



EDUCATION
TRAINING
YOUTH

Le Magazine

FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH IN EUROPE

PUBLISHED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION - 1997 - ISSUE 8

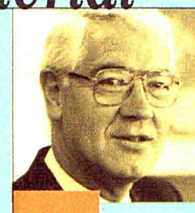


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Towards a Europe
of Knowledge

Contents

Editorial



This issue of *Le Magazine* opens with a presentation of *Towards a Europe of Knowledge*, the Communication adopted by the Commission on 12 November which proposes a new generation of Community actions in the areas of education, training and youth for the years 2000 to 2006.

As my own Directorate-General was at the centre of the preparatory work, I would like to introduce the final document with a few personal comments.

Our attention first focused on the achievements and results of the programmes to date: the increasing numbers of people involved and their strong commitment to European operations; a constant increase in mobility; major progress in knowledge of the diversity of systems; the creation and distribution of thousands of educational or training products resulting from transnational cooperation; the first palpable results from the constantly repeated message of the indispensable nature of the new information technologies; the direct involvement of young people in positions of responsibility in actions of solidarity... These are just some examples which suffice to demonstrate that the quantity alone of the achievements is already the strongest possible argument for giving the Community's future action greater scope to open up, to provide impetus and to innovate.

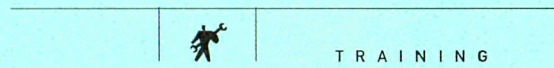
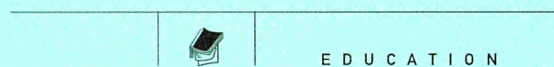
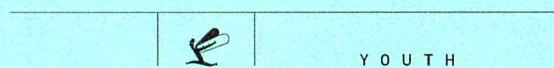
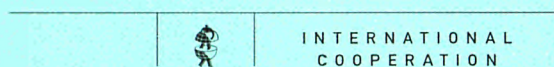
At a subsequent stage we naturally also identified the necessity of our being a part of wider developments or initiatives, for which the time is particularly opportune. First of all in the Member States, where the action of companies and the social partners to promote lifelong learning is becoming a major policy priority and where, in the wake of the debates held throughout the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning, Community action is designed to support convergence, cooperation, the pooling of experience and exchanges between all those involved.

For their part, the heads of state and government set out new ambitions for citizenship in the Amsterdam Treaty; this is reflected by the Commission in its *Agenda 2000*, which establishes a 'knowledge' policy as one of the pillars of the Union's internal policy priorities. When, finally, we interview young people as we have recently done through the Eurobarometer, we hear them rank education and training among the priority fields of action in which they believe Europe must be more present. There can be no doubt as to the fact that they want to learn and to acquire training in a European education area which they believe is both beneficial and useful.

By way of conclusion, I would point out that implicit in the *Towards a Europe of Knowledge* project are three key concepts which governed its drafting: greater homogeneity between the types of Community measures which must provide the structure for future programmes; greater visibility; a systematic search for simpler implementation and management. These are not empty words, neither for the programme participants nor, I can assure you, for those within our services who must demonstrate their efficiency and ultimately bear responsibility for them.

T. O'Dwyer

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

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997

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Preface



I wanted the debate on future Community actions for education, training and youth to be launched without delay, so that they can be implemented on the highly symbolic date of 1 January 2000.

Clearly true wealth, economic performance, industrial competitiveness and employment will no longer be solely based on the production of material goods. They are and will be linked to the production of knowledge, through research, and its transmission, through education and training, and finally to capitalizing on it through innovation. It is therefore a genuine Europe of Knowledge that we must define and build together.

If we want our continent to be not only a competitive economic area but also a humane and socially harmonious community, we must clearly spare no effort in achieving this goal. It is an essential element in any move towards deepening the Union.

This approach is based on an undeniable reality. Our continent is more than a geographical area. At a deeper level, it is a community of civilization, forged by history and ideas.

It also corresponds to the real expectations of our fellow citizens. They made this very clear in 1996, during the European Year of Lifelong Learning.

This is why, simultaneously with the impetus provided by economic and monetary union and the imminent prospect of enlargement, our ambition must also be to enrich citizenship and to highlight our social and cultural area, thereby stimulating the desire to belong to it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edith Cresson'.

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

What programmes for the year 2000?

The Community's education, training and youth programmes are now at mid-term. There is a strongly-felt desire not only to extend them but also to define a new generation of actions in order to meet the challenges of the years 2000-2006 and reduce some of the difficulties of implementation experienced at present. The Commission has therefore decided to launch the process of defining future programmes by adopting a Communication entitled "Towards a Europe of Knowledge" which sets out the main guidelines for future action. This Communication is to be submitted to the European Parliament and Council. Key extracts are set out below. The Communication is also supported by a working document, "The programme achievements", which Le Magazine also briefly presents.

The Communication "Towards a Europe of Knowledge"

The approach

The purpose of this Communication is to set out the guidelines for future Community action in the areas of education, training and youth for the period 2000-2006. It paves the way for the legal instruments to be proposed in the spring of 1998, with the relevant decisions to follow in 1999 and entry into force on 1 January 2000. It integrates two major preoccupations:

Knowledge policies

Noting that we are now entering the "knowledge society", the Commission, in its *Agenda 2000*, proposes making the policies which drive that society (innovation, research, education and training) one of the four fundamental pillars of the Union's internal policies. The role of future Community activity in these four areas is thus to underpin this evolution while ensuring that it does not become a new source of exclusion. Economic competitiveness, employment and the personal fulfilment of the citizens of Europe is no longer mainly based on the production of physical goods, nor will it be in the future. Real wealth creation will henceforth be linked to the production and dissemination of knowledge and will depend first and foremost on our efforts in the field of research, education and training and on our capacity to promote innovation. This is why we must fashion a veritable 'Europe of knowledge'.

This process is directly linked to the aim of developing **life-long learning** which the Union has set itself and which has been incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty, expressing the determination of the Union to *promote the highest level of knowledge for its people through broad access to education and its permanent updating.*

Promoting employment

Policies to restore the employment situation – whether macroeconomic policies or specific labour market action – must be part of an in-depth medium-term strategy to enhance the knowledge and skills of all Europe's citizens.

Community policy in the field of education, training and youth and the new generation of actions supporting it must enable Europe to face these major challenges.

Community action in the three fields has gathered regular momentum over the past 15 years. The achievements of Community cooperation to date and the evaluation of the existing programmes (Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe) and their predecessors (Erasmus, Comett, Lingua, Petra, Force and Eurotecnnet) provide solid foundations for a new stage. The new Community activities must capitalize on all these achievements. It is clear that a response must be forthcoming for the strongly-felt demand for the continuation of the existing activities, but it is also clear that proposals must be brought forward for a new generation of activities with:

- a limited number of objectives,
- more focused actions, and
- streamlined management.

In more general terms, everything must be done to build that **Europe of knowledge which we need in order to launch into the twenty-first century.**

Building a Europe of knowledge

The gradual construction of an open and dynamic European educational area is the principal guideline on which this Communication is based. In a rapidly-changing world, our societies must offer all citizens greater opportunities for access to knowledge, irrespective of their age or social circumstances. This is why the notion of an educational area needs to be understood in the broadest possible sense, both geographically and temporally. It provides the framework for mobilising the effort to make a reality of the idea of *lifelong learning*, which was at the heart of the European Year devoted to this theme in 1996.

Three dimensions of the European educational area should be emphasized:

- **Knowledge:** In order to be able to take an active part in the current processes of change, the citizens of Europe will be able to develop their fund of **knowledge** on a continuous basis, thus continually expanding and renewing it.
- **Citizenship:** This educational area will facilitate an **enhancement of citizenship through the sharing of common values**, and the development of a sense of belonging to a common social and cultural area. It must encourage a broader-based understanding of citizenship, founded on active solidarity and on mutual understanding of the cultural diversities that constitute Europe's originality and richness.
- **Competence:** Developing **employability through the acquisition of competencies** made necessary through changes in work and its organization. This means that it is necessary to promote on a lifelong basis creativity, flexibility, adaptability, the ability to "learn to learn" and to solve problems. These are the conditions we must meet in order to avoid the now rapid obsolescence of skills. Activities must be developed which help towards anticipating needs and towards the evolution of job profiles.

The very scale of these new challenges calls for a greater degree of integration between the fields of education, training and youth policy. While turning the idea of a European educational space into reality will utilize the types of activity which have already been at the heart of earlier action programmes and have assured their success to date, it will also have to make intensive use of the new information and communication technologies, which are still insufficiently used in Europe despite the numerous public and private initiatives taken to remedy this situation such as Netd@ys.

Limited number of objectives

The new generation of actions must focus upon a limited number of objectives:

- **increasing access for the citizens of Europe to the full range of Europe's education resources**, in support of and as a complement to policies pursued in the Member States;
- **innovation in these resources:** pilot projects initiated by the Commission need to be conducted to test new approaches and instruments (such as second-chance schools and the accreditation of skills). The point is to develop new approaches based on the pooling of experiences from different countries. A significant proportion of resources must therefore be set aside for such pilot projects whose subsequent introduction on a more widespread basis is of course principally a matter for national authorities;
- **wide dissemination of good practice in education** and better mutual knowledge of systems and activities. Systems for regular survey and analysis of education and training systems and youth policies in the Member States will enable political and economic decision-makers to improve the quality of their initiatives.

More focused activities

For the purpose of constructing a European educational area, the achievements and experiences of the programmes in force up to 1999 constitute a solid foundation. Nevertheless it is necessary to focus the measures, as is shown by the analysis and evaluation of the programmes.

Six major types of action are envisaged:

- **Physical mobility.** Mobility will be available to the different target groups involved in the European educational area: students, school pupils, teachers, heads of educational establishments; apprentices/trainees, trainers and the social partners involved in vocational training; and the voluntary sector, youth groups and young volunteers.
- Promotion of **virtual mobility.** We need to promote universal access to new educational tools by advancing the creation of links between places where learning goes on and communication/ information networks, and to do everything possible to ensure that they can be used at acceptable cost levels. We also need to stimulate the production and dissemination of European multimedia and audio-visual products and services which are appropriate for use for education, training and youth. The issue here is to have access to suitable material with a genuinely European educational content which reinforces the cultural identity of the Community. There is also a need to encourage the development of an appropriate education so that people in Europe, from the earliest age, are given the basic skills required for critical and responsible use of the information flow made available by the new media.
- Contributing to building up **cooperation networks** at European level in order to permit exchange of experience and good practice. These European cooperation networks must be in a position to pool what constitutes European excellence for a given subject or theme and to create a real European expertise capable of bringing to bear a more effective capacity for diagnosis and action.
- Promotion of **language skills and the understanding of different cultures:** these will be a supporting activity to other types of activity and applied transversally. A knowledge of languages and cultures is an essential part of the exercise of European citizenship. The virtual European education area will be all the richer and the more accessible to all if it is multilingual.
- Pursuing **innovation** through pilot projects based on transnational partnerships to create education and training products or instruments for the accreditation of skills or to test new approaches and arrangements.
- Continuing improvement of **Community sources of reference** with regard to education, training and youth systems and policies in the Member States (key data, databases, mutual knowledge of education systems, etc.).

All these activities are designed and managed at a **transnational level**. Particular attention will be devoted to the implementation of **integrated projects** which bring together several different kinds of activity dealing with the same theme.

The parties involved

Community action is not limited to actions initiated and piloted directly by the Commission. The central idea underlying the development of the new generation of activities is based on the establishment of a **framework of responsibilities shared between the Community, the Member States and the other parties involved**. This is also the **necessary condition** for the Europe of knowledge to take shape.

Targeted international cooperation

This new policy is also an active participant in the **run-up to enlargement**. Education, training and youth programmes are already open to the EEA countries (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and are gradually opening up to those applicant countries participating in the pre-accession strategy (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Cyprus, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia). The European Union has gradually moved from an approach based on assistance in the development of their systems to an approach based on cooperation, including cooperation with the Tempus programme.

Implementation

The Communication expresses the Commission's concern to raise the **visibility** of Community action and of the Union's aims. In order to enhance understanding of Community action and promote greater complementarity and consistency between the various Community policies affecting human resources, **evaluation** procedures will be improved and made more systematic.

For the management of day-to-day affairs, the Commission will put forward proposals for the **decentralization** of decisions to the levels closest to the parties concerned. The Commission will propose an improved organization and distribution of **structures for assistance** and operational management and a **simplification** which should lead to more user-friendly access to Community aid.

The working document:

The programme achievements

The three action programmes adopted in the fields of education, training and youth, namely *Leonardo da Vinci* on 6 December 1994 and *Socrates* and *Youth for Europe III* on 14 March 1995, run for a five-year period, from 1995 to 1999. These Community programmes are progressively creating a European education area which respects the diversity of the Member States, giving greater scope to capitalize on national, regional, local and sectorial initiatives.

In 1997, at a time when the Commission is preparing to place knowledge at the heart of Europe's future, it draws strength from what Community action has already achieved in the field of education, training and youth. For hundreds of thousands of teachers, pupils, students and trainees of all ages, trainers and workers, this has already helped give meaning to the concept of a "European dimension". These achievements, evaluated in the light of Community action since 1976 and the results already achieved after nearly three years of applying the present programmes, make it possible to appreciate the European value added obtained by virtue of effective means of action deployed in the framework of increased cooperation between specific players.

The Commission is therefore building on the achievements of the programmes and preparing the future by implementing actions which have already proved their worth in the service of the operational objectives it is setting, namely: to expand the access of European citizens to European education resources, to experiment with and create new innovative resources, to disseminate good practices and to create a genuine education area of real and virtual cooperation in the field of education, training and youth in Europe.

"Towards a Europe of Knowledge" and the working document are available at the DGXXII library in published form and at the Europa-DGXXII site in electronic form.



“It is high time to set a new course”

*Carte Blanche: J.M.M. Ritzen,
Dutch Minister for Education, Culture and Sciences*

Following his country's EU Presidency, Mr Ritzen, Dutch Minister for Education, sets out his vision of a European Union of knowledge. He believes urgent progress is needed in two priority areas: mobility and multimedia.

Europe must offer its citizens wide access to education. They must be able to maintain their knowledge at a high level. This is the task the heads of government set themselves in the preamble to the Amsterdam Treaty. A preamble which expresses the very essence of the goal my colleagues and myself are seeking to achieve: a Europe which develops to the point where it becomes a European Union of knowledge. The notion of a Union of knowledge was the leitmotiv at the informal meeting of Education Ministers held on 2 and 3 March 1997 in an Amsterdam University lecture theatre. I welcome this opportunity to summarize it.

Knowledge plays a crucial role in the competitive struggle in which Europe is currently engaged against other parts of the world. Many studies show that the world is moving in the direction of a knowledge society. All over the world, traditional methods of industrial production are being replaced by a production method which is far more dependent upon knowledge management, the rate of innovation and intellectual creativity. It is becoming of prime importance to make the best possible use of human capital in order to improve our opportunities for development and optimize our competitive position. In his White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, published a few years ago, Jacques Delors made the same analysis. He concluded that education in Europe left much to be desired, with too many students leaving the education system too early, education which is out of phase with the employment market, and insufficient attention paid to the need for lifelong learning. Commissioner Cresson's White Paper, which appeared later, conveys the same message. But although we are now aware of this

situation, we are unable to come up with a sufficient response to the problems posed. It is high time to set a new course.

When we speak of the Europe of the future, it is important to conjure up a sense of opportunity among its citizens: the sense of Europe as a continent where you are free to study wherever you like. A continent whose universities and research centres are able to rival the very best which America or Japan is able to offer. A Europe where a knowledge of our languages and our cultures promotes mutual respect. It is essential to allow our citizens access to knowledge if we want this image of the future to become a reality.

Mobility: progress needed

The European Union of knowledge will not be made in a day. Nevertheless, during the Dutch Presidency, it became clear to me that my fellow education ministers largely shared this same idea of a Union of knowledge. Mobility and the use of multimedia in teaching can be a building-block in this edifice – and significant progress remains to be made in both these areas.

Let me take mobility first. The free movement of students and researchers in Europe is an essential precondition for achieving a Union of knowledge. Although the internal market seems to be operating well enough in terms of trade, it is proving difficult to remove barriers when it comes to mobility in education. Any student seeking to arrange a study period abroad must steel himself for an obstacle course. Will the credits obtained in a university abroad be recognized by the institution in his country of origin? Is a study grant valid abroad or not? For the teacher, the situation is often equally complex. Some research grants, obtained after so

much effort, are subject to double taxation: once in the host country and once in the home country. European ministers have looked at the issue of mobility thresholds on two occasions this year, first at an informal meeting on 2 and 3 March in Amsterdam and later on 26 June in Luxembourg at their official meeting. The Green Paper on Mobility, in which the European Commission listed the obstacles to mobility, served as a basis for discussion. Although all the ministers are committed to removing these barriers, the political implementation of such measures poses problems. A number of obstacles are linked to differences in social and fiscal legislation, for example.

The future stages were finally agreed in Luxembourg. Before the end of the year Commissioner Edith Cresson will submit a series of proposals to promote mobility, in the form of a recommendation to Member States designed to ensure that study grants can be exported. In other words, before leaving for a recognized university or other institute of higher education in the European Union, students will be assured that their study grant remains valid. The Scandinavian countries have already settled this question among themselves. It was also agreed that student and teacher mobility would be on the agenda at the European employment summit held in November under the Luxembourg Presidency. A direct link will thus be established between education and the future of employment in Europe.

It is my belief that obstacles to mobility can be removed much more quickly than has been the case to date, both at European level and nationally, insofar as the removal of barriers is the responsibility of Member States. I have myself taken a step in this direction in

my own country. Like the Norwegian education minister, I am a strong supporter of study grants which apply abroad. From the 1998-1999 academic year, 1000 Dutch students will have the opportunity to study for a complete academic year in a country of the European Union or European Economic Area without losing their grant from the Dutch Government.

The importance of multimedia

In addition to improved mobility, the initiation to multimedia use throughout the education system is a second instrument in preparing the European Union of knowledge. I am speaking here not just of the direct possibilities of the use of information technology in the classroom but also of the more general mission of education in preparing pupils to live in a computerized society. The new media can make a major contribution in terms of differences in methods and rates of learning. Teachers also have the opportunity to innovate in their particular branch. Traditional instruction-based teaching is developing in the direction of providing a support framework within which children learn independently.

A major media fair was held to coincide with the informal meeting of ministers on 2 and 3 March. Several interactive applications were presented on this occasion and hundreds of people participated in an Internet search. The fair was an enjoyable way of demonstrating the crucial importance of information and communication technologies. A little later, European ministers debated the political consequences of the advent of multimedia. This discussion gave rise to the subsequent stages, as agreed in Luxembourg in June. The European Commission will draw up plans to network all European

“We want our Presidency to have real impact for young people”

Carte Blanche: David Blunkett,

UK Secretary of State for Education and Employment

training programmes for teachers which serve as models in multimedia applications. The Commission will also make an inventory of the educational software market. Ministers are convinced that there are many more opportunities for public/private partnerships in this field than people are currently aware of. As in the case of mobility, developments at European and national level must be mutually complementary. In the Netherlands I have launched an ambitious action plan entitled “Investeren in voorsprong” (investing in progress) in order to prepare schools and teachers for use of the new media.

The European Union of knowledge has a collective importance for our continent. Mobility and multimedia are both important instruments in achieving a European Union of knowledge. The setting up of high-level European research centres is another important milestone along this road. Education and knowledge can also serve as links at the time of Union enlargement. The first steps towards integration can be taken in the field of student mobility and cooperation in scientific research. In the recently published Agenda 2000, the Commission is at pains to stress the importance of enlargement projects, placing particular emphasis on the motor role of education in the field of European integration. The Union of knowledge therefore seems to be taking shape; it is important for it to continue to do so. The image of Europe as a Union of knowledge can give its citizens confidence in our continent's development along the road to more training and more jobs while respecting our respective differences. The difficult but exciting task of politicians in the years to come is to transform this confidence into reality.

In January, Britain takes on the EU Presidency. We have said that Britain will use its influence at the heart of Europe to promote the issues we all must address if we are to develop as prosperous and inclusive societies in the new millennium. Our priorities must show that we are committed to vigorous action to help the 18 million unemployed people across the European Union.

We need to focus clearly on improving the employability of our people and the adaptability of our labour markets. In Britain, we believe that raising standards in schools is a key aspect of employability. Children need the best possible start in life. They must be competent in key skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology if they are to make the most of their working lives. In July 1997 the Government published a detailed consultation paper on raising standards at every level in schools in Britain, and narrowing the gap between success and failure. Following that policy paper the Government is now legislating to ensure that the targets set and the programme of work commenced will be underpinned by the necessary legal powers. However, education and training should not end when school ends. We live in an increasingly competitive and challenging world in which most people will have several jobs during their careers. In future, real security of employment will lie in people acquiring and updating their skills and qualifications - in other words, in developing their employability through a culture of lifelong learning. In 1996 the Commission launched its European Year of Lifelong Learning, in which all EU Member States undertook to promote more opportunities for learning through life.

In the UK, the Government has set out key objectives and mechanisms for achieving a culture of lifelong learning, ranging from post-16 through adult, further and higher education, in a substantive document published this autumn. It has pledged to:

- establish a new University for Industry which will extend learning opportunities to the workplace, the home and the community through the use of new technologies;
- introduce Individual Learning Accounts to help people invest in their own learning; and promote Investors in People as the general standard in Britain for raising the level of skills for individuals and improving business performance through people - in particular, to help the vital small firms sector achieve the best return on their training investment.

As part of its plans, the Government has set up Learning Direct, a permanent national telephone helpline offering information on local and national learning opportunities as well as advice on how individuals can pay for learning.

Our aim is to see a society in which learning is valued and practised as part of everyday life - not by the few but by the many. All sectors of society - local authorities, community groups, employers, trade unions and individuals - need to get involved in the values of lifetime learning if we are to prosper into the next millennium.

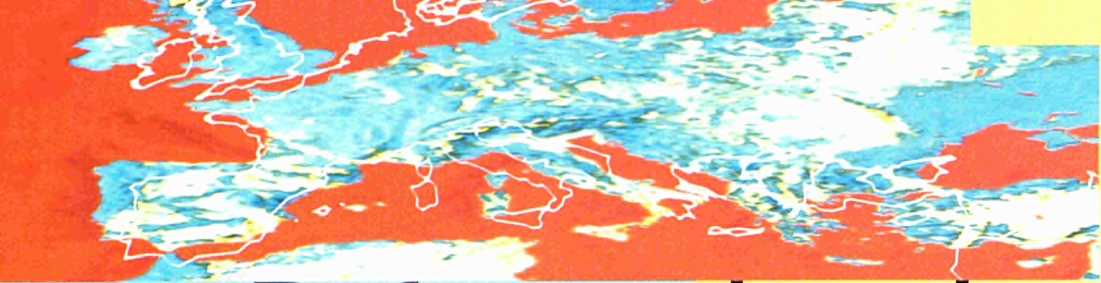
Equally, we want to encourage flexibility in our labour markets. By this we do not mean indiscriminate deregulation, reducing standards or competing on low wages. Every person has the right to decent minimum standards of fairness at work, but we must guard against regulation which disproportionately puts up the cost of employment or makes it difficult for particular groups, such as young people, to get jobs.

In Britain, we have offered a 'New Deal' to our young and long-term unemployed people. We cannot allow the time-bomb of a generation disconnected from the world of work and disconnected from the chance to contribute to society. We are offering them a high-quality range of options designed to give them the skills, experience and help they need to get jobs and stay in jobs. In partnership with business and the voluntary sector, we are giving them a foundation for their working lives.

The key to our approach should be to intervene actively to help people develop their employability. That means ensuring that they have the skills they need to get a job. It means promoting welfare to work initiatives which bring real jobs within reach of those now excluded from the labour market.

During our Presidency we are keen to play a key role in developing challenging action programmes to succeed Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe III, which fully embrace the range of young people's interests.

We want our Presidency to have real impact for young people. In Britain, we shall be holding a range of events involving schools and parents. We will be sending a package of materials to schools highlighting the importance of the EU to students. There will also be a competition for schools, colleges and youth organizations to promote European partnership. Finally, in recognition of the close links that exist between education, training and employability, we will encourage a close working relationship between the Education and Social Affairs Councils as a hallmark of the UK Presidency.



Reforms in education continue to progress

Education systems in Europe, both within and outside the EU, are undergoing profound changes. Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, reviews the situation in each country, highlighting the most recent and significant reforms.

Greece

Education without frontiers on the eve of the new millennium

The main changes are as follows:

- All-day school at pre-school and primary level. This is mainly in urban areas and schools will operate between 7.45 a.m. and 4 p.m. Pupil selection will be based on social and economic criteria.
- "Second chance" schools are being created for children aged 18 and over who have not completed the nine years of compulsory education.
- This year will also see the creation of a single Lykeio (Eniaio Lykeio).
- Teachers will be evaluated inside the establishment by the school head, the heads of the Directorates of Education, education advisers as well as the establishment's Evaluation Committee.
- External evaluations will be performed by a body of permanent evaluators.
- General examinations (to enter higher education) will be abolished in the year 2000. Those with an upper secondary qualification will have access to all departments within higher education establishments.
- Lastly, the directory of teacher nominations will be abolished by 2002. Starting in 2003, teacher nominations will be made solely from tables drawn up following a national competition.

The reform of the Greek education system is based on the following principles:

- Democratic teaching
- An equal opportunities policy
- Public and free education for all
- A humanitarian and humanist approach to education
- Constant striving for quality results.

Spain

Choice of school

A Royal Decree modifying pupil admission procedures for publicly-funded nursery, primary and secondary schools for the areas that report to the Ministry of Education and Culture was approved last spring.

Among the innovations of this regulation is the enlargement of school catchment areas so that families have greater freedom of choice when selecting a school. They can, however, decide to accept the place allocated automatically by the administration in a particular school. The regulation also modifies pupil admission criteria.

The main admission criteria for publicly-funded schools are: annual family income, proximity (for the first time, the school can either be located close to the pupil's home or to the parents' or tutors' place of work) and prior enrolment of other siblings in the school. Other possible admission criteria can be: if a child comes from a large family; has a handicapped parent, tutor or sibling; and other criteria linked to circumstances.

This Royal Decree has given rise to favourable reactions and some criticism. Some members of the education community point out that the number of schools varies by area and by zone (urban and rural). Some pupils are therefore at a disadvantage when it comes to choosing a school – it is then the establishment, rather than the parents, that has the power to decide who attends. Others affirm that this regulation allows families to choose between schools – which shows an approach similar to Spain's neighbours and adheres more closely to market trends.

Italy

Reform of State examinations at the end of upper secondary education

The proposed bill to reform State examinations at the end of upper secondary education (Maturità) has been approved by the Senate and is being discussed in the Chamber of Deputies.

The aim of these examinations is to check the level of general and specific competence acquired in relation to the objectives set by pupil's chosen course of study.

There are three written examinations and one oral. The first written examination is designed to evaluate the candidate's fluency and quality of expression in Italian, logical use of language and critical appreciation, and the second examination tests one of the basic subjects from the course of study. The third examination, which is multi-discipline, covers the subjects studied during the final year of the course and requires: presenting arguments succinctly; answering straightforward or multiple-choice questions; problem-solving in practical and real-life cases and project development. This last test is structured in such a way as to also evaluate foreign language competence. The oral examination deals with various subjects, depending on course content and the final year's work.

At the end of the State examination, each candidate is awarded a mark out of 100, made up as follows:

- written examination: maximum 45 points;
- oral examination: maximum 35 points;
- course work credits (credito scolastico): maximum 20 points.

To pass, the pupil must obtain at least 60/100.

Netherlands

New law on primary education

On 19 June 1997, Mr Netelenbos, Secretary of State for Education, Culture and Science policy, presented a new law on primary education (WPO) to the Chamber of Representatives. This law contains the legal provisions for primary education and special education schools attended by children with learning difficulties (MLK), learning and behavioural difficulties (LOM), and children of pre-school age with development problems (IOBK). These schools are called "special primary schools". The law should come into effect in August 1998.

The law on primary education comes as a reply to debates held on the theme of "Together again at school". The separation between general and special education was questioned. In the past, primary and special education were subject to separate laws – one on primary education (WBO) and the intermediate law on special education and special secondary education (ISOVSO). The current split prevents providing "made to measure" education. This "tailor-made" education is needed to ensure continuous pupil development. Secondary schools for pupils with learning difficulties and behavioural problems as well as for pupils with moderate or serious learning difficulties will be included in the law on secondary education (WVO). The intermediate law on special education and secondary special education will expire on 1 August 1998 and will become a law on levels of competence. It will provide details of financing by pupil.

Austria

Reform of the pre-vocational year of study - creation of new pre-vocational schools

A package of school acts, which passed parliament, provides for an extensive reform of the pre-vocational year of study (a one-year course in the ninth year of compulsory schooling). This will be re-named "pre-vocational school" and a thoroughly revised curriculum will become effective as of September 1997.

Motives for the reform

In Austria, vocational training can be started upon completion of year 8 or at the end of compulsory schooling (after spending nine years at school). Generally speaking, this situation favours school-bound vocational careers which quickly lead to higher qualifications. As a result, the dual system has lost prestige in comparison with full-time secondary technical and vocational colleges and is often the "second choice" after drop-out from full-time education.

Elements of the reform

Ways had to be found to enable the one-year pre-vocational school to best perform its task of preparing young people for work and facilitating their transition into that world.

The new curriculum of the pre-vocational school reflects the experience gained during the course of pilot projects. It responds to:

- the substantial structural differences that exist between schools (large, central schools compared with very small schools, sometimes "attached" to general secondary schools);
- the substantial differences in pupil achievement;
- varying career choices;
- different regional conditions and economic structures.
- whilst incorporating a high degree of flexibility and scope for school autonomy. At the same time, the new curriculum will be more demanding in terms of quality and achievement.

Finland

Vocational qualifications for adults

Traditionally, initial vocational training in Finland is given in schools, equipped with "work place" facilities and following National curriculum guidelines. Apprenticeships were less commonplace.

In 1995, an Act on Vocational Qualifications came into effect. It introduced a new option, primarily for adults, to demonstrate their vocational skills in an examination and skills test, thus receiving "official" recognition for their professional competence. This system does not set any requirements as to the previous formal training of the candidate. Work experience, apprenticeship or systematic training, or a combination of these, can all be a source of competence.

Qualification requirements are defined at central level by the National Board of Education, supported by Training Committees for each sector of economic activity. In the Committees, employers, employees, training experts and authorities are represented. At local level, the implementation of examinations is the responsibility of Examination Boards, representing employers, employees and teachers.

By now, almost all sectors of economic activity are covered and over 300 competence-based qualifications are defined in the National Qualifications Requirements. The system is continuously assessed and developed in close cooperation with the social partners. In complementing the initial training in schools, this examination system is expected to give a boost to lifelong learning among the adult population.

United Kingdom (England and Wales)

The first Labour Government in almost 20 years was elected in May 1997. The new Government intends to make education its top priority. Education White Papers for England and Wales, in which the Government emphasises raising standards in schools, were published in July. Proposals in the White Paper for England include:

- education for all four year olds whose parents want it;
- reduction of class sizes to 30 or under, for 5-, 6- and 7-year-olds;
- the setting up of Education Action Zones;
- the establishment of a General Teaching Council;
- new qualifications for headteachers;
- home school contracts which outline both parents' and schools' rights and responsibilities;
- increased representation for parents;
- a national strategy for information and communications technology.

In Wales, the White Paper sets out specific targets for achievement. An education Action Group involving businesses and other interests will be set up with the aim of developing a distinct Welsh education policy.

The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education recently reported its findings. The Committee's report offers wide-ranging recommendations covering the local and regional role of higher education; the qualifications framework; quality and standards; the role of information technology; staff and their training; management and governance of institutions; support for research; widening participation; institutional funding and student support; and many other issues. The Government has welcomed the Committee's report in principle and, in line with its recommendations, has stated its intention to introduce a tuition fee of £1 000 per year representing a quarter of the average cost of a course. Maintenance grants for students will be replaced with expanded loan provision.

Liechtenstein

New project for foreign languages

During the 1996/97 school year, the age at which pupils begin to study English in Liechtenstein schools was brought forward from the first year of secondary school to the third year of primary school. Following a gradual introduction, English will be taught continuously from the third year of primary school to the certificate at the end of the fourth year of secondary school, and throughout the duration of this project. English will therefore become the most taught foreign language in Liechtenstein.

Teachers will receive training to prepare them for their new task. This notably includes language courses in English-speaking countries.

During the course work, teachers will receive support from language assistants. This way of teaching as a team offers many possibilities for teaching methods. More attention will be paid to acquiring well-developed communication skills. The teachers will also have computerized back-up – classrooms will gradually be equipped with personal computers and interactive programmes. Pupils will therefore be able follow different English programmes individually.

Other foreign languages, such as French, Italian, Spanish or even Latin are also offered. For those children whose mother tongue is not German, schools also offer lessons and courses in that language. The aim of this important linguistic initiative is to promote communication and mutual understanding.

Norway

In Norway, various educational reforms have been launched in the 1990s. Reform 97 is being introduced in primary and lower secondary education. Taking account of a tradition of comprehensive schooling and the lowering of the school starting age to 6, new curricula have been introduced. New textbooks and the renovation of school buildings have been part of the reform, with the State and the municipalities making considerable investments. A strategy of increased competence with better in-service training for teachers as well as better support material has been developed and put into operation. The strategy is characterized by involving universities and colleges in a networking process, supporting the priorities of school-based in-service training. All municipalities have developed plans for competence building according to this strategy. Provision of after school activities for children at primary level is being developed as part of Reform 97.

Reform 97 may also be seen as a nursery school (day care institution) reform. In Norway, no child has a legal right to a place in a pre-school establishment, but more than 50 per cent of all children aged under 6 years attend such a school. Until this year, more than 90 per cent of all 6-year-olds have had an educational programme either in separate groups in schools or in the nursery establishments. This autumn, all

the places for children aged over 6 can be allocated to younger children. It is the Government's goal that by the year 2000, all parents can place their children in a nursery school if they want to. A new curriculum for pre-school establishments, prepared by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, called "Framework Plan for Day Care Institutions" entered into force on 1 January 1996.

Czech Republic

Optimization of the school network

One of the current main tasks of the Czech education system is to adapt the capacity of schools to the current and future school population figures. This is particularly true for the capacity of upper secondary schools, which developed very quickly when the child population was at its highest.

As the youth population will decline substantially long-term, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport launched the programme "Optimization of the school network" in spring 1997. It sets rules for adapting the capacity and structure of State upper secondary schools to current and future needs. All partners in the education system participated: municipalities and communities/regions, educational administrations, schools and the business and employment sectors. General educational principles and school autonomy are respected, but more stress is put on effective financing and higher quality teaching through a more efficient use of human resources in schools. The number of schools will decrease – this will allow the rental or sale of buildings and land. It is planned that non-qualified teachers and teachers at retirement age will be made redundant. The municipalities and communities who initially refused the optimisation of upper secondary schools have now been implementing this approach for pre-school establishments and basic schools that are under their responsibilities.

Latvia

Education reform in Latvia was undertaken after the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia in 1991. This reform is still under way. The latest innovations are the following:

- A new method of general education financing was introduced after the adoption of regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers in 1996. From the State budget through the Municipal Equalization Fund, which is for teaching staff salary fund provision in the municipal budgets, a special grant is allocated, according to the number of students, as well as taking into consideration the specifics of each area.
- Changes were made to the examination system by organizing written and centrally-

marked examinations in a range of subjects, in order to evaluate students' knowledge and skills according to the same criteria.

- It is planned that the centralized examination system will combine upper-secondary school leaving examinations with the entrance examinations to higher education establishments.
- In 1997, a system of student credit was implemented in higher education establishments. This credit will allow students to receive grants for their living expenses, but not for study fees.
- In basic education, an integrated course entitled "social sciences" is under development. This course is based on two subjects: civics, introduced in 1996, and an Introduction to economic, which will be implemented this year. The course is geared towards life in a democratic society.

Slovenia

A group of Slovene experts worked for several years to draft a White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (published in 1996). The suggestions put forward in the White Paper served as the basis for the preparation and adoption of new legislation in the field of education. Six acts regulating the organization and funding of education, pre-school education, primary schools, gymnasias, vocational education and training and adult education were debated for a year and adopted by the National Assembly in February 1996.

The first new pre-school education curriculum to be prepared by the end of 1998 will introduce more variety and choice in the curriculum, thereby stimulating higher enrolment rates in pre-school establishments, especially for children aged between 3 and 6. The new legislation introduces nine-year basic education consisting of three three-year cycles. The school-entering age was lowered to 6. New primary school curricula to be prepared and gradually implemented in schools by appropriate curriculum committees also include new features such as grading at the first stage of education, earlier foreign language teaching, a larger selection of subjects, flexible diversification in the last years of school, etc. Between 1999 and 2003 new programmes for the first and third levels of education will be tested and implemented. A tenth year of basic education will be introduced after the first pupils pass the State-wide final examination.

In the school year 1996/97, pilot vocational colleges and vocational courses leading to technical qualifications were offered for the first time and master craftsman examinations and the dual system have already started in some vocational schools. This part of the renewal is assisted by the Phare-VET reform programme. Since 1990, when gymnasias were reintroduced in the system, important new features concerning the contents of studies have been implemented. Since 1995, schooling concludes with a matura examination. In 1996/97, pilot technical gymnasias (in the fields of technical science, economics and music) and a pilot classical gymnasium were established.

New legislation systemically regulates the quality as well as the financing of private pre-school institutions and schools that have emerged after 1990.

The law regulating higher education was already adopted in December 1993. This guarantees autonomy to universities. Some free-standing -as a rule private- higher education institutions were founded. The academic year 1996/97 began with all new and renewed study programmes. It can be anticipated that undergraduate study programmes will continue to be modernized (with strong support from the Tempus programme) and graduate studies will be updated in the coming years. It is expected that the participation in thematic and mobility-oriented Socrates networks will render higher education studies more comparable and significantly improve their quality.

Cyprus

Improvements to the education system under study

On 18 April 1997 the final report of the appraisal study of the Cyprus Education System was given to the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus. The report was prepared by a team from UNESCO (IIEP). The study began on October 1996 and considered four main areas of education; teaching, personnel, building infrastructure and research.

The report stressed the excellent work undertaken by the ministry in order to bring education in Cyprus to present standards, given the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the ensuing occupation of approximately 37 % of the country's land. This forced around 200,000 people out of their homes and they had to seek education in the non-occupied area. The report contains many suggestions for changes and/or improvements to the Cyprus educational system.

The ministry has appointed four committees consisting of members from all the departments of education as well as members from teacher organizations and unions. The four committees, after re-evaluating the appraisal study, made preliminary reports with suggestions and guidelines indicating what could or has to be done in order to implement the suggestions made in the study. The reports will be reviewed by a ministerial committee which will then make recommendations for changes to the country's education policy.

The above contributions have been provided by the respective national units in the Eurydice network.

A very present "minority"

It is difficult to put a precise figure on the number of gypsies worldwide, largely due to their nomadic traditions. But they are generally considered to form a population of 12.5 million: 2.5 million in the United States and South America, 8 million in Central and Eastern Europe, and almost 2 million in the European Union.

The statistics compiled by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe are the authority on the subject. The OSCE gives the following breakdown of the gypsy population in the EU:

• Austria: 15,000 to 20,000	• Italy: 100,000 to 120,000
• Belgium: 10,000 to 15,000	• Luxembourg: 100 to 200
• Denmark: 2,000 to 3,000	• The Netherlands: 35,000 to 40,000
• Finland: 7,000 to 10,000	• Portugal: 40,000 to 50,000
• France: 300,000 to 380,000	• Spain: 700,000 to 800,000
• Germany: 90,000 to 120,000	• Sweden: 15,000 to 40,000
• Greece: 150,000 to 200,000	• United Kingdom: 15,000 to 40,000
• Ireland: 20,000 to 30,000	

Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia has reason to be pleased. For the past 30 years he has waged a constant campaign for the rights of his people to be recognized. Now, in the space of just three years, two events have marked significant progress in this enduring campaign.

First came the European Union's gypsy congress in Seville in May 1994. This was the first time gypsies from Eastern and Western Europe had come together to discuss issues of crucial importance to them all. It was also the first time -"after centuries of persecution and struggle for survival"- that the gypsies received high-level institutional support, as evidenced by the presence of Queen Sophia of Spain and Spanish premier Felipe Gonzales.

Three years later, in November 1997, the European meeting of young gypsies in Barcelona was a further milestone.

A gypsy at the European Parliament

A single individual can influence the course of history by serving as the crucial catalyst for change. One such man is Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia.

The son of very poor and illiterate gypsy parents, he had the exceptional opportunity of being sent to school in Cadiz, from where he went on to study at Barcelona University, obtaining a doctorate in information science. He quickly became a champion of the gypsy cause. In 1971 he helped set up the international Romany Union. The fall of General Franco ushered in a new period of hope for Spain. In 1977, at the time of the first democratic elections, Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia was elected a (socialist) Member of Parliament, taking up his seat in the Cortes. In January 1986, when Spain joined the European Community, he became a Member of the European Parliament, the first and only gypsy to do so. Eight years later, he gave up his seat in order to devote himself full time to his work as president of the Spanish Romany Union, a federation of some 50 gypsy associations.

During his time in Strasbourg, Juan de Dios compiled a detailed list of all Community initiatives against racism between 1986 and 1996. He was also the architect of the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 21 April 1994 on "the situation of gypsies in Europe". This was a fundamen-



Gypsies

towards full citizenship

1st European congress of young gypsies in Barcelona

Young gypsies came together at a European congress in Barcelona from 6 to 9 November, held in the context of the European Year Against Racism. The meeting was a milestone in their history.

tal policy document in which MEPs called for measures to promote school education for the children of gypsies and travellers and recommended that the Commission, the Council and governments of the Member States should contribute to their economic, social and political integration of these people.

A place in the sun

At the time of the Seville and Barcelona meetings, Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia and the Romany Union received considerable support from the European Commission, (first through DG XXII's intercultural education unit and subsequently through the youth unit)¹. Commission officials responded with enthusiasm, convinced that the gypsies deserved "a place in the sun" after so many years of being ridiculed, scorned, and the victims of repeated discrimination. Half a million gypsies perished as a result of Nazi persecution during World War II, a genocide which was long passed over in silence. Europe has a historical obligation to these people.

The Commission therefore decided to give the Seville congress its full support, while ensuring – an important point – that the gypsies themselves would be free to organize the event their way.

A historical obligation

It was under the Youth for Europe programme that the Commission was again able to support the gypsies, at their first congress for young people in Barcelona. An event which is very much in keeping with the 1997 European Year Against Racism. According to Alexandros Tsolakakis, who heads DG XXII's youth unit, one of the aims of this event was to encourage young gypsies to set up their own representation structure vis-à-vis the European Communities, in cooperation with the Youth Forum.

In September a meeting was held at the building used by the European Parliament in Brussels to prepare the European congress of young gypsies. It was attended by gypsy delegations from Eastern and Western Europe. A number of the questions raised on this occasion were later central to the discussions in Barcelona. What, for example, does the

notion of "youth" mean to the gypsy people who, traditionally, have moved directly from childhood to adulthood with no transitional period? How can young gypsies be integrated into an educated society without losing an identity to which they are wholeheartedly committed?

Roots and branches

Another heated topic of discussion was what term to use when referring to these people: "Tzigane", "gypsy", "Romany"? Behind this question of semantics there is another much deeper problem. The origin of the gypsy people lies in a long exodus of populations originating in north-east India, in the 11th century. The gypsy diaspora was then progressively formed, while adapting to the various host countries. Romany, the majority language, has been influenced by various dialects: Kalo, spoken in Spain; Manush, spoken in Western Europe; and Kalderash, which is found in Eastern Europe. There is also Sintis, spoken principally by gypsies in the Netherlands and Germany, which is a very different language to Romany. Although unique, the gypsy people are also very diverse. Hence the challenge of highlighting their common roots while simultaneously respecting their inherent differences.

Throughout the centuries, gypsies have travelled from country to country, ignoring borders, barriers and even the Iron Curtain which, until recently, divided Europe into two. Today, the European Union is giving priority to mobility and preparing for eastward enlargement. Are not the gypsies, in a sense, the forerunners of this future Europe of pluralism and solidarity?

300 young delegates

The first congress of young gypsies was held at Barcelona University from 6 to 9 November, with financial backing from the European Commission, the Catalonia Generalitat, the social Conselleria of Benestar, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Youth Institute. The event was attended by 300 young people aged between 18 and 30 from the countries of the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe. Activities focused on four principal themes: education, social policy, public liberties, and the creation of associations.

To allow maximum participation, discussions took place in smaller working parties as well in plenary sessions. Simultaneous interpretation was provided: Catalan, Spanish, English, French and Romany. A number of workshops presenting the cultural wealth and diversity of the gypsy people were also held throughout the congress which, in addition to the serious debates, also sought to present the more light-hearted and joyful side of gypsy life. On the final day, the "gadje" (non-gypsy) inhabitants of Barcelona were able to enjoy a celebration of gypsy music, song and dance.

The Romany Union... on the Internet

The Spanish Romany Union, co-organizer of the European congress together with the Federation of Gypsy Associations of Catalonia, is a non-profit and non-governmental organization devoted to defending the interests of the gypsy community.

This association attaches great importance to information. Among other activities, the Romany Union publishes a fortnightly journal entitled *Nevipens Romani* (Noticias Gitanas).

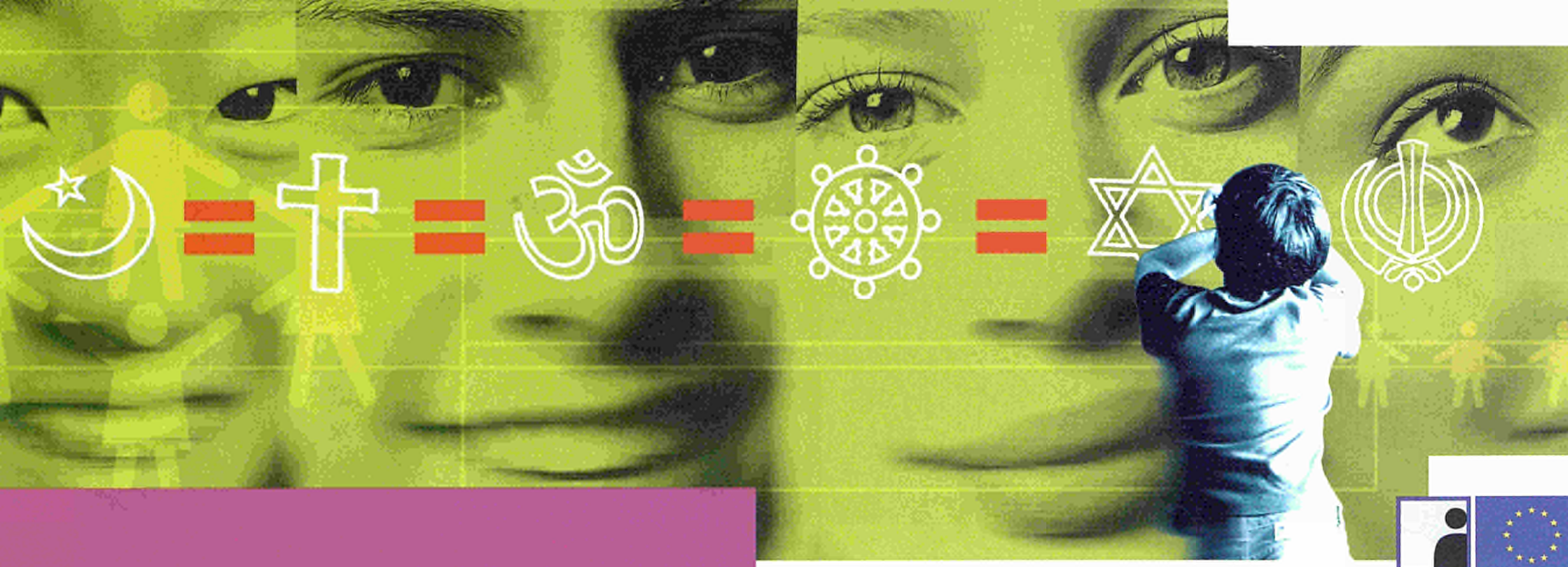
<http://www.qsystems.es/gipsy>

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Further information

¹ Under Comenius, Chapter II of the Socrates programme, an action specifically targeted at promoting school education for young gypsies.



Bradford

religions at the crossroads

Report

In the English city of Bradford, a 19th century former Anglican church is today home to the Interfaith Education Centre. A place where Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs work together to combat the rising tide of racism, concentrating on education. In making its experience available to other cities, through the Comenius network, Bradford has become a European laboratory in the fight against racism.

In Bradford town centre, a tense and nervous young man stands at the entrance to a pub. He is protesting loudly, appealing to passers-by: "My friends are in there, but not me. They refuse to let me in because I pray to Mecca," he shouts. "Scenes like this are all too common here in Bradford," explains David Jackson, coordinator of the Interfaith Education Centre. "You just have to be slightly darker skinned or wear a turban around your head to be accused of all the evils under the sun." As we walk the city streets, he describes the situation. "This kind of thing has been going on for 100 years. At the beginning of the century it was between Protestants and Catholics. Today it is directed against Hindus and Muslims."

The weather is mild in these early September days. People are returning from their holidays and the new school term is beginning, the start of a new year of work and activity – yet there is an air of sadness about the town. "Just 20 years ago this was a prosperous place," our host explains. "People worked hard, but it was easy to get a job, regardless of your colour or religion. Bradford was a centre of the world wool market. Until the early 1980s, people around here still lived from sheep farming or were employed in the mills. But these past few years of recession have resulted in massive job losses. Times have certainly changed since the days when it was a prosperous industrial centre..."

After 20 minutes' walk we have come a long way from the city centre to a depressing area on the outskirts, a desolate scene of abandoned factories, waste ground and run-down housing. At the end of Listerhills Road there is an Anglican church, dating from Victorian times, perched on the top of one of the many hills which surround the town. For the past 10 years this has been home to the Interfaith Education Centre (I), a public body supported by the local education authority. David Jackson has made it his base.

The people who live in this area are representative of Bradford's different communities: 25 % are Muslims, most of them from India or Pakistan, 10 % are Hindus or Sikhs and just under 10 % are Buddhists or Jews. Most of them arrived in successive waves after World War II, to work in the local industry. Now they find it extremely difficult to get jobs.

"The situation is really tense," stresses the Centre's manager. "On the one hand we are seeing an increasing impoverishment of the population. And on the other hand, the total lack of understanding between the five principal religious communities, namely Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus and Jews. When there were jobs for everyone, they lived together peacefully. Today, Bradford's original inhabitants are just looking for scapegoats for all the problems they are facing. Between the immigrant groups themselves, contact remains difficult and this sometimes leads to gratuitous violence."

Common values

You are taken by surprise when you first walk into the Interfaith Education Centre. Candles, candelabras and all kinds of religious symbols and prophecies inscribed on the walls immediately confront the visitor with what this is really all about.

It is open to everyone. There is a library, a communal kitchen, tables, armchairs and desks. In the lounge, a philosophy professor is talking with a group of teachers. In the kitchen, a Sikh in a turban is making tea. Over there, a Muslim is praying. In the library, young graduates of various origins are looking through religious books.

David Jackson explains his project's aim: "To have tolerance and respect you must first have an understanding of differences. We are seeking to combat racism and xenophobia through knowledge." But there are not only differences;

there are also similarities. "When you compare religions you see that they share, among other things, four fundamental values: 'thou shalt not kill', 'thou shalt not steal', 'thou shalt not bear false witness', and 'thou shalt not commit adultery'. David Jackson believes it is essential to prove that, over and above the divergences, Bradford's religious communities share a same ethic. "In this way we are creating a possible understanding between people who initially were not used to living together."

The Centre is run by a permanent team of 10, of all religions. "In a way, we provide the living proof that this is possible," explains David.

Teaching material

"If we want to create a pluralist society, one aware of the common values which lie at its root, then we must work above all with young people. It is in the world of education that this intercultural message is most likely to be heard. It is through education that we can put an end to this phenomenon of racism," stresses David Jackson. "This is why we have established close links between the world of education, parents and members of Bradford's various religious communities." These partnerships have allowed the whole team at the Interfaith Education Centre to successfully carry out a series of projects, including seminars, debates, meetings between religious communities and teacher training.

Among these initiatives there is one ambitious project to which David Jackson is particularly committed: the organization of a single religious education course, compulsory in all of Bradford's schools. Since September 1995 this has become a reality, thanks to official support from the Bradford LEA (Local Education Authority).

Further information

<http://www.bradford.gov.uk/educate.htm>

Part of the Socrates programme, Comenius promotes cooperation in the area of school education at all levels (pre-school, primary and secondary). It supports the following activities:

- European education projects within school partnerships.
- Educational activities with an intercultural dimension: intercultural education projects to promote mutual understanding and tolerance between pupils and teachers from different linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds. In this way they help to combat racism and xenophobia. Activities concentrate principally on the comparative study of cultures, their structures and the changes they undergo. The projects try to facilitate dialogue and understanding between different cultures, including, in some cases, religious cultures. The European Interfaith Project is one such example.
- The transnational in-service training of teachers and education staff.

A few figures

Many of the world's religions are now represented in Bradford. The Anglicans (Church of England) have a strong presence in the area and maintain good relations with the other denominations. In the private sector, there are 40 Church of England schools and 20 Catholic schools. 80 % of Bradford's schools are state schools.

There are 50 mosques in Bradford. Out of a population of 457,000, there are 120,000 Muslims. 20 % of the children are Muslims. Half of the Asian community is aged under 20 and most of them were born in Bradford. 4 % of schoolchildren are Sikhs and 2 % Hindus. The Jewish community is less numerous, representing 1 % of the school population.

A little history

In 1800 Bradford had just one textile mill. A hundred years later, there were more than 300, transforming the town into a world centre for the wool market. Over a period of 200 years, Bradford has seen the arrival of successive waves of migrants. Coming from all over the world, they brought with them their luggage and their many and diverse religious practices.

In the 19th century, most of the town's inhabitants were Protestants. The first half of the 20th century was marked by the arrival of thousands of people from Germany, Poland, Italy, the Baltic countries, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Greece. This influx of migrants, most of whom came to work in the mills, considerably changed the religious landscape. A number of faiths developed, both Protestant and Catholic. With the arrival of Asians in the 1960s, principally from Pakistan and India, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism also made their appearance.

"Combating racism means getting to know your neighbour"

Several Gods, but just one course

Mr Jackson explains how, in Bradford, Catholic religious education courses were previously only taught in Catholic schools (as elsewhere in the United Kingdom). The Muslims only had courses outside school, in the evening or at weekends, as did the Hindus and the Jews.

"Our approach gives all pupils a common core of religious knowledge. In a class where pupils may be Muslims or Catholics, or Jews, Sikhs or atheists, it is important for them to know more about and better understand their neighbour."

Thus, in the town's 200 schools, a single weekly religious education course is taught to pupils in all classes. The curriculum is adapted in line with the educational project of the individual school and teacher. It proposes a series of lessons based on a comparative study of six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. A particular topic is chosen for each lesson, such as places of worship, signs and symbols, sacred texts or the prophets.

"The method is simple and the material inexpensive," explains Mick Walker, a teacher at Nab Woods Upper School in Bradford. "We approach each topic from the perspective of the pupils' own experiences. We then propose various workshops where they can meet others and work together. Finally, we teach a comparative study. The pupils learn to appreciate the values of everyone else and identify those they have in common."

In-service training

To complete its work, the Centre has also developed, with the backing of the Local Education Authority, a religious education syllabus for pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers. It is up to the schools to decide, taking into account their specific situation, in what context the course is to be taught. In denominational schools, which make up 20 % of

Bradford's schools, it is taught by the teacher of religion. In state schools the course is given during history, French or geography lessons. All of which requires the necessary teacher training. "We regularly attend training courses at the Centre or at school," explains one teacher. Unfortunately, the government recently reduced funding for the local authority. Teachers now have to pay to attend these non-obligatory courses, although the cost is not prohibitive.

David Jackson remains confident for the future. "It is better to attend training," he says. "But the syllabus does offer sufficient theoretical and practical instruction."

And Europe?

In the area of religious education, each European country acts in accordance with its own legislation and education system. Nevertheless, Bradford's experience could in future inspire other similar initiatives in the EU. "We wanted to share our experience with other European towns," continues the Centre's manager. Three years ago teachers from Birmingham, Cork, Odense and Rotterdam attended a conference at the Interfaith Education Centre. "These are all towns experiencing similar tensions between the various ethnic communities," explains Maggie Power, a teacher at Grange Road First School. Together they had the idea of creating a partnership between their schools, under the aegis of the European Commission and through the Comenius programme.

During the first year teachers from the five towns met in Bradford. They observed, compared and evaluated the thinking behind the British initiative. They then prepared lessons in order to try out similar experiences in their own schools. The next year it was Bradford's turn to travel abroad. At the same time, seminars and conferences were held all over Europe, in Bari, Vienna, and Athens for example.

A teaching manual on religious education will be published on the basis of these exchanges. Similar to the Bradford publication, it will also include a number of new elements. "By comparing the way we work with practices in other towns, we will enrich our initiative and widen the debate to include different European sensibilities," explains David Jackson.

This European syllabus, entirely the work of the various participating countries, will propose a series of lessons and methods in order to combat racism and xenophobia. The manual will provide pupils, parents and local representatives with a practical aid enabling them to appreciate the religious values of the different communities.

1 The Interfaith Education Centre is recognized as a public institution under the Bradford Local Education Authority. The Centre is part of the city's Curriculum, Training and Support Service.

A flexible transition

The CEEC countries between Tempus and Socrates/Leonardo da Vinci

Since the end of 1997, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania have been able to participate fully in the Community's Youth for Europe, Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes. They are soon to be followed by seven other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. So how does this fit in with Tempus, the programme of assistance in higher education?

The deadlines are drawing near for Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs). Following June's Amsterdam summit, the Commission proposed to the other EU institutions¹ that accession negotiations should start with Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia, with a view to their joining the EU in 2002. Lithuania and Latvia, the two other Baltic countries, plus Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia should also ultimately join the EU.

The ground must be very carefully prepared. This is why these 10 "associated countries" are being invited to participate fully in certain Community programmes, including Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates. Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania joined these programmes in September and October 1997. They should normally be followed by Slovakia and Poland in early 1998. The three Baltic countries, Bulgaria and Slovenia will be joining the two programmes in 1998 and 1999, although the date remains to be set.

As the associated countries are also members of the Tempus European programme in the field of higher education, due to run until at least 2000, is there a danger of overlap with Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates or of some confusion in including the CEECs in European programmes? Any such risks of duplication are in fact quite slim.

New elements

Tempus was launched in 1990, well before the launch of Leonardo da Vinci (late 1994) and Socrates (early 1995). Between the first of these programmes and the two latter, there came a marked shift in approach.

Tempus was conceived as an instrument of assistance, designed to help the CEECs to develop and restructure their higher education systems. It targets its objectives according to the specific situation in each country.

Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates benefit from the experience gained by Tempus in order to promote cooperation

between the EU countries, widened to include the European Economic Area, with the aim of contributing "to the development of quality education" (Maastricht Treaty) while respecting the plurality of national systems.

Over the years, Tempus has been able to evolve. It too is increasingly focusing on cooperation by drawing on the good results and practices of individual countries. Meanwhile, the standard of higher education has considerably improved in the group of associated countries. This has caused Tempus to reconsider its priorities in connection with the pre-accession strategy. Universities are now entrusted with a broader mission: they are being invited to come out from academic seclusion and make a more direct contribution to the development of civil society. The priority now is "institution building", a term used by Tempus to describe the effort universities must make if they are to help their countries to take on board the EU's accumulated rules and regulations, the *acquis communautaire*. To take a specific example, in Hungary higher education establishments have developed continuous training modules for some 4,500 land register employees: an area in urgent need of reform in order to bring Hungary into line with the EU.

Effective interlocking

The flexibility and dynamism shown by Tempus in effectively interlocking with other programmes make it possible to avoid any overlap in specific areas. The risks have been identified.

For Leonardo da Vinci, the most sensitive area is cooperation between universities and enterprises, an area also seen as a priority by Tempus in certain countries. Whereas Leonardo da Vinci sees this cooperation as a way of defining new vocational training systems, Tempus sees links with companies primarily as a means of improving the services which the university itself is able to offer. In-company placements are another area in which the programmes differ.

Under Leonardo da Vinci, they are open to students and young graduates, whereas Tempus limits them to university staff only. The dividing lines between the programmes are clearer than they may first appear.

As regards Socrates, only Erasmus (higher education) could pose a problem, especially in the area of mobility grants, an instrument which is also found in Tempus. But this question will soon be resolved. Following a recent Council decision, mobility grants for students and university staff will be discontinued under Tempus from the time when the CEECs are authorized to participate in Socrates.

The *acquis communautaire*

There remains the matter of curricular development, for which Tempus and Socrates both have responsibilities, where care will be taken to ensure there is no duplication. Tempus has embarked on a strategic reorientation in the direction of institution building, lending its support to courses in a number of priority fields with a view to Community harmonization. In this context, it will concentrate on training for eight professions which are regulated at EU level, namely for doctors, dentists, vets, pharmacists, midwives, nurses, lawyers and architects. Achieving convergence between these courses is an essential precondition for Community professional recognition directives to be effectively applied to the CEECs.

The obstacles are clearly being progressively overcome. But in future new ways of coordinating Tempus and other Community programmes will have to be found. The entry of the associated countries into the European Union will not remove overnight the need for specific support policies in education and training for these countries.

¹ A decision was expected at the end of 1997

Further information

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The Tempus beneficiary countries

Tempus/Phare:

Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

Tempus/Tacis:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

Tempus

a rendezvous with the future

At November's conference in Slovenia

Tempus, set up seven years ago to support higher education in the countries of Central Europe and even in the former Soviet Union, is in fine form. All the protagonists came together in 1997 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to take stock of what Tempus has achieved to date - and look ahead to its future agenda.

In 1990, five countries participated in the programme. Today they number 26, including the Tacis countries. November's conference of Tempus representatives was a major event for the programme. It was the first occasion when all the participants in the Tempus, Phare and Tacis programmes were able to come together. In addition to representatives of the European Commission, also present were university rectors, the coordinators of the Tempus national agencies, Tacis and Phare information managers and education experts. During these two days, participants were able to appraise the work done since the programme was launched and set priorities for the future.

Three groups, three strategies

So what are the results to date? Tempus has generally contributed to the reform of higher education in the countries of Central Europe and of the former Soviet Union. It has provided a favourable framework for mobility for more than 51,000 university teachers and 27,000 students.

In its new phase it is evolving from an assistance programme to an instrument geared to cooperation. In this respect, three groups of countries may be identified, each with their specific priorities.

For the Phare associate countries which are candidates for European Union membership (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic countries), the emphasis is on preparations for membership at the administrative, social and economic level and on

preparing for progressive participation in the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe programmes and their complementarity with Tempus.

For the non-associate Phare countries (Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - FYROM - and Bosnia-Herzegovina), the recent arrival of Tempus signals participation in the wider restructuring in these countries. It is the source of hope and new dialogue.

Finally, for the Tacis countries the presence of Tempus should in future permit the consolidation of limited but lasting links between the European Union and countries as close as the Russian Federation and as distant as Mongolia.

Throughout the two conference days there was lively debate on the key themes, namely: the university and its environment, lifelong learning, higher education and civil society, and education and citizenship. The main thrust of future action clearly emerged from these debates: while remaining committed to its initial aims, the programme will in future contribute to the development and restructuring of society as a whole. Yet new questions are already taking shape. Which will be the next countries to join Tempus? And what new directions will the Tempus programme take after the year 2000?

TOP results for 1997

TOP (Tempus Output Promotion) is the name given to the information policy launched by Tempus in 1995. This policy is designed to allow all the programme's project promoters to benefit in full from the working priorities of each State.

In 1996, studies were drawn up on the five principal orientations of previous years: student mobility, university-enterprise cooperation, university management, national reforms and mutual benefits (EU - CEECs). Three practical guides have just been published: two of them take a deeper look at the 1996 studies (university-enterprise cooperation and university management) while the third looks at the publication of results and the durability of projects.

Take the example of a university which wants to cooperate with an enterprise. How can it go about this? What links must be established? What procedure must be followed? The appropriate guide will easily answer these questions.

The three guides will be available on the Internet and may also be used by the Tacis countries, or even by the European Union, provided of course certain adaptations are made. These information and visibility tools will provide a useful basis for defining the new orientations of Tempus II bis (1998-2000).



Three candles on the birthday cake

The European Training Foundation

In early 1998 the European Training Foundation will be celebrating the first three years of its existence. Time to take stock of progress to date and to set priorities for the future.

Further information

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E Mail: info@etf.it - Web: http://www.etf.it

The European Training Foundation is one of the agencies set up by the European Union in the early 1990s. Their aim is to fulfill specific tasks of a largely technical nature.

Given the need for the Phare and Tacis countries to improve qualifications in order to facilitate their transition to the market economy, the European Council decided in 1990 to create an agency to be charged with this specific aspect of reform in these countries.

Following the Council's decision to base the head office in Turin (in October 1993), preparations began in 1994. In January 1995 the founding regulations entered into force and the ETF was ready to get down to work, concentrating on two elements:

- the development of projects to contribute to the reform of the vocational training and management training sectors in the Phare and Tacis countries;
- the implementation of the Phare and Tacis programmes in these sectors.

In so doing, the ETF also had to slot into existing Community policy towards the Phare and Tacis countries in these sectors. It was also charged with providing the Commission with technical assistance in implementing the Tempus programme.

The principal successes

So what has it achieved during these first three years? Last July the Commission submitted an evaluation report on the first three activities of the European Training Foundation¹. While stressing the "significant value added" it has provided in managing the Phare and Tacis projects, the Commission clearly proposed that in future ETF should be able to concentrate more on its initial, more conceptual missions.

This report cites three examples illustrating the excellent quality of the foundation's work in the vocational training sector.

The first of these examples concerns the observatory. Of key importance to the ETF, this gathers and analyses data on the development, needs and priorities of vocational training mechanisms in the partner countries (Phare and Tacis). The foundation coordinates a decentralized network of "national observatories" set up in the countries in question,

in cooperation with the various national authorities. Turin played its organizing role to the full, assuming responsibility for training national observatory staff. Today this network is up and running, serving as the basis for giving advice on highly strategic matters. The observatory data have made it possible to make a precise evaluation of vocational training in the associated countries, an essential inventory in preparing them for future membership of the European Union.

The multilateral approach

A second example is the way, since 1995, the ETF has developed an ambitious programme of human resources development. In 11 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a dozen key players in vocational training (senior civil servants, social partners, trainers, representatives from the private sector) were selected for personalized training in what were considered to be sensitive areas. On completion of their training, these "trainees" became active correspondents for the foundation, working together within a network dynamic.

Finally, there is the pilot project launched by the ETF in north-west Russia. This too is rich in potential. Its aim is to promote vocational training reforms in four specific sectors: electronics and telecommunications, tourism, transport and the timber market. The project's originality lies in its distinct multinational identity. A number of EU countries decided to become directly involved in this action, with Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium (the Flemish Region) provided financial aid amounting to ECU 1.5 million for 1996 and 1997.

In its 1997 work programme², which sets the priorities for the next three years, the ETF proposes to increase its activities in this more conceptual area. These actions will also adapt to the new international context. In this respect, particular priority will be given to the associated countries, which are in urgent need of a transfer of the *acquis communautaire* in the field of vocational training. At the same time, there are others who are considering widening the foundation's field of action to include non-member Mediterranean countries – another major challenge.

The objectives

The European Training Foundation was set up to promote cooperation and the coordination of assistance in the field of vocational training reform in Central and Eastern Europe, the New Independent States and Mongolia.

Its main objectives are:

- to contribute to the reform of education and vocational training systems in the partner countries
- to promote effective cooperation in this field between the European Union and the partner countries
- to help coordinate the international assistance of donors
- to provide the European Commission with technical assistance in implementing the Tempus programme.

How it works

At the beginning of this year the ETF employed a staff of nearly 150 to manage a 1997 budget of ECU 15.4 million.

The agency's strategy is determined by its governing board at its two annual meetings. This board consists of representatives of the 15 EU Member States and the Commission. The chairman is DG XXII director-general Thomas O'Dwyer.

At the beginning of each year, the board sets the budget for the coming year, following the opinion of the European Parliament on the global amount. The annual programme for the next year is finalized around October. Work on this continues throughout the year, in consultation with an advisory board of 92 members – two experts from each of the 26 partner countries, 30 experts from the Member States, and 10 experts from other international bodies. The final strategy is therefore the result of extensive preparations and a great diversity of opinion. The 1998 work programme came out in November 1997, following the meeting of the governing board at the end of October.

¹ Report to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee concerning the European Training Foundation, submitted by the European Commission on 18 July 1997 (COM(97)379 final).

² European Training Foundation: 1997 Work Programme, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

Transatlantic cooperation, the '97 season

Since 1995, DG XXII for the European Union and the Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education for the United States have been cooperating in the field of higher education and vocational training. Projects funded by this bipolar programme must be primarily focused on students and involve at least three European partners and three US partners.

In September 1997, 12 new cooperation projects were selected. These will receive a total of ECU 1,356 million over a three-year period. The 1997 projects cover a wide range of subjects, in the economic, technological and social fields. Some subjects are notable for their originality, such as the project on new developments in the bicycle, another highlighting an integrated approach to health care in the community, and yet another on cooperation to promote a journalism free of any kind of nationalist stereotype.

Finally, this cooperation presents a good balance in terms of the organizations involved. The new partnerships bring together not only major universities but also institutions of higher education and more specialized universities.

Agri-foodstuffs without barriers

This project is aimed at reducing barriers to increased trade between the United States and Europe in the agri-foodstuffs sector. The partners are seeking to involve students of many different nationalities. This broad representation will allow results to be disseminated not just in the United States and Europe, but also in Africa, Asia and the Far East.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester - UK
 - **United States:** Arizona State University

Transnational journalism

There are signs of growing nationalism almost everywhere in the world. At the same time, journalism has a growing international dimension. Seven schools of journalism propose a common training module for the profession as part of a transnational or transcultural approach, while respecting the diversity of individual cultures.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** The Danish School of Journalism Aarhus - DK
 - **United States:** Ohio University

Management of coastlines and oceans

This project provides for exchanges of know-how and practical training in coastline and ocean management and fishing. It involves six university partners together with a number of private or public partners specialized in questions of maritime policy. The European funding will allow the European partners to join the existing partnership which is financed under the NAFTA (US-Canada-Mexico) agreements.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Universidad de Sevilla - E
 - **United States:** University of Delaware

The new realities of international trade

Today's international trade takes place in a very different context than in the past, with increasing recourse to advanced communication techniques. This project, run by a long-standing consortium of European and US universities, seeks to "open up the classroom doors to these new trading practices".

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** University College Galway - IRL
 - **United States:** Montana State University - Bozeman

The economic importance of geography

The management and analysis of geographical data is of real interest to companies. Hence the need to develop vocational qualifications which match the profiles sought. Universities offer a wide range of courses in this advanced field. Nevertheless, the course content and methods are in need of improvement, while at the same time placing the emphasis on common curricular developments. This project plans to develop distance teaching modules combining the Internet with direct exchanges between students. It receives additional support from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** University of Salzburg - AU
 - **United States:** University of Southern California

Health care in the widest sense

This project will give medical students the opportunity to follow a 4-week training course at a hospital (or in out-patient services).

The original feature is that each student will be sponsored by a student at the host establishment. After his period of training, the student will present a case study which takes account of health care in the widest sense, going beyond the strictly therapeutic framework. The case studies will then be debated between the school partners using videoconference techniques.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Ludwigs Maximilian Uni, München - D
 - **United States:** Harvard Medical School

Marketing managers and engineers, together

Future marketing managers and engineers take separate university courses. But such compartmentalization is no longer what companies need. In order to improve the quality of their products, companies need people with skills in both these areas.

This project is intended to develop teaching modules covering the fields of commerce and engineering. Particular attention will also be paid to producing multilingual teaching aids. One such idea is to produce a training game based on a simulation of an international company, to which students will have access via the Internet.

The following partners receive additional aid from the National Science Foundation (NSF):

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Universidade de Coimbra - P
 - **United States:** Clemson University

Veterinary medicine and global trade

The international meat trade has seen spectacular growth over the past few years. As a result, vets are facing new responsibilities in some very sensitive areas, such as detecting disease in animals, issuing certificates, quality control on imported meat, etc. This project seeks to develop joint training modules in order to better prepare future vets to meet these new challenges. European funding will allow European partners to join the existing partnership which is funded under the NAFTA agreements.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences - SW
 - **United States:** Washington State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

Information science: and the students?

Information science programmes circulate freely on both sides of the Atlantic. By contrast, there are few exchanges between the United States and Europe involving students taking first degree university courses. This project is designed to correct this deficiency. The partners stress that mutual recognition of study periods spent abroad would help boost international trade.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Université d'Evry Val d'Essonne - F
 - **United States:** University of Houston

Community health organization

This project brings together training schools for nurses. The aim is to increase students' knowledge in the specific field of community health planning, a discipline which involves the study of health needs in connection with other economic, social and cultural components of life in society.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Savonlinna Institute of Health Care - Fin
 - **United States:** University of Utah

The bicycle: rediscovering a means of transport

Sixty science and technology students are to study the bicycle in all its facets: scientific, technological and cultural. This will culminate in the production of a bilingual CD-Rom describing the cultural, technological and scientific aspects of this mode of transport. Every year, two training workshops will be attended by the students, teachers and experts involved in the project in order to study and test a joint bicycle project.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** University of Amsterdam - NL
 - **United States:** Calamazoo College, MI

Building bridges between vocational training and higher education

This project is designed to establish better links between vocational training courses and qualifications on the one hand, and higher education courses and qualifications on the other. This should make it easier for students (especially those from a deprived background) to transfer from one system to the other. The project has one year's prefinancing which should enable it to expand its partnership base. The European Commission wants to encourage this initiative and may decide to select this project at the time of a future submission.

- Coordinators
- **European Union:** Handsworth College, Birmingham - UK
 - **United States:** Harold Washington College, IL

A starting point



Listening to young people at the European Commission

More information, less bureaucracy, wider access to European programmes. These are the key messages conveyed by a hundred young people at a meeting organized by the European Commission in Brussels on 7 and 8 October. During a face-to-face encounter, the first of its kind, Commissioner Edith Cresson was able to hear for herself what they had to say. She undertook to develop deeper dialogue with the young beneficiaries of Community programmes.

The Brussels meeting was a notable event. For the first time, Edith Cresson gave more than 100 young people who had participated in a European programme (Mobility of Researchers, Youth for Europe, European Voluntary Service, Leonardo da Vinci, Tempus and Socrates) the chance to engage in direct dialogue. The exercise was designed to gather opinions and proposals at the time when minds are concentrated on the content of the new generation of Community programmes in these areas.

Fears that the meeting would turn into an academic seminar soon proved unfounded. Officials, guests and other Commission staff immediately showed that they had come to listen, limiting their interventions to a strict minimum. This made it easier for the young people to speak their minds at the various workshops. They had come determined to have their say and to take an active part in the proceedings. The mix of criticisms and constructive proposals during the "encounter" between these young people and Edith Cresson on the second day, following the workshops, was typical of the lively, open and direct approach which characterized the whole event. The young participants subjected the European Commissioner to a barrage of questions to which she replied with conviction. The general message was a call for more information, less bureaucracy and, above all, much wider access to Community programmes, which they all agreed must not be reserved for a minority or an elite.

Some of the participants regretted that the meeting had not been long enough to enable them to devote more time to proposals. Others expressed the fear that the meeting would prove to be a one-off event, designed solely to ease the official conscience. But in addition to the variety of words, styles and attitudes, everyone appreciated the initiative and expressed the desire for direct and regular dialogue between the European Commission and young people. One proposal in this area was for a greater role for pupil and student associations.

Message received, confirmed Edith Cresson, as she invited the young people to also put pressure on their national governments: to get things done, the Commission cannot act alone, but needs the support of the individual Member States. Finally, the Commissioner undertook to improve and deepen the dialogue with young people, by repeating face-to-face meetings of this kind with beneficiaries of Community programmes.

for increased dialogue

Report

Education and training *at the heart of the debate*

Wednesday 7 October. Following the meeting's official opening, participants split up into three working parties. Le Magazine followed a group of young people wearing a blue badge: "education and training". How do these young people view the Community programmes? What are their criticisms, and their suggestions?

There is a brief moment of hesitation as the participants enter the auditorium where the "education and training" workshop is to be held. The organizers have laid out little signs on the tables, giving the names of the countries. But the young people are reluctant to sit at the designated places, taking a mischievous pleasure in mixing them all up. The initial note is anti-conformist. A healthy sign perhaps?

No simultaneous interpreting facilities have been laid out in the room. It doesn't matter: everyone will speak in English. The decision comes naturally. John Wyles, a former Financial Times journalist, who is chairing this round table, sets out the subject of the debates. European Commission staff then briefly present the programmes for which they are responsible: Tempus, Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates. Throughout the ensuing discussions, the European officials remain a discreet presence, limiting their interventions to correcting facts or contributing an element of useful information.

Information is a problem

Kathleen, a young British student who went to Sweden to participate in a Leonardo da Vinci project, starts things off. "When I arrived in the country, I felt very isolated," she says. Ciep, who teaches English in the Netherlands, went abroad with Socrates. He makes a similar comment: "The reception on arrival left a lot to be desired, I received no clear information." Information – or rather the lack of it – is a problem. This opinion is shared by many participants. "There was a lack of communication at every stage, before and during my stay," explains the British student.

A French student who participated in an Erasmus project deplores the lack of project promotion by her university: "We have 50 Erasmus places, but only half of them were taken up by students as they received no proper information about them." She goes on to add that she "was poorly advised on the procedures for participation". Bert, a Belgian, speaks of his experience with a Leonardo da Vinci project: "My school told me where I was to go just one week before my departure. I had to make all the arrangements in just a few days."

A brief survey by John Wyles confirms the situation. Of the 30 young people present, only two received a brochure or any other written information on the programmes. It also seems you need personal contacts in order to get a place on them. "That creates inequalities among young people," observes one young Austrian.

The role of student associations

But who is to blame? The finger is pointed at the national agencies in particular, who are accused of being too inactive. Also criticized are the programme coordinators in the schools, who apparently often have an excessive workload and are themselves sometimes ill informed. Generally, the information does not seem to be effectively channelled through the national authorities. The Tempus students feel they are in the same boat. Katri, from Estonia, reckons that "the information gets through to the officials but not to the students".

But there are solutions to these problems. Gaëlle from France and Joachim from Germany believe that some of the responsibility for providing information should be delegated to student associations in the field. "Our organizations," observes Bert, "could also take care of reception arrangements for students visiting the particular university."

The financial question

The young people all agree that they drew undeniable benefit from their period abroad, both professionally and personally. "My stay in Ireland, through Tempus, really opened my mind," admits Vesselina, a Bulgarian. "I returned home much more tolerant of other people," adds one Spanish girl. "It is important not just to know the language of another country, but its culture too," commented one Finnish participant.

But they also had to overcome a number of obstacles in order to benefit from mobility, and first and foremost financial ones. This was a very sensitive issue.

Viktor, a Hungarian, explained his concern at his country's imminent inclusion in Socrates. When this happens, all the mobility grants made available under Tempus will be discontinued, to be replaced by similar grants under Socrates. But the amounts will be reduced, as Tempus operates a more generous system in this area. Viktor fears that this will present a serious obstacle to participation in Community programmes by young Hungarians, the level of which is already very low.

Some participants complained of late payments under Leonardo da Vinci. With Socrates, it is the amount of the grants which is deemed too low, although views vary on this from one country to another. One interesting point to emerge was how some students managed to raise additional funds. Emmanuelle, in France, received support from a local authority. While Horst, an Austrian, was able to persuade companies to sponsor the course, by organizing a press conference with a group of friends.

The workshop participants were all examples of young people who had been able to overcome the obstacles. But what about others? "The aim should be to enable more young people to participate," stressed Joachim. "We should be able to talk to those who have not been able to experience European mobility."

A European agency for the mobility of young people?

Other problems were raised. One of which was recognition of a period of training spent abroad. Under Erasmus this is the rule - but in practice it is not always applied. German establishments seem to be particularly reluctant in this respect.

Several Leonardo students gave unfortunate examples of the welcome reserved for young trainees. It seems that some employers tend to view these young people solely as "cheap labour". To correct this abuse, one Danish girl suggests "increased checks" and "informing the student of the exact place of training before he or she sets off abroad."

After six hours, the time came to wind up the discussion. The chairman, John Wyles, called for specific recommendations to be addressed to the European Commission. The ideas again came thick and fast. Some suggested more direct relations between the Commission and young people. In the event of a problem, they would then be able to quickly take the matter up at European level. Others, thinking along the same lines, suggested setting up a European agency for European mobility, assisted by student and pupil associations. One clear conclusion is that the participants want to be increasingly heard and to be seen as "active users" rather than "passive consumers" of European programmes.

The youth conference in brief

124 young people attended this meeting, which was jointly organized by four Directorate-Generals of the European Commission: the Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), Science, Research and Development (DG XII), Telecommunications, Information Market and Exploitation of Research (DG XIII) and Education, Training and Youth (DG XXII). Three workshops were held simultaneously at the Centre Borschette in Brussels, on the afternoon of Wednesday 7 October and the morning of Thursday 8 October:

- the "research and innovation" workshop
- the "education and training" workshop
- the "Youth for Europe" and "European Voluntary Service" workshop.

On Thursday 8 October at 3 p.m. all the participants gathered in the Commission's press room at the Breydel building, where European Commissioner Edith Cresson was waiting to meet them. Each workshop appointed one young spokesperson to summarize the group's discussions. This was followed by a questions and answers session between Edith Cresson and the participants.



Who are they? What do they want?

Eurobarometer interviews young people in the run-up to the year 2000

A recent Eurobarometer opinion poll of young people (aged 15-24) in the 15 European Union countries provides a contrasting picture which overturns many stereotypes. The younger generation may be individualistic, but it is also capable of showing solidarity and tolerance, is tuned into TV, aware of the new information technologies, committed to European mobility, increasingly polyglot, and deeply concerned about unemployment...

The "young Europeans" opinion poll was carried out by Eurobarometer between 20 April and 7 June 1997, interviewing 9,400 young people aged between 15 and 24 in the 15 EU countries. The sample per country was 600, with the exception of Germany where 1,200 young people were interviewed (divided equally between the former West Germany and the former East Germany), the United Kingdom where 800 were interviewed, and Luxembourg where 200 were interviewed. The poll was commissioned by the European Commission's DG XXII and coordinated by INRA/Europe (European Coordination Office) in Brussels.

This poll of young Europeans follows three similar polls carried out by Eurobarometer in 1982, 1987 and 1990. The first included the 10 European Union countries of the time, and the latter two the 12 Member States. These first three polls included a large common question base, a factor which facilitated comparisons and the highlighting of trends.

Modified questions

The questions were radically changed for this fourth poll. This was either in order to delve deeper into certain subjects or to cover new topics, such as solidarity between generations and European citizenship.

This new poll is not therefore comparable to the earlier ones, but it does convey the opinion of the young generation on key problems of concern to society as a whole.

Does the "juvenis europeanus" exist?

How are young Europeans living on the eve of the year 2000? And how do they view the European Union? Lesson number one: Eurobarometer shows that the replies of young people differ greatly depending on the country or group of countries to which they belong. This applies in particular to language skills, attitudes to foreigners, concern for old people and relations with the new information technologies. The greatest caution must therefore be exercised when interpreting European averages.

Another lesson is that this mosaic cannot be interpreted as a kind of national entrenchment. The situations are far from fixed. The dividing lines between countries or groups of countries differ and change depending on the questions asked. The Eurobarometer 1997 figures show many received ideas of a north/south divide in Europe to be wrong. Close inspection reveals a situation which is much less clearcut than that. There are no European stereotypes or standard models to which young Europeans conform.

The poll nevertheless reveals – by asking the same questions in all 15 EU countries – some pronounced trends. Young people have some clear messages for national and European politicians.

Individualistic, but capable of solidarity

Nearly half those polled belong to no kind of organization or association. But, although individualistic, young Europeans are not self-centred. Evidence of this is found in their sensitivity and openness to people with a handicap or of a different race, or the sense of solidarity towards the elderly. Generous in spirit, they are only rarely involved in social, humanitarian or political activities within group structures.

Another striking feature is the importance given to sport as a leisure activity. This far outstrips any cultural activity. Young Europeans also spend a great deal of their free time watching television. Logically enough, it is through the media (rather than youth movements, public bodies or European institutions, in that order) that they say they obtain information about Europe.

Languages: marked progress

Just 28.7 % of young Europeans confess that they are unable to converse in a language other than their mother tongue. This is marked progress. In 1990, the figure was 40 % (compared to 64 % among adults). This is all the more encouraging as language skills are seen by young people as a major factor in boosting their chances of finding a job.

European mobility: they are committed to it

More than half of young Europeans (57 %) had visited another European Union country during the two years prior to the poll. Although it is not easy to compare this with the results of earlier polls, it does seem to indicate greater European mobility. In any event, it is a subject to which they attach great importance. For these young people Europe means above all (in terms of their hopes) the opportunity of "going where they want". When asked about their understanding of citizenship, the first thing they mention is the fact of "working, living and studying in no matter what other Member State". In this respect, they say they are relatively pleased with what the EU has achieved: increased opportunities to "travel, study, work and live in Europe" (47.7 % express this view) are seen as the principal achievement.

Employment: the top priority

Employment is certainly the number one aspiration of young Europeans. For example, 65.1 % of young people say that the absence of a stable job is the main reason for being hesitant to have children. They believe that jobs should be the top priority for the European Union, even above the environment.

Education and training rank fourth in their list of priorities for Community action. Surprising? Perhaps – but this should also be seen in relation to the fact that these same young people believe that a "good general education" is "the most useful element" in finding a job.

New information technologies: virtual or real?

Young people show a keen interest in the new information and communication technologies, which they see as one of the key factors in access to work. Research and development in this field are ranked third in the order of European priorities, before housing, the fight against crime and consumer protection.

When asked about their own skills in using these new tools, half of the young Europeans admitted that they do not use a computer, the Internet, CD-Rom or e-mail...

Eloquent numbers

The first part of the survey provides a picture of the everyday lives of young people. Some questions relate to behaviour, others to their opinions on a number of sensitive subjects. Section 12 questions young people on what they expect from the European Union. Here are some extracts from the data gathered.

The everyday lives of young people

Membership of organizations

47.6 % of young Europeans belong to no organization, whether religious, political, social, cultural, artistic or a sports club. The other half can be broken down into two groups: 27.6 % are members of sports clubs and the others, with results below 10 %, are members of other kinds of associations. The lowest European averages are recorded by human rights movements (2 %) and consumer associations (1 %).

Those countries in which most young people are members of associations or other organizations are Sweden (82.2 %) and Denmark (77.2 %). The countries where the rate of membership is the lowest are Greece (35.6 %) and Spain (37.7 %).

Leisure activities

What do young people do in their free time? Meeting friends tops the list (73.4 %), followed by listening to music (63.7 %) and watching television (62.3 %). Half say they practise a sport (49.7 %). Other cultural activities include reading (40.7 %), the cinema/theatre and concerts (37.6 %).

Solidarity with old people

35.9 % say they would not let their parents go to live in an old folk's home and 34 % believe their generation "has a responsibility to elderly people". Just 5.3 % say that they would not like to look after elderly members of their family. Feelings of responsibility and solidarity therefore seem to dominate.

Closer analysis provides a more complete picture. 51.8 % of young Danes (the highest percentage) and 51.1 % of Swedes believe they have a responsibility to elderly people. This compares with just 22.3 % in Belgium and 25.2 % in Austria. A rather contradictory picture emerges in the Netherlands, where a high percentage of young people (47.4 %) feel a sense of responsibility while at the same time 17.7 %, which is three times the European average, say they do not want to be directly responsible for looking after their own elderly parents. 55 % of Greeks do not intend to leave their parents to grow old in a home, compared to 16.3 % (the lowest percentage) for young Swedes.

Tolerance

This subject attracted particular attention in this 1997 European Year Against Racism.

The young people were first asked to state whether or not they felt uncomfortable in regard to a particular category of person: no category, people of different nationality, of another race, of a different religion, of another culture, physically disabled, mentally handicapped, homosexuals, people "who are not dressed like you", people "who have much more or much less money than you", drug addicts, alcoholics, homeless people, others...

48 % of young Europeans feel at ease in the company of all these people. Drug addicts (28.1 %), alcoholics (20.1 %), homosexuals (13.3 %), the homeless (12.8 %) are the people who make them most uncomfortable, compared with 3.2 % for foreigners.

Again, there are sometimes surprising national variations. Young Spaniards are apparently the most open, with 71.9 % of them not feeling uncomfortable with any category. Young Belgians are the "most uncomfortable" in regard to foreigners (17.4 %, five times the Community average), but are slightly more tolerant than the European average when it comes to disabled people and homosexuals.

Foreigners

A series of opinions were then put to the young people on the subject of persons of different nationality living in their country. 27.5 % of young Europeans believe there are "too many" foreigners. Three groups of countries can be identified with reference to this central figure.

A first group, consisting of Belgium, Germany, Austria and Greece, is more "anti-foreigner" than the others. The two highest percentages are found in Belgium (41 % of young people believe there are too many foreigners) and Germany (39.6 %).

The second (most tolerant) group consists of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It is in Finland (44.8 %) and Sweden (32.5 %) that most young people say they "are pleased that there are foreigners living in their country" (European average: 14.7 %).

Finally, there is a third group of "more moderate" countries where opinions are less clearcut in either direction: Spain, France, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

Sex, equal opportunities

The poll shows that young people are very open on this subject. 86.7 % of young Europeans are in favour of sexual relations before marriage.

51.7 % believe homosexuals should be allowed to marry or enter into a contract of civil union. There is no discernible difference between northern and southern Europe on this subject. 80.2 % of young Dutch people (the highest percentage) are in favour of this right, compared to just 43.4 % of young Germans (below the Community average). 76.3 % of young Spaniards approve of this idea, compared to just 39.7 % of young Italians (the lowest percentage after Ireland with 36.1 %).

Another significant opinion concerns the clergy. 43.2 % prefer the job to be done by a man. In other words, a majority of them do not care whether it is done by a man or a woman.

Languages

71.3 % of young Europeans claim they are able "to speak sufficiently well to participate in a conversation" in a language other than their mother tongue. The significance of this figure is revealed in comparison to the results of earlier polls. In 1990, 60 % of young people claimed this ability. This is a marked increase. However, the three new members of the European Union show much better results than the European average in this area: 97.4 % of young Swedes speak another language, 96 % of young Finns and 68.1 % of young Austrians.

The three languages most widely spoken (apart from the mother tongue) are 1. English (53.7 %); 2. French (19.9 %); 3. German (11 %).

Spanish (a new phenomenon compared to the 1990 poll) is the language most young people would like to learn (23.1 %). This is followed by French (21.7 %) and English (19.8 %).

Employment

What are the most useful skills for finding a job? 10 proposals were put to the young people, with significant results. The top three are as follows: 1. General education (ranked first by 42.8 % of young people); 2. Language skills (40.4 %); 3. Communication skills (37.6 %).

Information technologies

53.7 % of young Europeans do not use any information technology "at least once a week". This means not a computer/PC, not the Internet, not a CD-Rom, not e-mail.

14.2 % of young Europeans use a CD-Rom at least once a week and 6.6 % the Internet.

As is often the case, there are major differences between groups of countries. Young people who use none of these systems are found primarily in Greece (77 %), Spain (63 %) and France (60 %). The highest proportion of users are primarily concentrated north of a median running from Belgium to Austria. The three countries with the most young Internet users are Sweden (31.8 %), Finland (28.3 %) and Denmark (15.4 %). Belgium, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy and Portugal all lie significantly below the Community average (6.6 %).

Opinions

Some clear opinions emerge in regard to a number of major problems of society.

- A majority of young Europeans are opposed to the death penalty (64.2 %).
- A majority state that they are in favour of "imposing a chemical or physical treatment of paedophiles" (68.6 %).
- A majority are opposed to compulsory military service (66.9 %).
- A majority are in favour of compulsory AIDS testing (60.9 %).

Young people and the European Union

The European Union

A series of positive and negative statements were put to the young people to test the way they saw the European Union. These are the statements they thought best described the EU: 1. Free movement (34.8 %); 2. A way of creating a better future (34.2 %); 3. A means of improving the economic situation in Europe (34 %).

The negative statements met with only limited approval: a lot of bureaucracy (14.4 %); a loss of cultural diversity (12 %).

This trend was confirmed when the question was put in another way. Asked about the principal contributions of the European Union, the young people pointed to two areas:

1. Easier to travel, study, work and live throughout Europe (47.7 %); 2. The euro as the single currency (41.8 %).

European citizenship

For young Europeans, European citizenship clearly means: 1. To be able to work anywhere in the EU (62.4 %); 2. To be able to live permanently anywhere in the Union (51.5 %); 3. To be able to study in any EU country (45.7 %). Also of note is the good score (34.6 %) for a more social proposal: "access to health and social protection services throughout Europe". The other proposals met with much lower approval percentages.

The priorities

What are the areas to which European action should award priority? Once again, there are some strong messages. Employment is the clear first (75.7 %), followed by environmental protection (60.2 %). The third priority comes as a relative surprise: research and development on the new technologies (54.4 %), preceding education and training (45.6 %), which comes fourth.

The same message is confirmed when the question is formulated differently. "What are the fields in which the European Union should not intervene at all?" The lowest percentages are recorded for employment (2.3 %), the environment (3.4 %) and research and development (4.3 %).

Information sources

How do these young people find information on the subject of their "rights and obligations in today's Europe"? Out of 11 sources proposed by Eurobarometer, the European institutions come... last (7.2 %). The sources of European information favoured by young Europeans are: 1. Television (62.2 %); 2. School/university (48.4 %); 3. Newspapers/magazines (47.8 %)...



DG XXII

takes over the Sorbonne

...at the 12th World Youth Days in Paris

Paris played host to the 12th World Youth Days. Last August, *The Journées Mondiales de la Jeunesse* brought together more than 500,000 young people from all countries in defence of a shared belief and ideal.

The two previous World Youth Days had been held in the USA and the Philippines. But in Paris the meeting acquired a specifically European dimension. The event attracted young people to the French capital principally from EU countries, but also in considerable numbers from Central and Eastern Europe and even the former Soviet Union.

Among the many Paris meetings, one series of debates held at Sorbonne University was perhaps particularly noteworthy. The central theme was: "What kind of person and what kind of society are we preparing in higher education?" The event was meticulously organized by the Mission of Catholic Students of France, which brings together some 250 chaplaincies and more than 20,000 young students.

Ten round tables were organized over a two-day period, attracting large audiences. The high point was a major symposium held by higher education specialists and key figures from various sectors of society.

The European Commission's DG XXII was able to set up its information stand on the Community programmes in the hall of the Sorbonne (see above) where it attracted the attention of hundreds of young people who attended the round tables and symposium.

Some showed a keen interest in EU education and training programmes of which they had previously been unaware. Others had already participated in the programmes, mainly through Erasmus exchanges, and wanted to find out more about other possibilities, such as Leonardo da Vinci or European Voluntary Service.

Most of the visitors were young women, aged between 20 and 26. Young people from Eastern Europe, mainly Poland and Romania, and Southern Europe (Spain, Italy and Portugal) were also in the majority. They wanted to go abroad to study or train. They believed this would give them the best chance of subsequently finding a job using their qualifications.

It was not always easy to answer their questions. Such as one put by Paula, who is studying chemistry at Madrid University. "I know all about what Europe can offer in the area of education, training and youth," she considered. "Unfortunately my university does not want to participate in Community projects. What should I do?"

The Italians had some criticisms to make. Gabriella, 26, a philosophy student at the Naples Sapienza, did not mince her words, accusing the Italian universities of failing to respect the rules of the game. "Many bright students want to participate in exchanges, such as the ones organized by Erasmus, but they are never going to be able to study abroad." Because, she complains, certain students have connections which they use to gain approval. "How can I appeal if I find I am not selected for an invalid reason?", she asks. She was not alone in making such complaints. This raises a question of principle: how can young people be given more equal opportunities in gaining access to Community programmes?

European Voluntary Service

European Voluntary Service was launched as a pilot action in 1996/97. It is aimed at young people aged between 18 and 25, giving them the opportunity to go abroad for a period of 6 to 12 months to take part in a project of benefit to the community at large. They thus perform a tangible act of solidarity and active citizenship. They improve their personal range of skills and their chances of making a good start in life.

"Café au lait, siouplaît, canapé"...

The Organisation Européenne des associations pour l'Insertion et le Logement de la jeunesse¹ (European Organization for the Integration and Housing of Young People) works with young people from deprived backgrounds, bringing together non-governmental organizations from nine European Union countries. OEIL is an active participant in European Voluntary Service. Its chairman, Charles-Antoine Arnaud, gives a personal account of his experiences of the EVS pilot action.

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Café au lait, siouplaît, canapé... (coffee with milk, please, sofa!) ...It was with these three words that Manuel left Madrid for Belfort in France. He knew it wasn't enough. But he also knew that air conditioning does not sell too well in the winter and that he would soon find himself unemployed in Spain. And he had heard of the possibility of spending six months in another country.

Since he left school at 16, Manuel had been in and out of work, never being able to travel or find the break he hoped for in the music business, which was his dream. Setting off for Belfort was an opportunity to "have a bit of a change", as he modestly put it, and perhaps also to embark on a voyage of self-discovery. It isn't easy when you come from a large family, living in an outer suburb of Madrid and with very little money in the house.

In Belfort, Manuel has become a stage technician for a rock group, living out his dream of working in the music business. After a year's voluntary service, his training as a lighting technician will be finished and he will speak fluent French. He laughs now as he looks back at his first two months when it was so difficult to understand the people around him. When he returns to Spain he will try to persuade his friends to go on a similar adventure, but doubts if they will have the courage. He knows that he was in a rut before and that these 12 months have changed his life.

School abandoned too early, dreams shattered or destroyed, no work and a sense of utter uselessness. Solitude, silence and withdrawal. A lack of self-confidence, fear of further failure, rejection and exclusion... words which conjure up all too readily and too brutally the reality of life for Salah, Lora, Luke, Teresa, Eduardo, Beatrix, Derek, Macarena or Raik. They come from Potsdam or Pordenone, they are future long-term unemployed or already former alcoholics. They have severed all links with their family or have been in trouble with the police. They are "non-national residents" or "nationals without a residence", and their families are either too numerous or absent altogether... They combine all the handicaps, all the disadvantages, all the bad behaviour, all the undesirable acquaintances which characterize young people from a deprived background, or in any event those "who encounter most difficulties in participating in the programmes" offered by the European Union.

Tests of character

More than 70 of them have already set off as volunteers thanks to the ENVOL project, a pilot programme launched by the OEIL organization under European Voluntary Service.

Some of them failed to make it to the end of their contract. Such as Kenneth, who made the most of his voluntary service near Madrid to find himself a girlfriend and a job in an Irish bar. Or, more sadly, Dirk. He had not touched a drop of alcohol for six months, but the temptation was simply too great in this small Andalusian town so famed for its brandy. And also Corinna, who wanted to get away from her mother for a while but finally couldn't bear the separation. Yet these experiences should not be seen as failures, but as character building. Corinna is now more aware of what binds her to her mother. And Dirk has learned a new welding technique and is taking Spanish lessons: he wants to set off again.

As to others, they want to stay on longer. In Dublin, Sonia arrived not knowing a word of English to work in a café-cum-restaurant for the homeless. The people who ran it feared she might find it too much, what with the language problem and the inevitable process of adjustment. But she found other ways of communicating, with the face, hands, and drawings.

Her enthusiasm, generosity and simplicity did the rest. Today the customers and staff alike want her to stay on. What will they do without her laughter and energy? She is happy to be there, to help and contribute something of her own culture... but she now wants to return to her studies, which she abandoned several years ago.

There are so many examples we could give: the reconstruction of villages near Seville, ecological recycling works near Hanover, reintroducing olive-growing in Carpentras, helping disabled people in the north of Venice, repairing and converting a boat as a reception centre for young people in Bridgewater, and many more. The message is the same everywhere: these young people can overcome difficulties and contribute skills and enthusiasm to projects which need them.

A necessary preparation

But it is not always easy to get such good results. The young people had to be prepared, by giving them more confidence in their own abilities, showing them how to communicate without knowing the language, and assuring them of their ability to deal with unfamiliar situations. The host projects also had to be prepared. We had to explain to them that not all young people could be expected to speak another language and that they therefore needed an activity which would give them time to get to know a new environment and another culture. They also had to be shown that what may be seen as a disadvantage in one country may not be one in another (and can sometimes even be an advantage). And finally, they had to realise that the best way of helping a young person is to allow him or her to make themselves useful and show what they can do. And that this is even more true in the case of so-called "underprivileged" young people.

To allow all young people to participate in European Voluntary Service, you have to pay particular attention to those who, for all kinds of reasons, risk being unable to benefit from European youth policy. Policies to help underprivileged young people are determined by the individual Member States and thus vary from one country to another. Even the definitions of what constitutes "underprivileged" young people vary. Nevertheless, all these policies face the same double paradox, one inherent in all social policies. The aim is to help individuals in such a way that they will no longer need help. And in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the action, you must be able to show that they started out in a "bad situation". But there is a conflict between this stigmatizing and the desired approach.

European Voluntary Service makes it possible to create a positive dynamic based on confidence, respect and a contribution to the common good. All over Europe, there are hundreds of thousands of young people, underprivileged or otherwise, who are waiting for just such an opportunity. It can change their life, it can transform our societies, and it can build our dream future, a future in which there is a place for everyone.

Charles-Antoine Arnaud
Chairman, OEIL



Further information

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Supporting Innovation in Language Teaching

In today's world, language skills are a requirement, not an option. If young people are to fulfil their potential, their education must be structured to meet this need. Multilingual comprehension techniques, foreign language teaching of non-language subjects and early learning are three strategies where European projects are making an impact.

The European Union's objective is not to reinforce a polyglot elite but to give all Europeans the opportunity to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue. Better language skills and genuine linguistic diversity will bring increased mobility, better mutual understanding and the emergence in practice of European citizenship.

But the insufficiencies of traditional language teaching methods are evident both in the gulf between teaching objectives and the real performance of learners and in the negative psychological attitudes to language learning in general.

The European citizen of the future needs new points of entry to the world of language learning.

Three new and promising initiatives are:

- multilingual comprehension
- CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*)
- early language learning.

Multilingual comprehension

The aim of multilingual comprehension is to enable the greatest possible number of Europeans to understand one another, while nevertheless speaking in their own language.

On the assumption that it is easier to understand a language than it is to speak it with fluency and nuance, this project proposes learning based on understanding in order to allow speakers of different languages to speak in their own language while understanding each other.

At a time when there will soon be around 20 national languages within the European Union, this initiative is distinctive in that it gives access to a very wide choice of languages and provides an initiation which is specific to each cultural, social or professional group.

The multilingual comprehension approach limits the study of languages to a certain level of written or oral understanding which is adapted according to the needs of the learner. It supposes a correct identification of the nature of the task: What languages? In relation to what others? For whom? To do what?

The acquisition of a language is no longer seen as an undifferentiated lump of knowledge, namely "the language", but rather as the result of a set of skills acquired in the course of the learning process and which will be acquired to varying degrees on the basis of a number of parameters.

Also, by refocusing the learning process on the learner's motivations, the teaching strategy is radically changed. The learner ceases to be an undifferentiated subject and becomes an active participant.

The first stage, consisting of the basic substance of languages (sounds, writing, etc.), becomes a subject to discover within oneself, in a pre-school environment for example (in view of the perceptual versatility of children).

The notion of "similarity" between languages is itself viewed on the basis of explicit cognitive criteria in order to provide a better estimation of the cognitive pertinence of learning methods (the similarities explained by etymology are not necessarily an economical means of entering a new language).

Multilingual comprehension introduces another notion of success; its open and flexible nature allows the teacher a large measure of initiative and he or she alone is able to ultimately evaluate the relevance of the objective and the approach in respect to the students.

Relations between the mother tongue and the languages being learned are consequently redefined. By placing the emphasis on similarities, the suggestion is that the language and culture to be discovered are altogether less "foreign" than is widely believed. The learner draws strength from what he knows already (his mother tongue or a foreign language he has already learned).

The problem is then no longer that of knowing the meaning of words taken out of context, as is still too often taught, but of reconstructing the meaning on the basis of the interaction between words in the construction of sentences.

Linguists estimate that the differences on the basis of which the 3000 languages spoken in the world today can be classified relate to under 100 parameters. This means that

the range of differences results from the combination of these 100 parameters. It is a question of identifying the features likely to reveal similarities between two languages belonging to different groups.

In order to introduce the idea that there are always similarities between languages, the notion of a scale of proximity (small and large proximities), founded upon simple and practical parameters, could facilitate entry to a new language. There would be a calibrated scale of similarities and differences which could then be used in the teaching strategy.

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

If no more curriculum time can be made available for language teaching and learning, CLIL can be a valid approach to improving the linguistic competence of young people.

CLIL refers to the situation where classes in one or several disciplines – other than languages – are taught in a foreign language, while at least one other foreign language is taught as a subject. This results in competence in at least two foreign languages.

This concept can be applied in a variety of ways, taking into account specific national, regional, geographical, cultural and economic contexts. For example, the European Commission's White Paper on teaching and learning suggested that "secondary school pupils should study certain subjects in the first foreign language learned". Subsequent discussions at both expert and political level have supported this approach.

Within the Lingua strand of Socrates, CLIL has gradually developed into a major area receiving support. Teacher training projects are being established alongside projects to develop the appropriate material to introduce and carry on CLIL successfully. A case in point is DIESeLL, a European cooperation programme in teacher training coordinated by the University of Jyväskylä. Started in 1996, DIESeLL aims to develop an innovative distance education programme to train teachers who are teaching a subject in a foreign language.

Languages: *for European citizenship*

There are sound practical reasons for promoting language learning, but a language is more than a list of words or symbols to be learned mechanically. Language expresses a cultural identity. Learning a language involves understanding the mentality of someone else. It means moving from 'us and them' to 'we'.

The EU's drive to promote the learning of European languages is therefore prompted not only by a desire to improve communication as such, or to overcome linguistic barriers to trade, or to enhance the free movement of people, important though they are. It is based on the belief that with language skills come many other abilities and qualities that are of crucial importance to the "European citizen" of the future.

According to a recent Eurobarometer report (April'96), less than half the people in the European Union speak any EU language except their own. In some countries, and amongst certain groups, the figure is much higher. Language skills are unevenly spread;

it is largely young, professional graduates who are the most likely to be able to communicate with their fellow Europeans.

Yet the EU has endorsed the idea put forward in the Commission's White Paper on education and training that "upon completing initial training everyone should be proficient in two Community foreign languages" in addition to their own. These three languages could comprise one from three different language families. These would be core languages around which additional language skills could be constructed. Moreover, language learning should be undertaken throughout life.

Is this pie in the sky? New technologies, open learning methods, distance learning and self-teaching have already shown that they have much to offer. Not everyone would be expected to attain the standard of a native speaker, nor have equal competence in speaking, writing, reading and listening. It may be enough to be able to understand the gist of a spoken conversation in one

language while writing and speaking another to a higher standard. The emphasis should be on valuing as much as possible whatever language skills an individual has, and on enabling him to build on them – and to make maximum use of them – in his own way. For some people, for example, it may be enough to be able to understand the gist of a spoken conversation in one language, whereas in another they may wish to speak and write it to a higher standard.

There needs to be an environment in which the teaching and learning of European Union languages as foreign languages can flourish. This might involve greater exposure to foreign languages, a wider supply of language courses and language-learning opportunities, a vigorous programme of research in the fields of language teaching and applied linguistics, and actions aimed at raising awareness of the benefits of language learning and of cultural issues (for example, building on activities which encourage contact between communities, such as town twinning).

Sensitization to language issues, the actual learning of foreign languages and exposure to other cultures need to begin early. Early language learning reaches pupils when they are most able to develop the necessary skills.

And language teaching has to work. While a 1997 Eurobarometer survey found that some 70 % of young people claim to be able to converse in a second language, it is still vital that teachers have all the knowledge, skills, training and support they need. And all language teachers should ideally, after qualifying, have a repertoire of teaching skills enabling them to match their teaching approaches to the needs of each individual pupil; should have lived in countries where the languages taught are spoken; and should have access to in-service training including a stay in a country where the languages taught are spoken. Language teachers still often tend to teach a language, as a block of knowledge, rather than the skills of language learning in general.

Also within mobility activities, teachers teaching a non-linguistic subject in a foreign language are starting to receive more grants. In Germany, for example, about 300 of around 1,500 grants made available in 1996 were awarded to teachers teaching a non-linguistic subject in a foreign language.

With the support of the Commission, a European network for CLIL classrooms, EuroCLIC, was created early in 1997, to promote the exchange of information between all those involved in plurilingual education. Teachers, researchers, curriculum and material developers, administrators and others with an interest in this field are offered a platform to exchange information and to help in practical implementation. EuroCLIC (<http://www.cec.jyu.fi/euroclil>) publishes a newsletter, organizes seminars and conferences and has been involved in the production of a video demonstrating plurilingual education in Europe.

Early language learning

Pupils are increasingly starting to learn a foreign language earlier in their school education. This has far-reaching consequences for the language learning landscape: methodological approaches must be developed to match the needs of children of a given age; choices must be made about whether initiation into one language is a better alternative than the 'awakening' of several languages; teacher training needs to be developed according to the options chosen; continuity through successive levels of education must be ensured.

If Early Language Learning is to be effective, sufficient time must be made available in the curriculum. Lowering the age without optimizing the conditions and factors determining the outcome of early language learning will not automatically lead to improved language competence. Recent research by a group of European experts has analysed the complexity of this question. They set out to identify parameters for the success and failure of early language learning. Their recommendations will offer a solid basis for decision-makers to weigh the alternatives available.

The White Paper emphasises that starting foreign language learning at a young age is essential to ensuring that young people become proficient in two foreign languages before they complete compulsory education. The challenge is enormous. Even today, a substantial proportion of young people are leaving compulsory education without being able to communicate in a foreign language. Urgent measures are needed to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to spend sufficient school time learning foreign languages.

Within the Lingua activities of Socrates, early language learning has been the single most important growth area. One example is a new European cooperation programme for teacher training coordinated by the Italian Ministry for Education. This brings together teacher training institutions from some 10 European countries, which will develop, test and implement innovative primary language learning methodologies and materials.

A new practical handbook has been published, in all official languages, to help teachers thinking of setting up Joint Educational Projects. It contains information, advice and examples of best practice, and is available from the Socrates/Lingua National Agency in each participating country. It can be downloaded from:
<http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/socrates/lingua/jep.html>

Lingua

Within the Socrates programme, the five Lingua actions promote the teaching and learning of foreign languages. **Action A:** finances transnational projects between teacher training institutions, which work together to create new courses or materials to train foreign language teachers.

Action B: provides grants to enable teachers of foreign languages to undertake an in-service training course abroad.

Action C: gives a grant to help future language teachers to spend a period as a Lingua Assistant in a school abroad.

Action D: finances multinational projects to develop materials and curricula for language teaching, learning and testing.

Action E: brings together groups of pupils in two different countries to improve their language skills by working together on a jointly-defined project, culminating in a two-week exchange.

PartBase

PartBase is a software facility, developed with support from the European Commission within the Socrates programme, to help educational institutions, especially schools, to locate appropriate partners in other countries with whom they can cooperate on European projects, in particular European Education Projects (Comenius action 1) and Joint Educational Projects (Lingua action E). It is accessible through Internet:

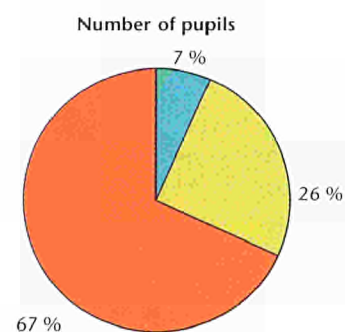
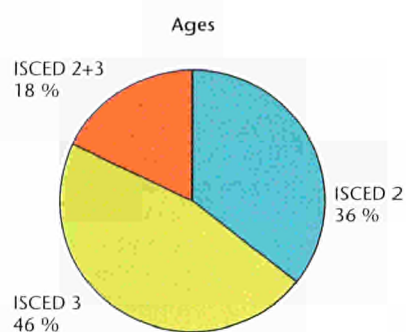
<http://partbase.eupro.se>

Schools and other institutions can advertise for a partner by entering information about themselves, their pupils or trainees and any project ideas, or look for a partner among those institutions which are already in the data base.

Social background of pupils (parent income levels)		
low	mid	25 %
high	mid	55 %
mid	low	20 %

Ethnic minority profile	
10 % or less	83 %
10-40 %	13 %
40-70 %	2 %
Over 70 %	2 %

less than 200	
less than 500	
over 500	



A European pilot project for 100 schools in 18 countries

Evaluating quality in school education

Further information

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A Socrates pilot project is bringing together 100 schools in 18 European countries in a joint self-evaluation exercise. How do they rate themselves? The aim is to develop a deeper, shared approach to raising school standards.

Quality matters. Every school in Europe is intrinsically concerned with quality, and the first priority of every teacher is pupils' quality of education. But how do schools live up to their ideals? Is there agreement on what "quality" is? What are the possibilities for improving quality? Do the various stakeholders within a school and its community share the same views?

Since 1995 the evaluation of schooling has been one of priority areas for action under the Socrates programme. It is a response to the growing emphasis on evaluating schools, not simply to compare standards of achievement – for example, in the form of league tables – but in order to inform policy and improve practice.

A recently launched European pilot project aims to find answers to three simple questions:

- What makes a school good?
- How can we find out?
- What can we do with the answers we get?

Schools in different countries will seek answers to these questions in a variety of ways and may arrive at a variety of answers. This variety will contribute to the depth and richness of the project. It will offer the participating schools and countries a repertoire of alternatives for different purposes and different contexts. How schools share and learn from one another's experience will be the key test of the project's value and durability.

About half the schools have pupils at lower secondary level (known in the language of international classification as ISCED 2) and half have pupils at upper secondary (ISCED 3); 62 % of the schools are fairly large (i.e. more than 500 pupils), while 8 % have less than 200 pupils.

Education under the microscope

The project involves 100 schools in the 18 European countries participating in the Socrates programme, the number of schools selected in each country being roughly proportionate to each country's size. The school catchment areas represent a range of socio-economic backgrounds; while 22 % are in low-income areas, more than 80 % have less than 10 % of pupils from ethnic minorities.

The methodology

The 100 schools in the project will have considerable freedom to pursue a course of evaluation suited to their own context and stage of development, but they will be expected to share some methods, evaluate a common core issues and exchange ideas and information with other schools in the project.

At the beginning of the project, all schools rate themselves on a dozen common quality issues using a four point scale from positive to negative (++ + - -), and a change scale (↑ → ↓) from improving to declining.

These 12 evaluation areas are:

- Academic achievement
- Personal and social development
- Pupils' destinations
- Time as a resource for learning
- Quality of learning and teaching
- Support for learning difficulties
- School as a learning place
- School as a social place
- School as a professional place
- School and home
- School and community
- School and work

Because these judgements are made by school leaders, teachers, pupils and parents, differences in perception are thrown into sharp relief. In other words, the school will get a view of its quality and effectiveness from differing standpoints and consider how these coincide and differ. On the basis of this exercise, these schools will identify the issues which they wish to monitor and evaluate in greater depth over the coming year.

Meeting future challenges

Whatever shades of opinion there may be over what constitutes the quality of education, the project assumes that schools will be helped to meet the future challenges if they:

- have good reliable data on how they are performing
- have the means and the expertise to find and use data for themselves
- create a culture in which teachers and others value the evaluation process because it is satisfying and because it helps to improve learning and teaching
- provide information at school level which promotes better planning, professional development and school improvement.

The outcome of the project will be a deeper, shared understanding of how self-evaluation can benefit schools and enhance learning and teaching. It promises to inform policy at international, national, local and individual school level.

After the pilot project has finished in 1998, the Commission will ensure that the experiences gained during the project are exploited and that results are disseminated.



Bundestag President Rita Süßmuth with Thomas O'Dwyer, Director-General of DG XXII, and Joachim Fronia (right), responsible for adult education in DG XXII, at the UNESCO conference in Hamburg



Further information

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UNESCO 5th Conference on Adult Education

A broader vision of adult learning

Until recently, adult education has largely meant literacy in the Unesco context. The CONFINTEA V Conference in Hamburg went well beyond the alphabet, shifting the emphasis to a learner-centred system able to provide the individual with the means of understanding an increasingly complex reality and of participating in democratic processes.

The 5th International Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA V, took place in Hamburg in July. Organized by UNESCO in cooperation with various international partners, it was attended by over 1,500 participants, from some 100 Member States of UNESCO, 16 non Member States and international organizations, some 80 foundations and universities and nearly 200 NGOs.

A dozen years had elapsed since the previous world conference on adult education (Paris, 1985). All EU Members States and the Commission were strongly represented.

CONFINTEA V was preceded by five "regional" conferences grouping the Latin American and Caribbean, Asian, African, Arab and European countries respectively.

The conference was expected to identify the emerging needs of adult learning and the approaches needed to ensure widespread access to lifelong learning after the year 2000. The UNESCO Institute of Education has been engaged in a fundamental redefinition of the nature and functions of this complex educational area. This reflection process was not unrelated to the review of modern educational needs in Europe conducted by the European Commission in the White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*.

The conference revealed sharp differences between the "North" and the "South", where the struggle against illiteracy is still far from won. Some countries still face illiteracy rates

of around 70 %. A strong unifying theme across countries at very different stages of development, however, was that of political participation and of the empowerment of the individual through education. For the Commission, this was underlined by Dr Thomas O'Dwyer, Director General of DG XXII, who stressed the vital role of education as a guarantee for the exercise of the fundamental rights of the individual. The challenges posed by the globalization of the economy, the information society, the role and value of local communities and local cultures, multiculturalism and multilingualism were other common themes.

These were discussed in plenary sessions, but also in round tables, tele-conferences and in the numerous working groups. Intensive discussion also took place in the semi-improvised fringe conference animated by the NGOs, whose massive presence was the main novelty of the 5th International Conference.

The fringe conference also revolved very much around the exhibition area, where the DG XXII stand became a meeting-point and a forum for discussion and mutual information between European and non-European countries.

The Declaration and the Agenda for the Future adopted at the end of the conference provide a broader vision of adult learning, and a world-wide, holistic approach based on lifelong learning.

More than basic literacy

In the UNESCO context, where adult education has long been nearly a synonym for literacy, CONFINTEA V marked an important change of perspective that brought European and non-European countries much more closely together. The stress was put on a learner-centred "system" able to provide the individual with all the necessary tools to decode an increasingly complex reality, to participate in the democratic processes, and to be part of the "global community". From this stemmed the necessity of identifying new roles for existing education provision, in the formal and non-formal sectors and at university level, and of building new partnerships able to take on board responsibilities that can no longer be met by the public sector only.

Rita Süßmuth, President of the German Bundestag and chairing the conference, underlined in her closing remarks the changing role of the State in education and the growing importance of NGOs in playing some of the roles traditionally attributed to it.

For the Commission, this conference was a confirmation of the trends identified and the work initiated in recent years, where a broader vision of adult learning has been advocated from an early stage. It was also an encouragement to proceed in that direction and to be more active than before in its dialogue with other parts of the world on adult education issues. The Declaration and the Agenda for the Future set up various possibilities for a follow-up, including a "regional educational watch", a permanent consultation mechanism and a world-wide permanent forum, in all of which the EU would have a crucial role to play



Vocational training around Europe

Further information

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Within the context of lifelong learning, Member States are continuing to review and develop their vocational training policies and programmes aimed at preparing young people for entry to working life and, through workplace training, at helping workers to 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).

Belgium - Walloon Region

Alternance training as a path to qualifications

In agreement with the social partners, the Government of the Walloon Region intends to promote alternance training for young people aged between 16 and 25. This will provide a path to genuine qualifying training bringing real qualifications for young people seeking either to continue their training through alternance and in-company placements or to learn a trade.

Trainees have a contract and a rising level of remuneration for periods spent in workplace training. There are various kinds of alternance training contracts (industrial apprenticeship contracts, employment-training contracts, part-time employment contracts, placement contracts, etc.).

Centres providing theoretical and/or technological training must be approved by a special commission set up for the purpose. These centres may include technical or vocational training institutions, Alternance Training Education Centres (CEFA), establishments for social promotion education, and the Community and Regional Employment and Vocational Training Office (FOREM).

Public- and private-sector industrial or services companies which organize apprenticeships must also be approved. They pay trainees a wage.

In order to promote and encourage training, the Walloon Government has set up a system of financial support for companies which take on young trainees for a period of at least six months and for the training provider.

Belgium - Flemish Region

Practical training for students in the construction sector

The training fund for the construction sector (Fonds voor Vakopleiding in de Bouwneijverheid - FVB) organizes work experience opportunities in construction firms for vocational schools at secondary level in order to attune school curricula to the real needs of the sector. The underlying objective is to upgrade the public's perception of work in the construction sector.

During the past school year, 96 Flemish schools have made agreements with the FVB. These bring financial and logistic advantages to the school which is offered support per student and per specialism involved (limited to construction-structural work, sanitary installation, central heating, woodworking and decoration).

The work experience training on the construction site aims at developing skills, qualifications and attitudes, which are complementary to regular school focal points such as quality control, punctuality, etc.

It is hoped that these actions will improve the image of the construction sector. Regrettably, the inflow of students is still very much influenced by established negative perceptions and earlier poor examination results. To counteract these, it may be appropriate to provide accurate and motivating information to students in their last year of primary education.

Denmark

Improving the alternance principle

The basic structure of vocational education and training (VET) programmes in Denmark is based on the principle of alternance. Continuous change between periods at a vocational school and training in a company, based on an apprenticeship contract, is seen as a decisive element behind the comparatively high quality of the Danish VET system.

It is felt that the alternance principle should not only be kept in the coming years, it must also be improved. The rapid structural development of the economy with a growing specialization of companies is seen as a challenge. The Vocational Education and Training Council (EUR), the national advisory body to the Ministry of Education, has decided to focus more sharply on future challenges to, and perspectives for, the alternance principle. In the short term, school-company interplay should be improved through a joint effort by the national sectoral trade committees, the local school-level education and training committees, and the vocational schools in order to define and implement concrete methods and parameters of quality for the content and substance of this interplay.

Several actors are important to improve the quality of learning at school and in companies: companies, social partner organizations, vocational schools and not least the students.

Surveys have indicated that the intended increased coherence of learning in schools and in companies has not yet been fully achieved. As a practical first step, an 'inspiration' catalogue has been prepared by a team from the National Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers (DEL).

Germany

Tapping available knowledge

An "ideas competition" launched by the government to tap knowledge available around the world for initial and continuing vocational training and innovation purposes has brought in a total of 251 competition entries. They document a major potential for innovation which had previously been lying dormant in companies, universities and research institutes. The intention is to stimulate innovative ideas for the tapping of available knowledge and to develop perspectives for its wide use. The goal is to offer effective support to the learning process by means of new systems and to improve the preconditions for innovation, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises.

By linking the resources of science and industry into the subject area, the projects are to assume a pacemaker function and help to create internationally competitive competence centres (centres of excellence), which can then encourage future development by building on successful experience. The proposals submitted ranged from the development of a self-help network on educational issues through support concepts for the tourist sector to proposals for multimedia literature, technical databases and virtual learning systems. This competition has prompted encounters between partners from science and industry on a previously unknown scale. This, alone, has an important knock-on effect. It is encouraging that around 40 % of the ideas submitted were under the aegis of universities or university institutions. In roughly one in five cases, smaller and medium-sized enterprises were envisaged as cooperation partners.

An independent jury of 11 experts from science and industry has recommended 15 of the project ideas for further development and they will each be given financial support.

Spain

Second national vocational training programme

The reorganized General Council for Vocational Training was set up in May. And it is now attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as a consultative body which ensures the participation of the relevant public administrations and advises the government on vocational training. The greatest change is in the composition of the Council as, with the addition of the representatives of the regions or autonomous communities, it has evolved from a tripartite to a quadripartite body. It now has four groups each of 19 members representing the central trade unions, the employers' associations, the central state administration, and the autonomous communities. The Council will be renewed every four years and the chairmanship will alternate every year between the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, and Education and Culture.

One of its main responsibilities is to draw up the second national vocational training programme which, like its predecessor, serves as an integrating framework for the three sub-systems which make up vocational education and training in Spain. The programme, which is still in the process of elaboration and will be in force till the year 2000, pursues six principal objectives:

- establishment of effective links between the three vocational training sub-systems (regulated, occupational and continuing training)
- improvement and development of regulated vocational training so that it directs more attention to disadvantaged groups
- strengthening the links between companies and training organizations to ensure the effectiveness of the continuing training of employed persons
- more flexible management of vocational training so that it can be integrated in all active employment policies
- improving and guaranteeing the quality of training
- further developing the legal provisions governing the certificates of professional proficiency so that they are geared to the needs of companies.

France

Social utility jobs for young people

The law on jobs for young people passed by the National Assembly on 13 October 1997 aims to rescue young people from unemployment and insecurity, while at the same time meeting social needs which are either new or not met by the market.

This extraordinarily ambitious project should create 350,000 jobs within the next three years in the public and voluntary sector, at an annual cost of 35 billion French francs (around ECU 5,275 billion).

For a period of five years, the State will pay 80 % of the national minimum wage per job created, social charges included. The employer will pay the balance.

Young people aged between 18 and 25 – and, under certain conditions, those aged between 26 and 30 – will consequently be able to exercise functions as varied as school support coordinators, accompaniers for dependent persons in care, cultural heritage development agents, industrial and urban waste technicians, family or criminal mediators, etc.

This programme will help both to strengthen emerging occupations and to create new ones. Existing diplomas will be recognised and new ones created. The training offered by the National Association for Adult Training (AFPA) will be oriented towards these new jobs. Job reference systems will be drawn up.

With the bill due to be passed by parliament in October, it is hoped to be able to conclude 50,000 contracts by the end of the year.

Ireland

White Paper on human resource development

The long-awaited *White Paper on Human Resource Development* is a comprehensive document outlining the roles of the social partners, government agencies, the individual worker and the unemployed person. Published on the eve of the June general election, it is now being considered by the new coalition government.

The document's first three objectives relate to enterprise training and contain an acceptance of the need for employer-led training in industry. The proposals include the following:

- Helping young people to become more employable through the provision of extra places in existing programmes and a new National Traineeship Programme.
- Re-integrating the unemployed, by establishing a new subsidiary of FAS (Training and Employment Authority) to assist the long-term unemployed back to work.
- Promoting equal opportunities through the extension of facilities for women who wish to enter training, education or employment to bring about an increase in the level of female employment.
- Strengthening the commitment to lifelong learning by introducing tax relief towards the cost of approved training courses.
- Developing quality assurance by setting quality assurance standards for all training providers and assessing and accrediting their competence.
- Ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness and net economic benefit of public expenditure on human resources development.

The new government in its recent policy programme makes a commitment to examine the future role and structure of FAS. The outcome of this examination may affect the implementation of the White Paper.

The Netherlands

A 'brain port'

The objectives of additional investments proposed in the draft 1998 budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science are to convert the Netherlands into a real 'brain port', and to ensure and demonstrate that everybody in society can participate in this. The fostering of knowledge transfer, personal development and intellectual curiosity are the instruments available to achieve this. For this the government has reserved almost 730 million guilders (ca. ECU 330 million). In addition the government will stimulate education and culture through tax allowances costing up to 220 million guilders (ca. ECU 100 million) in 1998 and 305 million guilders (ca. ECU 137 million) for the years after 1998.

Policy priorities include reducing class sizes in the first four years of primary education, investment in information and communication technology (ICT), which will allow for the development of teacher training, teaching materials and computer systems, and the purchase of computers. In addition funds will be available for teacher training measures aimed at motivating older teachers and maintaining their skill levels.

Priorities for the vocational training and adult education sector include additional money for school buildings, development of the quality of training in regional training centres and improving the links between vocational secondary education (mbo) and higher vocational education (hbo).

Austria

Access for apprentices to higher education

From the coming school year, apprentices will be able to sit an examination giving access to higher education. A law to this effect has been approved by the National Council. The new secondary technical and vocational certificate, based on this act, is a "customized" school-leaving certificate (i.e. secondary school-leaving and diploma examination). It opens the door to a higher level career path and to higher education. It is designed for apprentices who successfully sit their final apprenticeship examination and for those completing vocational school, including nursing colleges and schools for medical-technical occupations.

The requirements of the secondary technical and vocational certificate build on vocational training in apprenticeship/vocational school. It testifies to in-depth vocational education and a sound knowledge of German, mathematics and another modern language. This additional knowledge in specific or general subjects can be obtained by attending courses in adult education centres, or (from 1998 onwards) in technical and vocational schools, where most examinations can also be taken. Self-study and direct admission to the secondary technical and vocational examination are possible.

The secondary technical and vocational certificate is a major step forward since, for the first time in the Austrian education system knowledge and skills obtained outside school can be taken into account. Another new feature is that educational credentials can be supplied not only by schools but also, to a large degree, by non-school institutions (for instance adult education centres). The secondary technical and vocational certificate is considered as an important component of the Austrian government's youth employment initiative.

Sweden


Advanced vocational training

A pilot project involving advanced vocational training (AVT) has been under way in Sweden since late 1996. This is a new form of post-secondary education intended to correspond to real needs in the employment market. In it two-thirds of the time is spent in educational institutions and one-third is based on advanced application of theoretical knowledge at a workplace. What this involves is not the traditional traineeship period, but active work-place learning and problem-solving. Proposals can be made by individual educational institutions (upper secondary schools, municipal adult education centres, high education institutions) or companies, or consortia of both.

By last August, 134 courses with 3,500 student places had been approved by a governmental commission. There are no restrictions in terms of the sectors in which AVT is to be provided. Courses are open to participants coming directly from upper secondary school and to employees who want to develop their skills within a defined area.

The courses are at post-secondary level, in the sense that completed upper-secondary education or equivalent knowledge is required for eligibility. The course content is taken from upper secondary, supplementary and advanced courses in higher education, and from employment market training. The courses should combine a practical orientation with in-depth theoretical knowledge. The interplay between theory and practice is important both for course quality and to meet the needs of the employment market and the students. The student is entitled to study support according to current higher education regulations. The courses should confer at least 40 points (i.e. comprise 40 weeks' full-time study at post-secondary level). A course consisting of 80 points or more will culminate in an AVT certificate or diploma.





Vocational training in the EU: key data

Further information

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More school-leavers than ever before in Europe are going on to some form of vocational education or training. At the same time, more job-seekers than before have qualifications. How much of a difference does vocational training make in finding and keeping a job?

The first overview of its kind to be carried out at EU level, *Key data on vocational training in the European Union* shows that unemployment of 20 to 29-year-olds with additional vocational training is less than half as high (on average 11.5 %) as for those with only basic education (23.5 %). Notable exceptions are Greece and Portugal, where this trend is reversed, and Spain, where one third of people in their 20s are unemployed with or without vocational training.

Vocational education and training also appear to offer greater job security. An analysis of people in their 20s employed in 1994 shows that 5.2 % of those only educated up to school-leaving age lost their jobs the following year, compared to 3.1% of those with additional vocational training.

Initial training

The percentage of teenagers (15-19) in initial vocational training is highest in Austria (55 %), Belgium (45 %), Germany (40 %) and Sweden (37 %). From the age of 20 onwards, the highest percentages are in Finland and Germany. Young women are in the majority in initial training courses, which generally last two to three years, in Finland and Ireland. The UK has the highest percentage of 25 to 29-year-olds in initial training – at 12 % of all such trainees, over double the EU average – while in Finland, 15 % are aged over 30.

Continuing training

In what sectors are companies most likely to offer continuing training? It is common in financial services, utilities and the motor trade, but less so in textiles, mining, transport and construction. The main indicator is nonetheless the size of the business: 98 % of companies with a thousand employees or more offer continuing vocational training, compared to 52 % of those with 10-49 employees.

Overall, some 60 % of enterprises in the EU with 10 or more employees offer some form of continuing training. The highest percentages are in Denmark (87 %), Germany (85 %), the UK (82 %) and Ireland (77 %). The lowest is in Portugal (13 %).

Who pays for it?

Training is financed by a variety of sources. In most EU countries initial training is publicly funded at national and regional level, with a high proportion of regional and local funding in Belgium, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

EU funding has increased in recent years, as is evidenced by the Leonardo da Vinci programme (ECU 620 million, 1995-99). The important contribution from the European Social Fund takes different forms in different countries: Ireland makes the highest per capita use of this kind of fund for training, followed by Portugal, Spain and Greece – a sign of these three countries' determination to reduce the gap.

Company spending on training as a proportion of total manpower costs varies widely among Member States and is highest in the UK, partly reflecting the lower incidence of tax and social security on the overall payroll. In countries with a lower percentage of participants in company training courses, the duration of training courses over the whole year per participant tends to be higher and it is more common for companies to have well-defined training plans and budgets.

Training of the self-employed without employees remains a particular issue. Besides small farmers and shop-keepers, the category includes many people in the service sector and real estate whose overall participation in training is lower than for employees.

Men and women

Self-employed women with no employees are nonetheless more likely to undergo continuing training than self-employed men, with a monthly participation rate of 3.9 % compared to 2.2 %.

Equal opportunity issues assume a particular importance in the area of vocational education and training. EU-wide, participants in initial training are predominantly male (55 %). However, participation in continuing training is higher for women than for men.

The overall picture emerging from a survey of company training in 1993 - the Continuing Vocational Training Survey – is slightly different, in that it found 29 % of men and 27 % of women employees received training that year. Nonetheless, this survey did not cover a number of sectors or companies with less than 10 employees. A comparison between male and female employee participation in training courses within a given occupation is likely to show higher participation by women, while participation is strongly determined by the occupation in question: higher ranking employees such as managerial, scientific and technical staff are far more likely to take part. This deserves more detailed analysis.

Top topics

Production techniques are the leading subject of company training schemes, followed by **data-processing** and **management**.

Languages, accounting and **marketing** are important to retailing and the wholesale sector. **Safety** is a top topic in hotels and restaurants as well as in traditionally dangerous occupations such as mining and quarrying.

Key data on vocational training in the European Union

Key data on vocational training in the European Union was published in October, drawing on work by CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training; Eurostat, the EU's statistical office; and DG XXII, with contributions from independent specialists, working groups of Member State experts and representatives in the various fields of training statistics. It follows the completion of major surveys launched under the Leonardo da Vinci programme and its predecessors. It is the first comprehensive collection of statistical information on vocational training at EU level; as such, it reveals the strengths and weaknesses of information systems in this area, and will prompt feedback from a wide range of researchers, policy-makers, companies and training organizations, helping to create a more complete and coordinated statistical system on training in Europe.

Key data features country-at-a-glance illustrations of the main programmes of training courses for young people, including theoretical start and finish ages, the proportion of time they spend in the workplace as apprentices, etc. It will be followed by a series of publications focusing on particular topics, such as in-company training, initial training and the transition from school to work.

Key data on vocational training in the European Union:

132 pages; 9 tables of international definitions;
167 vocational education and training programmes described.
Price: ECU 19.5 (+ VAT).

Available in English, French and German from the sales offices of:
Office for Official Publications of the European Communities
2, rue Mercier - L - 2985 Luxembourg - F +352 2929 42 709.
Other language versions will be available from the beginning of 1998.

Just how good is access to continuing training?

Further information

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First survey of the situation in the EU

The Commission's recently published report on "access to continuing training in the European Union" provides an initial evaluation of the situation. It shows that, on average, one in four workers has benefited from a continuing training scheme. But closer examination also reveals sharply contrasting situations depending on the country, size of company and the kind of job.

If European enterprises are to become more competitive, and better able to develop new forms of work organization or to effectively integrate into the new forms of work which are developing at European and global level (such as networking, the constant exchange of information, multidisciplinary and multicultural teams), then they must upgrade the "skills capital" of their workers.

Similarly, if they are to be able to cope with changing job profiles, workers in employment need to improve their competencies in order to learn to learn, solve problems, and show proof of creativity and inventiveness. For job seekers, there is unanimous agreement that the process of reintegration into work is increasingly linked to their "employability", in which the principal element is competence.

Three factors for change

In Europe's economies, the renewal of available skills can no longer be limited to the cycle of successive generations of workers replacing the one which went before, as has been the case for decades. Traditionally, it was younger generations of better skilled and better trained workers who added to the capital of available skills by replacing older retiring workers. But times have changed. The cycle of skills renewal is constantly accelerating, under the combined pressure of three factors:

- Closer horizons for changes in technology and work organization: products and technologies are being replaced with increasing speed, the need for competitiveness is imposing rapid changes in work organization, and job content is constantly changing.
- The changed age pyramid of the working population: the relative share of young people is shrinking and the working population of European countries shows a marked ageing – a trend which is set to accelerate in future years. The median age will also rise by almost 10 years by the year 2030.
- The growing number of women on the labour market, resulting in shifting training needs.

For all these reasons, continuing training and lifelong learning, and their development and generalization, are becoming increasingly central concerns in the studies and policies of governments and enterprises.

This is a relatively new area of activity at Community level, only really dating back to the adoption of the Social Charter and Force programme in the early 1990s. The process of Community cooperation saw two major new phases with the adoption of the Council Recommendation on continuing training in June 1993, followed by the debates and events of the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996.

Valuable lessons

The publication in 1997 of the Commission's first report on access to continuing training in the EU marks a new stage. This document provides a first comprehensive evaluation of the present situation - and there are some valuable lessons to be learned from it.

This European report draws its information from a variety of sources: the national reports drawn up Member States and Community-wide organizations of the "social partners" (ETUC, UNICE and CEEP); studies by the support structure for social dialogue on continuing training; and the results of the first Community survey, conducted in 1994 among 50,000 companies on the subject of their continuing training policies. It provides the first Community-wide quantitative and qualitative description of all the continuing training systems and innovative practices of companies and the social partners. All the analyses confirm that continuing training is seen as being of key importance, in all the Member States and by the social partners.

This report also confirms that access to continuing training for all workers in the EU has yet to be achieved. As a Community average, it is estimated that slightly more than one in four workers has participated in a continuing training scheme of one year's duration and that fewer than two in three companies may be considered to have a genuine continuing training policy. Although the results are very encouraging, they nevertheless fail to satisfy the need for constant skills development.

Differences which threaten to widen?

One finding was particularly worrying, namely the very wide differences in access to continuing training between different countries, different types of company, and different categories of workers. For example, the annual rate of worker participation in continuing training per Member State ranges from 1 worker in 8 for the countries at the bottom of the scale (P-GR) to almost 1 worker in 2 for the leading countries (IRL, UK, F, DK, S, Fin).

As a Community average, 58 % of companies – that is fewer than 2 in 3 companies - can be considered to be "trainers", irrespective of the method of training adopted. Major differences are also found in this respect between countries where virtually all companies are committed to continuing training (DK, D, UK, Irl) and countries in which this is the case for fewer than 1 in 3 companies (E, I, P, Gr). There is also a correlation between the results obtained and the size of companies, as the level of access to continuing training varies from 13 % for companies with between 10 and 49 employees to 43 % for companies with more than

1,000 employees. This means that a worker in a company with more than 1,000 employees is three times more likely to participate in training than a worker in a company with between 10 and 49 employees. Major differences are also evident between different sectors of activity.

Overall, it is nevertheless true to say that it is those countries, sectors or companies lying at the top of the "scale" which also seem to be the most dynamic. There is consequently a danger of a further widening of these differences within the EU.

The dissemination of good practice

Despite this rather bleak picture, a great many initiatives are being taken in this area by public authorities, social partners and companies alike. Continuing training policies in companies include many different types of training schemes: training sub-contracted to external agents, in-company training, on-the-job training, conferences, self-learning. Public authorities are taking a number of incentive measures to encourage companies to invest in training.

The social dialogue support structure draws attention to the variety and originality of schemes initiated by the social partners and the many different forms and methods of social dialogue on continuing training. For example, a "job rotation" system was introduced in Denmark following a tripartite dialogue. Under this scheme, companies can bring in job-seekers for a limited period in order to replace workers wanting to follow continuing training. This makes it easier to release workers for training and allows unemployed people to gain work experience.

This dynamic is an interesting and encouraging opportunity for disseminating best practice and ensuring a more favourable overall development. It merits wider use throughout the Community. The Commission is currently preparing various initiatives, following the publication of its report. For example, it intends to promote further debate on continuing training, especially within the Member States, and make reporting an on-going practice in order to draw up, at Community level, regular qualitative references and quantitative indicators on the progress made. The Commission also envisages lending support to the social partners so that they can deepen and extend the Community's social dialogue on continuing training.





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Shared benefits

Leonardo da Vinci and student placements in business

Every year, under the aegis of Leonardo da Vinci, several hundred students and young graduates from higher education are placed in companies in other European countries. Maarten van Welly from the Netherlands, David Colas from France and Theresa McBride from the United Kingdom have all recently participated in a scheme of this type. What did they think of it?

European SMEs and companies are in growing need of people able to work in a transnational environment. Many higher education establishments are well aware of the implications and are tailoring their training programmes to meet the real needs of the labour market. Leonardo da Vinci aims to encourage this process by supporting placements, i.e. the practice whereby an education establishment sends young people to work for a period of 3 to 12 months in a company in another country, to give them a qualification in addition to that from their studies.

"I became more confident"...

A high-quality and practical apprenticeship abroad is very beneficial for students. It strengthens their ability to work independently, completes their theoretical training and improves their command of a foreign language, all factors which improve their chances of finding employment in the EU.

Last winter, David Colas, a young graduate of INSA (Institut National des Sciences Appliquées) in Rennes, France, spent four and a half months in Oulu in Finland. He was on placement in VTT Electronics, an international technology centre which works with several European partners. His job there was to develop a new technology known as LTCC (Low Temperature Cofired Ceramic Technology). He found it a positive career move: "The work I had to do suited me perfectly. I had to provide a complete study of existing material and future methods of development. Everything was in English. Before, I had problems with English, but not by the end". David was able to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired at school. But he also gained a lot in personal terms. "The placement in Finland gave me confidence in my real ability. I am now more confident about my future career". He added: "I also discovered a magnificent country, cloaked in beauty and snow".

Experiencing another culture

Maarten van Welly, now a graduate of a technical institute in The Hague, agreed that the Leonardo da Vinci placement is an essential key to career success: "To get a job in the Netherlands nowadays, it is really important to have professional experience abroad". He also went on placement to Oulu in Finland, in a company called Videra. "My job was to develop a new video-conferencing system to compete on the

market. It was really exciting! I did everything: market studies, design, tests. I realized that I was capable of completing a large-scale task, and that gave me confidence".

Like his French colleague, Maarten stressed the linguistic and cultural benefits of such a placement abroad. "When I was there, I did an intensive Finnish course. Including Dutch, I now have four active languages. Nowadays, this is a major advantage if you want to get a job in Europe. Similarly, experiencing another culture increases your understanding of the world immensely: it also shows us that young people in Europe actually have lots in common."

The experience will also benefit others

Higher education establishments also stand to gain much from the experience. Sending young people on placement gives them an opportunity to discuss changes affecting the business world, to better adapt their lectures according to the real situations experienced by the students during their placements abroad, and to improve their teaching methods. The result is a genuine transfer of knowledge in the field of innovation and in higher education. "At the end of the placement, I gave the institute a detailed report of every stage of my work," said David Colas. "The report was to be submitted to a jury. The members of the jury thought very highly of it and said they were not very familiar with the field. I also know that next year a lecturer intends to incorporate aspects of my work into his syllabus. It makes it worthwhile to know that my experience will benefit other students".

A multiplier effect

The architecture department of the Hogeschool voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten of Saint-Luc in Brussels also signed up to this strand of Leonardo da Vinci. For this particular school, the decision to send students abroad on placement was in response to very specific needs. Johan Verbeke, the department coordinator in Saint-Luc, described the initial challenge. Architects need to work on design for long periods before they can come up with a project. Today, there is a new, highly effective computer-assisted architectural design system (CAAD). But few architects actually use it, probably due to a lack of information but also, and this is the crux of the problem, because few architecture schools provide high-quality classes on its use. "Thanks to Leonardo da Vinci and its placement programme, we have been able to establish a project to give student architects the opportunity

to become familiar with CAAD, directly in the workplace." It was still necessary to ensure that the initiative benefited everyone, students, lecturers and professionals alike. "We then", said Johan Verbeke, "had the idea of developing a manual for use and information that could be consulted by all architects. The experience of the young people meant that I could get to know the system. I analysed it and developed an understanding of the system. Then we published a users' guide, a sort of training manual". Gradually, the multiplier effect became evident.

Benefits for smaller firms

Hosting a young European on placement strengthens the European image and culture of a company. It is a blessing in particular for SMEs, which are faced with the need to adapt their technological know-how to cope with rapid change in an increasingly open environment. Leonardo da Vinci plays a part in improving the competitiveness of these small companies, often large job providers, in the European market. In high-tech sectors such as engineering, medicine, management or sciences, there are many projects designed to send students, at low cost, on placement to work on a specific area of development that will prove vital to the survival and renewal of the particular company in question.

Geneviève Berger, coordinator of student placements in the Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie of Lyons, thinks that hosting a student offers companies "the possibility to perfect a product and test its application from a new perspective" and facilitates "the production of technical documents in the language of the target country".

Heads of SMEs in the field of water treatment stress that "students on placement improve productivity and bring fresh ideas to the company. They can also take charge of projects which would otherwise be difficult to implement".

"Students on placement strengthen the cultural diversity of our staff", said Stéphane Tetreau from Schlumberger. "It is an opportunity for technology transfer through human mobility and enables us to overcome the obstacles to transnational mobility more effectively".

New blood

Under Leonardo da Vinci, Theresa McBride spent a year in Verona working for Glaxo Wellcome, a company specializing in biotechnologies. She feels she learnt a lot from the placement, but also reckons that she made her own contribution to the local company. "In England, we have a different approach to biotechnology applications. Glaxo Wellcome works mainly with England and the US. My input was crucial to their future development. My work colleagues were interested in the new ideas that I suggested. I was also able to help the professionals in the company to write their reports in a truly British style".

Students, due to the new skills acquired in their studies, and due also to their cultural differences, inject new life into a company and motivate the team as a whole. It is clear that the benefits are widely shared.

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First impressions of the 1997 call for proposals

An examination of the proposals submitted for the 1997 Leonardo da Vinci call highlights the main trends emerging in vocational training projects in Europe. The call for proposals yielded 1,823 applications eligible for transnational projects (pilot projects, placement and exchange programmes, surveys and analytical projects), with an average of 14 partners per proposal (compared with 8.2 in 1996).

Continuity and development

While the renewal of the five Community priorities for 1997 provided consistency with the dynamic set in motion by the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996 and by the publication of the White Paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*, several factors have influenced the profile of this call for proposals.

The drop in applications observed in 1996 was confirmed in 1997, mainly as a result of clearer and better-targeted priorities in the call for proposals.

A particular point to note was the genuine enthusiasm prompted by the joint call for educational multimedia, launched on the same day as the 1997 Leonardo da Vinci call and for which more than 370 applications bear the Leonardo da Vinci mark. The impact of this programme on the range of partnerships and the scope of projects submitted is clear, as it brings together the Telematics, Targeted Socio-Economic Research, Esprit, Ten-Telecom and Socrates programmes (for information: <http://www2.echo.lu>).

The proposals in the 1997 call generally demonstrate an even higher level of quality and innovation than those of 1996. Project promoters not selected in previous calls for proposals have clearly drawn the requisite lessons and now fully meet the requirements of the programme.

As regards project content, as in 1996, concern for employment is ever present in all the proposals submitted.

An effective alternative for getting more young people into work

Firstly, the Leonardo da Vinci call for proposals reveals a dramatic quantitative and qualitative improvement in the programmes placing students and young graduates in companies: the advantages of placements are increasingly recognized by training schemes and the young people are given due credit. They become much more employable and significantly improve their social skills. Host companies are identified more effectively and are more involved than in the past. Moreover, placements are more a part of the transfer of know-how and technology to companies and, more particularly, to SMEs.

Secondly, many projects are designed to develop new approaches to apprenticeships and sandwich-training at all levels and in all countries, ensuring that these are better integrated into overall training and guided by supervisors who are better managed and trained.

New career profiles in response to technological change

Adapting to technological and industrial change, through the emergence of new career profiles offering new skills, is still the subject of a significant number of proposals. The proposals begin by analysing skills and qualification needs in response to the latest technological developments and to their implications for the organization of work. They then define the new career profiles required and draw up systems of reference for the necessary training skills.

Genuine lifelong training pathways

The 1997 call for proposals confirms and reinforces the disappearance of the dividing line between initial and continuing training in many projects, thanks to validation and recognition of the skills acquired by young people completing sandwich training and by workers still in employment. Moreover, individual access to skills validation and recognition systems is one of the keys to promoting a genuine culture of lifelong learning, as it enables workers to validate skills acquired during their training pathway whenever they wish.

The development of increasingly effective and flexible multimedia tools is also part of the notion of training as a continuing process. These tools enable people to train in the workplace, at their own pace, either independently or semi-independently, guided by periodic and sometimes long-distance supervision. The culture of lifelong learning, therefore, goes hand in hand with specifically tailored approaches.

A European training area

The transnational dimension of projects is becoming increasingly important both in terms of the remarkable range of partnerships and in terms of the subjects addressed.

There is renewed interest in language training projects, which clearly play a key role in European citizenship and form the linchpin of the European social area.

Several proposals deal with training young people and workers in implementing European directives, mainly in the areas of quality, hygiene, safety in the workplace or environmental protection in the production process.

Information and communication technologies are increasingly becoming the vehicles for training, thanks to their immense potential in terms of how flexibly they can be used in terms of time and space.

Finally, transnational sectoral networks are continuing to develop and play an increasingly crucial role, particularly in cross-border recognition of worker qualifications.

New countries are participating fully in the programme

While the 1996 Leonardo da Vinci call for proposals enabled the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (the CEECs) to be involved in the programme without any legal or financial commitment from the Commission, the 1997 call was opened up to Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Cyprus as promoters or partners of projects.

Moreover, the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe will this year be involved in projects, although no funding will be awarded, preparing them for more direct and full involvement in the near future.

flash!

Results of the 1997 call for proposals selection process

Following the assessment procedure, 730 projects (708 for the 18 countries involved from the beginning of the programme and 22 for Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Cyprus) were selected on the basis of qualitative analytical criteria and in accordance with the five priorities defined by the Commission. Almost 40 % of the eligible projects were accepted. The total amount of funding for the projects selected is over ECU 110 million (almost ECU 105 million for the 18 countries involved from the launch of the programme and about 5 million for Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Cyprus), that is, an average funding level of some ECU 150 000.

Projects selected

The 730 transnational projects selected following the 1997 Leonardo da Vinci call for proposals include:

- 495 pilot projects;
- 188 placement and exchange programmes for a total of 9,059 students, young graduates and trainers exercising their trans-national mobility (this figure does not include some 19,500 participating in mobility programmes under Strand I);
- 47 surveys and studies.



Tackling the obstacles to transnational mobility in the European Union

Further information

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Green Paper

Every year more than 350,000 people undertake some sort of transnational mobility action under EU initiatives, whether it is a three-week placement in a company as part of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, a year at a university in another country, voluntary work, or researching a PhD. Most of them will experience little or no difficulty before or during their time abroad, but a small proportion face problems.

To find out more about these obstacles and to set about dismantling them, in 1996 the Commission published a Green Paper: *Education, training, research - the obstacles to transnational mobility*¹. Not only can such obstacles detract from the benefits of mobility for those who undertake it, but they may deter other people from even thinking about it. The Commission undertook extensive consultation, covering youth groups, universities, training establishments, companies, trade unions, employers' organizations and others. There were also personal responses to the Commission's invitation to provide examples of obstacles encountered in these areas.

Inspection, reflection, correction

The Commission's analysis of the problems was generally held to be relevant and accurate. Though some obstacles were encountered more often in some fields or some Member States than others, there was general agreement that the Green Paper had hit the right note, at the right time. This was endorsed last May, when the Netherlands Presidency of the Council hosted a conference bringing together representatives of many of the different groups affected by the issues raised in the Green Paper. During two days of plenary and workshop discussion, delegates examined the various obstacles and proposed possible solutions. An unexpected benefit of the conference was the way that, in bringing together people from a wide diversity of interests, it allowed very diverse groups to make connections.

On the basis of this consultation, the Commission identified five main areas where the obstacles were seen to be particularly significant, and some initial actions to be taken.

Five strategies to solve tackle five dilemmas

Definition of status

People undertaking a transnational placement research contract etc. do not always fit easily into national rules and regulations. This can lead to administrative difficulties and a person may not have the same status (student, trainee, apprentice, researcher, employee) in the host country as in the home country.

There is a wide variety of target groups in the Green Paper and the most effective way to solve this problem will be looked at for each group. In the case of apprentices, for example, the Commission will be presenting a proposal establishing a common quality framework for apprentices, including the notion of a 'European status of apprentices'. For researchers, these issues will be examined within the context of the newly agreed Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. There is also work being done at grassroots level to find solutions to this problem, such as Internship Agreements, signed by the home institution, the host institution and the student/trainee, which set out the responsibilities and clarify the status of the student/trainee and clarify his or her status.

Qualifications

Students who undertake some of their studies at a university abroad may have difficulties in getting that period recognized when they are back in their home country. Workers also frequently experience problems in producing evidence of their vocational qualifications when they establish themselves in another Member State. Although most of the legal problems have been addressed by the EU, a number of practical obstacles remain. For instance, national systems are so different that it is difficult for a job applicant to make a potential employer understand a qualification's content and level.

A number of tools are being developed, so that non-national students and workers may have their achievements more easily understood and recognized. Tools such as 'diploma supplements', 'portfolios' or 'skill cards' are being supported and will be improved. 'Ad hoc' agreements on mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications will be actively supported at all levels. Qualifications could also be made more transparent and include a number of clear indicators about the level of skills required. Further, validation and recognition of periods spent abroad via Community programmes should become a pre-condition for financial support from the Commission.

Transferability of grants

Students wishing to finance a period of study abroad can sometimes find that the rules governing the distribution of national grants and other forms of support do not cover the time spent in another country.

Some Member States have already approached this issue, either on a bilateral or multilateral basis. However, to ensure equal application of the principle of free movement throughout the EU, the Commission will be proposing a Recommendation relating to the transferability of grants, urging all Member States to adopt measures allowing students and trainees to take their grants – or other forms of support – with them when studying in another Member State.

Linguistic and cultural obstacles

A major obstacle to mobility in Europe is a lack of sufficient language skills, particularly for mobility to countries outside the English-, French- and German-speaking areas. It is also necessary to consider the level of proficiency that is necessary – would a knowledge of the host language be necessary for purely social reasons or would it also be required at work? A major aim of mobility is to create mutual understanding among the people of Europe, so understanding the culture of the country visited and acquiring intercultural competencies are important aspects of any transnational mobility.

*Within the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, numerous initiatives are being financed to improve language learning in an academic and professional context. The Commission's White Paper, *Teaching and learning - towards the learning society*, introduced the idea of a language 'label' for new initiatives to promote language learning. At institutional level, there needs to be a commitment on the part of both those involved in designing mobility activities and the participants themselves, to develop their language skills before embarking on a mobility action.*

Information and administration

There is a sometimes bewildering array of sources of information relating to transnational mobility for studying, training and research. Each of these deals with a specific area, and they are not all necessarily linked. People giving advice need to be aware of all the opportunities available. It is also important to have information that is as clear as possible about the country being visited, the rules and regulations that apply to the student/trainee and the content of the mobility action being undertaken.

The Commission is examining ways to link up the existing sources of information. Member States will need to consider how they can ensure that their officials are trained to deal with the full range of enquiries and are able to provide information about the host country. Some interesting initiatives being undertaken at institutional level, such as directories with information about all partner institutions and the countries they are in, are worth being repeated at national and European level.

The issues raised in the Green Paper are complex and fall under the responsibility of a wide range of players. The Commission, Member States, institutions, enterprises and even the participants themselves need to address these issues and find practical, simple solutions that allow the fullest possible advantage to be drawn from transnational mobility, to the benefit of all.

¹ COM(96) 462 final. See article in Issue 6 of Le Magazine.

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Building the learning environments of the future

Multimedia education

46 projects have finally been selected following the Commission's joint call for educational multimedia projects. The full results are not expected this side of the year 2000, but an initial analysis provides some interesting indicators.

What do teachers and pupils have in common with multimedia producers, information technologists, telecoms operators, publishers, broadcasters, SMEs, the software industry, voluntary associations and other organizations throughout the European Union and beyond? One answer is the Joint Call for Educational Multimedia launched by the European Commission last December, as a cross-programme call involving six different Commission services and programmes, including Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci.

These diverse groups have joined forces to improve the quality of European education by developing educational multimedia tools and applications for a variety of user groups at different educational levels.

The Joint Call for Educational Multimedia was designed to implement the recommendations of the Research-Industry Task Force set up in March 1995 by Commissioners Edith Cresson and Martin Bangemann to coordinate EU programmes in this area. This initiative also led to the adoption of a Council resolution on educational multimedia software in the field of education and training, plus the action plan Learning in the Information Society, adopted by the Commission following the European Council in Florence (June 1996), which aims to:

- encourage electronic networks of schools in Europe;
- stimulate multimedia teaching and learning multimedia resources of European interest;
- promote teacher training aimed at integrating new technologies in the classroom;
- raise awareness of the educational potential of audio-visual and multimedia teaching and learning aids.

The Joint Call links together Community research and technological development programmes (Esprit, Telematics application and Targeted socio-economic research) and other Community programmes such as Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and TEN-Telecom.

The Joint call generated no fewer than 835 pre-proposals. Full proposals were invited from 107 projects, of which 46 were finally selected to share the ECU 42 million expected to be available.

Technological and pedagogical innovation

A primary concern of most projects selected is to develop and validate new and innovative learning environments supported by educational multimedia, such as three-dimensional graphical interfaces and virtual reality representation (VR) applied to specific subject areas. These new environments also include examples of innovative pedagogical approaches, such as simulation and game metaphors, and research on user acceptance.

Many projects address the needs of school communities and directly involve schools. They focus on the needs of teachers as well as pupils in the introduction and use of new technologies. The Joint Call is considered to be a breakthrough for the involvement of schools in European research and technology development activities, within the area of educational multimedia and the use of new information and communication technologies in schools.

Cooperation and networking

Some of the projects aim at building support networks to facilitate cooperation in education and the use of multimedia resources and information and communication technologies, and the exchange of practical experience from the use of multimedia in school and university environments. One such project is the European School Net (EUN), a network of national networks, initiated by the Swedish education minister and supported by her colleagues in the other Member States. Several projects will develop authoring tools and appropriate methodologies for the design of multimedia learning resources, including the training of teachers and the involvement of teachers in the conceptualization and production of learning resources.

The main objectives for the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes via these projects are

- to promote the elaboration of sound and innovative pedagogical frameworks and improve the quality of the pedagogical materials and on-line services to be developed;
- to enhance the skills of the teachers and trainers in the use of new methods and techniques;
- to analyse aspects of open and distance learning (ODL) methodologies and the use of new technologies, with a view to sharing experience at European level; and
- to support cooperation between educational establishments and others within the domain of ODL and educational multimedia.

The final outcomes of projects will be available in 2 to 3 years; meanwhile, the research and development process itself will be a valuable outcome linking a multitude of partners and competencies, including schools and universities, in a joint effort to build the learning environments of the future and improve the quality of the learning process.



Several thousand European schools connect to the Internet

Now you can "surf" in class too!

Putting 10,000 European schools on-line in one week? No problem. Operation Netdays, organized under the aegis of the Commission, ran from October 18 to 25 throughout Europe, and suddenly everything just clicked. So now you can "surf" in class too.



As part of the "Learning in an information society" action plan, the European Commission launched Netdays¹ to make Europe's young people more aware of the use of the new technologies. Three types of partnership joined forces to make the week-long event a success: schools, enterprises and public institutions. An ambitious initiative based on a similar action carried out in California, where more than 3,000 schools and colleges came on-line in just a single day.

Linking up to spread the message

The first step was to link up local, regional and national school networks at European level. "Several dozen networks already existed prior to the Netdays, but few of them were known to each other and involved in educational exchanges," explains Jimmy Jamar, one of the event organizers for the Commission. The involvement of institutional and private partners allowed schools not yet connected to connect to the Internet at a reduced cost.

The second step was to inform pupils, teachers, parents and head teachers of the educational opportunities offered by the new technologies. With financial support from the Commission, awareness-boosting campaigns targeted at Internet use were organized in schools more or less everywhere.

"Until very recently the school community was suspicious of the Internet," explains Jimmy Jamar. The Netdays changed all that. Parents discovered the benefits of the Internet in a classroom situation. They saw that access by children to certain information could be controlled. At the same time, teachers were reassured of their role in the information society. Finally, school heads came to better understand the benefits of making Netdays a priority within their school.

The Internet comes to the islands

More than 300 projects were submitted, bringing together 10,000 schools in many different areas. The experience of the Scandinavian countries in the new technologies pro-

vided a useful example for the so-called "Southern" countries. Some of the regions at the greatest distance from urban centres showed a particularly keen interest in the initiative. The Canary Islands, the Isle of Wight, and rural areas such as the Creuse in France are now all connected to the Internet.

Public and private, in the service of schools

"We wanted to prove that a closer partnership between schools, local authorities and enterprises was not only possible but necessary for the effective development of the information society," explains the European official. Such an operation would have been unthinkable without the cooperation and support of the public sector. National governments, regional authorities, municipalities and local associations were all involved in the Netdays, providing a favourable framework plus an endorsement for these new teaching practices.

Major companies such as Apple, ICL, France Telecom, Lotus and Deutsche Telecom agreed to financially sponsor either the awareness-raising campaigns or the actual connecting of schools to the Internet. "By investing in education in this way, the business world proves that it can have a role to play in areas which are essential to society's development," explains Alain Dumort, co-organizer of the event.

The impact of Netdays

The Commission will soon be making a full evaluation of the operation. But the impact is already clear. Netdays provided a new impetus to existing networks and served to set up new ones. Through its awareness-boosting campaign and other supporting actions, operation Netdays focused attention on the many possibilities networks can offer. Finally, it clearly helped overcome certain people's fears of information technologies.

¹ Details (in English or French) of all Netdays projects, plus a list of participating schools and sponsors, can be found at <http://netdays.eun.org>

Edith Cresson gives the green light

Netdays Europe was launched on 16 October at the Institut Frans Fisher in Schaerbeek, Brussels, in the presence of Commission President Jacques Santer, Commissioner Edith Cresson and DG XXII Director-General Thomas O'Dwyer. Mrs Cresson said every child should have access to the new technologies. She declared that it was "everybody's responsibility" to ensure that schools join the information society, calling on "teachers, parents, public authorities and enterprises" to act. Welcoming the participation of some 10,000 schools in these first Netdays, she sounded a word of caution: "Multimedia is not a magic wand; to be effective, it must be part of an active approach to education." Finally, she hoped that by the year 2000 all schools would be involved in setting up a vast European network of knowledge.

