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TRAINING
YOUTH

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Volunteers
on the move

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG XXII: Education, Training and Youth
Rue Belliard, 5-7 - B-1049 Brussels - T +32.2 299 11 11 - F +32.2 295 01 38

Socrates-Youth for Europe
Technical Assistance Office
Rue Montoyer 70 - B-1000 Brussels
T +32.2 233 01 11 - F +32.2 233 01 50

Eurydice
European Unit
Rue d'Arlon 15 - B-1050 Bruxelles
T +32.2 238 30 11 - F +32.2 230 65 62

Leonardo da Vinci
Technical Assistance Office
Rue de l'astronomie 9 - B-1210 Brussels
T +32.2 227 01 00 - F +32.2 227 01 01

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
It can be accessed through the Europa server (http://europa.eu.int)

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Editor: **Thomas O'Dwyer**
Graphic design and illustration:
Signé Lazer sa - Brussels

Editorial

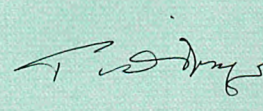
Fighting racism, uniting Europe

The problem of racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism represents a major challenge for the future development of the European Community. The rise of the far right and growing frequency of acts of racist violence, even if they are perpetrated by small minorities, cannot be ignored. While the causes of this rising tide of intolerance are complex, there are a number of factors which help to create a climate in which racism flourishes: unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, problems at school and inadequate policies to promote immigrant integration. As a result, action against racism will only be effective if it is embodied in a wide range of policies designed to improve those economic and social situations which are regarded as potential aggravating factors. Now more than ever, the lessons of the past must not be forgotten and we must face the future head on.

The year 1997 has been declared European Year Against Racism. DG XXII is heavily involved - after all, if we want to fight racism effectively we need to concentrate our efforts amongst young people, the main target for racist propaganda. Education plays a cardinal role in countering racist ideology. By encouraging intercultural contacts and facilitating mutual respect and understanding, we can guard against and contain the growth of xenophobic prejudices. Promoting tolerance and solidarity with all cultures should be a top priority for education in the broader sense.

Numerous anti-racist initiatives have been developed within the programmes of DG XXII: Youth for Europe, Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates... all place great store in inter-Community exchanges and increased awareness of cultural diversity. This intercultural communication is a strong feature of our initiatives. We need to go further down this path, promoting equal opportunities and combating all forms of discrimination, in order to promote a climate of understanding between all the Union's citizens. There is still much to be done before these educational projects extend to the whole Community.

This is a vital issue. Europe does not simply have interests to defend: it also has a wide diversity of cultural identities to protect and to share. Preserving a multitude of different languages and cultures while building bridges is the challenge which lies ahead for us before a truly united and peaceful Europe can become a reality.



Thomas O'Dwyer

European Voluntary Service:
imagination is all it takes

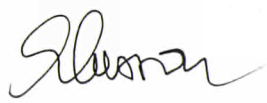
The idea of voluntary service for young people has long been close to my heart, since well before my arrival in Brussels, doubtless due both to personal social convictions and to the particular way in which a life in politics colours one's views of society. Things such as this tend to come to fruition one fine day, when circumstance – or chance – permits. So it was that these three magic words – Europe, youth, volunteer – found their time and place. I was appointed to Brussels and my brief provided me with an opportunity to turn the idea into reality. Moreover, within the Commission, I was ideally placed to give the necessary support to the Community's administrative services, and with their help my ideas rapidly began to take practical shape.

Thousands of young people are caught in a no man's land, devoid of any social status, having left school or planning to leave school, generally living with their parents, but to no one's great satisfaction, outside any vocational framework and with nothing to look forward to in the short or medium term. In many countries, military service has represented a rite of passage between the end of adolescence and adulthood. However, with the threats posed by the Cold War now behind us, military service no longer provides the traditional opportunity it offered youngsters to make a break with their circumstances – not a panacea, but a departure, a breaking off.

So let us find an alternative. Let us think up a project which is useful to everyone in helping to put young people on track, which supports the environment, involves culture... and let's launch it as an experiment. Let us offer young people the chance to break out of their microcosm and help other people by contributing to a worthwhile, practical, palpable initiative. Let us lift from society's shoulders responsibility for a group of people who are viewed as youngsters from nowhere, yet who are the first to want to be of use to others. Let us give them the chance to find a place from which to look society in the face and be part of it, and let us declare that the social rite of passage to adulthood should be built upon the discovery and learning of European citizenship.

In creating this European Voluntary Service, we have no model and no references, but we have a great deal of ambition and hope. It took only eight months to launch the pilot project and 400 young people are already involved in the experience. Soon, there will be two thousand participants.

A drop in the ocean, you might say on reading these figures. Of course it is. But we should wait to see the first results; it is the young people themselves who will build the foundations of this project and prove that it is worth pursuing. Maybe you will already be persuaded that it is by reading about the progress of European Voluntary Service in this issue of *Le Magazine*.



Edith Cresson
Member of the European Commission
responsible for research, innovation,
education, training and youth

Danielle, Alan, Michael, Tracy, Fred, Kyriakos and Mohamed: offering a helping hand to new volunteers

European Voluntary Service

Volunteers on the move

The European Voluntary Service pilot action (1996-97) is open to all young people aged 18 to 25 who are nationals of or have their legal residence in a Member State of the European Union, Iceland or Norway. Young volunteers have the opportunity to spend between 6-12 months taking part in a local project in another Member State in the social, environmental or cultural field.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) does not aim to replace military service or alternative civilian service systems which exist in some Member States. Neither should it be regarded as a source of cheap labour or a means of substitution for existing or potential paid jobs.

The Commission considers that voluntary service can offer an alternative learning experience to young people in a European context. The pilot action allows young volunteers to broaden their horizons, to familiarize themselves with a different social and cultural environment, to develop self-confidence and often to develop their own plans for the future. They can put their energy, enthusiasm and creativity to good use by participating in practical activities which they themselves have a say in defining. They learn about taking responsibility and teamwork, including organization and management.

Volunteers also have the chance to make a valuable contribution to local projects and the local communities which host them during the period of voluntary service. Projects with strong local roots provide the best opportunity to integrate volunteers into the host community. This will increase the educational value of the experience for young people. It will also help to ensure that the activities carried out by the volunteers have a tangible impact at local level. European Voluntary Service therefore represents an important opportunity for local projects.

Several hundred young volunteers are currently taking part in such projects. The following stories are examples of how EVS works.

A Luxembourg lass in Scotland

A Scottish organization, the Sustainable Village Charitable Trust (SVCT), has restored a historic farmstead in Gowanbank, West Lothian, and is now constructing a new village complex on sustainable design principles in the adjacent valley.

The 220-acre site in central Scotland is a mixture of improved and unimproved grassland, with small areas of woodland and bare rock. There is an abandoned watermill in the middle of the deserted valley. One third of the site will eventually be forested with native species of tree, one third will be used for lowland crofts – small resettlement farms – and one third will be given over to an educational resource centre and a youth hostel. The site will be powered by renewable energy sources and use sustainable waste treatment systems.

When an article about the SVCT appeared in the newsletter of "Jeunes et environnement", the youth branch of the biggest environmental organization in Luxembourg, it caught the attention of Katrien. The article referred to an exchange between the Czech Republic and the SVCT. Katrien contacted European Youth Forest Action, of which "Jeunes et environnement" is a member. EYFA's international headquarters in Amsterdam put her in touch with SVCT in Edinburgh, who proved very interested in having a long-term foreign volunteer and sent her full details. Katrien jumped into a plane to meet representatives of the Gowanbank project and set her heart on joining it for a few months.

The problem was funding. Then she heard about the European Voluntary Service pilot programme. The EVS organizers in Luxembourg reckoned the project had a good chance of being accepted by the European Commission, provided she could find a sending organization which could prepare her before leaving and use her knowledge when she came back."Jeunes et environnement" readily agreed to help.

Katrien will join in the SVCT project's practical education sessions in building design and ecological activities with one of the resident project supervisors. A qualified teacher, a music and theatre instructor, and training in building work are part of the support system for young people involved in the project. She will live and eat with the other young volunteers and have her own room in the renovated farmstead. Surveying local environment projects and youth organizations to find opportunities for partnership during exchanges, she will also have an opportunity to meet a wide variety of Scottish organizations and get to know more of the Scottish social and cultural scene.

La Granja Escuela La Limpia

Oscar is an Icelandic volunteer from a small fishing village near Reykjavik. He is currently staying at La Limpia, a farm near Madrid used for educational purposes. It can accommodate up to 100 children of primary school age. They live and eat at the farm for a week to learn about the different aspects of farming life and go to different workshops. For example, they can learn to recognise different aromatic plants and their uses, use freshly sheared wool by spinning it and dying it, take honeycombs from beehives and learn how to make candles and honey.

Oscar's role at the project is to help run the workshops and take care of certain parts of the farm, for example, painting the dormitories, reinforcing the ceiling, picking fruit, feeding the animals, taking care of the vegetables, etc. and recycling old Christmas trees. He lives in La Casita, a small house on the farm grounds which he shares with the dogs he has adopted since arriving, the monitors when there are groups at the farm and a doctor's consulting room. He has room to study, play his guitar, watch television and there is a log fire.

When he arrived last August, Oscar did not speak a word of Spanish. He started by doing tasks which needed little communication such as picking fruit and painting. After six months his Spanish is fluent and he is capable of running a workshop with the children. Oscar's spell of voluntary service started out as a way to delay the decision about what to do after school and to give him time to think about his options. Now, he has specific plans to follow up on his stay in Spain.

Like many people in his village, Oscar's father is a cod fisherman. They sell fish to European companies which process it and sell it at a much higher price in other countries. Many of the consumers are Spanish. Oscar would like to use

Robert Fuchs

Further information

Tony Lockett - DG XXII

F +32.2 299 41 58

The European Voluntary Service pilot action launched by the Commission builds on national experiences of voluntary service and aims to provide a new boost through the development of a European dimension. This should help to extend voluntary service to organizations and countries which are not yet familiar with this kind of activity. New partnerships should be created and transnational links should be reinforced through EVS projects.

his knowledge of the Spanish language and culture to start a business trading cod with Spain. First, he will do a management course and learn how to set up a business. He then wants to set up a factory near his village to process the cod which he will sell to Spanish companies. This idea, which he is developing whilst in Spain, is a combination of his experiences from home and from his voluntary service.

Robert, a young man with a dream

Born in 1975 in East Berlin, Robert Fuchs dreamed as a child of travelling in Europe. Suddenly in November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down. Speaking to Berliners, even now some eight years later, it is remarkable how many of them begin a sentence with "since the wall came down"...

For Robert, then only 14 years old, it was difficult to comprehend how exactly his life would be changed by the disappearance of a few lumps of concrete. Well, in reality, it's a lot more than that, but at that age you see things differently.

Robert is a certified youth leader, and technical school graduate with skills in cartography and theatre design. He has a good understanding of English. When asked what motivated and interested him in becoming a young European volunteer he answered: "Getting to know the arts and culture of other countries, learning the language, broadening my horizons." His dream is not only to travel, but also eventually to become a theatre producer and set designer.

European Voluntary Service is offering him an opportunity to build upon his hopes. After preparation at the International Centre for Youth and Culture Schlesische Straße 27 in Berlin, one of the sending partners in the Creative Cooperations Flagship Network, he is spending six months at the famous Chapito circus school in Portugal. The various skills and techniques taught at the school include how a show is planned and executed, from the sequence of the acts to the lighting and technical back-up, etc. He has begun lessons in Portuguese and been briefed by a representative from the host project on what to expect on his arrival.

When asked to list his hobbies Robert wrote down only one - climbing. Could this have anything to do with the fact that for 14 years he lived within sight of a very large wall?

Piet goes to Denmark

Asserbohus Efterskole is an 'alternative' school where teenagers with difficult backgrounds learn and live together. Piet, a young Flemish volunteer, has been helping to develop recreational activities (particularly music and sport) and participating in the daily life of the school for the past few months.

Piet belongs to a youth club in his home village of Eeklo in Flanders. He has been keeping in touch with his friends there by sending them extracts from the diary he has been writing since arriving in Denmark. These extracts provide an insight into the day-to-day experiences of a young European volunteer:

"One of the first evenings, we had a meeting with all the teachers. The discussion started in English, but in the heat of the moment a lot of Danish was spoken as well. It takes a lot of concentration to get used to the language... I have been trying to read a Danish book in front of the students. They laugh about it, but it is a good way to practice."

"I organized music activities again today. There was some progress and it's nice to get the feeling that you can be useful. In the evening, I organized a rehearsal with a band to provide some fresh air. I am really looking forward to dealing with the musical part of the programme and hope that I will get more responsibilities for this project in the future."

"Outside my 30 hours of activities each week, I have Danish classes which allow me the freedom to discover Denmark and 'out-of-school' activities to broaden my experience and to make contact with the Danish people. In this regard, I have someone who acts as my 'guiding light', opening up the way into Danish culture and the local community."

"The past couple of weeks have left me with a mass of positive impressions: becoming accustomed to the work structure and the way of life of young Danish people at school, getting to know the environment, having numerous encounters with new people, or integrating into another fascinating culture... The experience is totally new and there's never a dull moment. I can now communicate with everybody in Danish, which has been a self-discovery." The Commission is planning to encourage diary keeping by young European volunteers as a self-evaluation tool which can be used as one element in certification of the experience acquired.

Peer group support for volunteers

Daniëlle, Alan, Michael, Tracy, Fred, Kyriakos and Mohamed all have first-hand experience of voluntary service. They had the opportunity to spend a period abroad as volunteers during 1995/96 through a project on "Youth policy and the fight against social exclusion" which was coordinated by the Youth Forum of the European Union, with the support of the Youth for Europe programme.

Daniëlle from the Netherlands says that she has become more independent and learnt to respect other cultures as a result of the period she spent as a volunteer in Athens running artistic activities in a centre for young people. Alan from Ireland ranks increased self-confidence as his "number one" achievement. He was also able to acquire a range of practical skills, including carpentry and masonry, through spending a year working with local people from the small rural community of Beaumotte in France.

However, despite their generally positive view of the experience, all of these young people know that life as a volunteer in a foreign country is not always easy. Alan arrived in France speaking no French, and spent an uncomfortable night sleeping at a train station after failing to understand directions he had been given. Daniëlle often felt uneasy as a single girl going out in Athens at night. Both of them would have appreciated having a friend of their own age to turn to for support during their period of voluntary service.

This has led the Youth Forum to develop training activities for former volunteers who would be interested in providing peer group support for young volunteers coming to their country through a new European Voluntary Service Flagship Project. Daniëlle, Alan, Michael, Tracy, Fred, Kyriakos and Mohamed recently attended a weekend training session which helped them to reflect on their own experiences and develop a clearer idea of their roles and responsibilities as support persons.

They are now looking forward to meeting and befriending the next generation of incoming volunteers. They are also prepared to act as 'multipliers', building on their experiences to inform young people from their own local areas about the possibilities offered by European Voluntary Service, and helping to prepare them to become volunteers.

1997 European Year against racism

Education: an antidote to prejudice

1997 has been declared European Year Against Racism by the EU Council of Ministers. Anti-racism initiatives developed in DG XXII's key programmes, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth for Europe and Tempus, combat prejudice through education, training and the promotion of responsible citizenship.

Insularity and intolerance are, sadly, phenomena with a long history. Through the ages, racism has taken many forms.

In the 1980s, the EU countries witnessed a resurgence of xenophobia. In the minds of many people, there is a link between increasing social problems and the presence of foreigners - immigrants are sometimes perceived as a threat. In truth, fear of strangers betrays the more personal anxieties of individuals faced with the challenges of a fast-moving world and a more uncertain social environment.

A reversible trend

Racism is not an inescapable phenomenon: it is directly affected by political, economic and social factors; even more importantly, it can be combated. Rejection of foreigners is driven by prejudice, ignorance, poor knowledge of history, culture, or the individual's own roots. Children may cry if they wake up in a darkened room, but if we turn on the light, the fear goes away.

The very construction of a political Europe runs counter to any notion of racism, because the Union's philosophy centres on bringing different peoples together, creating points of contact between individuals, learning to live together and treating differences as a strength rather than as a weakness. Two major, complementary lines of policy are being developed to counter racism: the battle against 'social exclusion', which inevitably stirs up tensions and conflicts, and the promotion of education as an antidote to the prejudice which feeds acts of intolerance.

Fighting racism is a job for both Member States and the European Union. For its part, the Commission can create a significant impetus through awareness-raising and information campaigns, by supporting innovative practices and by encouraging European cooperation at every level.

DG XXII is at the forefront of this work. Education in active, responsible citizenship, promotion of tolerance and solidarity, and hence the prevention of racist or xenophobic behaviour, are common denominators of EU programmes in the fields of education, training, and youth. Since the adoption of the various programmes, these concrete policy lines have added significant weight to a wide range of different projects.

A "transverse" priority

The Youth for Europe programme (phase three of which was adopted in 1995) includes amongst its objectives the fight against racism and xenophobia. Leonardo da Vinci (adopted in December 1994) promotes equal opportunities for migrant workers in the area of vocational training and, more generally, seeks to eliminate any racial discrimination in access to lifelong training. Socrates (adopted in 1995) aims primarily to "reinforce understanding and solidarity between the peoples who make up the Union" and "promote the intercultural dimension of teaching". At the same time, it places special emphasis on the schooling of children of migrants.

The battle against social exclusion and support for groups of people in difficulty are central themes in these three programmes.

Since 1994 and 1995, a new anti-racist emphasis has been placed on projects given financial support by DG XXII. This approach had already been piloted well before the new framework programmes were set in place; for example, priority for the intercultural dimension and the education of migrants formed the basis of one of the Commission's first education projects, at the end of the 1970s.

Projects in the pipeline

DG XXII is playing an active part in this European Year, in close cooperation with DG V, responsible for employment, industrial relations and social affairs. The year's activities have two major themes: firstly, raising awareness of the wide range of initiatives already established as part of DG XXII's various programmes, while informing beneficiaries of the possibilities which exist for the development of initiatives to tackle racism; and secondly, the Commission wishes to promote specific cooperation initiatives on a European level in the areas of education and training. Several projects of this type are already in the pipeline.

A common denominator in every programme

Socrates: Comenius shows the way

As part of the Socrates programme, Comenius promotes European cooperation in the field of education at pre-school, primary and secondary level. Action 1 of Comenius encourages partnerships between schools, built around European educational projects. This action develops better mutual understanding and helps to instil values of tolerance in youngsters from the earliest age. Action 2 aims to promote transnational projects in two areas: education for children of migrant workers, itinerant workers, travellers and Gypsies; and promotion of the intercultural dimension in school, along with the introduction of innovative teaching practices for intercultural education.

The following are examples of the most innovative projects:

- Ghent University, in Belgium, has created a comprehensive European data bank in the area of intercultural education which should help ground-breaking teaching methods to be exchanged between different European countries.
- Teachers from five European cities (Bradford and Birmingham in the UK; Cork in Ireland; Odense in Denmark and Rotterdam in the Netherlands) have teamed up to share successful intercultural teaching techniques.
- Together with partners in Greece and Portugal, four Italian cities (Milan, Rome, Turin and Mantua) are training young mediators whose role will be to assist the schooling of children of Gypsies and the use of social facilities by their families. These mediators will work in primary schools and in social facilities in conjunction with the authorities in question.
- Another Italian project is designed to promote intercultural education in a sample group of 10 primary and secondary classes. The aim is to enhance the reading and social skills of pupils through exposure to other cultures. Then, curricula will be piloted which are innovative in terms of their teaching content and methods. Finally, the coming on stream of "intercultural curricula" should help to bring educational institutions closer to their surrounding communities.

- A European project launched by the Omroep Allochtonen foundation, based in Utrecht (Netherlands), aims to promote communication between pupils and teachers in multicultural secondary schools in the urban areas of various European countries. These exchanges are encouraged through new teaching tools, use of the Internet and a "video letters" system between partner schools.

Adult education also a priority

Amongst the "transverse" actions in the Socrates programme is a chapter devoted specifically to education (general, cultural, social) for adults. This reflects the growing need for an active lifelong education policy. During the first two years (1995 and 1996), Socrates supported some 70 European projects in this field, covering a wide range of themes, organizations and target groups.

A number of these projects are related to anti-racism. The France Libertés foundation has developed a CD-Rom for the training of trainers across 13 EU countries, in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations. A major project entitled *Learning to live in a multicultural society* brings together various institutions specializing in adult education in six European countries, under the direction of a German partner. These organizations have created a European network to exchange information on successful practices in this field. Together, they have produced a training guide which has been translated into several languages and is destined for wide distribution.

Another German project, *Nationalism means war*, aims to bring into adult education the problems of nationalism and the far right, phenomena which represent a major danger for the European Union.

Developing minority languages: a key to better understanding

Actions which aim to promote and safeguard regional or minority languages and cultures form a separate programme for DG XXII. Its aim is to preserve the languages spoken by almost 40 million people as an element of the diversity on which the richness of Europe is based. In this area, the Commission notably finances intercultural cooperation projects: fairs, exhibitions or other special events. The aim is encourage linguistic communities living in the same country to meet each other, talk to each other and, in so doing, move closer together.

As an example of this initiative DG XXII gave its backing to a cultural meeting between different minority populations (Gypsies, Hungarians, Croats) living in the region of Burgenland in Austria, not far from the Hungarian border.

Leonardo, fighting social exclusion

Leonardo da Vinci, the Community vocational training programme, is supporting several projects with an anti-racist theme. These projects mostly fall within strand I of the programme (supporting improvements in Member States' vocational training systems and arrangements) and contribute more generally to the battle against social exclusion.

One project, run from Denmark, develops training modules in interpreting, for people with an immigrant background. The idea is to make their intercultural character an asset when it comes to looking for a job.

Spain has seen high levels of immigration from countries outside the European Union. A Leonardo da Vinci project aims to train mediators to build closer relations between these immigrants and the host society.

Another project in the south of France aims to promote the integration of settled Gypsy populations through work. In order to identify appropriate solutions, it has been necessary to study Romany value systems and customs.

Initiatives designed to combat xenophobia are also found in other strands of the programme. One good example, in the research and analysis strand, is an interesting project led by the European Media Institute in Düsseldorf, *More colour in the media*. This project aims to study ways in which television and radio stations in different European countries can promote the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities into various vocational training programmes.

Lifelong education and training

A number of anti-racism projects were financed by DG XXII in 1996 as part of the European Year of Lifelong Education and Training.

A series of actions was supported in Greece to promote the education rights of the Gypsy community. This initiative involved both schools and small businesses.

In Sweden, various seminars and special events were organized in the Stockholm-Rinkeby-Tensta area, with the aim of promoting new possibilities for lifelong education for immigrants and refugees.

Unemployed people from different ethnic backgrounds living in various towns in the UK met to discuss different ways of making access to education and training easier for them, presenting a joint report to politicians.

Youth for Europe, a driving force

Youth for Europe aims to contribute to the educational process for young people through exchanges within the EU, separate from the education or training systems. A particular feature of this programme is that it is highly to accessible to all categories of young people, whatever their origins and training background. Youth for Europe places great emphasis on the principles of social solidarity, and works to promote amongst young people, who will, after all, form the Europe of tomorrow, the concept of responsible citizenship. One of its key objectives is specifically to "promote raised awareness of the dangers linked to societal exclusion, including racism and xenophobia". The anti-racist approach is therefore a central plank of this programme. Thus, in 1997 alone, no fewer than 82 Youth for Europe projects are directly based on action against xenophobia, in all five strands of the programme.

Action A directly involves young people. One example: a group of young Germans, basing their work on a methodology developed by Greenpeace, are setting up an Internet server to provide national and European information on racism-related issues which affect young people.

Action B is aimed at youth leaders. On the initiative of European Young Christian Workers, 37 youth leaders from seven EU countries are following a training programme geared towards intercultural learning, which should help to reinforce their activities amongst young people from less-advantaged backgrounds.

Action C relates to cooperation between those in charge of youth associations or of public services dealing with youth issues. In France, a seminar has been organized to enable leaders of youth associations which work with young immigrants to exchange notes and different points of view.

Action D supports exchanges with third countries, as an ideal way of increasing understanding of people with different cultures, histories or religious traditions. In addition, within Europe, it will help to build bridges between EU citizens and young immigrants from third countries. Thus, an Italian association working "for peace and mutual respect" has established a partnership with three other NGOs in Spain, Argentina and Colombia. For each country, eight future voluntary activity leaders have been selected; they will meet during joint activities organised near Rome.

Finally, Action E focuses on information for young people and research into youth. For example, a seminar will be held in Barcelona to draw up a list of written and audiovisual resources available to young Gypsies. It will bring together delegations from six EU countries, together with Poland and Serbia.

European voluntary service for young people: solidarity at work

Through the pilot European voluntary service project, young people aged from 18 to 25 are invited to take a training placement (6-12 months) in another European country, in a local social solidarity project. They get the chance to experience active citizenship in practice, while learning more about other cultures and languages.

Tempus, promoting human rights

Tempus is the trans-European programme of cooperation in higher education, aimed at the countries of central and eastern Europe, the republics of the former Soviet Union and Mongolia.

Few of its projects tackle racism and xenophobia directly. However, bringing different peoples closer together is a central aim of the programme. Through on-going contacts, the various parties involved in Tempus projects learn to appreciate their differences. In this respect, Tempus represents an important integration factor.

In Poland, one project is working to strengthen higher education in the field of human rights and social legislation. Another project, running in Bulgaria, focuses on on-going training for civil servants and the representatives of minorities in the minority rights and integration sector. In Hungary, systematic research into degree courses in ethnography will help to make the teaching of this subject in the country more international. One pre-project also relates to human rights: it involves the training of teachers of law in the Russian Federation, with particular emphasis on the international and European approach to human rights.

One white paper, five thematic conferences

Teaching and learning - towards the learning society

The White Paper *Teaching and learning - towards the learning society,* adopted by the Commission in November 1995 on the initiative of Commissioners Edith Cresson and Padraig Flynn, aimed to initiate a debate on the new challenges facing society in education and training. Five key objectives were identified to ensure a smooth transition to a new age of education and training beyond the year 2000. The Commission quickly demonstrated its commitment to securing real follow-up to its five "guidelines for action", by launching numerous practical actions, running in parallel with a wide-reaching debate. This very useful debate has been conducted through major thematic conferences on each objective. One is summarized here, another examined at more length. Future editions of *Le Magazine* will return to the other objectives.

Objective 1 "Encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge"

How are skills formed nowadays? By what means are they transmitted? How can they be recognized? How can they be accredited? How do we develop new accreditation methods? How are skills linked to the changing nature of work and employment? These issues formed the basis of the agenda for the thematic conference on objective 1.

Discussion centred on four themes:

The diversification of means of accessing knowledge in the learning society.
The debate took as its basis the growing diversification of access to knowledge and its possible repercussions on the roles of educational institutions, particularly universities, in this field. The ways in which individuals might take responsibility for developing their own skills were also discussed.

Transparency and recognition of degrees and vocational qualifications in Europe, now and in the future.
The advances made in the area of mutual recognition of university degrees were surveyed. The question of transparency of vocational qualifications was discussed, together with the issue of how to establish an ECTS (European course credit transfer scheme) for vocational training.

Accrediting skills in the learning society: new methods? New instruments? New roles for players?
The thinking behind the new approach to accreditation proposed by the White Paper, and the principles involved, were discussed with reference to initial experiments and examples from the United States.

Prospects, challenges and limitations to the development of a skills policy in Europe.
There was discussion of whether skills might be regarded as the central plank of an integrated growth and employment strategy. Micro- and macro-economic aspects were examined, notably through an attempt to determine whether the job market was indeed moving in this direction.

During the conference, several practical examples were presented

AEVEM: Automatic Evaluation in Mathematics
This project aims to develop a system of assessing mathematics skills by means of a multimedia computer. The evaluation will take the form of automatically generated tests, linked to graded knowledge modules ranging from the most elementary to the most advanced. The test could be distributed by a question generation server, over the Internet.

MAPS: Mapping and Profile of Skills
This project aims to develop a tool for the dynamic viewing and assessment of key skills based on a path through a skills map which will trigger micro-tests. The tool will allow key skills to be validated, and then listed on a personal skills card.

DIALANG: Diagnosis of Foreign Language Skills
Aims to create a framework for diagnosing and comparing foreign language proficiency and, on the basis of this framework, developing a set of tests in the 11 official Community languages. The skills assessment tests will be designed to be used by anyone wishing to test his or her knowledge and will be distributed in electronic formats such as floppy disk or CD-Rom.

Objective 5 "Treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis"

The economies of Europe seem to be marked by two fundamental characteristics: investments in human resources are not keeping up with socio-economic changes, and the degree of substitution between capital and labour appears higher than in certain competing economies.

Intangible aspects are becoming more important in the economy in general, and more particularly in the ways in which, at both the micro-economic and macro-economic level, wealth is created. This phenomenon is marked by extensive use of intelligence in the production process, and a systematic search for it in companies and economic organizations.

How is this situation affected by accounting and fiscal systems? How might investment in training be encouraged? What provision could be considered in this area?

The participants agreed on the general objective: the creation of a learning society will be one of the main challenges for Member States and the Union as the 21st century dawns. In this perspective, although investment in lifelong training must remain a priority, numerous questions remain to be addressed before all those involved – companies, individuals, households, local organizations, public authorities, and so on - begin to take a lead from this philosophy.

The conference affirmed the wide-ranging nature of the subject in relation to equal treatment for investments in training and physical investments, notably with respect to promoting intangible investment and shifting the expenditure of the various players in this direction. This means promoting the idea and the instruments of new relationships between capital and labour, both within the company and in society in general.

A broad consensus emerged in favour of increasing investment in human capital. There were, nonetheless, significant disagreements on two fundamental questions: what strategies, policies and incentives are best placed to promote this type of investment? Who should pay for education and training in their various forms?

There appears to be a difficult choice of approach:

- Either they should be regarded as intangible assets, like any other asset, to be categorized alongside other company investments in management, development, performance measurement and monitoring. In this case, traditional management tools will need to be adapted to the particular problem of intangible expenditure.
- Or it should be recognized that these assets give rise to specific questions, for which a straightforward application of the standard management methods applied to other areas will prove inadequate.

This second approach leads to an acceptance that there is a dearth of analysis tools and that, in the absence of suitable assessment methods, intangible assets tend to be overlooked.

So what incentives might be employed? Most existing accounting or fiscal provision, including the financing obligation, failed to satisfy the experts. The bureaucratic nature of legislation in this area was seen as a discouragement for investors, defeating the whole objective.

A common message emerged: advancing towards the learning society will not be a mechanical process. Significant changes in approach, in behaviour, and even in mentalities are required, especially in companies and amongst those who make decisions on public or private investment. For many experts, it seemed that the criteria used by decision-makers remained the central issue, above that of administrative legislation. How are these decision-makers to be won over, and given the instruments they need in order to decide in favour of investments in human resources rather than machines and technological processes?

Although numerous studies and analyses have been written on these issues, their results are inconclusive and hostile to decision-makers. This research should doubtless continue, and be synthesized, but it appears more useful to promote new solutions, particularly as regards means of making decisions and taking action. In particular, a workable measurement of "return" on investments in training should be devised – especially as investment in human resources appears to generate a greater return in the long term than in the short term.

The balance between the sums invested by different players was often raised as a concern. If the investment made by economic players or individuals rises, particularly as a result of market forces, isn't there a risk that public funds formerly earmarked for infrastructure investment will be withdrawn?

For a number of years, the factors which promote investment in training have been discussed. Few significant results have been achieved up to now. The White Paper opens up new possibilities: it is no longer a question of investing in training as a way of coping with changes. In the context of the learning society, it becomes an absolute necessity for all concerned, and its economic status needs to evolve as a result.

Existing accounting systems treat capital and labour differently. The use of a factor of production is treated as an expenditure falling within the operating cycle of the business, while accumulation represents a stock which is attached to the investment cycle. In fact, capital expenditure is treated as contributing to the company's assets, and hence to its value, whereas expenditure on employment is generally treated as an operating cost. The question asked was: how might this view be overturned, and work, therefore the skills of a company's workforce, be regarded as an element which adds to the company's assets?

Bringing about such a change of perspective is no simple task, as it calls into question the apportionment of expenditure, the value of human capital and the way in which power is exercised, because intangible assets cannot be appropriated in the same way as tangible ones. Intangible assets may be defined as a usufruct asset. Thus, training costs represent an investment in the individual, but the company which pays the costs is not the owner of the product which is being purchased. How is it possible to give up the training capital accumulated by a company without giving up the company itself?

Existing accounting systems embody a "biased" measurement of the value of companies. One indicator of this bias is the gap between the sale value of a company on the market and its balance sheet value. This gap largely represents the value of the intangible assets of the company. Sometimes, and in the case of most companies whose activities are based on intelligence (information technology designers for example), this value is much greater than the value of the company's property. The total asset value shown in the accounts, in the market economy and even more so in the intangible economy, are meaningless, because they do not represent the value of the assets – which includes a large proportion of intangible assets – and they are a poor guide to the capital invested, which is shown under the operating costs.

Several different ways of measuring intangible capital were put forward: a balance sheet of human resources integrated into the company's overall balance sheet, a report on human resources appended to the balance sheet, satellite balance sheets, individual human capital management tools such as skill cards, and so on. However, it should be noted that training outlay is entered in company accounts as outgoings or deferred charges, but their categorization as an asset is still under discussion in the Member States and the United States. In this perspective, accountancy rules seem to be more developed in the area of research costs than for training costs.

The most recent work in the field of economics and management indicates that it is essential to take into account the way in which human resources are managed in companies if capital is to be allocated most effectively. The major lesson from this is that the cash risk analysis carried out by financial analysts, shareholders or lenders in assessing an investment takes account of the impact of human resources on performance, especially from the point of view of motivation, skills, culture and strategic consistency.

It was also pointed out that the environment makes a big difference to the data. Investment in education and training may not bring the immediate returns, either in terms of economic growth or of the social advancement of individuals, which it still offered a few years ago. Closer targeting, better assessment and measurement are required if the trend towards falling, marginal returns which might develop is to be curbed.

One particular problem was raised: is the job market helping to raise the standing of human resources? It was pointed out that growing fragmentation in the job market represents a negative factor for the standing of investments in human capital. Some speakers put forward the idea of managing the job market like a real market, rather than as an offshoot of the welfare state.

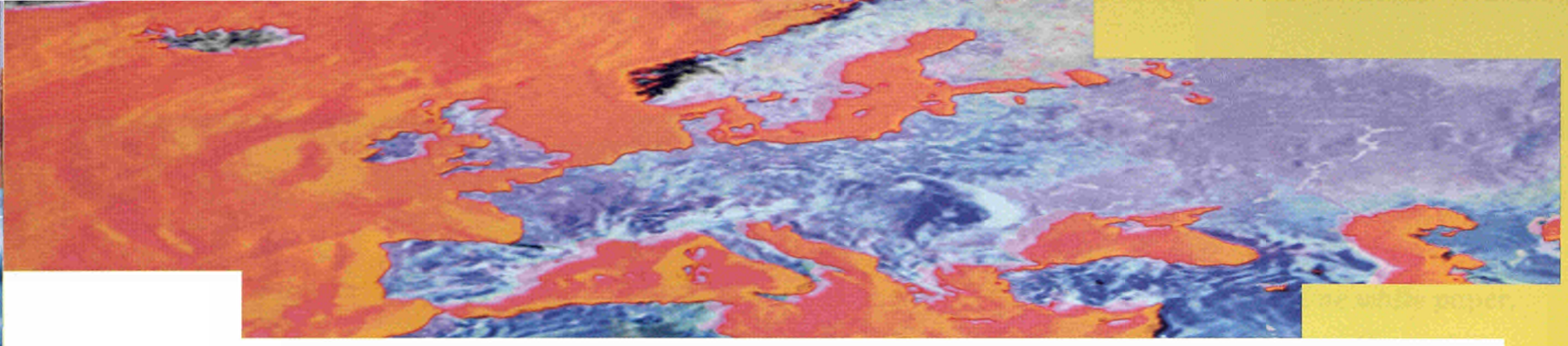
The conference reaffirmed, expanded and enriched the work programme which the Commission has set itself under the terms of the equal treatment objective put forward by the White Paper, taking as its basis the expertise which exists on this topic (meetings of experts, technical research).

This work programme should help to provide new answers to the following questions:

- How do accountancy systems take account of investments in training when it comes to assessing the "wealth" of the company, particularly in the context of share acquisition or transfer operations?
- How may decision-makers be provided with the information they need in order to decide between the different types of investment which are possible: investments in training as an alternative to other possibilities – recruitment on the external market in particular, changes in the organization of work and choice of production technologies?
- How do we raise the standing of informal training, learning situations in the workplace or qualifying structures which develop within companies and which should be integrated into the accounting of expenditure?
- How can the portability of skills acquired by employees be assured as they move around the internal market of companies, especially on the external market, in cases of voluntary or involuntary mobility? In addition, how may a cumulative process be developed which enriches, improves and complements an existing "capital" of knowledge?
- How can better consistency be ensured in the job market between the objective of flexibility and investment in training? In other words, how do we prevent the fragmentation of the job market from undermining an improved standing for investments which require a certain period of time before coming to fruition, resullting in a certain degree of stability in the workforce?
- How can new forms of social regulation for investments be developed, and the way in which partners within the company talk to each other about these investment decisions be improved? For example, through company balance sheets, but also through methods of costing time which appear promising and may open the way for major changes.

In the short term, an inventory, which is as exhaustive as possible, will be drawn up of the fiscal and accounting provision designed to take account of training costs, treating this expenditure, and the various incentive mechanisms which are developed, as an investment.

A more detailed cost/efficiency analysis of training costs for the three categories of players in question - companies, public authorities and individuals – is also planned. Both at a macro-economic and micro-economic level, the available research should be extended to produce more decisive results and indicators which could be made available to decision-makers.



Wind of change blowing across Europe

From primary schools to universities, profound changes are taking place in education systems within the EU as well as further afield in Europe. Eurydice, the European education information network, provides an overview of the main recent reforms in 13 countries.

Austria

Integration into stage-one secondary education

The 15th Amendment of the School Organization Act stipulated that starting from the 1993/94 school year, children requiring special needs education should be gradually integrated into primary schools. This measure helped integrate pilot projects for the joint teaching of handicapped and non-handicapped children into mainstream schooling.

The next step involved similar integration from the 5th year upwards on the basis of pilot projects run in the *Hauptschule* (general secondary schools) and lower levels of the *allgemeinbildende höhere Schule* (academic secondary schools). The following regulations were adopted and will become effective as of 1 September:

- Provision should be made for the joint instruction of handicapped and non-handicapped children from the 5th to the 8th years of general and academic secondary schools.
- Children requiring special needs education are entitled to admission to general secondary schools, if the necessary framework conditions are met.
- Framework conditions mean, first of all, additional teachers who are specially trained for the instruction of children requiring special needs education; at least five such children must attend a class for an additional teacher to be assigned. The rule for academic secondary school is that admission may only be refused both to handicapped and non-handicapped children due to overcrowding.

Extending integration to lower secondary education is expected to cost less than 315 million Austrian schillings annually in terms of additional teacher salaries.

Bulgaria

New priorities for secondary education

Changes are being made in secondary education along the lines of the *Development plan for secondary education in Bulgaria*, based mainly on the principle of the 'social mission' of secondary education: to prepare the younger generation for life in a democratic society.

Currently, the changes are based on the following principles: to maintain the centralized influence of the state over secondary education; to safeguard the global nature of this system; to find a balance between the goals and the specific interests of individual components within the system; to gear the management of the system towards innovation and tackling concrete problems, as well as analysing the possible consequences thereof; to decentralize the management functions of individual departments according to their specific characteristics; to provide objective information concerning these processes and the state of the system; to follow up by defining priorities; and lastly, to implement changes within the education system in a transparent manner.

The priorities for developing the education system may be defined as follows: to provide quality education; to provide basic education, gearing teaching to pupil choice; to teach the mother tongue as well as foreign languages; to promote educational mobility as well as educational continuity and to introduce civic education.

There are two inter-related levels of education in the Bulgarian system: primary education and secondary education. According to the development plan, the secondary school leaving certificate must include the results obtained in final examinations in two subject areas: Bulgarian language and literature, and one chosen subject area.

In addition to primary and secondary education, pupils may also receive vocational training. This training will be guaranteed by a law that will also regulate the participation of professional organizations and trade unions in the management of vocational education.

At present, the development of secondary education in Bulgaria is closely linked with the country's economic situation. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the organizations belonging to it are already committed to these new priorities.

Czech Republic

Changes in compulsory education

One of many areas of education ungoing transformation since 1989 is compulsory education provided by "basic" schools for children aged 6 to 15 years (years 1 to 9, divided into two stages). Education programmes for basic schools stem from the standards for basic education set by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Programmes differ in the organization of education and methods of teaching. They have been developed by teams of specialists and must be approved by the education ministry. The schools are free to choose the programmes they use.

To date, the new programmes have been introduced in the following areas: General School *(Obecná škola)* for the 1st stage (since 1993/94), Civic School *(Obèanska škola)* for the 2nd stage (since 1994/95), Basic School *(Základní škola)* for both stages (since 1996/97). At the beginning of 1997 the new programme covering both stages, called National School *(Národní škola)*, was approved, which allows both project and block teaching. The programmes may be combined.

In the first term of 1997, a new education ministry consultative council was established. This National Curriculum Council *(Národní kurikulární rada)* is made up of senior officials, parents' representatives and education specialists. Its mission will be to advise on the content of curricula with the aim of protecting education from the influence of different political changes, as far as is possible.

Finland

Establishing a strategy for evaluating education

The Finnish education ministry has prepared national guidelines for evaluating the level of education in all institutions from comprehensive schools to universities. One of the reasons for preparing these guidelines was the perception amongst schools and education authorities that previous studies were poorly coordinated and duplicated effort.

The principles and objectives for the national evaluation programme have been decided by the ministry, which will also fund it. The National Board of Education in Finland will assess the level of education in comprehensive schools, upper secondary general and upper secondary vocational schools. The Council for Evaluation of Higher Education, established a year ago, will be responsible for evaluating higher education institutions and universities.

In the new assessment process, education authorities and other education providers will be able to negotiate with the evaluating parties before the evaluation process begins. This represents a fundamental change in policy. Furthermore, the evaluation results will not affect the financing of comprehensive schools or

upper secondary schools. In order to reward achievements, educational authorities and schools may also be granted special awards on the basis of the assessment criteria.

No nationwide tests will be developed for different age groups, but learning results will be evaluated on the basis of samples taken from different age groups. For example, 25% of the students in a certain age group will be chosen for evaluation according to their achievements in various subjects. In addition to cognitive learning and practical skills, learning and communication skills as well as self-confidence and the ability to learn progressively will be evaluated.

To unify the comprehensive school pupil evaluation criteria, a National Test Library will be established by the National Board of Education. Schools will be able to order series of tests for different subjects to facilitate the evaluation of their pupils.

Germany

Special higher education programme III

On 2 September 1996, the German Federal Government and the governments of the *Länder* agreed on a new special higher education programme. An additional 3,600 million German marks will be invested up to the end of the year 2000 to advance the structural reforms required in the higher education sector, increase the level of efficiency of teaching and research, ensure the international competitiveness of German higher education institutions and boost the number of women employed in teaching and research.

The central points of the new special higher education programme are as follows:

- The post-graduate colleges, which have proven to be extremely successful in Germany, are to be expanded. Such colleges are for students who have already obtained a university diploma in Germany.
- Student care via course guidance services and tutorials is to be improved in order to reduce the numbers of students giving up their studies and reduce the length of study.
- External and internal evaluation of teaching is to be improved.
- The use of multimedia is to be intensified, in particular to improve library services and further develop distance and multimedia studies.
- *Fachhochschulen* (polytechnics) are to be further expanded with the objective of having 35% of students studying at such institutions by the year 2000.
- European and international cooperation is to be further intensified. Besides the provision of scholarship grants for research visits abroad by talented young German academics, the aim is also to bring foreign academics to higher education institutions in Germany.
- Scholarships and additional positions are to be provided for talented young academics, enabling them to further their knowledge and obtain additional qualifications.
- Special measures aim to support women in a targeted manner.

Greece

Exemplary actions and measures

In July 1995, the European Commission approved an operational programme on education and training submitted by the Greek education ministry. This consists of integrated actions and projects targeted on reforming secondary and post-secondary education, which should also lead to drastic changes in higher education.

Under the guidance of the ministry, a team of experts (academics and administrators) have created the framework for the programmes, which have now been developed in establishments all over the country. Since the 18 universities and 14 TEIs (technological institutions) are established in almost every region, the effort involved creates core activity for the local population and economy.

The programme contains actions such as:

- Restructuring the curriculum and compulsory utilisation of a multiple bibliography.
- Developing electronic libraries and networks throughout the establishments.
- Distance learning (an open university foundation was opened in August 1996).
- Modifying university studies to comply with the new priorities and developing new areas of study.
- Administrative support to placement and training programmes as well as first job experiences through "LINKS" offices.

These actions and measures, which complement each other, are not a panacea but should provide a solid base for future innovation in European education plans and generally raise standards.

The overall aim is to strengthen the establishments' independence by providing them with an overall system for planning, rationalizing their internal operations and modernizing their management, whilst allowing them also to be an active link between production and society.

Iceland

New Upper Secondary Education Act

A new Act on Upper Secondary Education was adopted in May 1996 and entered into force on 1 August of the same year. Some of its provisions will take effect in stages, with the act as a whole fully implemented by the beginning of the 2000/01 school year.

The act ensures all pupils the right to attend upper secondary school but sets entrance requirements for specific programmes of study and introduces some changes to the study structure. It contains provisions on national exams in specific subjects at the conclusion of upper secondary school. With the exception of journeymen's examinations, such exams have not previously been held in Iceland.

It provides a means to increase emphasis on vocational training, and for trade unions and the labour market to exert a greater influence on the organization and execution of vocational training.

The act includes more detailed provisions concerning a National Curriculum Guide, as well as provisions obliging schools to compile school curriculum guides. Under the new act, schools are to carry out regular self-evaluations of their activities.

It also introduces more autonomy and financial independence for schools. The composition of school boards has been changed, their role defined more clearly and their influence increased.

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture is ultimately responsible for upper secondary school affairs and monitoring school operations, as well as for the gathering and distribution of information. The minister is to report on upper secondary school operations to the *Alþingi*, the Icelandic parliament, at three-year intervals.

Italy

Presentation of the proposed reform of the school system

In January, the Italian education minister submitted his proposal for reform of the education system. Starting with an extension of compulsory education (from eight to ten years of compulsory free education), it aims to raise educational standards and levels of general cultural and scientific knowledge and make integrated education a reality.

The proposed system goes further than the traditional divisions of the education system into primary, lower and upper secondary education to create one basic education school (primary cycle) lasting seven years and a six-year secondary cycle.

The last year of nursery school will become compulsory and prepare pupils for the primary cycle. This will ensure that children receive a basic education, learn to correlate space and time, are introduced to information technology, acquire knowledge of a foreign language and develop an awareness of the world around them and of their rights and duties as individuals.

Secondary school will be geared towards meeting the needs of students in terms of educational and vocational development. It will be divided into two three-year stages, the first of which, known as the 'orientation' stage, takes pupils to the end of compulsory schooling, while the second three-year period combines educational and vocational elements, providing opportunities for an introduction to the world of employment.

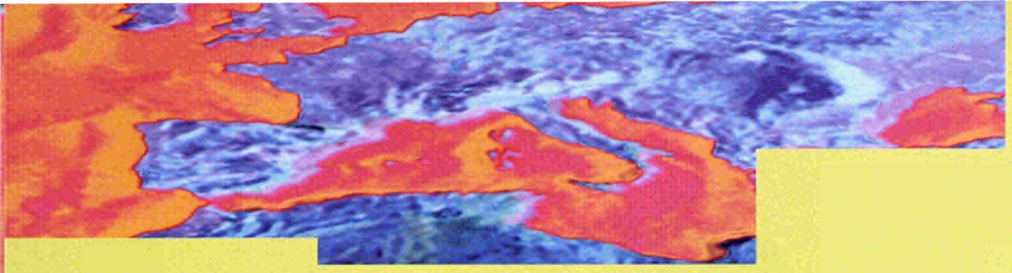
Liechtenstein

Pilot project for harmonizing school curricula

In Liechtenstein, each kind of school within the compulsory education system (1st to 9th years) has its own curriculum. The aim of the pilot curriculum project is to create a single curriculum for this educational sector, specifically oriented to learning objectives. This will serve to enhance the continuity, transparency, and flexibility of the compulsary school curriculum. The nursery school level will be involved in the project work as appropriate.

Flexible school entry age

A working group has been looking into improving the transition from pre-school to primary school. The working group's principal task has been to tackle this issue in relation to the age at which children should enter school. A child reaching the age of six on or before 30 April



(qualifying date) is currently required to start attending school following the summer holidays in that year. The working group suggests that this qualifying date should be moved from 30 April to 30 June, which would be more in line with the situation in neighbouring countries and regions. At the same time, it is proposed that the qualifying date should be surrounded by a so-called flexible zone. Parents will be able to decide relatively freely within this planned four-month time zone, subject to existing regulations regarding school entry, whether their children should commence school or whether they should continue attending nursery school for a further year. This proposal is an example of how opportunities are gradually being increased for parents to cooperate and have a say in how compulsory education is organized in Liechtenstein.

The Netherlands

Law on adult education and vocational training

A four-level qualification structure for vocational training will be introduced on 1 August in the context of the new Law on Education and Vocational Training (WEB), along with the associated training courses. The levels correspond to the SEDOC system.

The first level is *assistant training*, with courses lasting from six months to one year. This is a completely new course. The second level, *basic vocational training*, with courses lasting from two to three years, approximately corresponds to the current primary apprenticeship or shorter intermediate vocational training ("kort-mbo") courses. Level three consists of *specialist training*, with courses lasting from two to four years, and corresponds approximately to secondary level apprenticeship. These training courses can follow in sequence, with the final qualification for each course providing access to the next.

At the fourth level, a distinction is made between two types of courses, *intermediate managerial training* with studies lasting from three to four years, which is comparable to the current "lang-mbo" (full intermediate vocational training) and *specialist training*, with courses lasting from one to two years. In order to take this type of course, a diploma from a specialist or intermediate management training course is compulsory.

In principle all courses can have two branches: a vocational training curriculum in which the proportion of practical professional training is between 20 and 60%, and a professional accompanying curriculum in which the proportion of practical professional training is more than 60%. Final achievement standards have been set for each sector or branch of industry, and these state what is expected from the participants at each level of qualification.

Portugal

New communications and information technology in schools

The Nonio - Seculo XXI programme follows on from important trials in information and communications technology (ICT) which the education ministry has been developing since the mid-1980s in the form of the Minerva project. The need for ongoing work in this area has already been highlighted in the Minerva project external assessment report drafted by the OECD in 1994. The aims of the current programme are as follows:

- The provision of computer equipment for schools which not only connects them to information networks (connectivity) but promotes the development of educational projects which are innovative in terms of assured sustainability and quality.
- The development of an organization in the schools network which will have *ICT in education literacy centres* (based in higher education establishments, research institutes and resource centres) which will be responsible for guaranteeing scientific and technological support in the development of educational projects.
- The training of school staff in information and communications technology.
- The provision of access to high quality educational software which combines with the education/training curricula and programme material to form a coherent whole.
- The creation of conditions favourable for the development of a national software market, particularly in those areas where the specific nature of the national context particularly justifies and requires it.
- Coherence with other programmes, projects or initiatives to be developed in the more general framework of the construction of the information society.
- Cooperation between communities at school, national and EU level in order to exchange experiences and develop skills and a ICT products industry within the European Economic Area.
- Cooperation with educational and research institutions in countries which have Portuguese as their official language.

Inevitably, in order to be dynamic, the Nónio programme relies largely on the use of the Internet. To this end, as well as bringing together a mass of material relating to education to be put on the Internet, the Nónio web server is already providing a range of services to schools including hosting home pages and advertising projects and activities. This will make Nónio Portugal's flagship ICT in education programme until the year 2000.

Slovakia

New law on primary and secondary education in preparation

The far-reaching socio-political and economic changes since 1990 and the inception of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993 led to the transformation of the education system and fundamental changes in the content and organization of the entire education and training system. After the rejection of the old system of a uniform school, non-state, private and denominational schools came into being. The content of teaching also underwent a major transformation to include a new principle of democracy, without ideology and open to all opinions.

The continuous reconstruction of the content and organization of education also stems from this, and is reflected in the content of a new Act on primary and secondary education which will come into force on 1 September.

The essential change in school organization is the gradual transition of the basic eight-year school to a nine-year school and, at the same time, the prolongation of compulsory school attendance from nine to 10 years. In practice, it means that starting in 2000, each pupil will follow nine years of "basic" education and then start the first year of secondary school, either in a *gymnasium*, secondary specialized or secondary vocational school. Secondary education will take three to five years to complete, and upon completion the pupils will receive either a school-leaving certificate and apprenticeship certificate, or just the school-leaving certificate (for those attending specialized secondary schools and gymnasia). It is presumed that pupils who will start the first year of secondary school will complete this education, since according to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic these schools are free.

The prolongation of compulsory school attendance will enable the pupils completing basic education to be of an age where they will be better able to evaluate their abilities for future professional orientation. Even those who complete the shorter course, i.e. in a secondary vocational school, will have reached the age of 18 and will be able to enter the labour market.

Spain

New directions for the Spanish education system

Six months after the Popular Party won the Spanish general election, officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture reviewed the ministry's administration and presented guidelines for 1997.

The first notable achievement in pre-school education in 1996 was to provide schooling for all children aged four and five and to make major efforts towards providing schooling for three-year-olds, the aim being to provide parents with the freedom to choose nursery schools.

In primary education, efforts will focus on gradually improving those parameters which have the greatest impact on quality, such as providing more specialist staff and reducing class sizes.

During the 1996/97 school year, the first year of the new compulsory secondary education system (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria)* is being introduced throughout the country. Some aspects are considered to require further improvement, so it is planned to concentrate optional subjects in upper secondary education and to reduce the number of such subjects, to develop teaching of the humanities and to make the teaching of a second foreign language universal.

An audit of the education system will be made this year, focusing on academic performance, the evaluation of course content and the management of schools.

Contributions provided by the national units of the Eurydice network.

Further information

Klara Besançon - Technical Assistance Office - Leonardo da Vinci

F +32.2 227 01 01

Training the trainers, a fast-moving profession

8% of the projects selected for Leonardo da Vinci in 1996 relate to the training of trainers – a job title which covers a wide range of different activities. "Trainer" now covers individuals who provide occasional training, or other categories such as mentors. The training profession is rapidly changing as a result of the widening of the field of intervention of vocational training, and the diversification of sites in which it can take place.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme lays a particular emphasis on the training of trainers, *individuals who, by virtue of their duties, are directly involved in delivering or designing vocational training activities, advanced training, bringing trainees up to standard or retraining them, however they are described in their own Member State.*

Analysis of the 8% of the total number of projects selected in 1996 designed for "trainers" shows that the concept has been broadened, to include both occasional participants in training activities and people who are not directly involved in designing or delivering training programmes but who act as mediators or "resources".

The broadening of this concept is due in part to the programme itself, as the training of trainers, planners and training programme managers, along with that of mentors, often fall within the same measures. The actions proposed in this field often affect a number of these groups at the same time, forming part of overall human resources management strategies, which are often complex in form. These strategies give rise to profound changes in the field of vocational training.

In companies...

These changes are especially keenly felt in the field of continuing training in companies, where professional trainers work full-time both inside and outside the company as designers and deliverers of training programmes. Planners, managers, mentors or guest trainers, for their part, contribute to the training process only on a part-time basis. The company asks them to contribute to the training of their colleagues, co-workers or customers in specific technical fields, which represents an extra responsibility and calls for aptitude, specific skills and, therefore, specific training.

The strengthened role of vocational mentors

It is also worth pointing to the changing role of vocational mentors in companies and the investments which are being made in designing and piloting training programmes designed for their benefit. They are regarded as key players in alternance vocational training. Developing their qualifications, and hence their training, is the objective of a significant number of projects, especially in countries where the tradition of alternance has yet to develop.

For many project promoters, therefore, the development of training of these mentors involves sharpening up the definition of professional functions and profiles.

Strengthening "social qualifications"

For certain organizations, training of trainers is becoming an essential means of boosting their medium- and long-term development.

The training profession is undergoing profound changes throughout Europe, to the extent that it sometimes appears blurred in the projects submitted to the Leonardo da Vinci programme. This change is closely linked to a widening of the field of intervention of vocational training and radical changes in the nature of training sites, which range from traditional fixed, identifiable structures such as schools or training centres, to virtual training sites used in distance teaching.

The training of trainers often follows these changes, and sometimes anticipates them. One of the most notable trends in the development of trainer training through projects submitted to the Leonardo da Vinci programme seems to be the development or strengthening of their "social qualifications", with a greater emphasis on their personal skills than in the past, preparing them for the role of development agents which increasingly seems to lie in store for them.

A model project in the retail sector

When managers become trainers...

One of the best illustrations of the widening of the definition of the trainer, and also of the overall strategy of developing companies through their human resources, is to be found in a project submitted by a promoter in Luxembourg with partners in Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

The project, entitled "Training, assisting, promoting, acquiring new skills thanks to a dedicated programme for directors-trainers-mentors in the retail sector" was selected in 1996.

The initial hypothesis of this ongoing project is that people responsible for running and managing a commercial business have a pivotal role in developing the programme of continuing training of employees, not only as decision-makers but also as trainers. Such managers have a role as trainers and mentors towards people who come to the company as part of initial vocational training or national measures, notably those for the young unemployed, without vocational qualifications. However, they are ill-equipped for this role, because in order to train these various people managers need to have both teaching skills and skills of a social nature.

To address these needs, the partnership plans to develop a modular training package consisting of four modules:

- **the psychosocial module,** relating to the individual and his or her social environment;
- **the sector-based,** economic, commercial and industrial module;
- **the geographic module** relating to the regional, national and community environment;
- **the technological module.**

The project plans to transfer the teaching package to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, where the contractor and one of its partners own a number of supermarkets.

Further information
Francis Gutmann - DG XXII
F +32.2 295 57 23

Dynamic project leadership

A project never remains confined to the strict framework set by its initial objectives: it evolves, moves in new directions, adapts to change, and tries to stay in touch with the "state of the art" in its particular field. Someone needs to support the project as it develops. This is the challenge facing Leonardo da Vinci project leaders - making the best use of the programme's growing interactive dynamism.

When applications closed for the first two Leonardo da Vinci calls for proposals in 1995 and 1996, more than 1500 projets were selected, with a Community contribution of more than ECU 200 million. These projects are now well into their operational phase.

In order to sustain the innovative momentum, a number of project leadership initiatives were established in the vocational training field. Some, at the transnational level, bring together projects according to their main theme; others, at the national level, involve projects with one or more particular themes in common, based in different regions of the country in question.

"I believe not in things, but in relationships between things"

(Georges Braque)

Living projects

It is not enough simply to finance a transnational project and expect it to run smoothly and have a positive impact on training systems, provision and policies in Europe. The various stages in its development still need to be overseen, particularly in terms of organization and content.

A project never remains confined to the strict framework set by its initial objectives: it evolves, moves in new directions, adapts to change, tries to stay in touch with the state of the art in its particular field, and strives constantly to bring itself closer to its target audience.

It is these stages in particular – often critical stages – of reorientation which need to be monitored. Meetings with partners involved in thematically linked projects can also prove beneficial.

From complementarity to thematic networks

Depending on the main theme on which each project is based, groupings can be formed which pave the way for valuable exchanges of information between projects, the development of synergy and cooperation, or the formation of genuine transnational thematic networks. As a result, the development of projects is given extra momentum.

As one promoter says, *"the chance to exchange points of view and solutions which have been found for a variety of problems involved in the setting up of transnational projects is invaluable when it comes to identifying more innovative approaches"*. For instance, certain distance training methodologies might be better suited in practice to a particular target group. The use of a particular computer program may offer the learner more flexibility and autonomy. Socio-cultural difficulties between partners might have been resolved by a particular approach. The partners of a thematically linked project may sign a mutually beneficial agreement on royalties on the products produced, and so on.

Better still, thematic conferences or seminars build direct cooperation between partners involved with different projects, and enable relationships of complementarity to be built. These can last well beyond the period of operation of the projects, and may evolve into thematic or sector-based networks such as, for example, networks of social partners or small businesses in the secondary sector involved in playing host to young trainees.

Higher quality and better dissemination opportunities

Evidently, the coming together of the approaches adopted by the different projects awakens creativity, leads to healthy emulation and helps each party to take stock of where they stand in relation to the prevailing standards. For example, software packages which simulate real workplace situations provide a very high level of interaction, effectively immersing the trainee in a virtual, animated graphic world. Meanwhile, the pooling of experiences of partners from different generations of projects can prove particularly enlightening, with the experience of old hands benefiting novices.

Furthermore, meetings of project leaders provide a golden opportunity for direct dialogue between project partners, the Commission, the Technical Assistance Office and national bodies involved in coordinating the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

One of the most valuable effects of interaction between thematically linked projects lies in the widening of opportunities for disseminating and transferring the results of the different transnational projects.

Finally, as part of project leaders' seminars and thematic conferences, outside experts with knowledge of the fields in question may be invited to give the partners of current projects some additional food for thought.

Thanks to this positive external input, there is less risk of training projects devoting all their energies to introspection rather than the outside world, thereby seriously compromising the validity of their work.

Open information on the Internet

There are plans to make an Internet page available to the promoters and partners involved in Leonardo da Vinci projects. This will summarize the various project leadership activities and provide information on the products generated by these projects.

In addition, the creation of theme-based electronic communication groups will be encouraged. These will pass on experiences and queries by electronic means. A page on the Europa server could be opened up for their use, accessible to the greatest possible number of interested parties and thereby reinforcing the impact of projects on vocational training policies.

A few examples

Project leadership activities have already been organized by countries involved in the Leonardo da Vinci programme. For example, a project leadership seminar for all training projects relating to the fishing sector was held in Iceland, and a similar seminar was held in Finland for projects relating to the environment. Other project leaders' meetings have taken place in France and Germany on research and analysis into transnational mobility and language skills, along with a seminar in Spain on regional development.

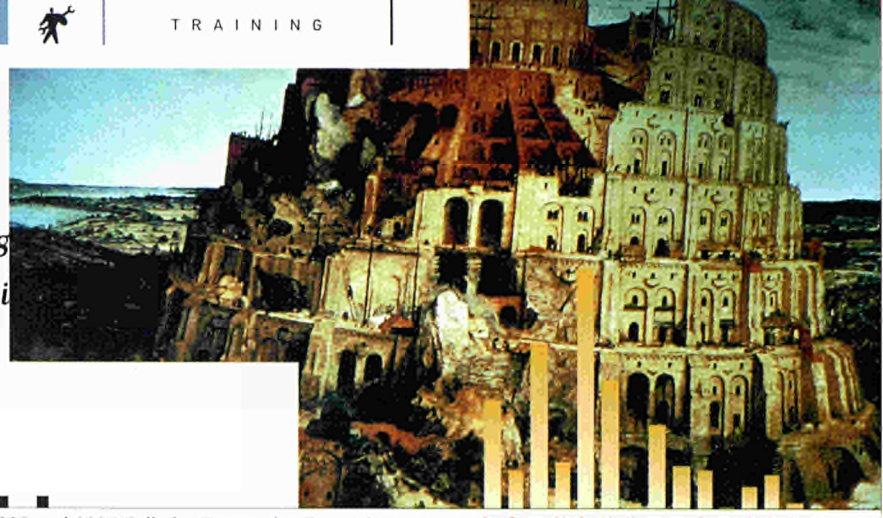
A number of activities for those running Leonardo da Vinci projects have also been held which reflect the common framework of objectives of the Council decision setting up the programme.

Overall, the project leadership work has been organized around the five strategic priorities set out in the Leonardo da Vinci calls for proposals in 1996 and 1997, namely:

1. acquisition of new skills;
2. bringing teaching or vocational training establishments and businesses closer together;
3. combating social exclusion;
4. investing in human resources;
5. widening access to knowledge and promoting the development of vocational capabilities through tools of the information society in a context of lifelong training.

The project leadership activities organized in the participating countries and at Community level are coordinated by the Commission.

The project leadership movement is still in its initial stages, and will need to be strengthened considerably in the future if the Leonardo da Vinci programme is to maintain the spirit of innovation required in order to become established as the European laboratory for vocational training.

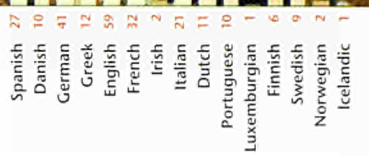


Language training in Leonardo da Vinci

Further information

Sigi Gruber - DG XXII - F +32.2 295 56 99
Pierre de Villers - Technical Assistance Office
Leonardo da Vinci - F +32.2 227 01 01

Loosening tongues...



Improved knowledge of languages in the world of work is a key objective of the Leonardo da Vinci 1997 programme. A look at the projects confirms the great advance in teaching with multimedia and the large number of synergies which these projects are creating between training providers and trainees.

Learning the language of your neighbour, steeping yourself in his culture and his signs, also means preparing the ground for a European social area in which ideas circulate without hindrance and tolerance and innovation can prosper. What is more, multilingualism is becoming a significant factor in increasing the employability of young people entering the world of work and active workers.

With its first two calls for proposals now behind it, the Leonardo da Vinci programme has been able to preserve and reinforce the experience inherited from the former action III of the Lingua programme, both in terms of dynamics of cooperation between partners and the variety of approaches.

Speaking your customer's language

Language training projects in Leonardo da Vinci cover all the official EU languages, including more unusual languages such as Luxemburgian or Irish, and point to a wide interest in the Nordic languages, including Norwegian and Icelandic, which are also eligible. Of course, the languages most commonly used in the economic world continue to be the subject of most projects, as the table above shows. This indispensable diversification of target languages takes account of the increasing awareness in the world of work of the challenges of multilingualism and the need to have at least a basic knowledge of the language of one's partner or customer, however obscure it may be. Without this knowledge, and as acknowledged by the companies taking part in an important seminar devoted to language audits held in Saarbruck in 1994, significant market share and development prospects risk being lost.

However, this raises the problem of the skills sought by learners, and the best means of acquiring them. Training in a language for vocational purposes, as in the case of Leonardo da Vinci, tends to favour learning through immersion in the exclusive environment of the target language and the simulation of real work situations.

A teaching approach firmly anchored to vocational training

Experience shows that learning a language in a professional context entails employing particular teaching strategies which take account of the different "language acts" which the employee or young job-seeker will be called upon to use in the context of his or her work. For example, a tourist guide will, depending on the situation, need to describe a place of interest in an attractive manner, explain an itinerary with precision, offer a group reassurance, resolve minor arguments between people or, indeed, negotiate a favourable price in a particular establishment. It is therefore important to make sure that for those receiving training, their job category and the profession in which they work are clearly identified, along with their needs and existing skills.

Language training projects in Leonardo da Vinci (strand III.1 of the programme) cover a very wide range of economic sectors – from the primary sector (agriculture) to the tertiary sector (environment, advertising, telemarketing, air transport, tourism and, in particular, health care), via the secondary sector (metallurgy, spectacle manufacturers, electricity, building, and so on). They include a number of promising sectors as regards job creation, such as the environment or social services and health. And a very large number of projects are not restricted to a single sector, in that the learning of a language develops knowledge and skills which are highly transverse and transferable to other target groups, such as the ability to identify social relationships or, indeed, weigh up the power relationships inherent to the learning of a language at whatever level.

Multimedia holds the key

A favourite area for computer-assisted teaching, language learning is constantly evolving in terms of the close links maintained between the methodology and multimedia.

Back in 1990, the Lingua programme produced its first teaching software packages, which involved a simple processing of exercises written in the target language, and rudimentary feedback of the "true or false" variety.

The emergence of sound cards, and then of speech synthesis, found a direct application in pronunciation training. As this technology has grown more sophisticated, the specifically multimedia nature of language training products has increased, culminating today's complete systems which combine text, sound and animation in a single unit. At the same time, the way in which computers are used has shifted towards greater autonomy for the learner, or semi-autonomy with occasional "live" tuition.

For the first time, language training projects resulting from the Leonardo da Vinci 1996 call for proposals have made greater use of electronic and computer equipment than of printed materials.

This does not, however, signal the impending end of the printed form as a training resource, and still less the end of the Gutenberg Galaxy as evoked by Marshal McLuhan. The printed word remains the ultimate reference medium, the guide to which the user comes when he or she needs to check a particular aspect of the tuition or read around it, but its limits in terms of interaction and flexibility of use are gradually transforming its role into that of teaching support material for electronic products.

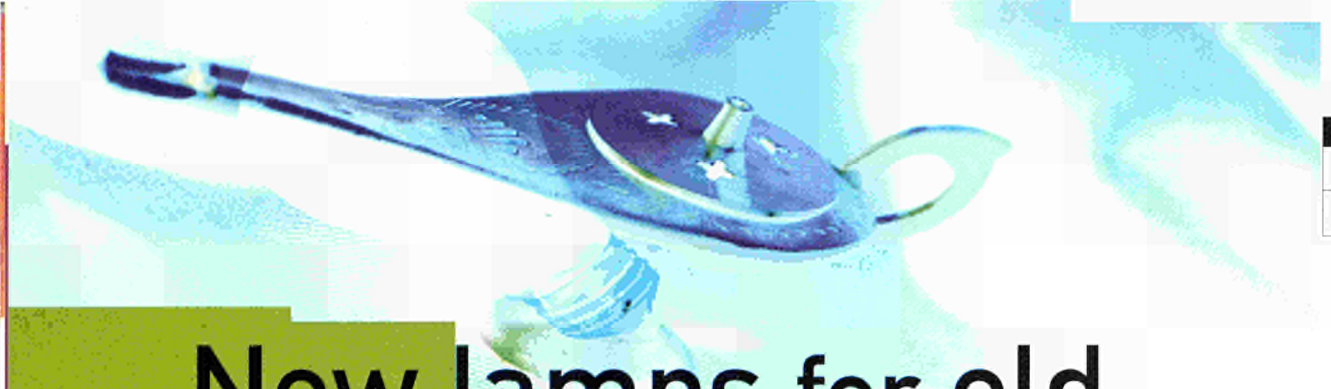
On the other hand, audio and video cassettes seem set to disappear in the medium term. As for multimedia, a clear polarization is emerging between off-line CD-Rom based technology with sound cards and on-line technology using the Internet and, significantly, the development of local LAN networks and dedicated inter-company networks, foreshadowing a proliferation of Intranet networks.

In addition, language teaching is the perfect forum for fun-with-learning activities such as role-play, whose structure closely mirrors the hypertext links around which most multimedia software is constructed.

In this respect, it is worth looking into a recent development whose consequences in terms of methodology are of some interest. The trend towards immersion and the simulation of real work situations is most marked in off-line multimedia CD-Rom products. The characteristic features of teaching, the presence of navigation or help tools, all elements which remind the learner of what he or she is doing, namely acquiring and assimilating knowledge of a language, are systematically erased, and confined to the bottom of the screen, leaving the voice as the only means of interfacing with the system. This approach is closely tied to the simulation, fun with learning and virtual reality approach.

On the other hand, teaching methods of a more constructivist nature are seeing significant growth in the distance training field. Constructivism means an approach which, in the learning process, lays emphasis on the commitment of the learner and the fact that any newly acquired concept or skill is added to the body of "things he knew before". This type of approach is somewhat in vogue in training products made available over the Internet. In fact, finding one's way around the Internet is itself governed by a set of codes and signs which strongly affect the learner's approach, as these signs are a constant reminder that he or she is learning, and a gap opens up between the subject who is learning and the object of the learning process.

Language training projects build synergies between training providers in the form of universities and training bodies on the one hand, and the recipients of training, namely companies and their structures, on the other hand. They therefore continue to be a driving force in the field of methodological research. And they lead the way for new applications able to be transferred to other contexts, and to other teaching objectives.



Further information

Barry Nyhan - DG XXII

F +32.2 295 56 99

New lamps for old

Developing innovative ideas for vocational education and training

The purpose of European cooperation in the area of vocational education and training is not only to facilitate the take-up of successful training strategies by broadening awareness of different approaches across Europe, but to reach beyond current practices and develop new ones. Integrated surveys and analyses under the Leonardo programme make up-to-date information accessible.

The emphasis on innovation is a key feature of the Leonardo programme. Developing new ideas, however, requires more detailed and comprehensive mapping of the overall vocational education and training landscape. The programme, therefore, supports initiatives concerned with the sourcing of new knowledge by means of surveys and analyses.

The importance assigned to this component of Leonardo is a recognition of the fact that the creation of high-quality vocational education and training systems in Europe is dependent on the support of innovative, dynamic, research and development support services. Likewise, in order to provide a scientific frame of reference for the policies and actions being implemented in the programme itself, networks of European-oriented research and development institutes are needed to carry out studies on key issues.

Research carried out in the previous EU vocational training programmes, in particular Petra, Force, Comett and Eurotecnet, has helped build a European tradition of scientific policy-oriented and applied research in vocational education and training. More than 100 monographs were published in the framework of the former programmes, which gave rise to the emergence of distinctive research strategies and methodological approaches appropriate to European programmes in vocational education and training.

The issues examined in Leonardo

Fourteen key survey and analysis issues are receiving attention in the 88 transnational survey and analysis projects selected after the programme's calls for proposals in 1995 and 1996. These issues can be grouped under the following four broad headings.

- Improving the quality and innovation capacity of the vocational training systems in the participating countries.
- Developing the European dimension of vocational training and the transparency of qualification systems.
- Industrial change, adaptation of skills, vocational training as an investment.
- Promoting new forms of cooperative learning arrangements supporting lifelong learning.

An example of a project addressing the first area is a Finnish-led study, *Post-16*, which examines reforms taking place in eight European countries regarding the improvement of the status of initial vocational education and training. Another project, addressing the issue of transparency of qualifications in a European context is led by a French-based institute and is examining the feasibility of transnational reference structures to monitor qualifications, by means of a network of national bodies analysing and providing information, according to a common framework. Regarding the third area, a Portuguese-led project called Forbitec is analysing the investments in training by SMEs in the biological sector in five countries. An Italian-led project is addressing the fourth area, through examining ways in which training professionals can be developed to provide guidance and counselling services for SMEs.

Another project, led by a German research institute, deals with the development of a new European profile for educational and training professionals, seeking to bring together two different perspectives on training and development - the vocational training approach and the human resource development approach. The final example provided here is a project concerned with the evaluation of the effectiveness of private sector interventions in local community vocational training initiatives for the unemployed.

Leonardo da Vinci survey and analysis topics

- skill and qualification needs
- the development of vocational qualifications
- improvement of the attractiveness of initial vocational training
- diversification of initial and continuing vocational training
- new types of vocational training apprenticeships or sandwich courses
- new training methods for SMEs
- continuing vocational training plans, within the framework of sectoral surveys
- new forms of training for vocational training planners and managers
- new methods and tools for evaluating the quality and cost-benefit analysis of vocational training
- the accounting of vocational training from the point of view of investment in training
- the development of vocational training contracts between employers and workers
- the development of access to training
- the recognition of the skills acquired in training measures
- the promotion of the transparency of vocational training qualifications

Developing a European vocational training research tradition

As well as addressing content issues, the survey and analysis measure in Leonardo has another important, 'process' objective: fostering the development of a high quality vocational training research tradition in Europe. This entails promoting appropriate research strategies and methodologies, creating networks and supporting conferences and workshops.

One of the main aims of a conference entitled *Putting innovative ideas into practice - creating links with policy-makers and practitioners*, held in Berlin last November, was to examine the distinctive contribution which the Leonardo surveys and analyses could make in relation to innovative policies and actions. This conference, attended by all the 1995 survey and analysis project leaders, focused specifically on two issues: the development of appropriate models for vocational training research and the assurance of quality. An earlier series of workshops, held in Brussels in April 1996, examined the issue of the dissemination of research results.

The conclusions emerging from these events regarding the distinctive role to be played by surveys and analyses are:

- The studies carried out in Leonardo should seek a balance between 'scientific' and 'practice-related' criteria. In other words, they should have credibility amongst the scientific community as well as with policy-makers and practitioners.
- The surveys and analyses should facilitate and evaluate the change process and not just stay at the level of analysing and recommending changes. This entails providing a reflective and theoretical framework within which change processes can be planned, implemented and monitored.
- Survey and analysis projects should set out to involve all of the stakeholders in the project, such as policy-makers, social partners, experts and participants, on the grounds that it is through creating a sense of ownership among those with a stake in the projects that the results are more likely to be implemented. In the same vein, dissemination activities should be built into all stages of the project as distinct from focusing on them only in the final stages of the project, or after it has been completed.

A central goal of the survey and analysis measure should be building a tradition of European collaborative research, entailing the development of a genuine European dimension of vocational education and training. This entails a shift from the traditional comparative research models, which in the main are based on a separate analysis of what different countries are doing.

The agenda arising from the above points is ambitious, and its implementation will entail much effort and a great deal of close cooperation between Leonardo and the other survey and research initiatives taking place at a European and Member State level. However, there are already signs that the Leonardo survey and analysis projects can actually fulfil an agenda-setting role, through developing innovative ideas for vocational education and training in Europe.

Cedefop

Further information
Michael Adams - Cedefop
F +32.2 230 58 24

The new world of vocational training

Within the context of lifelong learning, Member States continue to review and evaluate their vocational training programmes aimed at preparing young people for entry to working life and, through workplace training, helping workers face the future demands of the changing job market. *Le Magazine* looks at some recent developments in nine European countries on the basis of information made available by the information network of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).

Austria

Changes in apprenticeship training are leading to greater autonomy for schools while new specialized higher education colleges (Fachhochschulen) are providing an important alternative to university.

For many years, Austrian training colleges have included an "occupation-related foreign language" (English) as a compulsory part of the course. Tuition in "computer-assisted technologies" is also provided for commercial and technical training courses. In 1993, "German and communication" was introduced for some 40 training courses.

Official integration of the training colleges into Secondary Level 2 helped facilitate access to the higher education system from the dual training system. Training experiments were carried out, in particular for occupations in electronics and metal-processing. The introduction of training for groups of occupations created the opportunity for training for a wide number of occupations. Some of these occupational groups have already been formulated, others are in the pipeline.

With greater autonomy, a start has been made in changing curricula towards basic theoretical and practical training with subsequent practical specialization. Such initiatives aim to guarantee employability, high-quality vocational training and on-going continuing training. Within a set framework, schools can determine teaching content autonomously.

This will have particular implications for technical and commercial training, where amalgamation of related curricula results in larger training areas and specializations which differ from school to school. In other colleges, such as commercial secondary schools, specialization can be expected in areas which to date have largely been unstructured. New directives will also create increased scope for the economic activities of schools.

At the beginning of the 1990s discussion started on the intensified expansion of non-university tertiary education in the form of specialized higher education colleges. With their highly structured vocationally oriented programmes, they could become an important alternative to universities. This trend has intensified. Such courses have now been offered since 1994. In the 1994/95 school year, some 10% of all students commencing studies chose a specialized college.

The Federal government has stated its intention to continue and extend this policy and in future to place the accent on courses for those already in employment and to offer courses for trainees who have successfully completed their apprenticeship.

Belgium

Flemish community

New developments integrate training into the labour market and lead to more demand-oriented programmes.

Parallel to ongoing policies at both national and Flemish community level, such as the national employment plans for the long-term unemployed and for young people, sector-based agreements on the financing of vocational training and the promotion of apprenticeship, a number of additional and complementary initiatives have been taken. These include:

- Activities launched following a meeting of the Flemish Socio-Economic Forum emphasising the importance of training for the integration into the labour market of semi- and unskilled workers.
- Following the most recent Employment Agreement, additional measures have been introduced for the unemployed with an expansion of training programmes, particularly those for the socially disadvantaged in both qualitative and quantitative terms. More flexible and demand-oriented programmes will be provided, especially with relation to SMEs. The Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service (Vdba) will play a key role in providing these programmes
- Objectives of a new work experience plan, agreed upon by the government and social partners, will harmonize existing systems, increase the number of places, provide more guidance and promote mobility after the first period of work experience.

French community

Integration paths for the unemployed.

The French-speaking community plans to implement the "Pathways to Integration" programme in 1997-98, designed to accompany job-seekers through a global process of integration into working life. They will be helped to choose the most appropriate type of training.

The most unusual feature of this programme is that the training revolves around the person to be trained and his or her own training background, rather than those of the training officer.

Job-seekers will be supported through a global process which combines social integration and individual development with employability (work), and factors promoting integration into work, qualifications and, ultimately, the transition to work.

Training officers involved in the integration path will be required to abide by a charter which sets out the objectives and aims of the programme – partnership, quality, responding to the job market, individual participation, etc. In addition, Forem, the French-speaking community's vocational training and employment office, will be responsible for establishing a "training crossroads" in each sub-region, to act as a first point of call for information, advice and guidance on the training and integration package.

Finally, each integration path will be recorded on a personalized document giving general information on the job-seeker's changing circumstances.

Finland

Vocational Qualifications Act is on track and progressing rapidly.

Qualifications under the act cover almost all vocational sectors and there are close to 300 separate qualifications available. National core curricula exist for more than 200 of these and nearly 200 examination boards have been appointed. At present, 25,000 students in adult and apprenticeship training participate in education leading to a qualification. This figure is expected to double within a few years.

The system is modular, designed to respond to the needs of the future workplace and to promote flexibility in learning methods. A comprehensive programme of training to familiarize teachers with the new system has been undertaken and 700 teachers have already completed a three-week programme; 500 have participated in an additional 10 week programme on the planning, organization and evaluation/assessment of competence-based qualifications.

France

Measures to promote mobility and bring the world of business in touch with higher education.

Making youth training more professional was the main concern of the national conference on youth employment, called by the Prime Minister on 10 February 1997. Social partners, representatives from national and regional parliaments, student organizations, family associations and integration networks for young people agreed on several new initiatives.

One of these is designed, as part of the general provision for vocational integration for young people, to promote mobility. From this year onwards, therefore, a new "international future" contract should enable 10,000 young people aged from 18-30 to spend 18 months gaining vocational experience in a French company based in a foreign country. The social partners are responsible for settling the practical details of this contract, which should include a training period lasting about 10 weeks.

The conference also adopted a measure geared towards students – a module of initial professional experience integrated into degree courses. Through this four-and-a-half month placement in a public or private company, it is proposed to introduce the world of business into higher education and shorten the waiting period between graduation and the first job, which currently stands at about one year on average.

The initial professional experience module will be available to interested students in 1997 from the beginning of the new academic year, starting with students taking the general studies component of their course from the third year onwards. An agreement will be signed between the student, the university and the company, which will need to demonstrate its commitment by appointing a mentor. This period will be recognized as a degree course credit element, and assessed by a panel including representatives from the education department and business.

Germany

Recent developments in the training market lead to new training places in expanding occupational sectors.

For the 1996 training year, there was an overall balance between supply and demand, although there were growing regional and occupational disparities. The number of training contracts, 574,342, represents a national increase of 1,600 or 0.3% over 1995. In the new federal states (Länder), the number of in-company training places increased while training places outside companies decreased. The larger companies have maintained or even increased the number of places they offer while the involvement of smaller companies has decreased, although the number of these has risen steadily since 1987.

For 1997 it can be assumed that some 70% of school-leavers are starting vocational training in the dual system, requiring up to 630,000 training places. Industry needs to intensify its efforts to cover these training needs. As part of the "Training campaign 1997" it is recommended that small and medium-sized companies jointly offer training in a training alliance.

A strong modernizing drive aims to guarantee that structural change leads more quickly than in the past to the creation of new training places in expanding occupational fields in the services sector. The decision taken by the government, employers and trade unions in 1995, to pursue new paths in formulating and agreeing upon training regulations and to accelerate the procedures in limiting them to a maximum of two years, has produced results. After a formulation period of 10 months on average, some 21 new training regulations came into force in 1996, covering three occupations which are completely new and 18 which have been modernized and reformulated. A further 100 occupations which the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (Bibb) is developing on behalf of the Federal government, with experts from the employer and trade union organizations, will be completely renewed or fundamentally changed in the foreseeable future. Some 50 new training provisions should come into force on 1 August 1997 and a further 50 should become valid the following year.

Ireland

A new agreement between government and social partners follows the highly successful programmes for Economic and Social Progress (1991 to 1993) and Competitiveness and Work (1994 to 1996).

It represents the outcome of discussions on the challenges facing the Irish economy and society over the next three years.

A new national programme, *Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness*, has been agreed between the government and social partners. In addition to the pay and tax elements, the new partnership contains provisions for an agreement to pursue partnership at the enterprise level, modernization of the public service and a specific programme of action for greater social inclusion. All these proposals involve a training element.

The need for higher levels of skills and the importance of lifelong learning in responding to the challenges of global competition are recognized, and to this end a number of proposals are advanced:

- The development of new business-led approaches to enterprise training, which would have strong business, trade union and education/training sector input.
- The requirement that training be fully integrated into all company programmes for development and into business plans and applications for all forms of state aid.
- A commitment to lifelong learning, particularly in the light of rapid technological change, from government and social partners.
- Support for individuals investing in their own training.
- The introduction of a "National Traineeship Programme and Certification" and on-going monitoring of the effectiveness of the existing apprenticeship system.

The specific training needs of small businesses, the tourist industry and agriculture are also addressed.

The Netherlands

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (Web), implemented on 1 January 1996, is designed to harmonize various types of education and training and to unify the different forms of vocational and adult education into a single statutory framework.

On 1 August 1997 a national qualification structure for vocational education will be introduced. This structure will have four distinct levels and two different educational paths, with ample attention being given to practical vocational training.

There will be a separate qualification structure for adult education programmes, divided into a number of levels mirroring those in vocational education. The national qualification structure for adult education entered into force on 1 January 1997.

As a result of the new law, various types of vocational training and adult education programmes will be united within Regional Training Centres (Rocs). The Web assumes that only broad-based educational institutes on this scale will be able to guarantee individualized training to the many people wanting to attend adult education and vocational training. Prior to 1 January 1998, all schools which are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will have to find a place in one of the 45 to 50 Rocs.

The Agricultural Training Centres (Aocs) are run under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and provide senior secondary cycle vocational training, apprenticeship training and pre-vocational education in agriculture and the natural environment or in food technology and management.

There are several parties active in the field of vocational education who jointly determine, monitor and guarantee the quality of education and training under the Web act. Amongst these are: educational institutions, the national vocational education bodies, participants in education and training, local authorities, trade and industry and the two ministries (education and agriculture).

Spain

In December 1996 the government, the employers' and trade union organizations signed an agreement forming the basis of vocational training policy for the next 4 years.

This agreement following five months of talks covers the three sub-systems of the National Programme on Vocational Training, i.e. initial training (formación reglada), vocational training for the unemployed (provided by the labour administration) and continuing training for employed workers.

At the same time, a bilateral agreement was signed by the employers' and trade union organizations on the development of Continuing Training in Companies through joint, bilateral management by the Foundation for Continuing Training in Companies (Forcem). On the basis of this joint agreement, the government and social partners signed a further tripartite agreement on managing the continuing training of workers.

One of the features of the new agreements is that as of January 1997 the National Institute for Employment (Inem) assumed responsibility for managing funding of vocational training courses in companies. Forcem will continue to receive the requests for training programmes and will decide on the framework and forward proposals to Inem. Another innovation is that the target group for continuing training is expanding and now includes not only salaried workers, but also workers affiliated to Reass (special agriculture social insurance system), the self-employed, part-time workers and other groups.

Another new feature is that the training contract has been modified and the training element will be strengthened.

United Kingdom

Establishing a seamless qualification and assessment route from the nursery to workplace training and lifelong learning.

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment recently announced the merging of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications into the Qualification and National Curriculum Authority (QNCA). This follows the merging of the Department of Employment with the Department of Education in 1995 – which has helped greatly in improving the links between education and work. The creation of QNCA will further this process. Subject to Royal Assent, QNCAs will begin work in October 1997.

The main objective of QNCA will be to work with and assist the Secretary of State to ensure that the curriculum and qualifications available to young people and adults are of high quality, coherent and flexible, and that they contribute effectively to improving the nation's level of attainment in education and training and to building the economy.

The Secretary of State also announced on 10 February the next stage in developing the government's proposals for external inspection of government-funded training. He is receiving proposals made by the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) National Council which include:

- The establishment of a Quality Council to oversee the inspection.
- The establishment of a National Inspection Unit.
- Inspections which are independent of the individual providers of training being inspected and their TECs.

The government has also published its White Paper *Learning to Compete: Education and Training for 14-19 year olds* which outlines plans to create a learning entitlement for all 14-21 year olds and introduces *Relaunch – a new start for disaffected young people*. It also released its plans on learning credits which would, from summer 1998, allow young people over the age of 16 to choose what and where to study.

Further information
Michel Lefranc - DG XXII
F +32.2 295 57 19

Baltic universities

EuroFaculty
on the high road to reform

Under the innovative Eurofaculty pilot project, three Baltic universities are reforming their programmes in economics, law, public administration, political science and business administration through strong links with donor country universities and a network of visiting professors. EuroFaculty is paving the way for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to join the European Union, and for the first time, through working with the University of Kaliningrad in the Russian Federation, a Tacis country is cooperating actively with Phare countries.

Since Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania gained their independence from Russia in 1991, the three countries have been struggling to rebuild their economies in preparation to join their Baltic Sea neighbours in the European Union (Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Germany are EU members, while Poland is in the pre-accession process.) The EuroFaculty project is being watched carefully by the EU, as it could be a blueprint for reforming higher education in other countries.

EuroFaculty, established in September 1993, was designed to bring the Baltic universities up to European standards in the social sciences and hence to accelerate their accession process, while at the same time opening the door for cooperation in different areas between the three countries: an example is the publication of the *Baltic Journal of Economics* this spring.

The universities involved are Tartu University in Estonia, Vilnius University in Lithuania and the University of Latvia, in Riga. A small central EuroFaculty directorate in Riga maintains contact with donor governments and universities, with the EU and with the programme officers at the three universities. A steering committee is composed of two representatives from each participating country and a representative from the European Commission.

The initial funding of EuroFaculty came through a Tempus joint European project via Phare, which has since remained a major contributor. Additional funding has been provided by the Danish, Finnish, German, Norwegian and Swedish governments on a voluntary basis, while teaching staff and library and computing resources have been made available by several European universities. The budget for 1996-1997 as adopted in April last year is ECU 1,832,000.

Upgrading "lamentable" academic standards

After 51 years under the Soviet regime, drastic action was needed to raise academic standards. In a report, an evaluation committee supported the view originally taken by the Council of Baltic Sea States that academic standards in the Baltic universities were "lamentably inadequate" and that "the quality of the delivery of the academic programmes fell far short of internationally acceptable scholastic norms."

At Tartu University, for example, an international evaluation led by academics from Bentley College in the United States revealed that work considered postgraduate would only be viewed as undergraduate-level in the West, and the level of research and education was so far below standard that the Faculty of Economics should have been closed down. Instead, young academic staff went to the US to retrain and brought their knowledge home.

Progress in the fields of political science and public administration, for example, has been hampered by the political sensitivities attached to these subjects under the Soviet regime, which left an unfortunate if predictable staffing legacy. The universities were less a community of scholars than a loose confederation of academic, managerial collectivities.

In addition, the low remuneration of academic staff has meant that many do not have the time to devote to professional development. Tartu's Faculty of Law fell apart following independence, as professors sought more lucrative employment with private law firms or in government, where salaries can be as much as 10 times greater.

EuroFaculty aims to make itself superfluous as soon as the Baltic universities have self-sustaining reformed study programmes offering a core curriculum in each field up to the level of a master's degree in line with international academic standards.

Visiting professors help build a foundation for change

One of EuroFaculty's main goals is to make the universities self-sufficient in academic staff. Professors from donor countries work alongside existing staff as a team, playing a major role in retraining and assisting local teachers in developing up-to-date teaching materials in the Baltic languages, transmitting professional knowledge and modern teaching methods. This is resulting in completely fresh curricula reflecting the leading edge in international scholarship.

These visiting professors are primarily senior staff at the top of their profession – leaders in research, scholarship and teaching. They commit themselves to at least one year, preferably two, in order to infuse stability and predictability into the programme. In some cases, however, visiting professors teach for shorter periods (several weeks or so) in conjunction with Western junior teachers.

In the autumn term of 1996, 15 Western professors taught some 30 EuroFaculty courses at the three Baltic universities. In addition, about 25 Baltic university teachers were associated with EuroFaculty programmes, either as retrained teachers with their own courses or as team teachers.

Tartu University

The university was founded in 1632 when King Gustavus II Adolphus of Sweden signed the foundation charter.
It was shut down when Russia conquered the Baltic region in 1710 and re-opened in 1802, when it became the only German-language university in Russia.
In 1889, Russian became the language of instruction and Estonian was finally adopted on 1 December 1919.
There are 10 departments with 66 departments and institutes, five museums and a computing centre.
There are 8,302 students (62 % female), of whom 90 % are ethnic Estonians, and 849 teaching staff.

Vilnius University

Vilnius University, founded in 1579, is one of the oldest establishments of higher education in Eastern Europe.
The Faculty of Law was established in 1641;
the Astronomical Observatory was set up in 1753;
the Faculty of Medicine founded in 1781.
It was closed down in 1832 by order of Czar Nicholas I and taken over by the Polish government and reopened in 1919.
In 1943, the university was closed down by the Nazis, then opened one year later.
Today, the university consists of 13 faculties, 97 departments, 25 clinics, three institutes, 16 study and research centres, the observatory, a botanical garden, computer centre, extensive library and St John's Church.
There are 10,625 students, while the research and teaching work is done by 1,433 specialists and 990 doctors.

The University of Latvia

The University of Latvia was founded in 1919, replacing the former Riga Polytechnical School. The goal was to become a national university teaching in the Latvian language.
In 1923, the parliament approved the board and the university became an autonomous institution with 11 faculties.
Since then, several institutions have separated from the university and have grown into independent centres of higher education and research, such as Latvia University of Agriculture, Riga Academy of Medicine and Riga Technical University.
Today, with 13 faculties, the university offers a broad range of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate study programmes leading to bachelor, master, doctor and professional degrees in 28 specialities. There are about 27,000 students, 785 academic staff and 98 professors.

At Tartu, new teaching methods have been introduced and there has been considerable curriculum development with new courses that started at the bachelor's level, now progressing to the master's level.

At Vilnius, the Institute of International Relations and Political Science has been very active in developing a new curriculum on its own initiative and has been very willing to introduce the EuroFaculty among its partners.

About 46 teaching associates have been supported by EuroFaculty to achieve a master's in economics at Tartu University, with the aim of enabling the best-qualified of the MA graduates to join a PhD programme at a Western donor university. These candidates are obliged to return to the university and teach for a minimum of five years. This strategy has proved promising and will be extended to Riga and Vilnius.

EuroFaculty has also played a central role in equipping and updating teaching and learning infrastructures, through donations of computer hardware and software and by facilitating the training of staff in information technology.

During 1995-96, it opened study libraries for economics, law and political science at each of its three Baltic centres. These libraries are supported by on-line computerized catalogues and are open to all students and staff.

EuroFaculty reaches out to the Russian Federation

EuroFaculty decided in 1996 to initiate a pilot programme at the University of Kaliningrad, an isolated part of Russia located on the Baltic Sea, between Lithuania and Poland.

This programme, funded at the level of ECU 56,000, is designed to modernize the teaching of economics at the university. The programme is expected to continue on an expanded basis in the following years, based on experience and dependent on separate funding.

The funding will also buy equipment and help build up a library for economics, law and the social sciences.

Government support a key to success

Introducing Western traditions of training and curriculum development has not been easy. When the Baltic states were under the Soviet regime, all these disciplines were very different or non-existent (for example, political science and political administration), and, unfortunately, not all teaching staff share the view that academic standards need necessarily be raised.

According to the evaluation committee, there exist pockets of considerable resentment that EuroFaculty, by its very existence, calls into question the status and standing of academic staff currently teaching the social sciences.

As a result, says Professor Toivo Maimets, the pro-rector of Tartu University and Estonia's academic representative on EuroFaculty's steering committee, EuroFaculty not only needs considerable administrative support at each university, but strong support from the governments.

In Estonia, for example, there is solid support from the education ministry and from the faculties, which has made progress particularly rapid and visible at Tartu University. The Estonian government has insisted that EuroFaculty be regarded as an integral part of the university, with a very visible campus presence.

At Vilnius, the rector supports the programme. In Latvia, although the education ministry is supportive, some faculties are eager to collaborate with EuroFaculty, while others are more cautious.

EuroFaculty cannot compel academic staff to accept its advice or to undergo retraining. Its success depends on voluntary cooperation and facilitation.

This makes dealing with governments and sceptical academics akin to missionary work, according to Professor Maimets. "You only have arguments based on the experience of developed countries... the rest depends on faith."

The challenges ahead

The challenges are many, including the upgrading of poor university facilities. EuroFaculty has invested in equipment, but depends on the universities to provide a suitable environment.

However, according to Professor Maimets, the tenuous financial situation of EuroFaculty makes it difficult to implement long-term strategies, which are necessary for the initiative to succeed.

"EuroFaculty urgently needs a smooth and regular inflow of funds," he says. "In addition, we need stability to be able to employ the best available academics and administrators."

All funding, except for that made available from Denmark (the biggest single contributor last year with the European Commission, each providing 25% of the overall budget), is allocated annually and donations are paid out at different times, resulting in difficulties.

According to Professor Maimets, the single most important challenge is to fully integrate EuroFaculty into the university faculties, so that when the funding stops, the academic activities may continue.

"The Baltic states want to become developed countries with a decent quality of life for their citizens," he says. "When it comes to higher education, we want to become donor countries instead of staying among those eternally waiting for help."

The challenges EuroFaculty hopes to meet include:

- Introduction of a core curriculum in each field up to the level of a master's degree in accordance with the academic standards of the supporting universities.
- Training of local academic staff to ensure that the host universities have the means to sustain a new curriculum.
- Development of libraries and computer networks in support of teaching and research at the Baltic Universities.
- Installing a permanent mechanism for continuous financial development.

The financial involvement of the European Commission through Tempus JEPs since 1993 has been substantial. Today, in order to fit into the future Tempus 2Bis framework, EuroFaculty has to review and adapt its involvement in the Tempus programme.

Towards a "common home" for education

Laying foundations in Warsaw

A summit meeting on 20-22 April 1997 in Warsaw brought together the 15 European Union education ministers and their counterparts in the associated Phare countries, together with the education ministers of Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The conference, attended by Commissioner Edith Cresson, was held in the Sejm, the Polish parliament.

The education ministers of these countries had already met twice before. However, their previous meetings had formed part of the "structured dialogue" devoted primarily to the modes of access for the Phare countries to the various EU education programmes (five Phare countries are due to participate in these programmes in the near future).

What set this Warsaw meeting apart was the eminently political nature of the discussions. The European education ministers were keen to develop a joint vision of the challenges facing education beyond the year 2000. This is the thinking behind the title given to the conference: *Towards a common home for education.*

Two major themes underscored the Warsaw conference. First, the link between education and civil society: how can education help to strengthen democratic civil society and develop cohesion between communities? And second, the relationship between education and the economy: how is an "economically wealthy Europe to face the global challenges of competition in enlarged markets"? Underlying these two themes, the question of new information and communications technology was extensively debated.

The Warsaw conference had been prepared by a "troika" consisting of the Polish education minister, the Dutch education minister (whose country held the presidency of the Union) and the European Commission. Professor Carneiro, the former Portuguese education minister and member of a DG XXII study group, was asked to produce a document to serve as a basis for discussions.

For the Vienna conference, the Commission's services (DGXXII) prepared two documents, one on education and the information society, the other on the Tempus programme, "from transition to membership". The latter enabled the participants to weigh up fully the changes which have taken place in the educational structure of the Phare countries, and the way in which Tempus has had to transform itself from an instrument of aid into a means of cooperation.

The Warsaw ministerial conference forcibly demonstrated the evolution towards a "phase of equal partnership in which responsibilities are assumed interdependently and equivalently in the construction of the human infrastructure of the Europe of the future".

The associate Phare countries are: *Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have recently joined the Phare programme and are currently benefiting from an adaptation phase within this programme.*

EU / USA Cooperation

Following an agreement between the European Union and the United States signed in 1995, nine cooperation projects in higher education and training began at the start of the 1996-1997 academic year. The first EU/US projects were launched in 1993, as a small-scale experiment. A recent report analyses 21 of these 23 pioneering projects.

21 projects emerge from the testing bench

Landmarks

- **23 November 1990**
  The Transatlantic Declaration on relations between the European Community and the United States cites education, and academic exchanges in particular, as a priority area for development.
- **1993/1994 and 1994/1995**
  Two years of multilateral projects initiated for an experimental phase of two years.
- **October 1995**
- An official agreement is signed between the European Union and the United States. This agreement establishes a programme of cooperation in the higher education field and in training and vocational training field (a first).
- The first call for projects for three academic years (1996/1997 to 1998/1999) is launched and 140 joint proposals are submitted. Nine projects are eventually chosen.
- **January 1997**
  A further call for projects, with its deadline in May 1997.

The Academic Cooperation Association[1], the ACA, recently published the final version of its report on cooperation projects in higher education between the European Community and the United States. The aim of these projects was to promote multilateral rather than simply bilateral cooperation between higher education establishments on either side of the Atlantic, while at the same time shifting the emphasis of cooperation towards teaching and students rather than research, as was traditionally the case.

The report[2] focuses on the preparatory phase of the programme, a period covering the years 1993/1994 and 1994/1995. At the time, 234 joint applications were lodged with the two funding bodies: the Commission (DG XXII) on the European side, and the US Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) on the American side. Of these 234 applications, 23 were selected.

In its study, the ACA analysed 21 of these 23 projects, on the basis of reports presented by the European coordinators at the Commission. The association firstly noted a number of positive points: in general, it found that cooperation with the United States reinforced the idea of "European identity". "The European partners", said one of the report's coordinators, "developed better mutual understanding and approached their American partners as united teams".

Another achievement of the experimental phase was the degree of academic recognition for the studies which were carried out, which stood at around two-thirds for Europeans returning from the United States. "This is a much higher level of recognition than we could have predicted," comments Brigitte Hasewend, coordinator of the study.

The first phase of cooperation permitted extensive mobilization at a European level. All the EU countries with the exception of Luxembourg took part in these partnerships. The Netherlands deserves special recognition because in proportion to its population, it sent the most students to the United States and played host to the most Americans in its higher education establishments.

During the first two years of cooperation, levels of involvement did, however, prove to be unbalanced. Statistics supplied by the European coordinators show that 311 European students went to the United States, while 210 American students came to Europe[3]. In order to increase the number of establishments involved, and extend and even up the number of students taking part, two adjustments were made when the stage of "full" cooperation began in 1996. In each consortium, the minimum number of partner establishments is now six (three in Europe, three in America). As for the students involved in the exchange, there must now be at least five per partner.

When the exploratory phase was launched, the aim was to help European/American partnerships to "stand on their own two feet" after two years' external financing. The analysis carried out by the ACA is encouraging: after the allotted period, two-thirds of the projects said they wished to continue with the work which they had begun in the consortium. However, a two-year deadline appears to be too short a time to get into the habit of working together in this way and lay the foundations for more long-lasting cooperation. The European and American sponsors have therefore decided that, from 1996 onwards, their financial support will run over a period of three years.

1 *The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) is an independent European organization which supports, develops, organizes and analyses university cooperation in Europe, and between Europe and other parts of the world. The ACA was founded in 1993 as a non-profit making international association. Its offices are at 15 rue d'Egmont, B-1000 Brussels.*

2 *A review prepared by ACA for DG XXII of the European Commission, "EC/US Cooperation in Higher Education", February 1997, by Brigitte Hasewend.*

3 *This figure has yet to be confirmed from the American coordinators' reports.*

The Centrale Lille engineering college in France is the main European partner of one of the nine consortia supported jointly by the European Union and the United States. This huge cooperation project has three years in which to set up a system of double degrees for students who want to finish their studies on the other side of the Atlantic. How does such a partnership get off the ground? What are the expected benefits? *Le Magazine* met Sylvianne Wignacourt, from the international relations department of the Ecole Centrale in Lille, and Patrice Serniclay, Registrar.

Centrale Lille plays

Young engineers in the year 2000

"**The biggest problem** with our American partners was to get them to discover Lille. For many Americans, France begins and ends with Paris. Early on, in order to locate our city in their minds, we boasted that we were only an hour's train ride away from Paris. Now, we are appreciated for what we represent."

Sylvianne Wignacourt, assistant manager of international relations at the Ecole Centrale in Lille, is pleased to have come so far in so short a time. The establishment which she represents has become the leading European partner of one of the nine consortia selected by the European Commission following its first call for proposals to set up a programme of EU-USA cooperation.

With about 600 students (excluding doctoral students), Centrale Lille is a small establishment. Small but high quality. Entry to this engineers' training college is restricted to university graduates or students who have passed a *grande école* exam. Centrale Lille prepares versatile "general engineers" with excellent professional adaptation skills. The training lasts three years. The first two years of study form a common-core syllabus. Students then choose one of 12 options in the various scientific or technical fields. Another special feature of the school is that training placements in the business world are closely integrated into the university course.

The challenge of the double degree

Firmly planted though its roots are in the Nord-Pas de Calais region, Lille's Ecole Centrale is internationally oriented. It has a proud tradition as a pioneering participant in new European projects. Since 1994, Centrale Lille has been one of the cornerstones of the TIME network created by the Ecole Centrale de Paris: "Top Industrial Managers for Europe". TIME involves 26 establishments in 11 EU countries which have joined forces to develop the double degree system. Students in any of the partner establishments have the opportunity to end their two final years of study in another establishment in the network and, at the end of the day, gain due credit for the years spent abroad.

"For students, this system provides an undeniable professional advantage," observes Sylvianne Wignacourt. "A German company which takes on an engineer who is a graduate of the Ecole Centrale in Lille and Munich University will immediately be able to see the value of our general engineers' training, something which isn't always well understood in other countries. Recruiters can be confident of making a quality choice."

The Euro-American consortium project aims to extend the double degree formula across the Atlantic. Centrale Lille had, in fact, long enjoyed close relations with various establishments in the United States, and especially with the University of Texas in Austin and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. However, as the international relations representative explains, this cooperation was mostly restricted to research and exchanges of teaching staff. The consortium's aim is to involve students more directly and develop relations on a more organized, multilateral basis.

A gradual process

The consortium supported by the European Commission consists of eight partners on the European side, coordinated by the University of Texas in Austin. Most of these establishments had already collaborated with Centrale Lille in one way or another, but, several newcomers joined, such as Oklahoma State University, the American partner of the Lille University of Science and Technology. The project was also opened up to other training disciplines, not strictly scientific, such as architecture, through collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano in Italy and the Université catholique de Louvain in Belgium.

The consortium predicts that the activities will gradually accelerate. During the first academic year 1996/1997, the focus is on getting the initiative moving, through the creation of a first batch of exchanges in both directions between American and European institutions. Year two, 1997/1998, should see full academic recognition for the periods of study undertaken by the students of the consortium, along with the start of industrial placements. Finally, in 1998/1999, genuine double degree training will become a reality between the US and Europe, through longer, two-year placements.

"For many Americans, France begins and end with Paris"

Rome wasn't built in a day... and a partnership such as this calls for a great deal of preparation. Sylvianne Wignacourt, the mainspring of the European element, affirms the need for establishments to meet regularly at the European and American level. In this respect, she appreciates the fact that the financial support of the Commission was designed to cover promotion and information diffusion activities, rather than being limited to student grants.

Teaching and practical issues

There still remain a host of other administrative and practical issues to be cleared up. Though European institutions did not hesitate to give their students recognition for their training periods in the US, American universities were less easily convinced. Another concern: Sylvianne Wignacourt admits that she had to "fight every day (perfectly amicably, of course) to

Cooperation

Eleven partners

This consortium is officially entitled: "Innovative Multi-Cultural Curricula for the Young Engineers of the Year 2000".

The partners are:

United States

- Oklahoma State University
- University of Texas
- University of Virginia

European Union

- Université Libre de Bruxelles (B)
- Université catholique de Louvain la Neuve (B)
- Technische Universität München (A)
- Universidad di Zaragoza, CPS (E)
- Ecole Centrale de Lille (F)
- Université des Sciences et technologies de Lille (F)
- Politecnico di Milano (I)
- Brunel University, Uxbridge (UK)

Linguistic and cultural preparation

Cooperation of this kind leaves no room for improvization. The members of the consortium agreed various measures to prepare carefully for student mobility. The consortium decided to concentrate its efforts in the first year on initiatives in the cultural and linguistic fields. Each institution undertook to offer its students five language options, in the form of lessons in English, French, German, Italian or Spanish. Other languages may be added as the consortium is extended to other institutions. This linguistic training prior to the students' departure will be followed up by the host partner throughout the period of mobility.

But, above and beyond language issues, students also need to acquire knowledge of the cultures and lifestyles which exist in the countries they are going to visit. To this end, each institution will be responsible for delivering cultural training geared towards a more personal perspective.

Finally, the European partners agreed to organize a two-day information seminar in Brussels for all the students selected for placements. A similar meeting will be held in Washington for the American students.

pilotfish

persuade American universities to cut down on the administrative formalities for student access to services such as the library or public transport." In Europe too, there is much still to be done. In France, for example, the long, complex procedure for obtaining a residence permit, the infamous *carte de séjour*, could certainly benefit from some streamlining.

In Austin (the American coordinator) and in Centrale Lille (the main European partner) alike, visiting students are well supervised. They are able to call on contacts ready to help them to deal with educational or practical problems. Sylvianne Wignacourt, for her part, combines her international responsibilities with her role as a teacher of English, which enables her to keep in close contact with the students.

Centrale Lille and its partners have three years in which to make their project a success. Given the scale of the challenges, this will not be easy - especially as the consortium must, as of now, prepare to make these multilateral exchanges self-supporting once the three years are up. Already, the 11 institutions are working towards this, with new initiatives to raise awareness of this Euro-American project amongst businesses. One positive sign: in France, certain regions have agreed to fund some of the travel and living costs for students going to study in the United States.

EU / Canada cooperation

13 new projects selected

Thirteen new EU/Canada joint consortium projects have recently been selected, and will benefit from financial support for a period of three years. These projects involve 125 higher education and vocational training establishments (76 in Europe and 49 in Canada), along with 14 associated partner organizations from the industry and commerce sectors and from professional bodies.

ECU 1.5 million will be granted from the European side to the selected projects. Taking these 13 projects together with the six initial projects already chosen in 1996, the students and staff of some 170 institutions and other partners will benefit from this programme.

The cooperation projects cover themes which directly involve the world of higher education, such as improving transatlantic academic recognition through the use of ECTS, the European Credit Transfer System[1]. However, they also involve more wide-reaching areas, such as the training of professionals in child abuse issues, protecting and safeguarding the environment, or new industrial training needs generated by the emergence of the global economy.

The 13 projects now selected came in response to the call for proposals published on 16 April 1996 and closed on 4 October. By this closing date, 72 valid proposals had been received. Following an in-depth analysis of each file by three independent experts, a first short list was then drawn up, containing 19 projects. A second selection process was then initiated, to take particular account of the views of the Canadian jury, leading to the final choice of 13 projects.

The next call for proposals should be made not this year, but some time in 1998. Watch this space!

1 ECTS is a system of awarding and transferring university course credits which aims to make it easier to obtain academic recognition for periods of study spent in partner institutions.

Further information

Arlette Delhaxhe - Eurydice

F +32.2 230 65 62

Are girls and boys equal at school?

"Good, but could do better..."

There is a clear trend in the various EU countries towards greater equality between the sexes in education. However, there are still important differences between boys and girls in their choice of subjects and in access to jobs when leaving school.

Increasing numbers of girls in higher education

For a quarter of a century, educational policies have been giving increasing prominence to the need for general basic education for all young people. This determination has resulted in the extension of compulsory schooling to at least 15 years of age everywhere in Europe. These reforms have certainly helped to halt the trend where girls have traditionally left the education system early.

Learning alongside their male classmates at primary school, girls everywhere in the European Union now continue well beyond compulsory schooling. Statistical data on trends in the number of pupils in upper secondary education show that the number of girls at this level of education has increased. Whilst in 1975 there were fewer girls than boys in most Member States, today female participation is as high, or even higher in some countries. The same trend can be found in higher education, where female admissions have constantly increased in parallel with the phenomenon of mass education. No EU country admitted more women than men into higher education 20 years ago, and in many countries there were barely half as many women as men at this level. Today there are still fewer women than men in most countries but the gap is gradually closing. In the European Union as a whole, the average is 98 women for every 100 men in higher education institutions.

In six countries, the level of female participation is even higher than that of men. These countries are Denmark, Spain, France, Portugal, Finland and Sweden. Germany and Austria are by contrast the countries with the highest number of male students.

Has co-education really become the norm? [1]

For many years, pupils were sent to single-sex schools. Today, with a few exceptions, primary education is co-educational throughout Europe and secondary schools have gradually been moving in the same direction, although disparities remain. A survey conducted among school heads as part of the IEA Literacy Study (1993) showed that the percentage of schools admitting equal numbers of girls and boys varies from one country to another. In most EU countries, co-education in lower secondary education has become the general rule. The main exceptions are Belgium and particularly Ireland, where fewer than half of schools are co-educational. However, the fact that a school is co-educational does not in the least prevent it from setting up separate classes for girls and boys. Indeed, the results of this survey show that a large number of countries group their pupils in this way.

Grouping of girls and boys by school and by class at the age of 14 - percentage of co-educational schools and classes by country, 1993

	Co-educational schools	Co-educational classes
Germany	98.4	74.1
Belgium (B Fr)	**50.8**	40
Denmark	99.2	89.4
Spain	85.2	65.4
France	100	**66.2**
Greece	99.1	83.7
Ireland	**37.2**	26.5
Italy	97	76.9
Netherlands	76.9	68.6
Portugal	94.7	**56.3**
Finland	100	80.7
Sweden	98	85.2

Source: Effectiveness evaluation report drawn up under Socrates III.3.1. **University of Liège.** Secondary analysis of the IEA Reading Literacy database.

This is worth underlining, not least because it appears to relate to the extension of schooling for girls beyond compulsory school age. As IEA studies[2] showed in 1965, the countries which had already adopted co-education were also those in which girls had equal access to upper secondary education. By contrast, in education systems where the majority of secondary schools were single-sex, there were many more boys than girls in post-compulsory education.

Girls pass as many exams as boys...

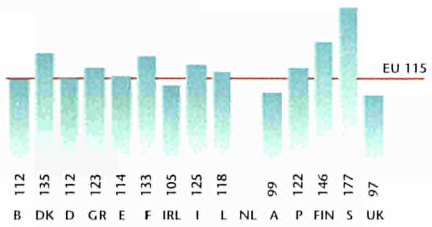
In all branches of upper secondary education, certificates are delivered each year to pupils who successfully complete this level of education. It was estimated that in 1993, for the European Union as a whole, almost 65% of young people held such a school-leaving qualification.

Clearly, the data available on the percentage of young people with secondary school qualifications today do not point to discrimination against girls. On the contrary, in the EU as a whole, on average slightly more girls than boys obtain school-leaving qualifications upon completion of upper secondary education. The balance is most favourable to girls in Portugal and Finland. In Austria, by contrast, girls receive fewer qualifications than boys.

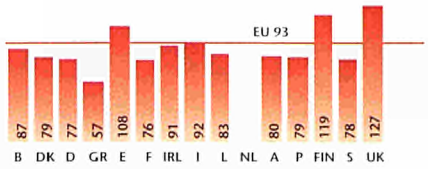
The situation in higher education is rather similar but the disparities between countries are different. At this level, women in Germany and the Netherlands obtain the lowest number of qualifications compared with men.

This trend towards greater equality between men and women in levels of educational achievement should not, however, mask the great inequality which remains among those in the 25 to 64 year age bracket. With the exception of Ireland, Finland and Sweden, there are more women than men with only primary or lower secondary education. It is in Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom that the disparities are the most marked with over 60% of women in this educational category (OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 1996).

Number of girls per 100 boys in general upper secondary education. 1992/1993



Number of girls per 100 boys in vocational upper secondary education. 1992/1993



NB: **Belgium:**
This is an estimate only.

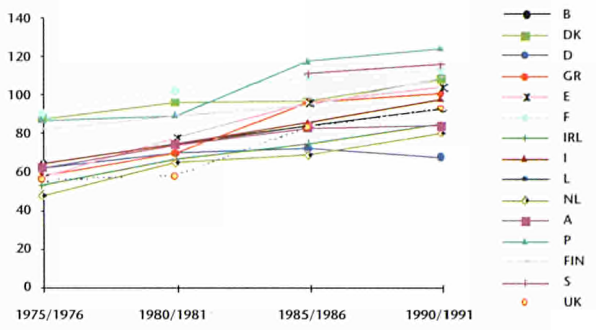
Luxembourg: Data supplied by the Ministry of Education.

Netherlands:
Data not available.

United Kingdom (E/W, NI):
There is no system of vocational secondary education. The figures refer to post-school vocational education (further education).

Source: Key data on education in the European Union, 1995. European Commission/Eurydice.

Trend in the number of women per 100 men in higher education (ISCED levels 5, 6 and 7), from 1975 to 1990

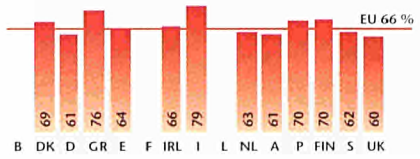


NB: **Germany:** Prior to 3 October 1990, data refer to the Federal Republic of Germany. - **Luxembourg:** Data not available. - **United Kingdom:** Nursing and paramedical students were not included before 1982/83.

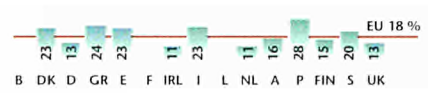
Source: Key data on education in the European Union, 1995. European Commission/Eurydice.

Higher education students. Percentage of women by field of study and by country, 1992/1993

Arts, Religion, Theology, Fine Arts

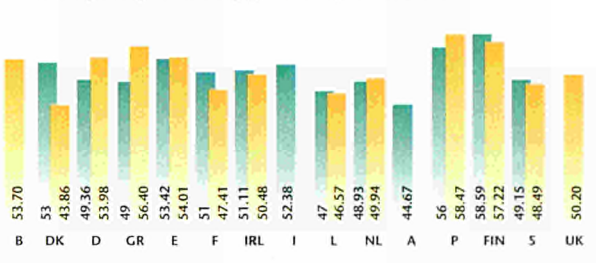


Engineering, Architecture, Transport



Source: Key data on education in the European Union, 1995. European Commission/Eurydice.

Percentage of girls among graduates, 1991/1992



Upper secondary education
Belgium, United Kingdom: Data not available.
Denmark, Ireland, Sweden: Data refer to the 1992/93 school year.
Luxembourg: Data supplied by the Ministry of Education.

Higher education
Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal: Data not available.
France: The qualifications included in the survey cover 88% of the higher education field.
Austria: Distance learning is not included.

Source: Key data on education in the European Union, 1995. European Commission/Eurydice.

...But girls' academic achievement varies depending on the subject area

Since its first study in 1965, the IEA has been interested in the differences in performance between boys and girls in several academic subject areas.

In most countries boys average the best results in mathematics and science at the beginning of secondary schooling. For reading comprehension, the trend is reversed in favour of girls.

On average the greatest differences are seen in the sciences, especially in physics and chemistry. In biology, girls achieve much the same results as boys.

Results also vary in line with the age of pupils. In mathematics and science, the differences become more marked at the end of secondary schooling than in primary school. However, by then the gap in reading comprehension tends to narrow.

It is reassuring to note that the disparities in mathematics today have nevertheless narrowed since the IEA's first studies. Taking all countries into account, the standardized difference in 1965 was 0.30 compared with 0.06 at present. However, no improvement has been observed in science.

Is stereotyping still a major influence in pupils' choice of subject area?

The gradual trend towards equality of access to full-time education up to the age of 18 can, however, conceal discrimination between the sexes at other levels. An indicator of this phenomenon is the comparison between chosen courses of study. At the first major choice of direction (which takes place around the age of 15 in most countries), the ratio of girls in general education compared with vocational education is not the same as for boys.

In all EU countries except Austria and the United Kingdom, more girls than boys enter general upper secondary education. By contrast, in most countries more boys tend to choose vocational education.

Similarly, higher education study courses are chosen along gender lines. As a result, in some subject areas there are far more women students than men, and in others the reverse.

The sharpest contrast can be found between the humanities (especially the arts, religion and fine arts) which are favoured by women, and engineering and architecture which few women enter.

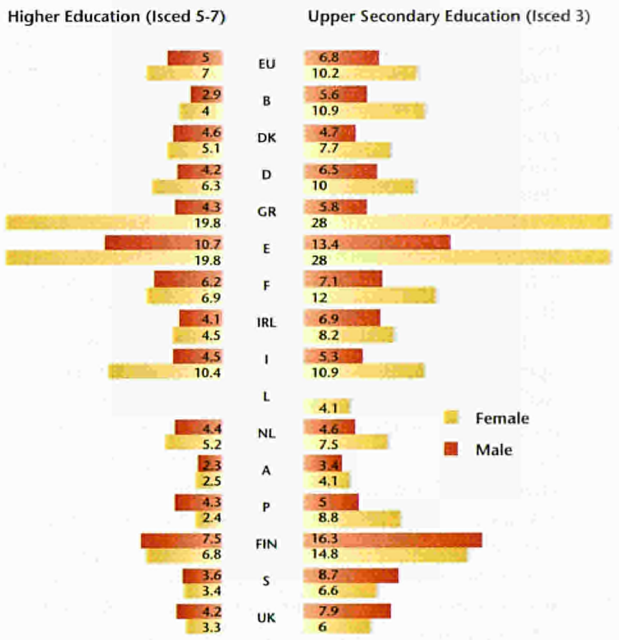
Women suffer more unemployment than men with the same level of education

The increasing numbers of women enrolled in long university courses and the growing number of women securing upper secondary or higher education qualifications have not completely eliminated the differences between men and women in the labour market. Even where women have equal qualifications, employers still tend to favour men when it comes to recruiting staff. Indeed, as illustrated by the table opposite based on data from a Eurostat labour force survey, more women fall victim to unemployment than men almost everywhere in the European Union, even when they have the same level of education as men. The disparities seem to be less marked among higher education graduates. The differences are particularly acute in Belgium, Greece, Spain and Italy. A few countries belie this rule with lower levels of female unemployment than male for all categories of qualification. These are Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom.

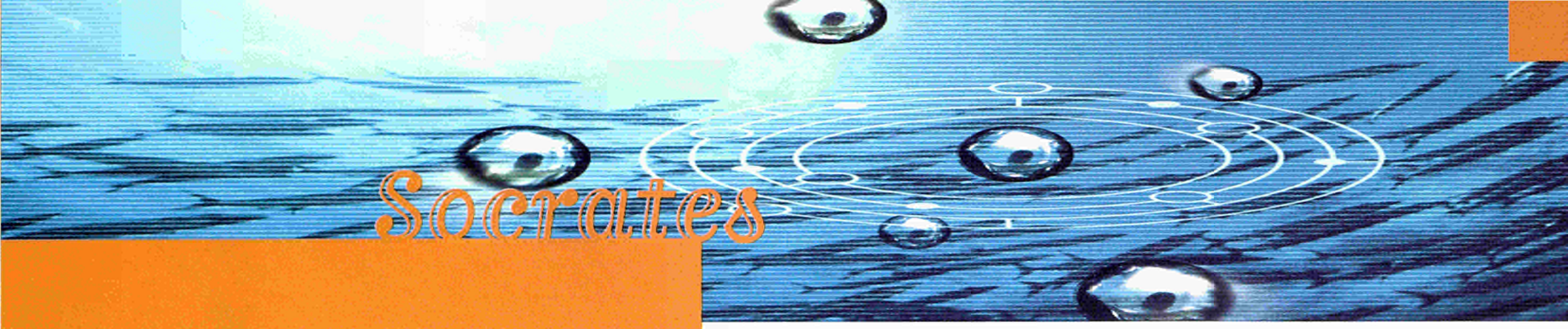
1 *Source: C. Blondin, C. Monseur Des caractéristiques changeables des systèmes éducatifs, la gestion des différences. University of Liege, January 1997. Report drafted on behalf of the European Commission, DGXXII, as part of the Socrates programme (III.3.1.) on evaluating the quality of compulsory education.*

2 *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.*

Rate of male/female unemployment at the same level of education, 1995



Data: Eurostat, labour force survey, 1995.



Erasmus

New approaches trigger massive response from Europe's universities

The Socrates programme introduced two main changes in European higher education cooperation compared with previous arrangements under Erasmus. One was at first sight largely administrative, the other concerned the European dimension of curriculum development. These new approaches were much debated and took some time to implement, but the response indicates that they have proved very successful.

Virtually every higher education institute of any size that could have applied for funding did so by the time of the first deadline (1 July 1996) for Erasmus "institutional contracts". In all, nearly 1,600 applications were received, from the 18 countries involved, covering all eligible subject areas and types of institution.

The institutional contract requires each university to submit all its Socrates-Erasmus activities in a single application. Previously, many small networks of departments, faculties and institutes formed inter-university cooperation programmes (ICPs), which constituted the backbone of Erasmus cooperation and required an alarming quantity of administrative paperwork.

Putting the focus on the whole institution has called for a reorientation of management principles, which ties in with the existing trend towards more strategic management in higher education. More than that, the main aim is to help universities develop European cooperation policies in relation to the other major policies they pursue. Applicants were also required to provide a "European policy statement" serving as a contextual framework for their proposed activities.

The second major innovation, with the introduction of the institutional contract, concerns the development of new activities complementing the traditional focus on studying abroad. The aim is to give students more of a chance to benefit from a European dimension to their education even if they do not take part in an exchange scheme. This mainly involves curriculum development, bringing "Europe" to the student at the home university.

The 1996 application round also saw the first open call for participation in the European Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS), piloted for some years by a limited number of higher education institutions.

The way the new "Erasmus at home" curriculum development (CD) activities took off is a noteworthy chapter of last July's success story. The previous Erasmus II programme offered support for only one category of this kind. Under Socrates, this area now has four separate programme slots. There is a CD category for the undergraduate as well as the graduate sector, both of which support the creation or restructuring of whole degrees or major parts of them. "European modules" and "integrated language courses" aim at the development of components which can and will be incorporated into a wide variety of degrees.

The response to these new activities shows that universities are set to Europeanize their curricula, recognizing that a solely national dimension may not be enough in future for an institution to be successful on what is increasingly a higher education market. The European modules attracted about 450 applications, involving more than 2,000 departments. The postgraduate CD activity type, commonly referred to as a master's, brought in approximately 350 proposals and its undergraduate version drew almost 300 applications.

Some examples of creative curricula development

European Module

Comparative studies in contemporary European migration
The aim of the project is to set up a joint course featuring an evaluation of the effectiveness of EU migration policy, insofar as it concerns intra-EU movements and highly skilled workers. It will also compare contemporary EU migration policies, particularly as regards to those countries which have long been migration destinations (Germany, France, UK, Sweden) compared to those EU Member States which have traditionally been emigration regions and are now having to deal with a new reality of immigration (Italy, Ireland).

The three principal sub-themes of the module will be Contemporary International Migration Flows, Contemporary EU Internal Migration Flows, Contemporary Immigration Policy and the Reception of Migrants. This module will be offered to second and third year undergraduates in the participating universities in Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Italy and France.

Integrated Language Course

Medilex – The aim of Medilex is to help medical students learn English medical jargon. Students will be presented with written, spoken, and, if necessary, illustrated patient cases on CD-Rom in the English language. In cumulative vocabulary lists, the pronunciation of the English words will be made audible. Limited English-Dutch, English-Italian and English-Portuguese vocabularies will be assembled in the first phase of the project.

Medilex is designed for third and fourth year undergraduates. Students who register for the course will have to sit for exams in "Medical English". The CD-Rom will be developed in the first year, tested at the different partner institutions in the second year and transformed for use via the Internet in the third year.

Curriculum Development Advanced Level

Masters in endangered European environment
Seven universities from the north and south of Europe will cooperate on developing a new master's course in the area of advanced environmental management and protection. The course will provide future scientists and professional environmentalists with a practical and theoretical basis for their research and work. The master's aims to provide an integrated environmental science programme which will be jointly recognized and certified by all the partner universities. Local industries will also be involved in the development of the teaching material used in the course.

The course is structured in four parts. First, students do a two-week preparatory course in the coordinating university, followed by a 20-week basic course in any one of the partner universities. They then take advanced specialist options on offer in the specialist universities. To complete the course, participants write a thesis either in one of the partner universities or at an appropriate company, agency or industry.

A feature of the course is its practical problem-solving approach. Apart from the traditional instructional methods and examinations, strong emphasis is put on practical field and laboratory work, comparative case studies, study visits to industries or other facilities and learning through multimedia and information technology.

Student mobility at record level

The success of these new programme activities has, however, not led universities to neglect efforts in the more traditional Erasmus programme components. The very popular student mobility part of the programme set another all-time record, with applications for some 180,000 students, beating the previous high by 11%. Erasmus students with and without an Erasmus student mobility grant may benefit from the arrangements made between universities concerning welcome facilities, accommodation, language preparation and recognition of studies.

Remarkable by any standards was the figure of 31,000 teaching staff whom Europe's higher education institutions intend to send abroad on short-term teaching assignments under Erasmus. The wave of applications in this category constitutes an increase of 280% over the previous year. To these must be added the applications received for European teaching fellowships, a new activity type focused on academic staff mobility of high quality and medium-term duration.

Preparatory visits were also in high demand, helping institutions less acquainted with Europe to extend their network of cooperation partners. Yet again, the long-standing intensive programmes also increased their appeal. More than 600 networks, each with more than 10 partners on average, show that there is a clear need for this sort of short-term student mobility, which results in summer school-type specialized courses with mixed-nationality groups of students and teachers.

ECTS opens doors to cooperation

The first open call for ECTS has demonstrated how clearly Europe's universities now see the need for structural preparation for international cooperation by introducing a credit system that offers curricular transparency, "learning agreements" and "transcripts of records" which facilitate recognition of studies abroad. Two out of three institutions that submitted an institutional contract application also intend to introduce the ECTS system, many of them in each faculty and department.

ECTS is increasingly becoming a criterion by which universities select their cooperation partners, and there are signs that institutions which will not adopt this system might find it difficult in the future to be further accepted by their partner institutions, let alone to forge new links.

The ECTS application picture also clearly reveals that the trend of the future will be study abroad based on full recognition, for which Erasmus paved the way. Interest in ECTS is evenly spread out across Europe, not just centred on countries already operating credit accumulation systems.

There are signs that the ECTS system is even starting to stimulate higher education reform at national level, in the direction of the creation of parallel national credit systems.

The Commission is informing universities as early as possible of the outcome of their applications, in good time for the start of the forthcoming academic year, and preparing the second institutional contract application round this year, which will most likely see new countries in the programme and therefore new opportunities for cooperation.

Thematic networks *in Socrates*

"The main aim of Thematic Network Projects is to define and develop a European dimension within a given academic discipline or other issues of common interest (including administrative issues) through cooperation between university faculties or departments and existing academic associations..."

Fine words from the formal Socrates programme guidelines, but how is it actually done? How do thematic network projects really go about their business? There are currently 28 of them, supported since September 1996, involving some 2,000 university departments and 85 European associations as well as a wide range of professional and industrial groups where appropriate. All but three of the main Erasmus subject classifications are covered in some way. What has been achieved so far?

The first thing to note about these projects is that it is not just the subject areas which are varied. The 1997 selection round will almost certainly introduce further new areas to the list and see expansion of some networks. Four broad objectives encouraging academic reflection on higher education teaching in Europe are given in the guidelines, and any one project may choose to follow any or all if it so chooses.

Furthermore, academic disciplines are so different from each other: the major concern of the physicists is unlikely to be that of the social workers, and even if it was, they would of necessity go about tackling it in a different way. Moreover, the so-called internationalization of subjects is at quite different stages: certain disciplines linked to regulated professions may well have a completely different perspective from those whose culture base is more local, and apparently universal subjects can be perceived quite differently from country to country. The list of diversity could go on.

So what about things in common? Is it just within a discipline that issues of common interest can be expected? Interestingly, a large majority of thematic network projects take an inter-disciplinary line, where the topic of concern impacts several related fields, or sometimes where the boundaries of a subject have to be drawn widely due to terminology and degree structures being angled differently according to the country concerned. One obvious cross-disciplinary interest is the rise of the use of information and communication technologies, and this not only has a network focusing on their application to university education, but commonly features as an aspect or sub-project within a discipline-specific network. This makes for a potentially high level of common interest between projects, as well as within them. It could also be premised that there are only a few key issues that affect quality in teaching – and they are pretty well universal; it is their implementation that has to be specific.

Finally, the use of Internet communication is now widely expected and thematic network projects are no different. Web pages and e-mail exchanges are just the starting point; for large networks, it becomes the one practical mechanism for keeping in touch and for keeping an eye on what else is going on. For when it comes down to it, it is the inter-relationship of thematic network projects that gives the action its unique character – that makes the whole more than just the sum of its parts.

1996 thematic network projects

Agriculture, arts education, quality in business and management studies, tourism and leisure, teacher education, engineering education and applied engineering (information technology, manufacturing, plastics, textiles), water, philosophy and ethics, archaeology, computing in the humanities, languages, law, medicine and medical physics, veterinary education, physics, chemistry, biotechnology, the 'social' economy, social professions, sports sciences, as well as the strongly inter- or multi-disciplinary topics of speech communication sciences, humanitarian development studies, telematics and distance education, and continuing education at higher education level.

Objectives for thematic network projects:

- To assess the quality of cooperation with respect to particular fields, or horizontally from the point of view of a given aspect of cooperation activities.
- To assess curriculum innovation in particular fields through comparison between curricula, notably with regard to the development of a European dimension.
- To promote discussion on improvements in teaching methods and encourage the wider application of good practice.
- To foster the development of joint programmes and specialized courses, particularly for subjects under-represented in inter-university cooperation so far.
- To improve the dialogue between academics and socio-economic partners.

The European Ethics Network

The purpose of the European Ethics Network is to develop practical ethics. Its focus, both as target audience and as cooperating partners, is the world of the professions. It is not merely an academic club of philosophers dealing with abstract problems. Professionals influence the lives of millions of people, whether their expertise is as scientist, bioengineer, medic, lawyer, public servant, journalist, economist, entrepreneur or manager. This is set to increase as the boundaries of knowledge are extended in areas such as biotechnology and the biomedical field, and as management practice changes.

In recent years the main impact of professionals has been felt on environmental issues, questions surrounding life and death, the organization of employment, in the field of information and on holders of public office.

There has been concern that perhaps professionals are not quite as professional as we would like. Are they really equipped to deal with the ethical aspects of their job and, in particular, to consider the social consequences of their professional decisions? Ideally, all professionals would complete a broad education in which their professional knowledge is complemented by the ability to resolve ethical dilemmas, and where they develop the capacity to discern the values at stake in every professional decision. Despite a number of courses in professional ethics offered in higher education, there is still a considerable way to go.

The European Ethics Network is a constructive response to this situation. To improve training in ethics for professionals, the network's first objective is to create the basic conditions for better communication between ethicists and centres for ethics in Europe. It has received endorsements from over 100 academic institutions, notably engineering schools, and has brought together the most significant of the existing networks and associations (the European Business Network, the European Association of Centres for Medical Ethics, and the Societas Ethica are represented on the steering committee). One result of this rallying call is the publication of a yearly directory of ethics – the second, revised and updated version will be available in September 1997 in print and on disk.

The second objective of the network is to produce jointly developed core material for courses in professional ethics. This is seen as an effective way of countering a drift into dealing solely with legal questions and of ensuring that the basic assumptions of the profession concerned have a means by which they can be challenged. More positively, it is seen as a focus for building up portfolios of European cases in an area where American textbooks dominate, and thereby emphasizing the European philosophical heritage which draws from the specific cultural and social context of Europe. Such core material can also put up alternatives to the "iron cage" of Weber, that is, domination of functional differentiation and accompanying instrumental rationality, and ensure that the complex character of ethical decision-making is fully appreciated, as well as the effect on, and arising from, the moral identity of the actor. A further curriculum project is the preparation for setting up a top-level inter-university master's and doctoral programme in professional ethics. Ground work for this includes information-gathering on existing programmes, comparative analysis and evaluation.

The network operates through four international teams. Each team will produce core material, concentrating on one topical area: professional ethics in general, business ethics, medical ethics, or engineering ethics. Work on environmental ethics and mediaethics will follow. These sub-projects seek overall coherence in the way the core material is devised and specified. Initial analysis of the achievements and shortcomings of professional ethics will lead to three common levels of analysis addressing, for each area, the micro level (personal decisions), meso level (institutional and organizational aspects) and macro level (professional power and society). This is to be set in the contemporary professional and cultural context and will notably include description of professional practice in which ethics is mainly determined by professional codes. Each team will draw out the pedagogic consequences ensuing.

The first activity of the network was to hold an inaugural conference which considered, amongst other things, the problem of interpreting professional reality and its relation to professional ethics. Consensus was achieved on the necessity to overcome instrumentalization and hyperfragmentation of professional ethics. The first leads to misuse of ethics as an instrument of professional interests or to using ethics for unjustified ends. The second leads to the incapacity to resolve global problems such as environmental questions, or the integration of bioethical questions in the context of meaningful human life. A well-considered professional ethic requires a broad framework of interpretation which transcends the limits of differentiated disciplines. Moreover, hyperfragmentation is overcome by the integration of moral choices into the whole of life. The conference also agreed on the need to shape the preconditions for the development of "powers of discernment and critical sense". The results of the conference act as the launching pad for the other network activities. The conference proceedings are published as a special edition of the network's refereed journal, *Ethical Perspectives*, and also in book form.

Ethical Perspectives is the chosen vehicle for continuing the interdisciplinary discussion on rethinking and broadening professional ethics. The goals of this journal are to promote dialogue between fundamental and applied ethics; to foster interdisciplinary reflection between ethicists and specialists from diverse sciences; and to develop the pedagogy of professional ethics. Its editorial board is drawn from the most prominent ethicists in Europe.

The network's second annual conference, in September 1997, will explore two themes: the foundations for a cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to professional ethics (presentation of first drafts of core material developed by the four teams); and ethics in professional contexts (reflections on the practice of the professions). For this second theme, the network has despatched questionnaires to directors of European centres for ethics and to selected businesses and professional organizations, to help identify the main players and their mutual interest and involvement in professional and business ethics. To avoid too limited an approach, organizations such as trades unions, employers' organizations, associations of managers and of engineers, and medical associations have been included.

Another conference, this time focusing specifically on the presidents and vice-chancellors of the various universities and higher education institutions across Europe, will seek to raise awareness of this group, bearing in mind that the realization of network's objective will not be achieved without their considerable support and understanding.

In conclusion: much is planned, much is thought of, and it only remains to bring the ideas to fruition, mindful of the potential for cooperation with other thematic networks.

ETNET-water

European thematic network of education and training for water

Water is essential for all living beings. Nevertheless, it can also be a natural hazard (floods and droughts) and is often a man-made nuisance due to pollution and mismanagement. Water does not recognize administrative, regional or national boundaries, and the study of water-related issues does not fall neatly into any one academic discipline. Water can be studied as a science (hydrology, hydrodynamics) or an applied science (hydraulics, river engineering, drainage, irrigation etc.). It has generated research developments in mathematics and applied economic and social sciences (for example, in risk analysis, statistics, and multi-criteria decision methods). The scale of some water problems means that advanced telematic and super-computing developments are necessary tools, and many countries, as well as the EU, have a considerable amount of direct legislation and regulation in the field. In short, water and civilization are closely entwined.

The European Commission has recently established an Environment-Water Task Force to promote research and technological development in four key areas:

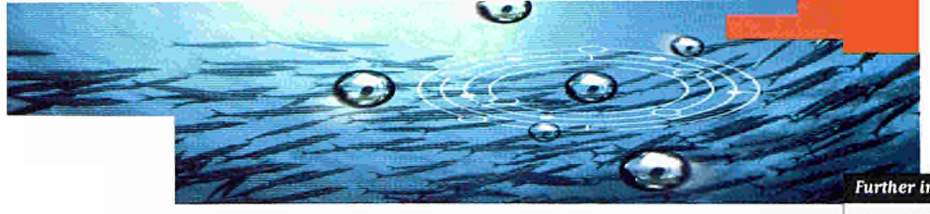
- fight against water pollution
- rational use of water
- fight against water deficits
- prevention and management of water crises.

It is recognized that water is a limited resource and that sustainable development requires an holistic approach to understanding and controlling the many processes in which water plays a role. However, the new knowledge arising from this policy direction must also find its way into education and training without delay: today's students are tomorrow's professionals and decision-makers. This is truly a formidable challenge, since the current fragmentation is not restricted to the professional domain. Innovative approaches and pooling and strengthening of existing European expertise is therefore deemed necessary, and this is where the thematic network comes in.

ETNET-Water is a broadly-based network, deriving from former ICPs of the Erasmus programme and a UETP of the Comett programme, and building on from a 1995 workshop, *Evaluation and assessment of continuing education and training for water resources engineering*. Its overall objectives are achieved through five specific projects, each addressing a range of topics selected to respond to the current issues.

Is it possible to pool expertise in European postgraduate education in hydrology and water management in order to raise quality and, at the same time, to strengthen it through more cost-effective delivery?

The network has already presented a comprehensive survey of existing postgraduate programmes and their needs. A feasibility study is under way,



Further information

Angeliki Verli-Wallace - DG XXII

F +32.2 299 22 31

using the European Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which will ultimately result in the careful preparation and model-design for joint curriculum development under the Erasmus institutional contract (implementation by several network partners in 2000). Cooperation is envisaged with the thematic network in Higher Engineering Education, including its sub-project, Joint European Engineering Project Teams.

Do we train enough researchers? And is the training effective?

Specialized training for research students has already been identified as a priority need for the EU. As a first step towards providing the basic level of training for research in Europe, a network of continuing education short courses at research institutions and universities within Europe is being established. This will fill an important gap and lead to better basic qualifications for doctoral students. An evaluation procedure, including both lecturers and students, is currently being tested out. Certification, possibly through ECTS, is also being studied. The outcome is intended as a possible model for other disciplines in search of enhancing training for research students with a quality assurance perspective.

New technologies for open and distance learning (ODL) are rapidly developing. Are they the right solutions for improving education and training in the water field?

A realistic assessment will be made of the sociological and transnational cultures in which ODL may be used in this field, as well as cost-benefit analysis of existing and planned ODL applications.

Do water professionals receive the optimum development programme?

A systematic continuing professional development programme will enhance training opportunities for European professionals in the water environment sector. This project has links with existing national professional development schemes as well as with projects in other European programmes (Leonardo da Vinci, Adapt). It will be a model for the thematic network in the area of continuing education.

Is there a European paradigm for integrated water management?

The relationship between all the disciplines which play a role in education and training for integrated water management is not easy to demonstrate. Case studies have been surveyed and are being used to develop methods for enhancing the integrated approach.

Further information on the network's activities can be found on the Internet. A dedicated site for ETNET-Water (http://etnet.vub.ac.be) links to each of the specific projects where details of activities, studies and results are given. It is intended that some pages become fully interactive. A more general information bulletin, Panta Rhei (http://pantar.vub.ac.be), developed electronically from a quarterly bulletin launched in 1989, has sections on education, training, mobility, technology transfer and on EU programmes related to environment-water. Links with other thematic networks have been made. Two other projects are of particular significance: the pilot project on evaluation of basic knowledge in the area of environment-water, and the position paper of ETNET-Water for the Commission's Environment-Water Task Force, stressing the fundamental link between education and research.

In conclusion, ETNET-Water pursues a vision of a European 'water community', including professionals and decision-makers, fully integrated into the learning society of tomorrow. Today, it is busy channelling the many flows to this end result.

Open and distance leaning

Multimedia approaches to learning difficulties

Open and distance leaning are not new concepts. Now, thanks to advances in information and communications technology, the two can be used together to create virtual classrooms. Under a Socrates project, EVA, attention is being given to young people experiencing difficulties in the traditional school and training systems through a collaborative effort involving partners from three countries.

In parallel with developments in information and communications technology, open and distance learning initiatives have proliferated since the 1970s. Yet the overall concept still remains hard to define. As the authors of a UNESCO study commented in 1975: "Open Learning is an impressive phrase to which a range of meanings can be, and is, attached. It eludes definition. But as an inscription to be carried in a procession on a banner, gathering adherents and enthusiasm, it has great potential."

Back then, when the expansion of higher education had not reached today's levels and multimedia personal computers were unknown, the emphasis was on delivering degree courses by a combination of television and correspondence. A major recent change is the attention being given to young people who have learning difficulties.

An example of this is the Socrates project EVA, whose participants are collaborating on a "European Virtual Training College" for groups of young people in Germany, Spain and the Netherlands. Rather than pursuing those elusive definitions, *Le Magazine* asked representations of the three organizations involved to describe their work. The EVA partners are IMBSE, based in Moers, Germany; the Psychologisch Instituut, PPI, in Amsterdam; and Acciones Integradas de Desarrollo, AID, in Ciudad Real.

What does your organization do?

IMBSE is a training institution for young people who have difficulties with learning due to social problems, drugs, bad school experiences, etc. For over 10 years our institution has been especially interested in the influence of new technologies as both a threat and a challenge to disadvantaged people.

PPI is an institute that works with youths at risk, mostly from an ethnic minority background. We work with the secondary school system, and we have a school for special education.

AID is a non-profit association registered with the Ministry of the Interior, that works mainly in the areas of training and job creation. The association seeks to coordinate and provide possible solutions to the job market; to work with young people, such as 20-year-olds who have abandoned the education system, and especially with disadvantaged persons; to work with and train counsellors, local development agents, etc. interested in the integration of disadvantaged persons; and to train and equip young people for jobs.

Why are you involved in the EVA project?

IMBSE Working with new technologies has been a matter of cross-border interest for us from the beginning. EVA shows European partners a way, independent of differences in national educational training structures, to add to their traditional work through new technologies. And we are convinced that new technologies extend the channels for our youngsters to get into cross-border cooperation and to use new technologies as a medium for active communication. The EVA project is trying both to change traditional educational structures, in a very slow, step-by-step process, and to enrich and extend open and distance learning to include our youngsters as important target groups in our society.

PPI We joined this Socrates project because of the importance we saw for our target group to acquire knowledge of multimedia and open and distance learning. For the institute and for our partner, the Esprit school group, it is important to discover and develop new methods.

This is our first experience of using multimedia with open learning. During this first year we have realized that in our itinerant help division,

elements of open learning are implicit in that the student and the mentor work together and the student has an important influence on what happens during a session. This project is an important contribution to new methods for coping with developments in Dutch education in general, where there are developments in open learning at all levels.

AID The justification for our participation in EVA was the ongoing need for revitalizing our training processes from within the integrated action philosophy of training that we follow. Work on a project like EVA allows exchanges of information and experience between the different teams on their work with other sectors and target groups. Our participation in other regional education programmes makes it necessary for us to maintain continuous training and updating of all the professionals involved.

Who are these target groups?
In Ciudad Real they are young Spaniards without enough education and training to get work. In Moers and Amsterdam there are a lot of students from ethnic minorities: in Moers, Turkish and from Kosovo; in Amsterdam, Turkish and Moroccan. In Moers the three target groups are disabled youngsters with learning difficulties, youngsters with learning difficulties and youngsters who are able to learn well, but have a lot of social and other problems. In summary, our target groups have different learning needs, and our open learning approach has to prove functional for the different groups.

What do open learning and multimedia mean to you in practice?
PPI For us open learning is a new method by which you can stimulate creativity and cooperation amongst youngsters. It is a way to activate and motivate them, especially in combination with multimedia, and a method to build up better concentration. For the team it is also a learning process. Multimedia is a tool/instrument to realize abstractions through real software designs by learners. Short-term results have had a positive effect on learners' concepts of themselves.

IMBSE In our case, we cannot define open learning without looking at our target groups: kids at risk with a lot of social problems, with bad learning and school experiences and with a lack of self-awareness, etc.

"Open" means a situation free from restrictions to self-guided learning, conditions in which the learner has control over the targets, contents and strategies of his/her learning, within the institutional context.

"Learning" means that the learner is organizing his/her own learning process: in our context it does not mean guided instruction by a teacher, but it could mean support and facilitation by media or by teachers.

The difficulty is that the competencies, motivation, sociability and individualistic self-concepts required are not typical for our target groups. Typically, they are in danger of being cut off by such processes of developmental learning. To deal with this, we try to build in learning that takes place in cooperative environments and which concentrates on the resources and abilities of the youngsters as well as on their individual needs and visions. Open learning with kids at risk is, for us, a cooperative and interactive process between the youngsters and the instructors, and it must not lead to isolating the learner.

Multimedia is a new technology to handle information. From a pedagogical point of view, multimedia can be used as:
- a learning environment (software design by learners),
- a technical platform for learning and communication,
- an instrument for the development of basic skills for handling graphical interfaces, graphical programming tools and the processing and presentation of information, teamwork and cooperation in small groups.

We give the tools to the learners. They use these to create their own constructions of their topics (whether personal or vocational-training oriented), e.g. audiovisual biographical collages, where they report about their experiences and the regions they come from. Multimedia is a catalyst in this processes that fosters both interaction and social integration.

The main principles when using multimedia are:
- construction versus instruction,
- learner-centred versus teacher-centred,
- creation versus consumption,
- integration versus separation,
- self (independent) responsibility versus other (dependent) responsibility.

AID Open learning abandons the classic idea of the traditional teacher.

From the perspective of open learning, the teacher perceives better what are the special or personal difficulties of the learners. Learner and teacher work together.

The tools of multimedia permit learners to act in a multiplicity of ways, abandoning the classic learning techniques. They are "learn-making" and the learners are conscious of the fact that to be able to do this they must participate in the learning of others. The personal creative and expressive capacities of each person are given greater emphasis in open learning systems of this type. The pupils also discover their individual aptitudes and potential for working in groups.

Multimedia is the visual integration of elements such as sound, animation and text through the use of informatics. The human being is capable of receiving information in many ways at the same time, and using more senses allows fuller and better comprehension of what is transmitted.

It took collaboration to find ways of doing open learning which lead to more individuality and self-responsibility of learners. The transnational group of instructors worked very hard on developing new methods and classroom arrangements for this purpose. In parallel, they organized software design by learners projects with their students and went back to the transnational group to discuss their experiences.

Further information

Corinne Hermant - DG XXII

F +32.2 299 63 21

How do you organize open learning using multimedia?
AID The classroom is organized technically, according to professional criteria (pedagogic and informatics). The use of the tools is a function of the needs of the group, sub-group or individual, without any limitations on time and management. In this way we hope that unplanned ideas will be reflected spontaneously, favouring a creative process in the construction of the units, and by so doing giving a greater comprehension and meaning to the learning contents. So it is also very important to create an agreeable and dynamic work environment, almost always with a recreational character.

IMBSE The multimedia studio is the learning centre for the groups because it gives optimal conditions for teamwork. Learning groups can resolve work plans and ideas together and draw up multimedia audiovisual collages. In the middle of the room are teamwork tables, which are the starting point of work. At the beginning of a project we start, for example, with a brainstorming session, and at the end the young people analyse their project together. During the project they use multimedia software tools and come together to think about progress.

They have access to:
- a sound PC for digitalization of music or language and the work-over of tone sequences (to record, to mix, etc.),
- a graphic PC for digitalization of pictures and graphics, with a scanner,
- a video PC for digitalization of video sequences and pictures,
- a PC for integration of media and text and for composing digital collages.

A network server allows data exchange between the individual computers, stores programmes and makes it possible to print out from all work stations. Over and above this, each participant has Internet access via ISDN from each PC.

We have agreed a platform in the project for the simplest reasons of cooperation: Windows and IBM-compatible multimedia PCs were partly already in existence in the institutions and used by students and staff. The selection of software was in principle, beside the cost factor, based on functionality and simplicity. Functionality means the programmes should be appropriate for the task. Simplicity means using software that can be operated without long training periods.

Graphical interfaces like MS-Windows are user-friendly, using icons, menus, guidance, integrated help, etc.

The technical environment of software design by learners has a catalytic function for the learning of the group in these projects. That means it is in the background and not in the centre of the process.

The EVA project is integrated into our normal classroom activities. It is a general philosophy of our work not to search only for deficiencies in our youngsters, but to search for strengths. So we foster the abilities they already have and students and teachers get a new view of each other. It is important that teachers are able to integrate open learning into their personal philosophy of teaching as well as into their curriculum, goals, practices and personal beliefs. In such a complex structure, where everybody who is engaged is able to find their own alternatives, the choices are nearly unlimited. One of the key factors is to ensure that the responsibility for managing learning is delegated as far as possible to the learners themselves.

What kind of topics have your learners chosen to work on?
PPI A good example of what learners have chosen as a topic is the toolbook LOVE. It was suggested by one of the youngsters at the sixth session of an open learning situation. What occurred was a kind of matrix, starting with structured technical lessons (1-5) and leading to a complete open learning situation in which the youngsters discussed an idea and finally decided to build up the toolbook.

They then organized and discussed the elements and different pages. The staff stayed out of the process as much as possible. One of the youngsters took the lead in the discussion and this was accepted by the others. They divided the tasks and planned their next actions. During the next lessons, open learning was demonstrated by the fact that the youngsters took over the responsibility for the organization of the sessions. They made their own timetable, set their goals and divided up the tasks. During the following sessions this process continued and the instructors became more and more coaches and advisors on technical matters. At the end of the eleventh session the toolbook was ready.

IMBSE In these projects learners bring in their competencies and act in many different ways: writing, reading, interviewing, filming, discussing, handling the PCs, etc.

For the second year we want to achieve real cross-border learning and it is a big task. Our concept is very new; it transfers the main principles of software design by learners not only to a local network, but also to a European-global environment. It will use the Internet not only as an exchange medium but as a learning environment.

It will transform a lot of activities that concern the organization and communication of learning in the institutes. It will be a big common task for the European partners to create the virtual classroom as an electronically mediated group work and interaction system, corresponding to the needs of the specific target groups. Our task will be to develop answers and concepts to create the "virtual classroom" as a pedagogical reality.

Further information

Gabriel de Santana - DG XXII

F +32.2 299 41 50

Eliminating violence in our schools

A conference in Utrecht lays the foundations for European cooperation

There is a rising tide of violence in Europe's schools. Both pupils and teachers are at risk. Can it be contained? How can crisis situations be resolved and preventative measures developed in the longer term? These issues were debated at a conference organized in February by the Dutch EU Presidency, together with the Commission. A number of initiatives were agreed for increased European cooperation in this highly sensitive area.

The issue of safety in schools concerns not only teachers and governors but the whole education profession, parents and many others. Acts of violence in schools reported by the media in various countries create anxiety and raise questions, even if media coverage also tends to exaggerate the scale of the problem and add to the general feeling of insecurity. The causes of this rising insecurity derive from all sorts of aggressive, anti-social and inconsiderate behaviour on the part of certain young people.

Europe's education community shares these worries. It was in response to these concerns that the Dutch Presidency of the European Union, in conjunction with the Commission, organized a conference on school security in Utrecht on 24-26 February. This meeting brought together political decision-makers representing the member countries, scientists specializing in the field, representatives of PTAs, teaching unions, school heads, pupils and students. The diversity of the participants was an implicit recognition that, in the face of such a complex phenomenon, the involvement of all the players involved in education offers the only chance of an adequate solution.

Pupils and teachers alike

Violence in schools takes different forms. It ranges from acts, attitudes and modes of behaviour marked by aggressiveness towards others, to physical violence inflicted by one or more individuals on another person which can, in rare cases, verge on criminality. Discussions of violence in general cannot exclude all those forms of inconsiderate behaviour which clearly reveal intolerance towards other people, a lack of respect, or rejection expressed in verbal or non-verbal forms.

Pupils and teachers alike are affected, both as perpetrators and as victims, not only inside but also outside school buildings, i.e. on school premises or on the way to or from school. Violence in schools cannot be fully understood without taking account of the violence experienced in society as a whole and often amplified by the media. Its complexity is also reflected in the diversity of the terminology used to describe it: violent behaviour, aggressive conduct, lack of consideration, harassment, theft, extortion, bullying... The causes are no less complex and cannot simply be laid at the door of the education system. They are part of a complex web of factors in which home life and socio-economic factors play a significant role.

A policy of prevention

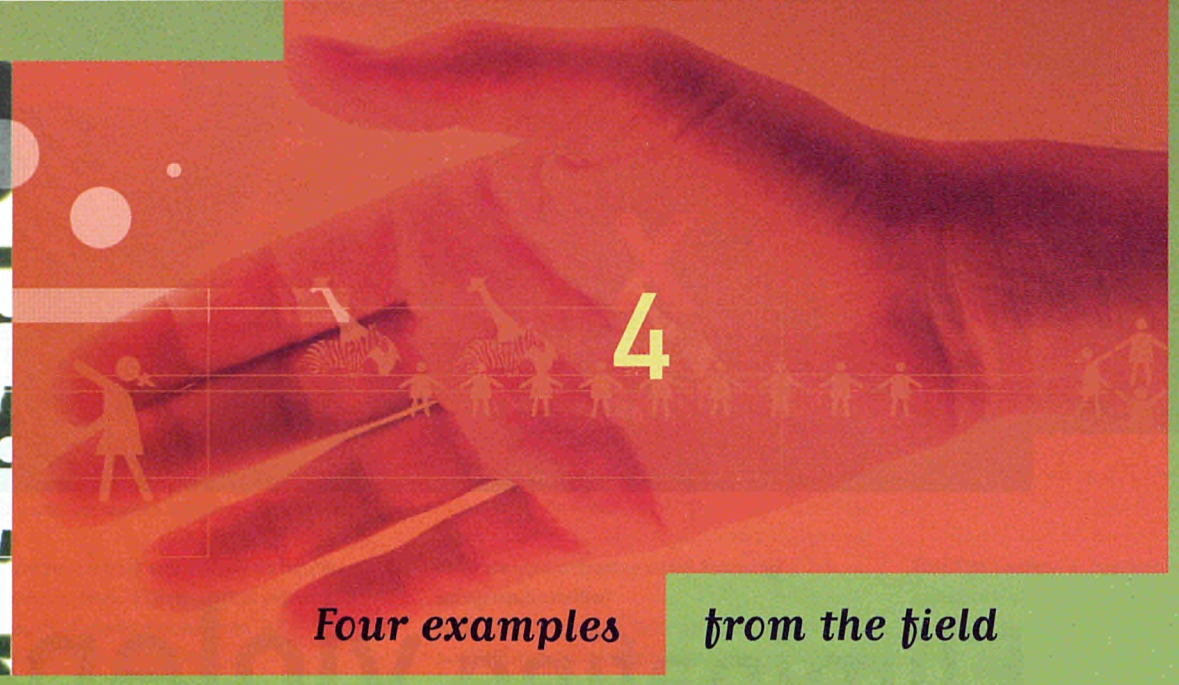
In each country, the scale of the problem and the urgent need to address it seriously are recognized. The causes of school violence need to be investigated, and appropriate means put in place to eradicate it. Most countries recognize the need to implement measures in this area. Initiatives have already been launched in several Member States, for example, the campaign for safer schools in the Netherlands, the school security programme in the United Kingdom or social behaviour development programmes in Spain or Sweden. The aim is first and foremost to offer schools, families, pupils and teachers help when they are confronted with acts of violence. However, this crisis management, though essential, demonstrates above all the need to establish a prevention policy. This means long-term action. What methods of prevention are most effective? What are the best ways to encourage pro-social attitudes and behaviour, positive behaviour which shows that pupils and young people are well integrated into the fabric of society? Successful prevention will be that which manages to create a secure atmosphere in schools which offers youngsters maximum scope to develop their full potential in all its diversity.

The Utrecht conference on school security has highlighted a question which preoccupies every country. In various Member States, national initiatives are already under way. However, whether through research or measures for combating and preventing violence as part of a promotion of safer schools, there is an acute need for an exchange of information and a pooling of experiences and good practice.

European cooperation

In inviting the participants to the conference, the aim of the Dutch Presidency and of the Commission was to promote cooperation, at a European level, between all the players, including decision-makers, researchers, teachers, pupils, parents and others. A forum for the gathering and dissemination of information could be developed. A network of researchers specializing in questions of violence in schools was formed in the course of the conference and a research programme may be developed. A group of experts from the Member States will, in conjunction with the Commission, study the options for supporting projects originating in the various countries. The emphasis will be on complementarity between projects, and between projects and existing actions, or on networking between projects. A multidisciplinary approach to the project, whereby it is addressed as much towards teachers as towards pupils and parents, and as much towards schools as towards external educational agencies, will also be prioritized.

By promoting closer cooperation in this field, Europe partnership can make a contribution to the creation of safer schools, and thereby to a more tolerant society.



4

Four examples *from the field*

Youth against

A youth club goes off the beaten track

In the northern suburbs of Charleroi, the Gazo youth club has decided to open its doors to teenagers from an inward-looking Turkish district. To get them back in touch with the outside world, the youth centre is using information technology. Thanks to the Internet, the youngsters are setting up initial contacts before joining forces to run practical projects against racism.

Charleroi, Belgium

With a population of some 200,000, Charleroi is the biggest city in Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium. For many years, it was prosperous, drawing its wealth from coal, iron and steel. But, inexorably, this traditional industrial fabric became outmoded. Charleroi lost thousands of jobs and never recovered its economic momentum. Today, levels of unemployment and social exclusion are considerably above the national average.

Standing to the north of Charleroi, the locality of Gilly (population around 20,000) has two contrasting faces. The main roads in the centre, lined with shops, appear smart and fairly well-to-do. Move away from the centre, however, and you discover small alleyways with ramshackle houses standing close to abandoned mine workings. Within a short walk, you're in a different world.

Gilly's youth club is in the shopping district. It enjoys a number of different advantages: regular subsidy from the Belgian Ministry for the French Community, premises supplied by the city council and a team of eight full-time workers. More than 350 youngsters are regular visitors to "Le Gazo". Most of them come from less-favoured backgrounds. Their friends know them as Mustafa, Franca or Gianni. They come from immigrant families, but most of them were born in Gilly and have since acquired Belgian citizenship. Whatever their origins, these youngsters interact as equals and are bound together by a spirit of solidarity.

"We couldn't stay behind our walls"

"The problem," explains Marc Parmentier, manager of the youth club, "lies on the edge of Gilly, in the neighbouring district of Couillet village." This area, with 900 inhabitants, is peopled mostly by recent immigrants, the majority of them Turkish. The young people of this district, many of whom have dropped out of school, do not speak good French and are living in a ghetto situation.

"As a youth club, we couldn't stay behind our walls, like some kind of aquarium cut off from the real world," comments Marc. "Some basic work was needed to make contact with the young people in Couillet." So, in addition to its traditional activities such as painting workshops, dancing lessons, exhibitions and sport, organized in the Gazo itself, in 1992 the youth club opened a local branch in the neighbouring Turkish quarter. From Couillet, the Gazo started work on an integrated development project, a very unusual move for a youth centre.

This action, called Pop Line, saw the opening of homework schools, and creative and sports workshops based on "exchange, mutual tolerance and positive recognition of cultural differences". The Gazo then secured funding from the European Commission under the Youth for Europe programme for a project called Audioscope which aims to establish better communications with Turkish youngsters in Couillet, helping them to find their own forms of expression. The idea is novel: to enable young people who are barely able to read or write to produce tape-recorded "letters". Several different products were successfully piloted. Some youngsters chose to send a "letter" to the mayor of Charleroi. One re-established contact with his grandfather, who had remained in Turkey, and one child sent a taped letter to Father Christmas!

Re-establishing communication

Little by little, the Audioscope project has gained momentum. Audio tape gave way to video, and video gave way to computers. This is how a second, even more ambitious, project was born. "At the youth club, we could see that things were on the move in society in terms of new communications technology. We saw that there was a potential danger of a chasm opening up between those who had the means and know-how to hook up to the Internet, and the rest. As a youth centre, we felt it was important to invest in this new field, to ensure that the least well-off youngsters had equal access." The Gazo shared its view with other European partners based in France, Germany, Italy, Finland and Greece. This process culminated in the development of a joint project submitted by Gilly to the Youth for Europe programme.

The aim of this initiative was to fill an Internet site with eminently practical information on socio-cultural leadership techniques: from folk dancing to video, via do-it-yourself papier mâché. At the Gazo, about 20 youngsters aged 13 to 17 were trained to carry out this painstaking work. The group included young people from both Couillet and Gilly.

Close on the heels of the European project, a computer workshop was opened in the youth club, meeting twice a week and connected to the Internet. Led by a tutor with a passionate interest in computers, the youngsters learnt how to navigate around the "web". Discussion forums were set up in which questions of integration and the battle against racism were debated.

Crossing over from virtuality to reality

Marc Parmentier draws the initial lessons from this complex experiment. Youth clubs have an essential role to play in helping people to learn about the Internet. It is important, he observes, for such clubs to provide youngsters from less-favoured backgrounds with public access points, as well as suitable training. But for him, the issue is not simply one of technology. "If youngsters are to take full advantage of new technologies, a lot of work is needed. The Internet needs to be placed within a wider frame of reference." The Gazo manager adds: "At the end of the day, the actual quality of information transmitted over the Internet can turn out to be very poor. Our aim is to help youngsters to move as far as they can in the virtual world, and then apply what they have learnt to real projects."

The Gazo is committed to backing up its words with action. The youth club recently contacted all the Charleroi youngsters who participated in the Internet discussion forum on the topic of integration. Each individual received a personal invitation to a meeting "in the flesh", on the Gazo's premises, to develop practical anti-racist projects together.

Youth for Europe supports a large number of initiatives with an overtly anti-racist mission. *Le Magazine* looks at a few of these projects and meets some of the people involved. The projects are being run in central, northern or southern Europe, in urban or rural areas. In widely varying contexts, they aim to combat the discrimination suffered by different groups of young people: Jews, Gypsies or immigrants from third countries. These actions spring up from the local community and, with the Commission's support, are developing by building partnerships in different European countries. Some focus on education (overcoming prejudices), while others lay a greater emphasis on combating social exclusion, a catalyst for racist tensions. These four examples from the field feature some creative and generous youngsters, who are showing the way towards an imaginative, fair-minded Europe: the way towards the Europe of tomorrow.

racism

Further information

Augusto Gonzalez Hernandez -
Michel Midré - DG XXII
F +32.2 299 41 58

A World of Difference

How can prejudice and racial stereotyping be cut off at their roots? The European Jewish Information Centre has imported a ground-breaking method tested by the "A World of Difference" Institute in the USA, based on peer training. Twenty youngsters, representing youth movements in six European Union countries, took part in the first workshop in Berlin before going off to train other groups of young people.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has a long history in the United States. The organization was founded in 1913, to work towards two objectives: to "battle against the defamation of the Jewish people" and "ensure equal rights for all citizens". In the 1960s, the ADL fought an active campaign, alongside the Reverend Martin Luther King, for civil rights. Public opinion forced a change in United States law and outlawed discrimination.

This did not mean an end to the problems. In the 1980s racial violence flared up again, in Boston, New York and elsewhere. Clearly, legislation alone cannot guarantee equal rights. Work is also required in the field of attitudes, culture and education; prevention and cure must go hand in hand. This realization lead to the creation by the ADL of the A World of Difference Institute in 1985. The aim was to work in schools, amongst teachers and students, to promote anti-racist teaching modules. Amongst other initiatives, the institute adopted a special programme entitled "peer training". The idea is to train youngsters, who in turn become trainers themselves. After all, it has been shown that youngsters respond best to this kind of message if it is delivered by other young people.

A wide partnership

Peer training has been a great success and has spread well beyond the United States. In Brussels, the European Jewish Information Centre (EJIC) was intrigued by this novel method; in 1995, it arranged with the American institute to try to spread the concept in Europe, while adapting it to the particularities of the EU. "European countries, unlike the United States, are home to a very large number of youth movements. So we decided to focus our collaboration on these movements rather than on schools," explains Pascale Charhon, director of the EJIC.

An action programme then took shape, involving six countries – Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden. The programme won financial backing from the Commission as part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (in 1996), and within the Youth for Europe programme. It also secured private sponsorship, thanks to Levi Strauss Europe, the multinational jeans manufacturer.

Kick-off in Berlin

Following a period of multi-level information gathering and contacts, the project was kicked off in Berlin in April 1996. Over the course of a week, 20 young people received anti-racism training under the direction of four American leaders from A World of Difference. The trainees came from youth movements in the different partner countries. "To go on to become a trainer, you need some basic qualities, you need to be used to taking charge of groups. It's no easy ride. So we selected motivated, experienced youth workers," says Pascale Charhon, coordinator of the project.

A wide range of associations became involved with the project, including scout groups, social democracy organizations, movements of young Jews and a European federation of secondary school pupils. "There was an interesting coming together between young people whose interest was more ideological, and others, such as the scouts, who favoured practical action in the real world," notes Pascale.

Returning to their own countries, the A World of Difference trainees were then invited to become trainers themselves and take various initiatives within their organizations, thereby creating a snowball effect. With renewed support from Youth for Europe, in January and February this year, the EJIC organized five national training seminars delivered by youngsters from Berlin for new groups in Stockholm, London, The Hague, Bologna and Bremen.

An exemplary method

In peer training, great care is taken with teaching methods. Intercultural education techniques have tended to be based on a discovering the richness of other cultures. "A World of Difference goes a step further," explains Pascale Charhon. "We want to attack the problems at their source, by looking at the reasons why prejudices emerge. Each youngster is helped to understand that their personality consists of a series of facets which cannot be reduced to a stereotype. Prejudices are something we learn unconsciously, and can be unlearnt consciously," stresses the director of the EJIC.

Could the method of peer training in the anti-racist field be extended to schools, as in the United States? Without a doubt. But for Pascale Charhon, it is important not to get carried away. "There's still a lot of work to be done within youth organizations and movements, where anti-racist information often circulates poorly," she says. At the moment, her dearest wish is for the "A World of Difference" label to be taken up by other, larger organizations. The ball is in their court...

Official launch in The Hague

A "World of Difference" training seminar was held in The Hague on 31 January 1997, to coincide with the official launch of the European Year Against Racism. Various dignitaries were present at the launch ceremony. Ineke Netelenbos, Dutch Vice-Minister for Education, Culture and Science underlined the importance of developing anti-racism in education. "It is necessary", she said, "to add the intercultural dimension to the basic training of all teachers."
Babette Nieder, representing the European Commission, also addressed the delegates. She stressed in particular the link between combating racism and combating social exclusion, before concluding that "from this world of differences, we can build a different world!"

Evora/Portugal

Music of every colour

In the working class district of Cruz da Picada, on the edge of the small city of Evora, tensions have risen between the Portuguese, African and Gypsy communities. A youth centre decided to try and stop the rising tide of racism. Amongst other projects, it has involved 19 groups of young musicians in the production of a CD and a major concert for tolerance and solidarity.

Evora, Portugal

A man is sitting on the pavement, starting blankly ahead, motionless, as though in despair. His beard, his tired expression make him appear old, but in fact he is quite young. "We know him quite well," whispers José Nascimento, coordinator of the Cruz da Picada Youth centre. "He's a Gypsy. He's got a serious drug problem. He's very unwell at the moment." As we walk the streets of the city, José, our guide, wants to show us everything, to point everything out. "It's a recent phenomenon," he says. "For the past few months, drugs have been flooding into this part of town. It's a tragedy. Every month, another young person from our part of town dies of an overdose."

It is late afternoon, and the weather is glorious. The streets are quiet and bathed in magical spring sunshine. Looking around, it's hard to believe that this area has so many problems.

In the distance, perched atop a hill, stands the old city of Evora, with its cathedral and its ancient walls[1]. The working class area on the edge of town is home to 8,500 people spread around four districts, each with its own peculiarities. There is Malagueira, with its little white houses. There is Escurinho, which consists of prefabricated houses inhabited by the "Returnados" – Portuguese refugees from Africa, who returned to Europe about 20 years ago following decolonization. There is Santa Maria, with its rustic air. Finally, standing amidst this labyrinth of alleyways, courtyards and gardens, you get your first glimpse of Cruz da Picada. The housing estate, painted yellow and white, consists of tower blocks – an architectural style which is unusual in this part of Portugal.

Tensions

José Nascimento, our young guide, continues his story: "In the 1980s, Cruz da Picada and the surrounding areas experienced a cycle of marginalization. The district was in decline and it was completely cut off from the rest of the city." Its fortunes changed with the creation of the Poverty II European programme[2]. Cruz da Picada in Evora was then chosen as a priority action zone. A plan of action against social exclusion was implemented in the district, and every resource was tapped. Social services, shops, a health centre and a local police station were provided. The buildings were renovated. Public spaces were developed, children were given playgrounds. Life in Cruz da Picada began to pick up. But new problems were lurking just around the corner...

At the beginning of the 1990s, recession began to take its toll. Unemployment hit young people hard. Unemployment levels in the Evora region were twice the national average. Social insecurity grew, as did the tide of racial violence. "Up until then," stresses the manager of the youth centre, "this was a phenomenon which had mostly passed Portugal by. Unfortunately, that soon changed".

In Cruz da Picada, at least, the climate remains very tense. Three large communities share the district: ethnic Portuguese people, Cape Verdeans recently recruited to work on civil engineering sites, and a large group of settled Gypsies – three communities which view each other with suspicion. "In the past, people lived peacefully alongside the Gypsies. But now, there's a growing climate of hysteria. Local people are turning them into scapegoats for all the problems they are facing. At the same time, you can't overlook the fact that lots of young Gypsies are getting involved in drug trafficking. This is something the local population won't stand for."

Tackling racism: a priority

In the face of this dangerous trend, the Cruz da Picada Youth Centre has made the battle against racism its number one priority. Its first project ran from March to September 1996, with the support of the Youth for Europe programme. The aim was to train inter-cultural youth workers. Fourteen young people (aged 16 to 18) from the three communities (Portuguese, African, Gypsy) were recruited and attended a series of classes as volunteers. There was nothing theoretical about the exercises: little by little, the participants began to understand each other better and learn how to work together. Following their training, the youth centre invited these newly qualified inter-cultural leaders to run a joint project. This project has now got off the ground: it won further Youth for Europe assistance and was formally launched last October.

This anti-racist project has a number of different facets, such as producing a local newspaper, filming a video and organizing a photographic exhibition. But the most unusual element is the production of a compact disc entitled *Musica com cores*, music with colour. The Cruz da Picada youth workers contacted all the young musical groups (amateurs, of course) in the Evora region. A total of 19 of them accepted the invitation to take part in the production of the CD. The idea was that each group would record a song to illustrate the battle against racism and social exclusion. The record will feature all these tracks, in music of every style (rap, reggae, traditional), and every language, Portuguese, Cape Verde Creole, etc.

The project culminates this summer, when all the anti-racist initiatives converge during a week-long event in June. There will be a big open-air concert in Evora, supported by the local council, during which the 19 groups will give free expression to their talents and their spirit of solidarity. Large crowds are expected.

Local action, global thinking

For José Nascimento, the anti-racism week in Evora will be a catalyst for other, even more ambitious initiatives. With the aim of "building bridges everywhere", the youth centre is inviting a Lisbon association of young Cape Verdeans to attend, together with young people from various European countries – Spain and Italy, and even Bulgaria and Estonia.

José Nascimento loves his part of town, the place where he feels most at home. But his vision for local action has undergone a transformation. "We have learnt," he says, "to see problems in global terms, and to prepare our projects in a European perspective."

A dynamic association

The Cruz da Picada Youth Centre was created in 1989. It is part of the "association for local development and well-being", founded in Evora following the Second European Programme Against Poverty. The association, with 500 members (two-thirds of them local young people) also runs, in addition to the youth centre, a centre which helps youngsters who have dropped out of school. The association and the youth centre are recognized as a "social solidarity institution" and as such benefit from a subsidy from the Portuguese Ministry of Solidarity and Social Security. This has made it possible to employ two full-time youth workers. They are supported by several trainees sponsored by the Portuguese Youth Institute (a public body), together with large numbers of volunteers.

1 Evora is the capital of Alto Alentejo in Portugal, a rural region characterized by large agricultural estates. Evora has a population of around 50,000 including a large number of students thanks to its university. It is a city with a very rich history: Evora was the first Portuguese town to be awarded "world heritage site" status by UNESCO.

2 The European Programme Against Poverty was run by DG V (responsible for social affairs) of the European Commission. The programme ran for three multiannual phases. Phase three came to an end in 1994.

"How can Europe be built without us?"

Düsseldorf, Germany

In Düsseldorf, capital of the North Rhine-Westphalia *Land*, youth workers, cooperating within a group of immigrant associations (the FIZ) fight day in and day out to make integration easier for young people from third countries. Thanks to the Youth for Europe programme, they have established links with three neighbouring states. Their project: to found a European federation of movements for young immigrants born in countries outside the Union.

"**The European Union** is home to 13 million immigrants born in third countries. Thirteen million people - that's a population the size of Belgium and Denmark put together. How can we build the Europe of the future if we leave these 13 million citizens on the sidelines?"

So says Said Chachia, director of the FIZ (Flucht-und Immigrationzentrum), an organization which brings together, at the regional level, the activities of 11 immigrant associations: Turkish, Moroccan, North African, Togolese, Cameroonian, Angolan and so on.

We are in Düsseldorf. For the past three hours, we have been chatting to Said Chachia and Chakib Charchira, head of the youth section of the FIZ. Before explaining what they do, the two Moroccans first wanted to place the questions of immigration and racism in the German context.

Changing attitudes

There are almost seven million immigrants in Germany, about 8% of the total population; 80% of this immigrant population is concentrated in North Rhine-Westphalia (population: 17 million), mainly in Cologne, Düsseldorf (the region's capital) and in the industrial area of Essen.

As in other European countries, the history of immigration has been one of successive waves. First came the age in which industry sought foreign labour. Germany signed economic agreements with various countries, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey and Italy. Then, in the 1980s, came a second wave, mostly claiming political refugee status. For a long time, the immigrant workers dreamed of one day returning to their country of origin. But little by little, they put down roots in Germany, and eventually decided to stay. Families grew larger. Now, the youngest members of their communities belong to the second or even third generation of immigrants.

Over the past few years, this situation has led to a radical change in attitudes. Young people with immigrant backgrounds are no longer prepared to put up with the difficult conditions experienced by their parents or grandparents. Nothing less than full citizenship will do. They demand equal opportunities in terms of training or access to the job market. They want jobs in the public service to be open to them. They reject all discrimination.

Concrete initiatives

The creation of the FIZ in 1990, recalls Said Chachia, was part of this evolution. The organization has two objectives: to promote the concept of human rights in different countries; and, above all, to work towards integration in Germany, by promoting new modes of behaviour and new legislation. In relation to this, Said Chachia was delighted to see the emergence of a new political majority in North-Westphalia in 1994. "A research centre on immigrant needs is being set up. For the first time, the regional parliament has created a cross-party immigration committee". The FIZ is now emerging from its cocoon and becoming a prime source of expertise for the various public authorities.

Within the group of immigrant associations, the Youth Committee led by Chakib Charchira plays a major role. In premises close to Düsseldorf station, the committee provides continuous social assistance. Chakib and his friends are getting involved in more and more practical initiatives. They have formed a musical group with immigrant children. They run homework clubs. They promote language courses. They organize training to help young victims of racism take appropriate action.

The Youth Committee lays special emphasis on the situation of children whose parents have applied for political asylum and who, consequently, live in hostels. The FIZ also tries to provide assistance to young people from countries with which Germany has no economic agreement such as Algeria, or the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, who do not benefit from the same provision in terms of social security as other categories of immigrant.

The European break

The European break came almost by accident for the FIZ Youth Committee. Chakib Charchira describes how it came about. "I was invited to a meeting of the Migrants' Forum in Brussels. They needed someone to represent Germany and contacted us. There, I met people from the European Commission and was invited to a series of training seminars for youth workers, financed by DG XXII (1). It taught me a lot. Before that, I didn't know anything about the European Union. I picked up lots of useful information." These meetings were the catalyst. "From that moment on, we decided to give our project a European dimension. Europe is becoming united, and so immigrants need to be united too, or else end up being sidelined."

Things then moved rapidly. As part of the Youth for Europe programme, the FIZ held a European seminar in Düsseldorf, from 16 to 25 February 1996, for North African youth workers from four countries: France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. "Although we are all North African, we saw how different the circumstances are for us in our respective countries," says Said Chachia.

This sharing of experiences also revealed a number of strong points in each of these four countries in the field of anti-racist action. In the Netherlands, says the director of the FIZ, there are 40 local offices where young people can go when they have witnessed or experienced a racist act. Belgium was notable for its generous financing of immigrant associations. France, meanwhile, had considerable experience of action in problem districts. As for Germany, the main contribution was in terms of social security provision for individuals.

Getting schools involved too

Also through the offices of Youth for Europe, a second seminar was held in Hattingen, from 14 to 23 October 1996, with the four partner countries. Leaders of immigrant youth movements were invited along, rather than grassroots workers as had been the case in Düsseldorf. The aim of this second meeting was to lay the foundations of a European structure of North African youth movements, an organization which should eventually be expanded to include all young immigrants from third countries.

The 1997 European Year Against Racism is bound to represent a high point for the FIZ: Said and Chakib have a whole string of projects on the drawing-board. They plan a European anti-racism seminar to discuss discrimination, particularly as it affects young girls. They are planning, in conjunction with their new partners in neighbouring countries, a major event to coincide with the closing session of the EU Inter-Governmental Conference, to remind political decision-makers of the importance of integration issues. For 1998, they are already preparing an initiative which will involve schools in teaching pupils about human rights and the realities of immigration.

1 Training seminars for youth workers involved in the fight against social exclusion, held in Luxembourg and financed by Youth for Europe.

Further information

Alain Dumort - DGXXII

F +32.2 296 70 12

Learning in the Information Society: action plan

Schools on the right track

The Commission has been implementing an action plan, *Learning in the Information Society,* since last November. Its aim is to help introduce new information technology into schools - every school. Practical initiatives are under way, such as a second European educational software competition and Netd@ys Europe 1997, planned from 18 to 25 October.

The emergence of the information society is leading to fundamental changes in the way in which people live and work. Adapting to them starts at school. Besides the new opportunities, there are human and social consequences with the risk, within 20 or 30 years, of social division between those who have the opportunity to access and give their children access to new learning tools, and those who do not. Increased inequality in access to such opportunities would have heavy consequences for the future of education and, in the longer term, for employment and the cohesion of European society.

This is the thinking behind the Commission's action plan *Learning in the Information Society*, adopted in November 1996 on the initiative of Edith Cresson. Morever, the future of European multimedia is far from assured in the current context of market fragmentation. The action plan therefore aims to promote the creation and distribution of multimedia educational software at the European level, with this objective integrated into the broader context of the introduction of new information technologies into schools.

The action plan has four objectives:

- helping to bring schools on-line;
- promoting the development and distribution of European multimedia educational software;
- providing training in the opportunities opened up by new information technology, especially for teachers;
- increasing the exchange of information and communication in this field.

These form the basis for a number of initiatives designed to increase the use of multimedia in schools. Two actions which aim more especially to mobilize the various partners will be organized later this year. One is the second European competition for educational software; the other involves holding "Netd@ys" across Europe.

The second European competition for educational software

This competition was first held last year, with active support from the Member States. Some 500 projects were submitted to national selection panels and 81 were chosen to go forward to the European evaluation stage.

What sets this competition apart from other similar initiatives organized in Europe is its emphasis on creativity and educational value, rather than the competitive element itself. All the projects selected for Europe-wide evaluation in 1996 received identical prizes (a certificate and a set of CD-Rom encyclopaedias), with the exception of six projects which, by virtue of their originality, also received teaching equipment worth a total of more than ECU 100,000. The 1997 competition will take a similar form.

The principle of the competition is simple: each participating school or class must submit to their national office, before 30 September, a project which takes the Internet, a floppy disk or a CD-Rom (PC or MAC compatible) as its medium, on a theme of interest to the whole of Europe (culture, environment, citizenship, or indeed anti-racism, to coincide with the 1997 European Year). Two categories of schools are targeted: primary and secondary schools, including technical schools; and higher education institutions and multimedia training institutes. Each Member State will be allowed to select up to ten projects (i.e. five in each category) to go forward to the European round of judging.

The results of the 1996 competition were particularly innovative and encouraging. For example, a school in Savoy produced a CD-Rom based on a story written entirely by the pupils, in which each object in the classroom was discussed and described by a different group of children. The class consisted of children from very different backgrounds, which greatly added to the originality and diversity of the teaching method. In Italy, the public park in Benevento was the source of inspiration for a class of seven and eight year-olds. Their project transported the user into a virtual reality version of the park, in which every element and every sound was commented upon and illustrated by the children.

The quality of last year's projects bodes well for a fresh influx of ideas in 1997. The prizes will be awarded in November, during a meeting of European education ministers.

Netd@ys Europe 1997

The concept of Netd@ys was born in the United States, in California to be precise, and was inspired by a journalist and an industrialist from Silicon Valley. Both noticed with amazement that, in the birthplace of the information society, home to those behind the growth of electronic networks, very few schools were connected to the Internet.

John Gage and Michael Kauffmann had the novel idea of recruiting volunteers to launch a huge project to connect schools to the World Wide Web. This initiative, based on promoting partnerships between schools, would have the additional benefit of making computer equipment available to schools at a low price. The Californian experiment in March 1996, which has resulted in the connection of more than 3,000 establishments to date, was taken up in October at national level. In total, almost 20% of American schools have benefited from access to the Internet thanks to the involvement of over 150,000 volunteers. The European experiment, which will run from 18 to 25 October 1997, will be similar in form but take account of the greater diversity of systems and attitudes, as well as the huge variations in the levels of IT equipment in different schools at the present time.

For this reason, Netd@ys Europe 1997 should be viewed as a pilot project based on three main themes:

- stimulating networks: the idea is to use the experiences of existing networks to stimulate the creation of new projects of this type in Europe;
- focusing on regional or local hubs; this initial experiment aims to result in between five and ten projects in each Member State;
- emphasising content: the aim is to focus, through awareness-raising and education projects, on the wide-ranging possibilities opened up by networks, and thereby overcome some of the reservations expressed in relation to strategies for the equipment of schools with information technology.

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