional associations, chambers of commerce and research institutes. On the American side, one of these projects is being subsidised on an experimental basis by the US National Science Foundation.

Although the number of projects is relatively small, it represents a wide range of fields of cooperation. Some deal with the issues of links between school and the job market, relate to international training in the health care field, or are intended for future engineers in the motor industry. Other projects include a comparison of political studies in Europe and the US, dealing with questions of international business, the development of exports, and even ancient Greek archaeology.

Warsaw

For the first time - 28 education ministers around the table

An inter-ministerial conference, to be held in Warsaw 21- 22 April 1997 will bring together 28 European education ministers, 15 for the European Union and 13 representatives of the Tempus Phare countries (countries of central and eastern Europe), to think about the main issues facing the European education system in the run up to the 21st century.

The groundwork for the meeting will be carried out by a "troika", consisting of the European Commission, the Dutch education ministry (The Netherlands holds the presidency of the European Union for the first half of 1997) and the Polish education ministry (the host country).

Canada

A hundred teaching establishments on the path of cooperation

This year, thanks to a bilateral agreement, more than 100 universities, vocational schools and other teaching establishments have participated in a new phase of transatlantic cooperation between the European Union and Canada.

The programme of cooperation between the European and Canadian higher education and vocational training establishments was launched in January. The budget assigned to the first call for offers, ECU 600,000 for Europe and C$ 1 million for Canada, allowed six projects put forward by groups of establishments to be selected from the 56 projects received, and thereby ensured that 45 partner establishments and associated organisations could be involved. Over the next three years, almost 500 students should enjoy the benefits of these projects. The investment will, in the longer term, help to expand a solid base of cooperation into a broader framework.

A second call for offers was launched in April with twice the budget, which should enable another dozen or so projects to get off the ground by the end of 1996. Because each group of establishments now includes at least six partners, this second set of projects should bring to almost 120 the number of higher education and vocational training establishments participating actively in the programme of cooperation between the European Union and Canada. There will be no call for offers in 1997.

The two parties feel that this programme represents a very cost-effective means of developing cooperation which will be of direct benefit to students, through an exchange programme, "virtual" mobility and structured activities.

Higher education

New priorities
for *Tempus*

Tempus, created by the European Union to support higher education in the countries of central and eastern Europe and in the former USSR, has a bright future. A major conference in Rome in July set the programme's working priorities for 1997. The key words are: flexibility, transparency and partnership.

The Tempus conference in Rome this summer was an event in more ways than one. The meeting, organized by the European Training Foundation in Turin and the Italian Tempus agency, brought all the players of Tempus Phare together for the first time, including representatives of the European Commission, the national agencies of the different EU countries, the representatives of the Tempus offices in the central and eastern European partner countries of Phare, and the experts responsible for the various tasks of assessment and more strategic studies. Thus, over three days, the full complement of players assessed the work already completed and set the new priorities for Tempus for 1997 and beyond.

Working priorities

Tempus Output Programmes were the first item of discussion. The TOPs, set up for the first time in 1996, summarize the horizontal working priorities. They provide Tempus Phare with coherence, bringing out those aspects of potential use to the whole university community – nothing less than a fully-fledged battle plan!

In Rome, experiences relating to five TOPs were reviewed as strategically important for the future: university management, university-business cooperation, student mobility, national reforms and, finally, how Tempus will make a successful transition from an assistance programme to an instrument based on cooperation.

In relation to this last point, it was decided to expand the list of TOPs in future. For example, in 1997, links between the university and its environment will be explored in greater depth. There is much to be gained from working not only with companies, but also with local authorities and social partners. At the Tempus synthesis conference to be held in November 1997, the question of new teaching methods in higher education in the year 2000 should also be looked at more deeply. In addition, the participants have proposed the setting up of TOPs specific to Tempus Tacis, the other arm of the programme, which brings together the countries of the former Soviet Union, together with Mongolia.

Transparency

For each of the five TOPs, solid results have been obtained. The problem is that they tend not to get the attention they deserve, so, intense efforts will be directed in 1997 towards improving the circulation of information, so that everyone will benefit. A number of initiatives are already on the agenda. "Recipe books" will be produced on the basis of the various TOPs. For example, if a university wants to set up an office for international relations, how would it best go about it? How could it check out other positive experiences? A practical guide could easily answer these questions.

Apart from the TOPs, the effects of the various activities financed by Tempus will be given added value: the CEPs (Common European Projects), projects benefiting from sizeable funding over three years; the CMEs (Complementary Measures), smaller one-or two-year projects; and the IMG (Individual Mobility Grants), to promote the visits of teachers, trainers, officials, and so on.

In the near future, Tempus Phare will benefit from a regular publication, *Tempus at work* and a video is planned for May 1997. Finally, better use will be made of the Internet to relay all the useful information generated by the programme.

Partnership

A key concept ran through the discussions during the course of the Rome meeting: partnership. Partnership will be encouraged at every level, by promoting cooperation between the national Tempus offices and the contact points in the member countries; by building better bridges between the Phare and Tacis countries; and also by establishing closer contacts between the Phare countries themselves. Poland and Hungary have already moved forward in reforming their systems: why not help them to share their know-how with the other countries of central and eastern Europe? The whole point of Tempus is to promote dialogue between all concerned.

Flexibility

Setting more specific strategic priorities does not rule out a little extra flexibility in the implementation of mechanisms. Every country has its own needs, of which greater account ought to be taken. Four groups of countries stand out: the new states which have entered Tempus Tacis (such as Turkmenistan or Azerbaijan); the Tacis countries closest to the realities of the Phare area (Belarus, the Russian Federation, etc); states which have recently entered Tempus Phare, but which are still fairly far away from the level of the European Union (Bosnia, Macedonia or Albania); and, finally, those Phare countries, known as associates, which are set to join the EU (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic countries).

This last category of states is worthy of special treatment. They will shortly be involved with other EU programmes. There will be a sliding transition from Tempus into these new programmes. This transitional phase should therefore be prepared with care. Some "associate countries" already have or plan agencies for the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe programmes, so it would be beneficial if they could start cooperating as of now with the national Tempus offices.

Tempus: two main objectives

1 To promote the quality and support the development and restructuring of higher education in the partner countries of the Phare and Tacis programmes.
2 To promote their increasing integration and cooperation which is as balanced as possible with partners of the European Union through common activities and appropriate exchanges.

From now to 2000

Tempus was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on 7 May 1990 and extended on 29 April 1993 for a second phase of four years, starting with the 1994/5 academic year (Tempus II). An extension of Tempus II is under discussion for 1999-2000.

Since January 1995, the programme's technical assistance has come from the European Training Foundation in Turin, on behalf of DG XXII of the European Commission.

Schools go

Action 1 of Comenius involves school partnerships: schools from all the Member States are joining forces to work on common education projects. Citizenship, environment, heritage... subjects which can fascinate adolescents and their teachers, and lead to the exchange of ideas in thousands of classrooms and in every language.

Industry and ecology: enemies for all eternity? The ideas of pupils from Naples give new impetus to those of students from Barcelona, appeal to a class in Antwerp, cause a stir among students from Athens or Jarfalla... two heads are certainly better than one, ditto for five hundred heads, for a thousand... the educational projects resulting from the school partnerships are not about to disprove this eternal truth!

The school partnerships have now been up and running for more than a year. Each one brings together educational establishments – in at least three EU countries – which work together on European education projects. The aim is to train the European citizens of tomorrow by encouraging pupils to establish contacts with their colleagues in other Member States, helping them to become familiar with the languages and cultures of other regions of Europe. This encourages them to view their own training and their own future in a European perspective.

Highly diverse educational projects

As soon as it was first floated, this idea met with an enthusiastic response from many schools, and more than a thousand partnerships, each involving an average of three or four schools, were established in 1995 and in 1996. Establishments in the new Member States, Austria, Finland and Sweden, have shown particularly high levels of motivation. Up to now, the partnerships have mostly involved secondary schools (senior schools in the majority of cases), and middle schools to a lesser extent. The Commission is therefore working to increase participation by primary and infant schools.

The education projects established by the partnerships are extremely diverse in nature. Though most of the themes selected are linked to European citizenship and cultural heritage, they have been given very different orientations in different types of school. For example, *War and peace* studies public monuments as witnesses to European civil wars, *Masters and servants* is geared towards cultural exchange through the theatre, *The joy of sharing* deals with integration and multiculturalism in Europe, and so on. The other major themes addressed in the projects are the environment, regional identity, art and literature, science and technology and the media. Here again, ideas abound: *Water reserves in Devon and in the Maas-Rhein-Ruhr*, *The growth of regional identity in the European context*, or, in primary schools, the gradual development of a newspaper, *Elos*.

The point of all these projects is that they have added a new dimension to the educational process in each school. By definition, partnership entails a project and an act of cooperation. This leads to new educational processes in which

teachers and pupils together carry out research which moves beyond the curriculum. As a result, they receive the stimulus they need in order to pursue new research, to approach diverse sources and use at least one other language in order to carry out the research and discuss it with the partners. Joint work changes the relationships between pupils and teachers, enriching them considerably.

Visits and exchanges

All this obviously presupposes considerable material resources. The school partnerships, created on the initiative of the Commission, would never have been possible without its financial support. They make up action 1 of Comenius, a programme devoted to school teaching. Comenius itself forms an integral part of the Socrates programme, which aims to promote European cooperation in the field of education in general.

This setting up of school partnerships follows from the useful experience of the 40 pilot partnerships supported by the Commission between 1992 and 1994 – an initiative which had already given rise to a number of extremely interesting instances of cooperation. It is also inspired by pilot exchanges of teachers and placements for teachers in businesses (Teachers Placements - TPS), as well as the experience of the Lingua partnerships. This year, action 1 is really taking wing, thanks to a marked increase in the funds available: the budget allocated to it has risen from ECU 6.5 million for 1995-96 to ECU 24 million for 1996-97.

The project is counting on the mobility of teachers, as they are the mainsprings of the education system. The budget notably provides grants for more than 1,000 preparatory visits (which should lead to the creation of several hundred new partnerships in the coming year), 600 teacher exchanges, over 200 company placements for teachers and almost 400 study visits for head teachers.

Widening the experiment

The Commission wants to see all the European Union's 320,000 schools involved in a partnership project. This will entail a very wide distribution of information on Comenius to schools.

Up to now, the national agencies appointed by each Member State have helped schools to find partners interested in their educational projects. In future, an electronic system will be made available to the schools. They will be able to consult it directly with an Internet connection; otherwise, it can be accessed via their national agency. This will make it easier for schools to make contact with suitable partners in the country – even the regions – of their choice, according to the type of establishment and work topic envisaged.

In addition, this system will provide schools with direct access to information on Comenius or on Lingua. This is important, because all these initiatives need to operate together to form a coherent educational package. Improving knowledge of European Union languages is one of the common objectives of the school partnerships and of the Lingua programme. It might therefore be imagined that Lingua assistants could act as a driving force in the formation and support of Comenius partnerships.

Similarly, open and distance teaching will enrich the activities of partnerships: in this case, "virtual" mobility can, to some extent, act as a substitute for the physical mobility of pupils and facilitate the development of Comenius projects.

Finally, beyond the Socrates programme, Comenius has been involved with the development of the *Web for Schools* project initiated by DG III under its Esprit programme. The goal is to connect 150 of the Union's secondary schools to the Internet and supply their teachers with all the information they need. Connecting to the Internet promotes partnerships and encourages other schools to set up new European projects. Comenius is also involved with various initiatives in the area of educational software and environmental education.

Finally, promoting educational partnerships also entails a streamlining of procedures, which can be extremely confusing for schools, very few of which are familiar with the financial details of international projects. The key is the determination and dynamism of national agencies. Some national agencies have been successful in overcoming the legal obstacles, enabling certain primary schools to receive the Community subsidies directly. Without this helping hand, these schools would have been unable to develop their educational project.

Comenius is now off the mark. If it is to grow and develop, it is now essential that other European initiatives, national, regional or local, public or private, should complement this Community project. This is an absolute necessity – the potential is enormous.
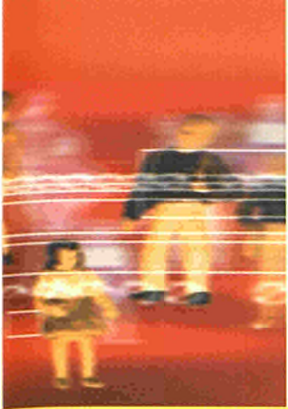
hand in hand

A few examples...

It's fun to share!

At the helm, an Italian school, one in Pavia to be exact. It is flanked by two French secondary schools (in Paris and Besançon), a Berlin secondary school, a Spanish secondary school (in Getafe, Madrid), a school in Bristol (United Kingdom), a school in Geldrop (Netherlands) and a secondary school in Luxembourg. Their objective: to study integration and multiculturalism in Europe. This issue touches the youngsters directly because in each of the schools, there is a high proportion of children of immigrant workers reaching secondary school age. In the Berlin school, 25 different nationalities rub shoulders each day!

This is one of the 40 pilot projects that now serve as a reference for other Comenius projects. It ran over four school years (from 1991-92 to 1994-95). In the partner schools, the teachers wanted to find a way to integrate a current topic into the lessons in order to bring their schools closer to social reality. This partnership gave them this opportunity, as well as the chance to compare their teaching practices with those of colleagues from other countries and cultures. As for the pupils, they started out both excited and sceptical, but actually rather flattered to have been chosen to take part in such an enterprise. And then, little by little, their enthusiasm and motivation grew. The project had given them a whole new outlook.

Laying the groundwork

An endeavour like this cannot be improvised, so a preparatory meeting was held in Pavia in the first year. Initially, the schools elected to work on the integration of people from "alien" cultures, and the ways in which each state deals with them. A second meeting brought together one teacher and one pupil from each school. Together, they assessed the work carried out up to that point. They also compared notes on the problems they faced integrating this work into the traditional activities of the school. This meeting was very profitable, and it injected dynamism into the ongoing project. On the basis of a bibliography drawn up jointly by the schools, themes linked to multiculturalism and the representation of "outsiders" in different contexts were then studied. During the second year, two planning meetings, one in Luxembourg, the other in Paris, gave the partners a further opportunity to meet up, to compare methods, and highlight the obstacles and positive elements which they were encountering. By this time, the group of students had gained self confidence in their dealings with the teachers, and were well able to assert their own preferences.

Finally, there was a major meeting of youngsters in Besançon at the end of this second year. The agenda was full, the atmosphere was charged, and the results were extremely rich, for example, the discussion groups reached some very interesting conclusions on the theme of racism.

Language and communication challenges

In the third year, considerable energies were devoted to summarizing the work carried out to date in a joint publication, while in the final year, the classes met up with one another during eight quadrilateral exchanges on the theme of the multicultural city.

During all these meetings, language and communications obviously presented a few challenges. At the end of their experiment, the participants felt that although the difficulties should not be underestimated, solutions can always be found. However; this is a greater challenge for the teachers than for the students. The youngsters tend to use more non-verbal communication, and are less afraid of making mistakes. But of course, this does not obviate the need to prepare for the meetings in language classes – an added motivation, in fact. As for the teachers, they coped by asking colleagues to act as interpreters, using written summaries and brushing up their own skills in the languages being used.

At the end of the experiment, the results were so encouraging and so beneficial that six of the eight schools have defined a new theme and a new project, and have submitted it jointly to Comenius.

Arts, maths and citizenship

Matemartica is another pilot project to inspire the current crop of Comenius projects – and what a programme! Its aim was to study the links that exist between mathematics and art in the most general sense, such as drawing, sculpture, and music. This ambitious project was geared towards the joint development by various EU schools of interesting teaching materials.

Six schools took part in the project, which ran over four school years (from 1991-1992 to 1994-95): a school in Barcelona (Spain), which coordinated the project; a middle school in Fourbourg (France); a school in Milan; one in Lourosa (Portugal); one in Ramsgate and another in Nottingham (United Kingdom). Each one, keen to motivate its pupils, chose artistic events closest to or the most relevant to the country or the social environment to which they belong.

In each case, the educational objective was achieved. The students were able to either carry out a mathematical interpretation of certain works of art or make an artistic discovery on the basis of known elements, which enabled them to experience mathematics as a living element of society. It was generally agreed that interdisciplinarity did much to promote an understanding of the European dimension and that the pooling of all this work helped the highly enthusiastic students to gain a better insight into other countries and intensify the cultural and scientific links which exist between them.

At the end of the experiment, the comments of the participants in the various schools were generally enthusiastic:

- "I think it's a very good idea to work together with other schools in Europe, and I enjoyed working on this project a lot. It think it could be improved if we had the chance to visit other schools more often."
- "The Matemartica project helps you to make friends in different European countries. You realise that you're not only British, you're European as well. Matemartica allows people to improve their skills in maths and art. Matemartica is also a good thing for business."
- " Matemartica is a promotional tool for our school, which has a reputation as a dynamic school. It organizes various exhibitions and participates in a lot of projects. The school takes pride in being part of a European project which involves a lot of big towns and different countries. It helps pupils to discover that they have tastes in common, and learn about maths and art (you don't have to be good at maths to take part in Matemartica). And it also allows you to see your teacher in a different light ..."

War and peace

Three partners – a middle school in Tielt (Belgium), a school in Helsinge (Denmark) and a school in Münster (Germany) – spent four school years studying art and public monuments as witnesses to the European civil wars. Each one, in its own country, observed, analysed and described monuments, carried out a series of interviews, trawled the archives and consulted a wide variety of documents. Then, the three schools compared their results and tried to understand the opinions and feelings expressed in the partner countries. Through art, pupils were able to break through the complexities of mutually divergent visions and become conscious of the tragically universal nature of war; they also realised that peace is a recent phenomenon in the European Union.

This project, which ran from 1991-92 to 1994-95 is one of the pilot projects now serving as a springboard to action 1 of Comenius. All the participants expressed their firm belief that such partnerships represent an excellent means of increasing awareness of the realities of the European Union and its importance, of fostering a desire to participate actively in European citizenship, and of strengthening peace.

Thematic networks:
"observatories"
for teaching quality

The role of the thematic networks in the Socrates programme is to bring together specialists from all the universities of Europe and ask them to put their discipline under the magnifying glass. The aim is to improve the quality of teaching. This is a first for the Community's education programmes.

Ambitious? That's the least you can say about the thematic networks project! The aim is to encourage all university faculties and higher education institutions working in the same discipline to cooperate on themes or projects of common interest. These networks are expected to act as real "observatories" for their discipline. They are called upon to offer guidance on teaching methods, on the new contents of courses and on the need to adapt each discipline to the changes taking place in European society.

The running and content of courses do not fall within the competency of the Community, and are the responsibility of the Member States alone, but if the aim, of European cooperation is to successfully improve the quality of the teaching offered to every student in every country, this means reflecting on the different disciplines being taught and their development. This is the role of the thematic networks – to promote cooperation between EU countries in order to help each of them to find innovative solutions to its particular needs. The most recent offspring of the Erasmus project, they are enshrined in chapter 1 of Socrates, whose priority objective is to promote European cooperation in the field of education. Thematic networks represent a new stage in European cooperation.

Linked to universities...
The networks are set up by a number of faculties, departments or university associations representing either a particular discipline or an area of interest. Each network is coordinated by a university association or a single faculty acting on behalf of a representative group of universities. The Commission's objective is to bring together as many establishments as possible to help them discuss and compare their methods and identify best practices.

The activities of the network can assume highly diverse forms: presenting a snapshot of the discipline in a European context, studying the academic contents of these disciplines in the various member countries of the network, identifying elements with a European dimension in the discipline in question, contributing to a more precise definition of the qualitative criteria for the discipline in question, and so on.

If they wish, the networks can also work with partners from other levels of teaching. This will certainly be the case of the European Chemistry Thematic Network. One of the stages of the project involves studying the image of chemistry in Europe. This will take place in conjunction with secondary schools where, apparently, this discipline suffers from a fairly bad reputation. This cooperation could lead to practical recommendations for the training of future secondary school chemistry teachers.

...but multi-purpose in their application
The thematic networks are set up within the world of academia, because it is the only sector capable of conducting the required observations and making appropriate recommendations, but they can also open up to other players in their particular field. They are therefore invited to work in conjunction with representatives from the professional world affected by the particular discipline. Meetings of this kind will highlight the relationship between the contents and objectives of the discipline as it is taught, and the exigencies of the economic and professional worlds of Europe. This will make the networks more sensitive to the employment prospects for young graduates, which is also part of their mission.

Convinced of the immense potential of the networks, the Commission would like to see them becoming real multi-purpose tools. Their field of debate and activity could then move beyond the confines of the Socrates programme and open out towards other programmes and other problems, in collaboration with other work groups and other players in the field. Two officials are responsible for monitoring the work of the networks and promoting them. A list of existing networks will also be made available via the Internet. But, for the moment, the main aim of this web of skills is, and remains, to improve the quality of teaching in each of the Member States.

29 active networks
The thematic networks address the real concerns of the academic world. This is demonstrated by the fact that Socrates received 109 applications, out of which 29 projects (some of them including one or more sub-projects) were chosen. Work on these is now beginning. Each project is designed to last three years, and includes different phases of discussion and action: a survey of the current situation, diagnosis and recommendations for the future.

These networks relate to the most wide-ranging disciplines and fields of interest. For example, Demeter (Network for Agricultural and Related Sciences) brings together 84 higher education institutions and two professional associations, and works on education in agriculture, horticulture and environmental sciences. Eupen (European Physics Education Network) focuses on every aspect of physics. The Universities and Social Economics Thematic Network is concerned with economics, history and political science, accountancy and statistics, law and taxation.

Closing

Equal treatment for men and women has always been a commitment in the European education and training programmes. But it took a question in the European Parliament, by French MEP Nicole Fontaine, to prompt a report[1] on whether this principle was reflected in practice.

The results of research showed that patterns of participation in the first generation of programmes mirrored the position of women and men in the sectors from which they were drawn. Hence, about half the participants in Petra (aimed at young people mostly still in education) were female, compared with only a small proportion of those in the Comett or Force programmes (geared towards technical and continuing training for employees). The report, compiled by Theresa Rees of the University of Bristol, noted some excellent projects benefiting women. However, it concluded that the net effect of the programmes was to widen the skill gap between men and women.

This was a fairly devastating finding. It was clear that by providing access on an 'equal treatment' basis, inequalities between men and women in the wider world were simply reproduced and indeed magnified. Skilled men received more investment, low skilled women received less. Clearly rather more sophisticated approaches needed to be adopted to equal opportunities than the legalistic 'equal access'.

This issue is not simply about equal opportunities, however. Given that women are the majority of the low skilled, long-term unemployed and new labour market entrants, it is vital to ensure that they benefit from measures designed to enhance human resources and so develop the Single Market's competitiveness while reducing social exclusion.

Tinkering, tailoring, transforming
What should be done? The Rees report presented recommendations under three headings: tinkering, tailoring and transforming. **Tinkering** means 'tidying up' the equal treatment commitment by introducing gender monitoring, making sure programme documentation does not contain sexist language or sex-stereotypical illustrations and so on. **Tailoring** means acknowledging that there are differences between men and women (in subject choices, career paths, domestic

opportunities in Leonardo da Vinci

Further information

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Despite the number of European education and training programmes that promote equal opportunity, the gap between men and women in terms of skills and qualifications is ever-widening. The Leonardo da Vinci programme is initiating a three-pronged approach to address this.

the skill gap

responsibilities, familiarity with technologies and so on) and addressing any particular needs women (or indeed men) may have as a consequence. Courses for women returning to work after a period at home bringing up children, addressing childcare needs in the design of training provision, and support for trainees entering non-traditional areas are all examples of positive action measures tailored to needs.

Finally, there is **transforming**, that is, redesigning education and training systems to accommodate not simply differences between men and women (although these are crucially important), but also differences between women, and between men. Transforming, or **mainstreaming** equality as it is more usually known, begins by recognising that existing systems, in some obvious and other more subtle ways, are geared towards people with particular characteristics (an example is the sexist language used in universities – Bachelors and Masters degrees). It then goes on to redesign provisions to ensure that a more diverse range of people may benefit. A key element of transforming is awareness raising in equal opportunities, to enable us to identify the more elusive forms of discrimination that exist in cultures and organisations, processes and practices.

These three approaches are complementary. While tinkering is relatively straightforward and implies the introduction of gender monitoring systems and mechanisms, tailoring means identifying and tackling particular barriers and pressure points to enable women and men to compete and participate on an equal footing.

Mainstreaming is clearly a long-term strategy and needs careful and imaginative thought. It is only by combining these approaches that we are likely to see results that move beyond reproducing the status quo.

Equal opportunities in Leonardo da Vinci

To what extent are these approaches towards developing equal opportunities being adopted in Leonardo da Vinci? Programme documentation prepared by the European Commission emphasises a clearer commitment to equal treatment than that of the previous action programmes. Indeed,

the call for proposals informs potential applicants that when bids are equal in quality, the contribution to the promotion of equal opportunities is one of five factors of which particular account will be taken in selection. This message was reinforced in the documentation about the various "strands" of the programme, where equal opportunities was listed as one of several specific objectives that projects might choose to address. Finally, specific measures were identified where equal opportunities was the main focus of projects in strands I (1. 1. 1.d) and II (11. 1. l.d).

However, responses to the 1995 call for projects were rather disappointing in this regard. While many promoters identified equal opportunities as one of their objectives, there was a lack of specificity in proposals about how this would be achieved. The general approach remained passive, conceived in terms of equal access, rather than a more proactive strategy of integrating measures previously regarded as accompanying measures for women as a 'special' group.

Very few applications were presented under the specific measures on equal opportunities available. These projects tended to be in the positive action mode, focusing on particular groups of disadvantaged women (such as returners). While these are most welcome, they do not significantly advance the mainstreaming agenda. Few projects address the essential issue of awareness raising in equal opportunities.

Towards mainstreaming equal opportunities

It is clear that equal access (tinkering) does not produce equal outcome. Many examples of good practice in positive action (tailoring) on women and training are available, for instance, in the *Compendium of Good Practice on Women and Training* (see *Le Magazine* no.4). The problem of increasing the proportion of girls and women in technology training and occupations has been studied by a Leonardo da Vinci "transitional measures" project (*Women's Technology in Europe*). The Iris network of projects includes many examples of excellent provision. The agenda now is to graft these good practices onto mainstream provision, to adapt the mainstream to accommodate both men and women (transforming).

The Commission took a more pro-active stance in seeking to improve the quality and quantity of proposals with regard to equal opportunities in the 1996 call. Drawing on the experience of the response to the first call, promoters were advised to define their target group in more detail (women are too often considered to be a homogenous group), to prepare tangible products, design a dissemination programme and examine how the results of the project could be integrated into general practice. A preliminary assessment of the 1996 proposals would seem to indicate that the message has not yet been fully taken on board. Meanwhile the Commission has decided to bring together promoters of 1995 projects focusing on equal opportunities to enable them to get to know each other and to achieve the best possible synergy between projects in similar fields. This thematic group should also contribute to developing strategies to mainstream good practice.

In future, the emphasis will be on consolidation. The budget for Leonardo da Vinci is inevitably limited but many hundreds of companies, unions, education and training organisations, trainers and trainees are taking part. Acting as a catalyst, the programme provides a unique opportunity to mainstream equal opportunities in our institutions and organisations.

[1] *Rees T. (1995) Women in the EC Training Programmes: Tinkering, Tailoring, Transforming. University of Bristol, Policy Press*

Research on Education and Training at European Level

According to the Council decision of 15 December 1994, "the objective of the Community's research activities on education and training must be to support the efforts made by the Member States to strengthen the links between research, education and training and to improve their education and training systems through research and disseminating good practice and innovations. The objective is to help to promote the development in Europe of a society in which lifelong training and education permanently play a central role."

The TSER programme includes three interrelated areas of research:
- evaluation of science and technology policy options
- research on education and training
- research into social integration and social exclusion in Europe

In the context of lifelong learning, TSER specifies that educational research at Community level should lead to practical consequences.

TSER is expected to make a significant contribution
TSER reaches beyond the borders of specific educational policies. The Council decision refers to the Commission's White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, which calls for a re-examination of the role of education and training in the fabric of society and their links with all economic and social activity. The reasoning behind this is that society is based on the production, transfer and sharing of knowledge, far more than on trade in goods. TSER can be expected to make a significant contribution to the stimulation of growth, to the strengthening of competitiveness and to the development of employment within the EU.

The importance of education and training is stressed in other documents such as the recent Green Paper on innovation and, more specifically, the White Paper on teaching and learning – Towards the Learning Society. The latter highlights the challenges which education and training systems have to meet in view of the internationalization of the economy and the development of scientific and technological knowledge. This can be achieved by providing a broad knowledge base while developing skills for employment and economic life.

The TSER programme opens up new opportunities for the community of European educational researchers to address a large variety of issues. Scientific cooperation at European level,

for example, allows for new approaches from different scientific and cultural traditions, facilitating both interdisciplinary and comparative research. Member States have to face common problems concerning their education and training systems, and the advantages of cooperative research strengthens the European scientific potential in this field. It is these comparative and interdisciplinary elements that are at the heart of European added value. A scientific investigation, carried out by a consortia of international researchers, leads to different approaches and results in a broader perception of the common problems of scientific and political interest. It also leads to the identification of successful measures to solve them.

TSER area II: research on education and training
A work programme lists TSER's main objectives and sets out 30 specific research tasks. Promoting research activities at European level should be attempted in three different stages: in the short term, to provide a base of information, knowledge and common references to a wide range of people involved in education; in the medium term, to build a community of research on education and training in Europe; and in the long term, to strengthen the function of education and training. In reality, efforts will be made to achieve these objectives simultaneously.

Core objectives
TSER's three main areas of research are:
II.1 Effectiveness of policies and actions, European dimension and diversity.
II.2 Methods, tools and technologies: quality and innovation in education and training.
II.3 Education, training and economic development.

Although these cover a very wide spectrum, they are defined by clear guidelines. The first objective examines the question: how are education and training systems in Europe responding and how should they respond to the emerging needs of European society and citizens? The second set of objectives addresses improvements to the capacity of innovation of educational systems. Clear guidelines have been established for the third objective: improve the understanding of education and training methods, patterns and means of allowing people to cope with the problems in relation to unemployment, under qualification, and economic and social needs.

These objectives link educational research with urgent economic and social challenges facing Europe. Research in this field can be defined as problem-oriented and designed to produce new knowledge while informing future decision-making. It will help lay the foundations for sustainable economic and social development, job creation and international competitiveness.

The research tasks are wide-ranging and while most reflect the practical orientation of the programme, others aim to create the framework for future decision-making.

About half of the 30 tasks identified relate to issues such as labour market requirements and new technologies in the information and communication sectors, while the rest address the educational system with a view to goals and philosophies, cultural diversity as well as the treatment of minorities and disadvantaged learners.

Innovative education and training
The themes and sub-themes to be addressed by the research tasks are of fundamental importance for educational policies and related research efforts, particularly those aimed innovative education and training systems. The areas are adaptation to change, innovation in education and training, education, training and new technologies, and evaluation of economic needs.

A broad scientific approach is required to bring research in these areas close to challenges of education and training emerging from ongoing technological, economic, labour market and societal developments. For example, in the area of adaptation to change of the education system, new research is needed to identify both the factors that determine the resistance of educational organizations to change and the means to improve their capacity to adapt to change. This work should be carried out with respect to the possible influence of differences in national educational structures and cultures.

In the area of innovation in education and training, the scientific community is requested to design and evaluate new kinds of learning environments. Available knowledge concerning cognitive, affective and socio-cultural factors which influence learning processes and school organizational conditions should be taken into account. The focus should be on aspects with special relevance to European perspectives, such as history, language, civil and multicultural education and education on the environment.
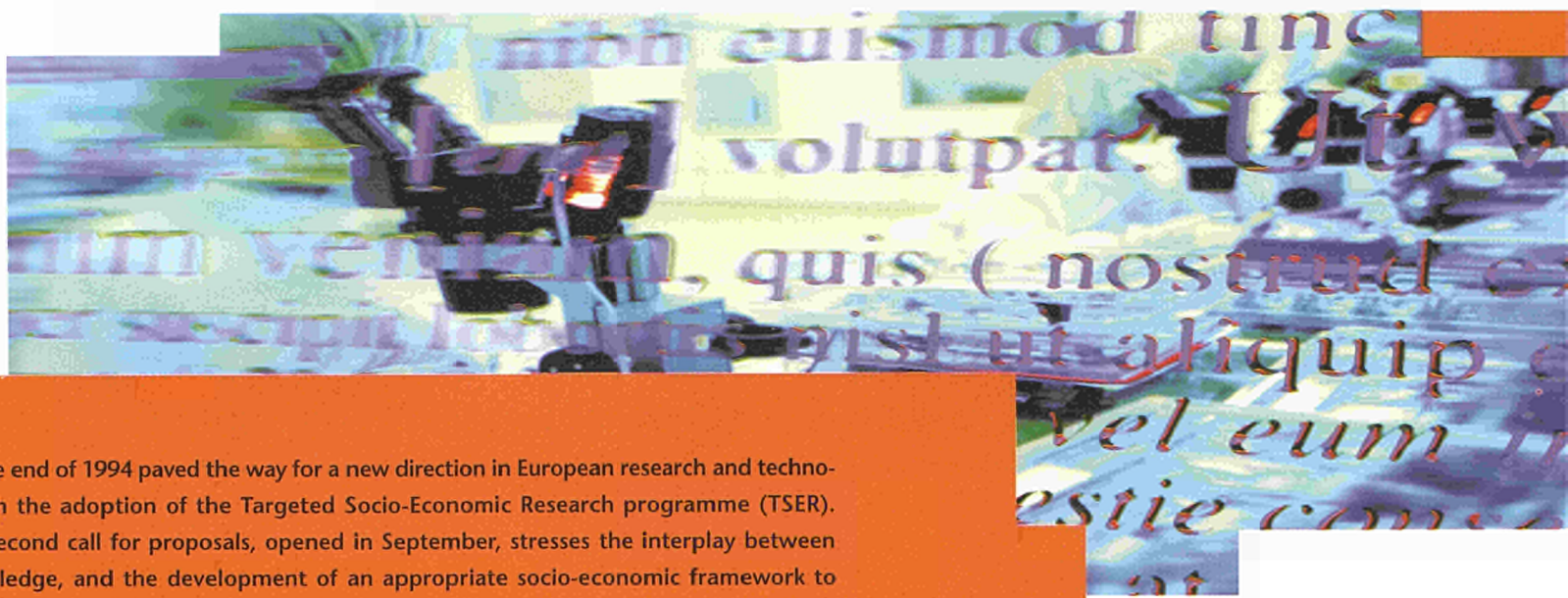
A decision by the Council of Minister at the end of 1994 paved the way for a new direction in European research and techno-logical development (RTD) policies, with the adoption of the Targeted Socio-Economic Research programme (TSER). A dozen projects are under way and a second call for proposals, opened in September, stresses the interplay between science and technology, skills and knowledge, and the development of an appropriate socio-economic framework to harness human and technological resources while reinforcing economic and social cohesion.

Within the context of new technologies and their involve-ment in the field of education and training, the work pro-gramme also addresses a wide range of important themes, stressing the cognitive aspects of the design and application of new technologies for education and training.

These tasks challenge European researchers to design their scientific work and their related proposals within guidelines that correspond to the major elements of change and development that define the educational environment in European countries.

The first call for proposals: March 1995

About 200 proposals were submitted from educational researchers across Europe – a heavy over subscription, given the limited funds available. This caused some disappoint-ment among the applicants when it became clear at a very early stage that only a relatively small number of proposals could be funded. However, area II has only 23.5 % of the funding of the TSER programme. The total programme is allocated ECU105 million over four years.

Following the selection process by a panel of independent international experts, 12 projects involving institutions from all Member States and more than 100 research teams are now under way. The majority of the projects address education and training systems in Europe with a view to quality and innova-tion (core objective II.2) and economic development (II.3).

Examples of projects

One TSER project aims to create a European network for educational research on assessment, effectiveness and inno-vation. With 19 participants from 15 different countries, the network is creating a database containing information about the characteristics of educational systems, and descriptions of research programmes and projects. It will identify and collect educational indicators and produce an inventory of existing research.

The central objective of another research activity, com-prising eight researchers from six Member States is to investi-gate the potential of new forms of learning arrangements to improve access to education and training for different groups. It will focus on the potential of open and distance learning and the use of advanced learning technologies.

Two other projects, with 12 researchers from nine European countries, are dealing with in-company training and training organization models; one is focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These projects are expected to con-tribute to the creation of effective strategies for in-company training, organizational learning and the development of core skills and competencies within these companies. The function of SMEs within the framework of learning will be clarified, while training needs, models of competence devel-opment and transfer between SMEs will be identified.

These projects are good examples of the types of actions which are being funded and demonstrate the extent of possi-ble cooperation. Each one is a shared-cost action, which comprises two types of activities – RTD projects as well as thematic networks. They involve from five to 19 partners, far exceeding the minimum requirement for each project of two partners from two Member States.

The second call for proposals

In September the 15 Member States adopted the programme for the second call for proposals. This second call differs sig-nificantly from the first. The tasks of educational research are focused on a limited number of issues and strictly ori-ented to priority themes of European and national educa-tional policies. Programme organizers hope to prevent a sec-ond over-subscription, which could again create disappointment in the scientific community.

Only 10 research tasks of the original 30 have been opened in the second call. These have been deliberately cho-sen with respect to what is covered by ongoing projects, and relate in particular to the originally intended policy context, reflecting major social, economic and technological chal-lenges. Three sets of priority themes have been developed:

1 The labour market and unemployment
- Comparative research to build models for a better under-standing of how European E&T systems and the economies develop in relation to each other.
- Linkages between general education and vocational training.
- The transition from initial education to working life.
- The development of lifelong learning as an integral part of working life.

2 The information society
- Pedagogically appropriate and cost-effective introduction of ICT into initial and continuing education and training.
- Analysis of learning models and cognitive processes.
- Mastering the rapidly accelerating flow of information and its conversion into useful knowledge.
- Access to information by disadvantaged groups.

3 Minorities and disadvantaged groups
- Improving access to E&T.
- Enhancing achievements of these groups within E&T sys-tems.
- Increasing their potential for employment.

The human factor is crucial to meaningful sustainable devel-opment. Indeed, improving human potential is central to the Commission's recent paper Inventing Tomorrow, which outlines the guidelines for the fifth RTD Framework Pro-gramme. Because of the predominant role of education and training in our societies, research in this area will remain an indispensable element at European level.

The European Year of Lifelong Learning draws to an end

Going out on a high

The footlights go out, the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning leaves the stage, and it's time to assess its impact. For Jimmy Jamar, who coordinated the operation within DG XXII, it was a "happy initiative". In all the Member States, the European Year has led to a wide-ranging debate which directly affected the public. This debate should go on, and flow into other concrete initiatives.

The closing conference in Dublin

The closing conference of the European Year took place in Dublin on 6 December 1996 under the Irish EU Presidency, with European Commissioners Edith Cresson and Padraig Flynn in attendance along with the education and employment ministers of the countries of the European Economic Area. The morning session was devoted to an assessment of the European Year and the awarding of the prizes for the European competition for educational software for use in schools. In the afternoon, the ministers were involved in a discussion on the final report of the think tank on education and training in Europe.

The size and the thickness of the press book containing all the articles written about the European Year show at a glance that this was a successful initiative, with hopes being fulfilled both in terms of the number of debates prompted in the Member States and of the genuine enthusiasm displayed by the general public.

From January to February, a very short period of time, the Commission received no fewer than 4,000 applications for assistance with projects. In the end, 550 of these were be co-financed: conferences, seminars, publications, and products of various kinds. The projects covered a wide range of issues and affected numerous target groups, including young people, women, the elderly, working people and the unemployed. Of these projects, it is worth noting that a large number are local initiatives – small-scale projects with a high potential for innovation. In total, some 2,000 events, an impressive programme, took place in the EU during this European Year.

This success confirms that the European Year addressed head-on a number of contemporary issues related to major social changes. With a relatively modest budget (ECU 8.3 million over two years), the Commission decided to support a maximum number of projects, by placing an emphasis on decentralized events at national, regional and local levels.

In the Member States, the education, employment and social affairs ministries were mobilized. In Austria, even the finance ministry got involved in meetings. This can only be a positive development; in this day and age, the debate on education can no longer be confined within the walls of a single ministry.

Sensitive issues

At the close of this European Year, what fundamental conclusions can be drawn? We might focus on groups of questions, which add depth to and complement the debate on the Commission's White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society.*

The first sensitive theme: moving from school to work. One third of all young Europeans fail to make this transition. The European Year has provided an opportunity to identify their needs, examine better ways of bridging the gap, and look at ways in which training centres can better serve these young people, who might otherwise risk being written off. Following this, questions were raised about schools: should training be geared primarily towards employment, or should it first and foremost offer means which make it easier to live in a society?

Another novel contribution of the European Year ties in with the information society: how to guarantee effective promotion by the information society of equal opportunities for all? There is a risk of the new information and communication tools being reserved for an elite, haunting the cybercafes now in vogue. Worse still, the information society could reinforce inequalities rather than absorbing them. The European Year has highlighted teachers' fears in this area. It has also raised the profile of positive projects, such as one in Finland, where new technologies are helping to raise everyone's level of education without reducing the essential human element in the teacher/pupil relationship.

How are we to deal with the increasingly diverse demand for education and training? This is another burning issue, which leads to highly practical questions: how should it be done and who pays?

Finally, the European Year has dealt in depth with the themes of managing and organizing working time... here again, crucial issues are involved. Will work always remain the central element of social interaction? In the future, how might we deal with non-working periods in our lives in a more positive way, taking advantage of the time to retrain?

At the end of the day, says Jimmy Jamar, two key messages have been central to the European Year: learning at any age is a process which makes the individual's outlook more positive; and secondly: the dynamics of learning help everyone to find their place in society, and function as active citizens.

Full steam ahead

The footlights may have been dimmed, but the excellent ideas which have lit up the European Year will remain, and continue to flourish. In the Member States, the initiative will be perpetuated through pilot projects, and discussions will be fuelled by a sharing of experiences and ideas through seminars and forums. For its part, the Commission will place particular emphasis on the dissemination of information, particularly via the Internet. It will do all it can to integrate the concept of lifelong learning into the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, as well as within Community initiatives such as Adapt or Emploi, linked to the structural funds. In short, DG XXII, amongst others, will carry forward the lessons that have been learnt.

The 1997 European Year will be devoted to the fight against racism and xenophobia, an objective coordinated by DG V, responsible for employment and social affairs. But the initiatives taken during this year will involve close cooperation with DG XXII, which will share the information it has been able to gather from the projects run during 1996 on the theme of promoting citizenship.