

Le Magazine

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH IN EUROPE

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EDUCATION



TRAINING



YOUTH



Arion in Finland





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LE MAGAZINE

in brief 

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Do you want to know more about an article?

This is easily done. The articles generally give the name and fax number of the contact person. Please feel free to use them!

Do you want to consult DG XXII's Internet site?

The address is:

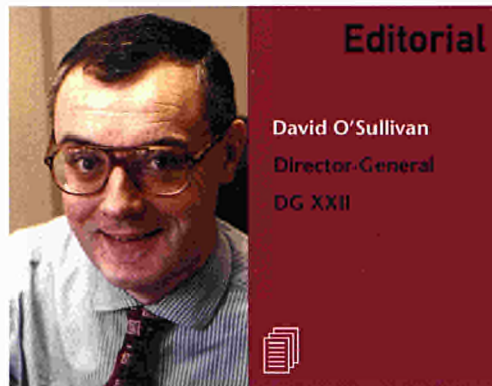
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The site contains a lot of useful information on DG XXII's programmes, actions, other publications and more.

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This edition of Le Magazine comes to you at a time of great change in the Commission.

There is no hiding the fact that the last few months have been difficult for DG XXII. The report of the Committee of Independent Experts and the subsequent resignation of the Commission have obviously had a profound impact on our work. And more specifically, we have had to manage the difficult situation provoked by the closure of the Leonardo Technical Assistance Office.

We regret the disruption that this has caused for project promoters and participants. We have been working extremely hard to resolve these problems, and a special team is now in place to ensure the smooth completion of the programme.

But looking beyond these short term difficulties, there is good reason to be optimistic.

As we go to press, the new President of the European Commission, Mr Prodi, is putting together his team of Commissioners, and the European Parliamentary elections are getting into gear. By the summer, therefore, we can expect to have put the current difficulties behind us.

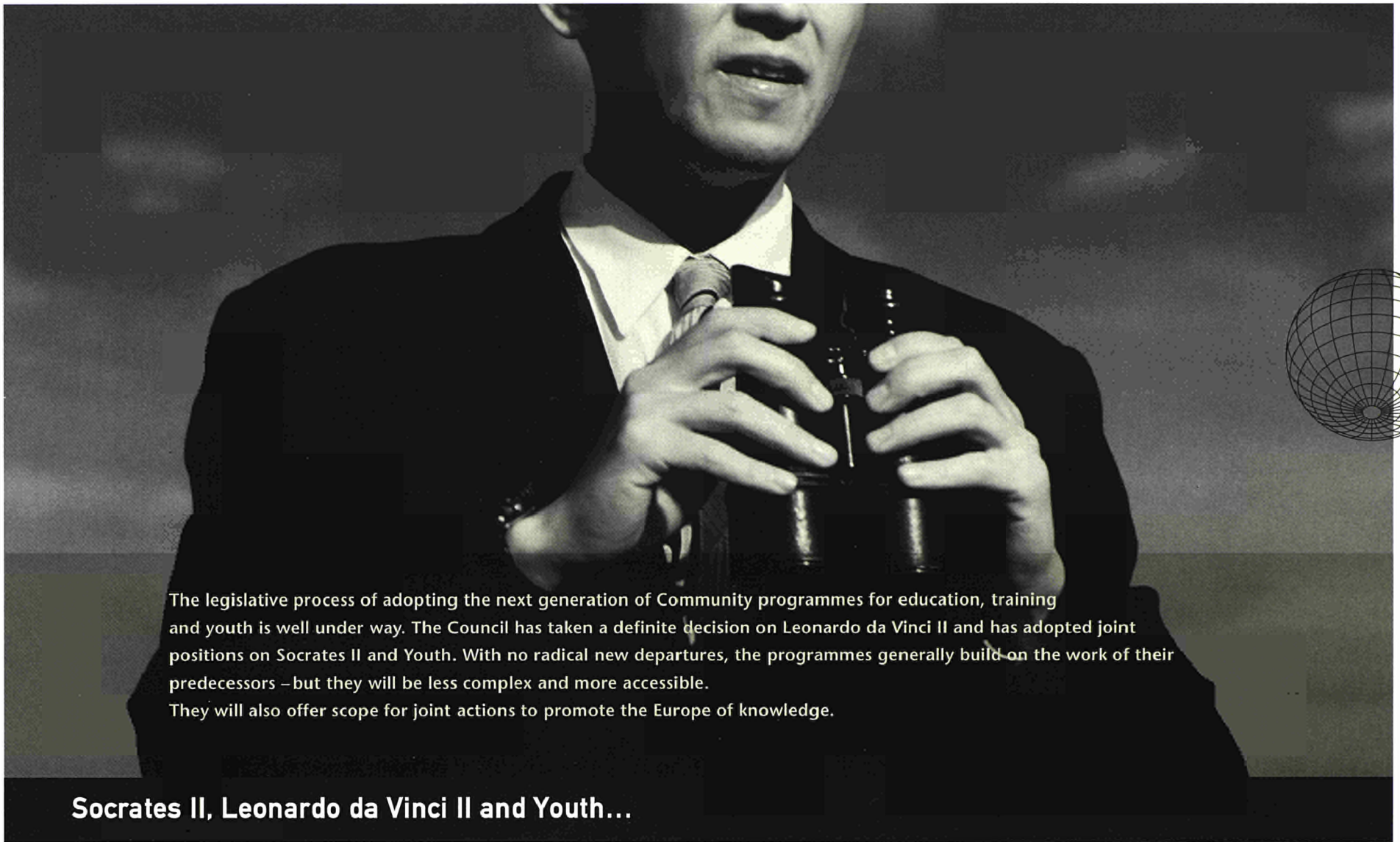
Looking to the future, the prospects are bright for education, training and youth policies. There is a strong political momentum behind our policies. Investing in knowledge, skills and qualifications is now a central concern for all Member States, and the European Union has an important catalytic role to play in helping Member States to improve and adapt systems and provision to meet these challenges.

The new generation of Community education, training and youth programmes will give a powerful impetus to these efforts. On 26 April, the second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme was formally adopted by the Council. The programme will be operational as from 1 January 2000, with a total budget of €1,150 million over the next seven years. And on 29 April, Tempus III was adopted, also for seven years. Final agreement on the Socrates II and Youth programmes will hopefully not be far behind. We are already working hard to prepare the launch and implementation of these programmes next year.

Beyond this, we will need to work together to find ways of deepening European cooperation and developing a policy dialogue based on the identification of common challenges, the pooling of resources and the promotion of innovation and improvements in the quality of systems and provision. The arrival of the new Commission, coupled with the launch of the new programmes, will provide a sound basis on which to build this cooperation. □

David O'Sullivan





The legislative process of adopting the next generation of Community programmes for education, training and youth is well under way. The Council has taken a definite decision on Leonardo da Vinci II and has adopted joint positions on Socrates II and Youth. With no radical new departures, the programmes generally build on the work of their predecessors –but they will be less complex and more accessible. They will also offer scope for joint actions to promote the Europe of knowledge.

Socrates II, Leonardo da Vinci II and Youth...

new programmes for a new millennium

Different legislative routes

Between the Commission's initial proposal and the final decision (by the Council of Ministers, together with the European Parliament in the case of Socrates II and Youth), the programme texts are constantly discussed and amended. In May 1998 the Commission made proposals to renew the Socrates (education) and Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training) programmes and to set up a new Youth programme combining the present European Voluntary Service and Youth for Europe.

Since then the three programmes have followed somewhat different legislative routes. On 26 April 1999 the Council adopted the decision on phase two of the Leonardo da Vinci vocational training programme, having taken on board some of Parliament's amendments under the codecision procedure.

The new programme has been allocated € 11.15 billion over a seven-year period (2000-2006), a significant increase on the previous period.

In December 1998 ministers agreed a joint position on Socrates. This then went before Parliament which voted 14 amendments at second reading in February. The final decision will be made in the autumn of 1999 under the codecision procedure of the European Parliament and Council.

There has been some delay with the Youth programme, the Youth Council having failed to adopt a joint position in November. In May, however, it agreed on a budget of € 350 million, and the programme should be approved by late 1999 or early 2000, under the same codecision procedure that applies to Socrates.

Innovations

What innovations will the new programmes bring? First there is the duration. Socrates II and Leonardo da Vinci II will run for seven years, from 1 January 2000 until 31 December 2006 (though this is less certain for the Youth programme as the common position envisages five years). The idea is to bring budgets in line with the Agenda 2000 arrangements. An added benefit is that it will give the programmes a more stable basis.

The programmes have also been simplified and made more coherent. There will be eight actions under Socrates and four objectives rather than nine, starting with school education (Comenius), then higher education (Erasmus) and finally adult and other types of education (action renamed Grundtvig). The horizontal actions follow: languages, multi-media and information exchange.

Leonardo da Vinci II is structured around three objectives (previously 19), to be implemented through five main measures (compared to the previous 23): mobility, pilot projects, language skills, transnational networks and reference tools. These measures can also be combined. Thematic pilot projects of broad Community interest will also be supported within certain budgetary limits.

The proposals in the Youth Programme also reflect this desire for rationalization and greater coherence. Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service will be merged, giving rise to a new action entitled "La Chance aux Jeunes" ("Youth Initiative" in the common position). While it builds on the experience of existing programmes, this action is also specifically designed to give more scope to young people's creativity.

Another innovation which will doubtless be welcomed by programme users is the possibility of organising joint actions across the Socrates II, Leonardo da Vinci II and Youth subject areas. Current programmes have often been criticized for being too compartmentalized and failing to take account of the often vague boundaries between different programmes or actions. In future it will be possible to present projects covering a number of fields or involving several Community actions.



Europe Direct

Get in touch with Europe

Europe Direct is an information service set up by the Commission to answer individual or business enquiries about the EU. It began in 1996 as a pilot e-mail question and answer project, and proved very much in demand. A call centre, with freephone numbers in each country, was integrated into Europe Direct in June 1998, and the service is now entering a new stage of development. Within the Commission, DG XXII is one of seven directorates-general that have joined forces under the Europe Direct initiative. Many of the enquiries received are to do with opportunities for studying or training abroad, the recognition of qualifications and other education-related issues.

If you have a question about the European Union, Europe Direct is there to give you the answer. As a European citizen, you have rights in all 15 countries which are members of the European Union. These include the right to travel, live or study in any member state. You also have a right to work in any EU country, and to have your qualifications recognized there. European law gives you rights when buying goods and services, and the right to equal opportunities throughout the EU. And whatever your views on Europe, you have a right to know what the EU means for you, your family or your business. Europe Direct is a free service designed to put the facts at your fingertips.

Europe Direct is a two-way dialogue. Your feedback is important, and helps the European Union to identify problems and respond to them. If you encounter problems in exercising your rights in the single market, if there are loopholes we should plug, or more information you need, use Europe Direct to let us know.

Information on offer includes:

■ **General information** about the European Union, its work, its institutions and its policies.

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■ **A jobs database** with vacancies in Europe open to jobseekers from all EU countries.

You can contact Europe Direct in a number of ways, including telephone, internet and e-mail (<http://europa.eu.int/citizens> and <http://europa.eu.int/business>). There are also networks of national and local information points which offer specialist help on particular topics. Call the freephone Call Centre where you live.

The Amsterdam Treaty came into force on 1 May 1999.

It amends several previous treaties, and strengthens certain provisions including those on education and training.

In the Treaty, the Member States affirm their determination to "promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge among their people, through broad access to education and the continuous updating of knowledge" (amended preamble to the Treaty establishing the European Union).

The articles dealing with education, training and youth have been renumbered from 126-127 to 149-150. In addition, article 150 (the old article 127) has been slightly amended.

Vocational training actions will now be adopted using the codecision procedure (joint adoption by European Parliament and Council) rather than the cooperation procedure (adoption by Council following an opinion by Parliament).

Finally, procedures have been streamlined in a number of ways. For example Socrates II dispenses with the submission and selection modes, as well as a number of intermediary stages which unnecessarily complicate the programme's management. As regards school education, each school will be invited to submit a 'Comenius plan' covering all activities.

Calls for proposals under Leonardo da Vinci II will no longer be launched annually, but in 2000, 2002 and 2004. The selection procedure will depend on the type of measure and all mobility projects will be fully decentralized to national level.

Pilot projects, transnational networks and language skills projects will also be decentralized, but with the Commission evaluating their innovative and transnational content. As with mobility schemes, contracts will be drawn up at country level. For other measures (thematic pilot projects, reference tools, projects by European organizations and joint actions), proposals will be sent direct to the Commission which will decide in accordance with the procedures laid down in the decision.

The concrete details of the Youth programme – which inherits a tradition of flexible implementation – will be discussed with the Member States.

Budget stumbling block

Budgets will be the main issue in future negotiations. For Socrates II, a compromise must be reached between the €1.55 billion proposed by the Council and the €2.5 billion sought by Parliament. As for Youth, the €350 million proposed is well below the €800 million Parliament wanted. Whatever the final outcome, the new programmes should receive increased funding, even if not quite at the level the Commission had been hoping for in its initial proposal. □

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Belgium	0800 (NL)-92038 (FR)-92039
Denmark	8001-0201
Finland	08001-13191
France	0800 90-9700
Germany	0800-1-850 400
Greece	00800-3212254

Ireland	1-800-553188
Italy	800-876-166
Luxembourg	0800-2550
The Netherlands	0800-8051
Portugal	0800-222-011
Spain	900-983198
Sweden	020-794949
United Kingdom	0800-581 591

Youth for Europe gives young people the chance to receive training outside the confines of school. In addition to its high profile European mobility actions, it also funds projects which do not necessarily involve spending time in other EU countries. These 'youth initiatives' are local projects in which young people come together to develop creative actions. The constituent parts of the Youth for Europe programme are designed to complement each other. There are different ways of taking part and the opportunities are numerous. A group of young people who have taken part in European exchanges, for example, can go on to launch an initiative with European Community backing –or vice versa. Although essentially local, youth initiatives nevertheless reflect a broader conceptual approach and include a European dimension, by virtue of the Community's support and the scope for subsequent networking.

European Voluntary Service reflects the same philosophy. The core component is the exchange visits by young people to a host community in another country, from which they derive a genuine learning experience. Other mechanisms are then linked to this. One such is Future Capital. This allows a young person who has completed a period of voluntary service to develop his or her own creative project. The criteria applied are very flexible and the European Commission provides financial support.

Behind all these activities lies the desire to stimulate the creativity of young people. The Commission's proposal for the new Youth programme includes an action known as "La Chance aux Jeunes" ("Youth Initiative" in the common position). This action is founded on the experiences gained under the earlier Youth Initiatives, together with similar measures under the EVS Future Capital scheme.



European
Voluntary Service
Youth
for Europe

Youth creativity

is the theme

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Future Capital

A recipe for success

Adopted in 1999, the European Voluntary Service is one of the two EC informal education programmes; it provides young people with the opportunity to acquire valuable experience for their future by working abroad on projects rooted in a local community. The programme has been conceived as a coherent framework in which different actions are combined so as to ensure that young people get the best out of their period as European volunteers and beyond. This is where Future Capital comes into play. Many EVS participants return home full of ideas for the future but in need of a helping hand to get their personal initiatives off the ground.

Future Capital allows former EVS volunteers to apply for a grant of up to € 5,000 to launch their own projects. Applicants can present their projects, whether profit-making or not, in a wide variety of areas – social, environmental, cultural, educational, economic – and the proposed activities need not correspond to the work they undertook during their voluntary service, although it helps if they do. The projects can be launched in any EU Member State, Norway or Iceland.

Applications for Future Capital funding, including a full description of the project and budget plan, are evaluated by national selection panels of five to ten people with proven experience in youth work, business, volunteering, financial matters and project development. The panel members help the EVS managers in each country to select the best projects and also act as advisors to the young people applying to Future Capital. Since January, 150 projects have been put forward and another 50 are in the pipeline.

What sort of projects are they?

After an experience such as EVS, volunteers usually become more independent and mature, and a period abroad often makes them realize what it is that they would like to do in life, redirecting their priorities and objectives.

This has been borne out by an evaluation study and the following quotations from two Spanish volunteers are typical:

“With EVS I discovered a side of myself that I never thought to be true. Now I am able to use my new skills to develop myself personally and I found a job in my host country thanks to what I learned during EVS. Thanks to it I have found my own way in life”.

“I think EVS is good because it brings down barriers and opens up our minds to be intercultural. It enriches us all. For some volunteers, EVS can be a strong influence in their professional careers, opening a lot of doors”.

Nevertheless, not all volunteers returning from abroad find the necessary support to achieve their new aims in life. Though a significant number find jobs (circa 40%) or continue their studies (circa 45%), many want to go further. Those who are less lucky in finding a job or who do not envisage studying any more often feel frustrated, lacking the opportunity to contribute in return with what they have learned during EVS. Future Capital was created to give help where it is most needed, when volunteers need a little backing to develop their EVS experience further.

Video training

Didier is French and has always been involved in youth work. After his EVS in Greece, he decided to create a youth association with a group of friends to support and inform young people in his deprived region about the existing European programmes and to develop intercultural learning activities with them. By creating a video documentary on the issues that concern young people in his area, he hopes to raise their social awareness and to “empower” them. He applied to Future Capital to fund the necessary training of the young people in filming techniques and for the editing of the final video. The video will be shown later to all the primary and secondary schools in the area, followed by group discussions coordinated by his youth association.

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A guide to Berlin

Hanna and Shona are German and Irish respectively. Hanna did her EVS in France and Shona in Germany. It so happened that Shona's hosting organization was Hanna's sending organization, and here starts the story of their friendship. They both realised that it would be nice if volunteers and other young foreigners coming to live in Berlin could have a guide that was not just for tourists, but went deeper into the history and stories of this city they both love to live in. Hence the idea of applying to Future Capital to put together this guide, titled: *Berlin, Berlin, Berlin, No place I'd rather be; Where else can I do 1000 things, And still be home for tea?* Future Capital will help them to collect the right information, meet with the right people and finally in editing and distributing it.

Memories, memories

Steven is British. While in Germany with EVS, he became interested in the memories of older people in his hosting town and thought of putting together a project where old and young people from his home town and his hosting town could exchange their memories. How was it to be young 40 years ago, and how is it now? What has changed and what has remained the same? He decided to apply to Future Capital to get funding to create an interactive CD-Rom with video images from these two towns, their people and history and with information on EVS. With this project, Steven wants to bring together two nations that were at war not so long ago, as well as two different generations.

Promoting EVS in Spain

Núria and Marc are both from Spain. They knew each other from university, had lost contact and one day found each other on a bus in the UK going to the same EVS training activity. This would be the start of a friendship that led them to create Alternative Youth, an association of and for young people. They applied to Future Capital to help promote EVS in their region, through workshops, conferences, targeted information, etc. Their dream is to be able to host EVS volunteers one day in their association. To begin with they will prepare and support Spanish volunteers to go abroad and will work closely with their local municipality to do so. They hope to boost EVS participation in their region. □

EVS is open to all young people between 18 and 25 legally resident in EU countries, Norway and Iceland. From six months to a year, volunteers are involved in projects ranging, for example, from rural and urban development projects to helping disabled children in doing sports and integrating homeless young people in mainstream society.

An EVS project is the result of a partnership, based on the initiative shown by the volunteer. A sending organization provides support and advice to the volunteer before departure and after his or her return, and a hosting organization accompanies and assists the volunteer during his or her stay abroad.

Applying for EVS is a simple procedure. Volunteers can contact a youth information centre in their local area, or any other youth related service near where they live, to obtain more detailed information on the programme.

The green team

European globe-trotters looking for a job in the environmental field can now consult a new guide to opportunities available throughout Europe, courtesy of Janine, Melanie and Kerstin. The project was made possible thanks to the European Community's Youth for Europe programme which supports local initiatives by young Europeans aged 15-25.

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Bad Oldesloe. This small German community with a population of 25,000, 30 km from Hamburg, has the appearance of a sleepy suburb. But its young people are certainly wide awake –and intend to let everyone know it. Janine, 21, Melanie, 19, and Kerstin, 17, are not short of ideas or resources. This year they have decided to devote themselves full time to their number one passion in life: the environment.

They meet up at the JUP, a non-profit-making association of young people and a defender of environmental causes. Organizing seminars and training courses, demonstrating against the use of genetically modified organisms, managing production workshops for natural cosmetics... there is certainly no shortage of outlets for their seemingly inexhaustible energies. "When I see a young person who tells me he is bored and doesn't know what to do," explains Melanie, tossing back her blonde hair, "I feel like shaking him. Why doesn't he use his hands, his brain, his creativity?"

Together with other young people in the town, the girls persuaded the local council to give them some empty premises to do up. This will be the *Inihaus*, or "house of initiative". For the moment, tarpaulins, paint pots, planks of wood and assorted debris litter the floor. A group of young people, dressed in dungarees or baggy trousers, are painting, banging in nails, renovating. Everybody lends a hand. "This here will be the bar," indicates Janine, behind her little round glasses. "Over there, a relaxation area. Upstairs the rooms are classified according to theme. There will be a reading room, a library and an anti-racism room for another youth organization. The yellow room is ours, dedicated to the theme of publishing."

The green job guide

The girls' choice of publishing was motivated by their initial project. This was to produce a guide to job opportunities for young people in Europe in the environmental field, whether in the city or the countryside. The guide includes opportunities to work on a farm or in a nature park, for a nature protection organization, or even in a research laboratory. This

Youth Initiative was supported by the European Commission under the Youth for Europe programme which funds local projects based on the creative input of young people. It clearly shows the link between the local and the European dimension. The guide helps young people to acquire work experience –very useful at a time of high unemployment– while at the same time discovering other EU or Central and Eastern European countries. It provides many useful details, on subjects such as the type of contract and remuneration proposed, the names of people to contact, the procedures to be followed (model letters and CVs in English, French and Spanish), the necessary social security forms, etc.

Preparing the guide was a formidable challenge. Information had to be gathered on environmental organizations, questionnaires drawn up and sent out, replies translated, texts written, the lay-out designed, photos obtained, errors corrected. "We were sometimes up all night working," said Kerstin, who is happy finally to see the culmination of their efforts and to know that the guide should soon be printed.

This young woman, who guiltily admits that she didn't much like school, seems to have changed a great deal. She once planned to train as a baker, but now has other more ambitious projects: to obtain her school leaving certificate and then either take an arts course or work for a newspaper.

At the age of 17, her horizons have broadened, she has become aware of political and social issues to which she used to be indifferent, and has become much more independent. "At school they are always telling you what you should do," adds Melanie. "You are not used to doing what you want to do, discovering activities and projects for yourself."

A wealth of projects

The three girls speak of a fourth friend, Frédérique, who came from France on a European Voluntary Service scheme (another Community "Youth" action which encourages the

informal education of young people). "She really did a lot of work," they all acknowledge. With hardly a word of German when she arrived, she soon made herself indispensable, and not just for contacting French organizations. Frédérique would now like to take the project further and make the guide available on the Internet.

Another possible development for the future is to set up European partnerships. At present the guide is mainly of use to young Germans, in particular for the practical information it offers on administrative procedures. Adapting it for other countries would be quite a job.

But our "ecology-girls" also have a lot of other ideas. Melanie is involved in a humanitarian action, collecting food from shopkeepers and then distributing it among the homeless. Meanwhile Janine is busy with another project backed by the European Community, the "ecomobile", a caravan which one young volunteer has restored using natural, non-polluting products. Old newspapers were used for the insulation and solar energy for the heating. Pulled by a tractor, the ecomobile is used for cultural events (concerts and plays), information and protest actions.

Of course it is also necessary to ensure a follow-up team is in place. Julia, who is in her final year at school, has been spending time at the JUP to help her decide whether to take an "environment" year out before going on to higher education. "In the present climate, young people's main worry is unemployment. It is becoming more difficult to mobilize them to actively support environmental causes," comments Jörn Hartje, JUP manager. But whether you actively support the cause or not, you cannot help but be struck by the commitment of these young people and their sense of initiative. Also, as Melanie points out, "the most interesting thing of all is to see an idea being turned into concrete action. What it shows is how the European Community can generate real enthusiasm!" □



Contact

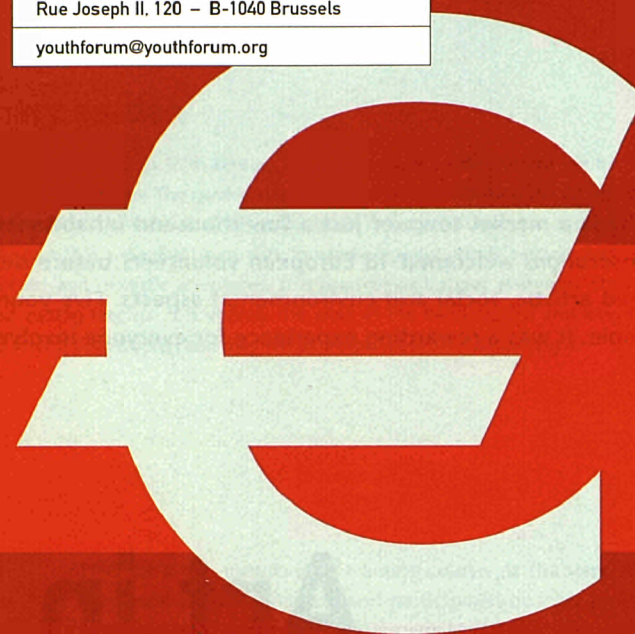
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1 euro per head is not enough



A school for democracy, an ice-breaker for relations with other countries, a boost for the civil society... A youth policy is many-faceted and important. The EU needs such a policy, says Pau Solanilla¹, President of the European Youth Forum. But in some ways, things are going backwards.

Why was the European Youth Forum set up?

The Youth Forum was created in 1978, with the encouragement of the European institutions. It provided a means of consulting young people prior to the launch of the first European programmes targeted at young people in the early '80s. These subsequently broadened to become the programmes we see today: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth for Europe III and now the European Voluntary Service. But I think it is still too early to say that the EU has what we could describe as a youth policy.

What has the Forum's value been?

First, the Youth Forum has been extremely useful in allowing the European institutions to have a permanent dialogue with young people. When it needs to find out what young people across Europe think, it can get rapid feedback. Not only this: we act as a multiplier, telling the grassroots what the European institutions are doing. I think we are one of the best multipliers that the European institutions have.

Secondly, it has increased the political profile of youth issues within the EU. I would say that cooperation between the Commission, the Youth Committee of the European Parliament and the Youth Forum has been the main motor of creating European actions for young people.

Thirdly, the Youth Forum is an excellent school for democracy. It serves as a training ground for Europe's future leaders – after all Jacques Santer was a member of Luxembourg's national youth council!

Is your role essentially political or educational?

Our first role is essentially political: to ensure that young people are taken into account in all areas of policy. This means making space for them in those places where decisions are taken. We believe that in all decisions that affect them, young people should be able to have a voice and be part of the decision. At the moment, they are excluded from decision-making, and this is undemocratic.

Our second task is educational: we try to encourage young people to play an active role in voluntary associations and in civil society. If we can succeed in this, then democracy will be strengthened, as the control of institutions will be broader. This is part of bringing the concept of European citizenship into being – we are creating an awareness of the role of the citizen in the decision-making process. We are not just a lobby for money for actions for young people.

Are you happy with the way the European institutions deal with young people?

We have built up good partnership relationships with the Commission – chiefly via DG XXII of course – and with the Parliament – including its Youth Committee – but have fared less well as regards the Council. Recently however, the profile of youth issues has been getting higher, particularly on employment. During the Austrian presidency, we met Prime Minister Klima, and as a result the Vienna summit emphasized the importance of young people. We take this as a good sign for the future.

What issues have you been active on recently?

As regards programmes, we are very concerned about the EU budget line "support for international youth NGOs" (A3-029), under which young people's organizations can apply for grant aid. Nowadays, when the Commission publishes a call for proposals, 30% more organizations are bidding for support. So it is increasingly needed – yet the Parliament and Council have cut the budget by about 15%.

This cut contradicts the claim that the Union is supporting young people. The Union has to give a clear political sign that it is making an investment in civil society, and in the demands of the citizens. Currently, EU spending on education, culture, youth and information taken all together is just over € 1 per European citizen. How much do we spend on each European cow? If we want a Europe of citizens, the budget of the Union has to be the budget of the citizens.

Is the Youth Forum itself suffering budget reductions?

The Youth Forum benefits from a separate grant for operating costs, which has not been cut as such. But it has been asked to provide 10% co-financing. Now we are not against the idea of co-financing, because we have always done it, but we think it is too much to have to find a fixed sum of € 200,000 per year. The only place that an international organisation can look for grant support is the EU. Reducing this support is creating competition instead of complementarity, and this is a move in the wrong direction.

What has your biggest setback been?

Our biggest disappointment was our failure at the last Inter-governmental Conference to get a clear reference to youth inserted into the Amsterdam Treaty.

But currently², our main worry is the fact that the youth programme budget is blocked, and the new youth programme will not be in place by 1 January 2000. This has come about because four countries – Britain, France, the Netherlands and Sweden – wanted zero growth in the budget. They want to stay at € 250 million, whereas the Commission has proposed € 600 million and Parliament € 800 million. It is completely unacceptable – in fact it is an insult to young people – to propose zero growth given the increased number of countries and people concerned.

What about longer-term challenges?

The challenge of the 21st century is to promote the values of European civilization while helping young people to find jobs. Even if actions for young people are built around employability, broader values such as tolerance, respect for human rights, solidarity, social justice and the fight against poverty should not be forgotten. The great challenge is to combine both things. □

1 Pau Solanilla, from Barcelona, was elected President of the European Youth Forum in October 1998 and holds office till October 2000.

2 The interview took place in February 1999.

The voice of organized youth

The European Youth Forum is a pluralist umbrella organization, representing young people, that is recognized by the European Union, Council of Europe and United Nations. It has 103 member organizations, comprising national youth councils in 38 countries as well as international non-governmental youth organizations from all over Europe. Its general assembly meets every two years, and an executive committee comprising all member organizations meets every six months. A bureau of 12 is elected to manage day-to-day affairs, all volunteers apart from the secretary general. The Brussels office has around 15 staff.

Wiltz is a market town of just a few thousand inhabitants in the rural north of Luxembourg. It was here that the international institution *Inifae* and the association *Coopérations* welcomed 18 European volunteers before despatching them to the United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal and Luxembourg to take part in projects that combined artistic, social and environmental aspects. Five young volunteers stayed in Wiltz, where they spent six months working with a group of mentally handicapped people. It was a rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Art in the service of society and the environment

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An extraordinary garden



Wiltz has three main tourist attractions: its 17th century chateau, a museum devoted to the Battle of the Ardennes (1944/45) and... its garden. The garden covers 2.5 hectares overlooking the *Coopérations* premises. It was at the association's initiative that this area, which belonged to a former brewery, was fully renovated as a public park. It is a magical place, with its winding paths, ponds, terraces and tastefully positioned works of art and majestic sculptures. It is used by just about everyone: children, the local community and visiting tourists. It is entirely the work of the handicapped and long-term unemployed people who attend *Coopérations* and they remain responsible for maintaining it.

Fernand, Jean-Pierre, Carlo, Jürgen and Tom are genuine workaholics. When Friday evening comes round, they say they are sad to have to down tools for two whole days. They then return to their family or the hospital for the weekend. All five are classed as mentally handicapped. During the week they attend the *Coopérations* workshop. Under the guidance of professional artists and Marc, their trainer, they are able freely to express their feelings and emotions, and display their talents.

They each perfect their own technique. Tom and Fernand carve wood. Jean-Pierre makes sculptures using wire wool. Jürgen and Carlo are the painters of the group. Jürgen is currently working on a painting of the Acropolis, using a very particular technique. Carlo is at work on the Greek gods. After Apollo, Zeus and Athena he is now getting down to Aphrodite, goddess of beauty and love.

Why this attraction to Greece? It no doubt has something to do with their trip to Athens in May 1998, accompanied by Marc and the five European volunteers working with *Coopérations* at the time. For almost three weeks the group functioned as a closely-knit team, working and playing together. The handicapped artists had been commissioned to work on laying out a small public park located in a green area at the foot of the Parthenon, where they designed and produced a series of wooden sculptures.

"We were all at the same level"

For six months, from January to June 1998, the young volunteers accompanied the five artists on their various trips. In fact, the Wiltz art workshop is always on the move, seizing any opportunity to make contact with a wider public. In March the young volunteers helped set up an exhibition of works by handicapped people just outside Antwerp, Belgium. In April, together with the *Coopérations* residents, they produced the scenery for a children's theatre in Luxembourg city, a huge work more than 15 metres long. In June, following the Greek project, they held a creative workshop in Wiltz for German-speakers, with or without a handicap. They built a wooden ship, nick-named "the ship of fools". Apparently, in the Middle Ages, "mad" people were rounded up and put on a boat which was simply left to be carried off by the current.

Marc, who runs the workshop, says he was really impressed by the volunteers. "Most of them had taken an art course and proved very useful, especially in constructing the theatre decor and preparing and installing the exhibitions." There was also a "really great atmosphere" between the young volunteers and the handicapped artists. "The volunteers learned a smattering of Luxemburgish – the words for paper, scissors and brush for example – and it all worked very well. We were all at the same level. Art allowed us to find a way to understand each other."

From local to global

A little earlier we had been welcomed at *Coopérations* by its director, Herbert Maly. An artist of Austrian origin, he settled in Luxembourg about 15 years ago. He is a firm believer in art in the service of society and the environment. After launching a number of creative projects in Wiltz, it was not long before he founded the *Coopérations* association as a permanent organization. Every day about 40 disabled or underprivileged people attend the centre. They can choose courses aimed at either professional integration or personal development, and in three fields: gardening, cooking and... art. The town of Wiltz, the Luxembourg authorities and the European Commission (through the Social Fund) have all shown their interest in this original project by giving it financial support.

Herbert Maly is convinced that wide-ranging exchanges must be an inherent part of any local project. Thus, in 1995, he co-founded the European association Inifae (International institute for art and the environment) which brings together organizations similar to *Coopérations* in Austria, the United Kingdom and Portugal.

The impact of volunteers

When the Commission launched a call for expressions of interest, the *Coopérations* director was quick to respond. He submitted an application in the "flagships" (pilot projects) category and enthusiastically embarked on the European Voluntary Service adventure. The challenge for Herbert Maly was not just to obtain the help of young volunteers, but also to set up networks with them, while at the same time benefiting from a critical external view.

The project was carefully prepared. 18 young volunteers were selected, from Austria, the United Kingdom, Italy and Portugal. They gathered in Wiltz during October and November

1997 for a two-month joint training course. At the same time, they took language courses and participated in local projects. Some attended a nearby environment workshop, while others set up a radio station and carried out a survey on the expectations of Wiltz's young people. One of the findings was that the young people wanted a place where they could meet. This wish was subsequently granted by the local authority which takes the work of the European volunteers very seriously.

After two months of joint activities, the volunteers were divided into small groups and set off to join their respective host communities: in Edinburgh and Yorkshire (United Kingdom), Lisbon, Rome and of course Wiltz itself where three young Britons, an Italian and a Portuguese formed the local team. In June the group met up again in Wiltz for a general project assessment.

No longer isolated

Herbert Maly believes the net result is positive, though he admits that it placed a heavy organizational burden on Inifae (the project promoter) and *Coopérations*, both small associations. He believes the project was particularly successful in bringing the volunteers and their projects to the attention of the local authority. "That permitted a better understanding of our work; it allowed us to change attitudes."

There is an empty building next to the *Coopérations* office. The local authority and the association would like to convert it into a cinema, art gallery and bistro for young people. It would thus become a unique cultural space, open to all sections of the population. Just a few years ago some people in Wiltz used to speak of *Coopérations* with a certain disdain: "Oh those crazy people on the rue de la Montagne!" But not any more. The time these five young European volunteers spent with the association undoubtedly played a part in boosting its image. □

The testimony of Irene, one of the young volunteers

Irene Loureiro is one of the five European volunteers who spent six months in Wiltz. She found the work so rewarding that she decided to extend her stay. Irene is a psychology graduate from Portugal. "An artistic approach like this with mentally disabled people is virtually unknown in my country," she says, adding that she would like to be involved in setting up a similar project in Portugal. In the meantime, she is anxious to learn more. She is soon to start a course in project management in Luxembourg and will spend a period in Limoges, France, where she will take a course in theatre techniques, working alongside mentally handicapped people.

She has fond memories of European Voluntary Service. Her one criticism is that the information could be improved. "So that they can make a well-informed choice of host project, volunteers should have the opportunity to visit it for a few days." She also thinks it would be a good idea to "facilitate contacts between young volunteers when they complete their various projects." These contacts could generate other ideas and actions. "Why not create an Internet site through which former volunteers could exchange thoughts on their projects and experiences?", suggests Irene. □

Juvenile delinquency

questioning received ideas

With the support of the Youth for Europe programme, four European universities have carried out an extensive study of juvenile delinquency. The initial findings question received ideas, such as the link between social environment and delinquency or the effectiveness of a repressive drugs policy.

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How can social policy as it relates to young people be debated without tackling the subject of delinquency? Four criminologists (professors at the Universities of Seville, Castilla-La Mancha, Leiden and Cambridge) decided to pool their skills to carry out a comparative study of delinquency among young people. The aim was to come up with concrete proposals on crime prevention and social exclusion in relation to Europe's young people.

The two-year research project was launched in 1997 as an E-II Youth Studies action under Youth for Europe.

An analysis of three countries

The partner universities carried out a comparative analysis of juvenile delinquency in three countries faced with different situations: the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom (England and Wales). The promoters based their analysis on the results of a major survey conducted among young people aged between 14 and 21, both offenders and non-offenders. 2,100 young people were interviewed in Spain, 914 in the Netherlands, and 1,223 in England and Wales.

The data gathered were classified according to age, sex, family, school and socio-economic situation. Five types of deviant behaviour were identified: vandalism, violence against the person, petty crime involving property, drug use and "other crimes".

Common trends

All categories combined, the average age at which a young person commits his or her first offence is 14. Boys tend to commit more crimes than girls. One explanation for this could be that by nature girls tend to avoid risk behaviour, joining organized gangs, or challenging authority through criminal acts.

Closer scrutiny of the different categories of crime also reveals certain nuances. Take vandalism and crimes against the person for example. Among boys, vandalism starts to decrease early in adolescence. This is also true for girls, although the phenomenon is less marked. When it comes to violence against the person, there is a clear difference between the sexes, with boys involved in a much higher number of crimes. The proportion of "other crimes" declines after the age of 21, among girls and boys.

Drugs: is the repressive approach failing?

The pattern of drug use shows both similarities and differences. More boys than girls take drugs, and this applies to all types of narcotic. Drugs are first taken around the age of 15 or 16. Cannabis use is equally common in all three countries. But for drugs as a whole, England and Wales show the highest consumption, despite the United Kingdom's much more repressive policy. Rosemary Barberet, professor at Seville University and the project coordinator, believes that this finding refutes the argument for a repressive approach. Whatever the case, this is certainly a complex issue which requires in-depth analysis.

No automatic link between social class and delinquency

The young delinquent is generally portrayed as coming from an underprivileged social class. This study questions these stereotypes. Rosemary Barberet does not believe there is any direct link between social group and delinquent behaviour. In other words, there is nothing to prove that young people

from more privileged backgrounds are any less likely to commit crime. "In Spain," the criminologist stresses, "young people from more privileged backgrounds are actually more likely to commit crimes against property."

Prevention: the role of the family and school

It seems clear that the family and school have a vital role to play in crime prevention. The vast majority of offences committed by young people are not discovered by the police but by informal "social control agents", meaning parents, teachers, bus drivers, etc.

The study results will be published at the end of 1999, although some initial conclusions can already be drawn. Young people encounter fewer problems if they have relationships of trust with people whom they see as important, give thought to what they are going to do with their lives and participate in activities that occupy their time. The likelihood of committing acts of delinquency then falls. This is what the experts call the "social control theory".

Another theory – that of "opportunity" – advocates a better analysis of the "opportunities" which young people have to commit crime. Rosemary Barberet believes that for certain acts it should be possible to redirect a young person's behaviour without acting directly on his or her personality. One idea is to make telephone boxes more vandal-proof to prevent damage and theft.

Effective policies needed

The survey coordinator makes the point that little European research has so far been carried out into juvenile delinquency, despite its increase and the growing concern it is causing. The aim of a sociological study is to determine the facts, formulate proposals and if necessary overturn certain received ideas. This approach should help in drawing up youth policies that are effective in preventing and correcting delinquency. □

Eurydice - a CD-ROM Round Tour of Education in Europe

The aim of the Eurydice network is to produce viable and comparable information on national education policies. It recently produced a CD-ROM to meet the demand of the growing number of end-users.

What arrangements have been made in the various European countries to combat school failure in secondary education? Have school evaluation and inspection in compulsory education been reformed since the mid-1980s? How are parents represented on school participatory bodies across Europe? What variations can be observed from country to country in the number of days of teaching at primary and secondary levels? How far do responsibilities and procedures for the appointment and selection of head teachers vary? How are education and initial train-

ing systems structured in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe? What is meant by "Grundschulen" in the German system?

All these and many more questions are regularly asked by thousands of staff in local, regional or national authorities, as well as head teachers, inspectors, teachers and researchers. To find the answer to them, you no longer need to consult scores of publications, pore over their contents pages or even have Internet access. All you need is the Eurydice CD-ROM available since May 1999.

While not containing the entire range of Eurydice publications, this CD-ROM offers a summary of the latest comparative studies and analyses. Besides enabling linear browsing and consultation of these various publications, it is also equipped with a search engine so

that readers can obtain rapidly and in a single query all available references on a selected topic.

These studies, along with guidance regarding search and navigation procedures, are available on this single CD-ROM in French, English and German.

This CD-ROM is available free on request from the Eurydice European Unit.

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eurydice.uee@euronet.be - <http://www.eurydice.org>

Resolution on youth participation

EU ministers want young people to get more involved in public life. Last November, on the initiative of the Austrian Presidency, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on youth participation. This text, which is addressed to both the Commission and the Member States, marks the first time the Community has shown specific interest in youth participation in general, and more specifically, their involvement in political life. The resolution stresses that increased youth participation should be a key objective in developing European society at the political, social and economic level, encouraging young people to progressively assume their responsibilities and actively exercise their Union citizenship.

In the resolution, the ministers responsible for youth issues affirm the importance of taking the interests of young people into account when deciding national measures. They also highlight the need to support youth creativity and initiative in developing new forms of dialogue, and to encourage their participation in existing political structures.

With this in mind, the resolution invites the Commission to take youth opinions on board, to establish a dialogue with them and, more specifically, to take account of their

interests when adopting Community measures. The resolution also urges the Commission to promote the involvement of young people in developing, implementing and evaluating Community youth actions and in promoting studies on the conditions and opportunities for youth participation, as well as exchanges of experience in this area.

* The text of the resolution was published in the Official Journal No C 042 of 17 February 1999.

Finding out more about the Euro

Although not yet a concrete everyday reality, the euro looms ever larger as 2002 draws near. Prices are already being displayed in euros.

We are also seeing a growing number of communication and information initiatives in response to increasing requests for information about the Euro.

One such initiative is the appointment of "euro" managers at Commission offices in the Member States who are available to provide information, documentation and useful addresses. Chambers of commerce and industry are also useful sources of information on the currency, as are consumers' associations.

For those with Internet access, the Commission's Euro site contains a whole range of documents on the new currency. This allows you to keep up to date with the latest news

and to download material such as transparencies for presentations at schools. A number of links direct you to the sites of Member State agencies and of other European Community institutions. The address is: <http://europa.eu.int/euro>

For young people

Some countries already have Internet sites specifically designed for young people. Here is an initial list:

- Belgium (FR et NL): <http://www.eurotribu.fgov.be>
- France (FR): <http://www.info-europe.fr>
- Italy (IT et EN): <http://eurolandia.tin.it>
- Germany (DE): <http://www.youngnet.de>
- Ireland (EN): <http://www.irlgov.ie/ecbi-euro>

Netd@ys Europe 1999: soon coming your way!

Netd@ys Europe 3 will be held from 13 to 21 November 1999. This is now the world's number one event in boosting awareness of how the Internet and new technologies can be used in the fields of education, training and culture. The success of Netd@ys 1998 (see *Le Magazine 10*) was overwhelming, with more than 35,000 schools and organizations participating in over 5,000 events.

Spreading the word...

Netd@ys Europe is based on three key ideas: network development and exploitation, raising awareness among target groups and giving priority to content.

The initiative also aims to show that education and knowledge are not just a matter for schools, but also for other centres of learning which run genuine educational activities, such as vocational training

centres, cultural organizations (opera houses, museums, theatres, cinemas, public libraries) and youth organizations.

Over to you!

Netd@ys Europe is open to any organization which wants to circulate and exchange experience in the use of the new media for knowledge and discovery. Participation is not dependent on the financial support of the Commission, whose closing date for grant applications was 14 May. If you are funding your

own participation you can submit your project any time before 13 November and thereby benefit from the vast Netd@ys Europe communication campaign.

Netd@ys projects will be registered with the European Commission under the official label *Netd@ys 99 Project*. They will also be mentioned on the Netd@ys Europe Internet site at <http://www.netdays99.org>

Further information

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netdaysdg22.cec.be

Dissemination

What does it involve?

Leonardo da Vinci spreads the message

Disseminating information and results is vital in developing and spreading good practice. Those responsible for the Leonardo da Vinci programme are well aware of this and take every available opportunity to spread the message. Product fairs and seminars are an ideal setting. As well as providing a forum for discussion and exchange, they enable participants to acquire new knowledge and, perhaps, to look at their own working practices in a different light.

When asked what measures they have taken to ensure the dissemination of their results, it is not unusual for project promoters to reply: "I published X copies of a brochure" or "I set up a web site". Fair enough. But what are the chances of the brochure actually being read? And how likely is it that the website will be visited? If the aim of the exercise is to permit access to the information, so be it. But in that case it would be better to speak about distributing information and sending messages – not dissemination.

Dissemination is something more than simply dispatching an item labelled "information". It involves the attempt to share experience, communicate results, elicit a response, and propose a new and improved methodology – thereby changing behaviour. In short, the aim is to generate a multi-directional information flow which allows senders and recipients to learn from each other by assimilating and acting on the information acquired. This is very different to the one-directional transmission of data.

The Leonardo da Vinci promoter – or partnership to be more precise – disseminates to make his project's aims known to potential users and no doubt modify them on the basis of their reactions, to share his experience with his peers, to communicate his results (even preliminary), and to make a wider public aware of his final product. So dissemination is not simply a way of communicating as people tend to believe. It is, above all, a management tool that helps the promoter to target his project on the basis of user expectations, to come up with products that can immediately be put to use, and to influence training methods and practices. At Community level, dissemination is vital in ensuring that projects have an impact on national systems – something which is always a priority for the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

In short, "dissemination of information" has to do with using knowledge in taking decisions and carrying out actions. Using knowledge thus becomes a process of active learning rather than improvisation.

A strategy

On its own, traditional information is not enough to encourage people to adopt new practices and new products. For this to happen, you need well-thought-out and programmed dissemination. What is the most effective way of doing this? Although, there are several methods depending on the target group, a number of rules should be respected.

First, dissemination must be targeted at user needs. The best way of achieving this is to involve them in the product's development, which implies early dissemination when implementing the project. Dissemination methods must be varied, employing a mix of written and electronic means, and, above all, personal interaction. At the end of the day, there is nothing as convincing as a personal recommendation. The content and language of the dissemination must also be adapted to the needs of the specific user: the same argument will not necessarily be appropriate for a trainer, a business manager and a policy-maker. Dissemination must be based on known resources, relations and networks. In other words, it must be targeted, not aimed at the general public. The wider the dissemination, the less effective it will be. It must be managed in such a way as to ensure that the data are relevant. Late dissemination

will lose its pertinence. And it must also include sufficient information to provide the user with a justification of the practices proposed and to indicate where the methods will prove most effective. A business manager, for example, is mainly interested in whether the product is suitable for his company, and if he can adopt the same practice in his sector.

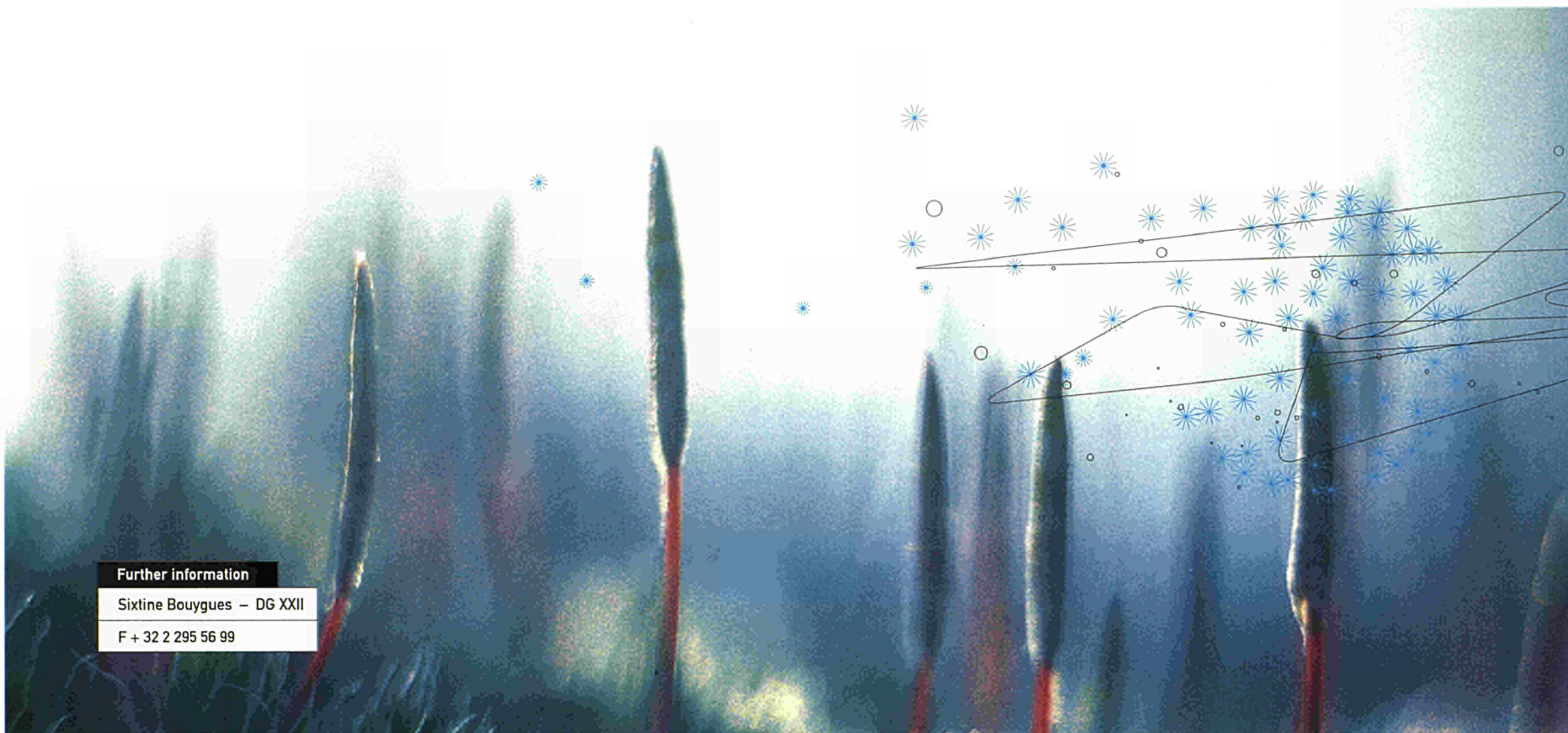
Some examples

Seminars

Aware of the important role of exchanges in any dissemination strategy, the Commission has, for the second time, financed a series of eight seminars organized by the Leonardo da Vinci national coordination units on a voluntary basis (see *Le Magazine* no 9)

These events aim to bring together project representatives, national authorities, social partners, the Commission and recognized experts to debate a specific topic. They all have the same three objectives: 1) to encourage the development of thematic networks aimed at creating synergy and complementarity between projects; 2) to prepare the dissemination

Here is what Laurent Dalou, coordinator of the *Eurocompétences en biologie* project, had to say about his dissemination strategy: "The aim of our partnership was to inform all interested parties – and above all biology professionals – right from the start of the project. We tailored our communications to the target public, with a different content for a business manager than a biotechnologist for example [...]. Our dissemination had a direct impact on certain national regulations. In Italy, our European professional file has become a reference framework for classifying professions; in Portugal, the whole legislation and training of biotechnologists was reviewed." This project promoter also offered some words of advice. "Good dissemination must be coupled with targeted messages; the use of new technologies brings considerable benefits; and exchanges between European project promoters can be very productive."



Further information

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of project results and good practice; 3) to increase the impact of the projects on national systems and Community policy in the field of vocational training.

To maximize the opportunity for interaction at these events, the number of participants is limited to about 80. Experience has shown that the more people who are involved the less dissemination take place as the event takes on the aspect of a major conference with little room for personal expression.

The seminars are held over a two – or three-day period and normally consist of plenary sessions, workshops and product exhibitions/presentations. Only the opening and closing meetings are in plenary, leaving most of the time free for the workshops which are the core of the event. There are usually three or four workshops per event. Their main aim is to permit an in-depth discussion of a particular subject, in the course of two or three 90-minute sessions, and arrive at practical recommendations which are presented at the plenary session by the rapporteurs. Finally, promoters can present their projects at plenary sessions or workshops and give demonstrations in the exhibition halls.

Although – to ensure the maximum participation of everyone present – the organizational structure for these seminars may appear somewhat rigid, the way things are arranged in practice varies depending on who is doing the organizing. A seminar in Iceland may be altogether different from one held in Greece, for example, but will lead to the same results.

Whatever form the particular seminar takes, the dissemination objective is always achieved as, more than actual content, these events are invaluable for the opportunity they offer to meet and exchange experience. It is much more important to establish contacts and generate the motivation to cooperate than it is to discuss a subject which may already have been tackled on many occasions in the past. The waiting, the extended dinner and the coach trips are all worth it, because they are part of a unique opportunity to meet other people, express personal views, share experience, exchange ideas and ultimately set in train a genuine process of knowledge acquisition.

There is general agreement that the most appreciated aspect of these meetings is the exchanges that take place. A heavily charged programme is the thing that participants appreciate least, because of the constraints it places upon them. There must be fewer debates and more opportunities to develop contacts.

Product fairs

Leonardo da Vinci aims to act as a European innovation laboratory in the field of vocational training – and that means research, experience and the results provided by the 38,000 partners who develop training products. The product fairs make it possible to visualize and demonstrate the initiatives of more than 3,000 Leonardo da Vinci projects.

These fairs complement the seminars and are aimed at a wider public. Business and training managers, researchers and European social partners are invited to present current projects and finished products. They get the opportunity to meet the teams which develop transnational projects, discuss matters with them, obtain useful information on product results and attend demonstrations. The fairs are organized either by the Commission or the Member States with Community support.

In December 1998 the Commission held the Training 2000 product fair in Brussels, based on the concept of the vocational training workshop. This event was designed both to present finished products and to allow on-going projects to present their results to potential users. Over 100 exhibitors were on hand to answer the questions of more than 2,000 visitors from all over Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe in particular. Two thematic workshops were organized on the same occasion to promote the dissemination of results and

encourage applications. These were entitled Negotiating with editors and Intellectual property and reproduction rights. Reports on these workshops are available on the web at the following address:

<http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/leonardo.html>.

An article on Forum 2000 was published in the last issue of Le Magazine.

Similar initiatives organised at national level have included the Impact days of Flemish and Dutch projects which are regularly organized by the Flemish and Dutch National Coordination Units (NCUs), the annual Human Resource Development Week held in London in April with a product fair attended by many Leonardo da Vinci programme representatives, and the Potsdam event planned under the German Presidency in June with another Leonardo product fair.

As it approaches its end, the first phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme has built up an impressive wealth of experience which provides a solid basis for phase two (2000-2006). Dissemination is more important than ever if we are to improve on what has been done in the past, capitalize on experience and ensure that projects have the maximum impact. The Commission intends to stress this dimension by acquiring effective tools, increasing awareness of the Community initiative among a wider public and encouraging dissemination in all its diverse forms. □

Seminars

Combating exclusion	Bergen	Norway	10-12	Dec. 1998
The contribution of Leonardo da Vinci projects to the development of new professional profiles	Dresden	Germany	14-16	January 1999
Expanding Europe's vocational training frontiers	Riga	Latvia, (Swedish NCU)	20-24	January 1999
Social dialogue	Madrid	Spain	11-12	February 1999
The quality of in-company vocational training	Athens	Greece	25-26	February 1999
Developing the spirit of enterprise	Reykjavik	Iceland	26-27	February 1999
Mobility in Europe	Copenhagen	Denmark	15-16	March 1999
Leonardo green	Wageningen	The Netherlands	19-20	March 1999



TRAINING

Building on project achievements

Valorization

With phase II of the Leonardo da Vinci vocational training programme due to be launched in the year 2000, it is not surprising that there has been an emphasis this year on taking stock. This has been done using various methods, one of which is what the French call "valorisation". It is a broad method of analysis designed specifically to help policymakers involved in this field.

Valorization is not the same as evaluation, although in both cases the notion of appraisal is present. In Community parlance, evaluation is concerned with analysing the entire programme process (conditions of implementation, cost effectiveness, etc.). Nor should valorization be confused with dissemination, which deals with the results of a single project, evaluated by the promoter, who pays particular attention to the conditions of transferability to another Member State – thereby aiding the spread of "good practice".

So what is valorization? It is distinguished by an approach, characterized by an objective and focused on an ambition. The approach is to analyze and synthesize the results of a set of comparable and significant projects. The objective is to draw from this a number of strategic or political proposals and conclusions designed to improve national vocational training systems. The ambition is above all to be useful to the decision-makers to whom the proposals and conclusions are submitted. In the case of Leonardo da Vinci this means vocational training policy-makers at regional, national and Community level, plus the social partners.

Thematic analysis

The Commission wants to carry out this exercise at two levels: Community and national (or regional, as training becomes increasingly decentralized). The methodology is the same in both cases. A number of subjects are first selected for valoriza-

tion. Although these necessarily cover the main horizontal aspects of vocational training (equal opportunities, mobility, the acquisition of language and information technology skills, the role of companies, etc.), two of them concern specific sectors: the environment and culture. Particular light is also shed on what is commonly known as *transparency of qualifications*, meaning the international recognition of skills, an area which is much more complex in the vocational field than the academic world (it seemingly being easier to determine the equivalence of diplomas than of experience).

This is not an easy task given the thousands of "experiences" provided under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. It is not a question of concentrating on the most effective actions, but rather on the most significant ones. This means looking at both positive aspects (method, results, interest of partnership model, etc.) and negative ones (much can be learned from the obstacles and difficulties encountered). The results will be analysed with the help of Cedefop experts and after consulting the promoters. The aim is to estimate the contribution that the Leonardo da Vinci programme makes to the specific environments in which its actions are carried out.

The parties involved will then come together to discuss the initial conclusions in thematic debates and conferences. This approach will make it possible to further develop the proposals of the experts in order to "valorize" the Leonardo da Vinci results.

Choosing better, acting better

The approach at regional and national level is comparable. The common methodological approach, the result of technical meetings with the national coordination units (NCUs), is set out in a Commission guidance note. The initiative to promote valorization has proved a resounding success and the vast majority of Member States have responded positively to the invitation to participate in this "experiment".

In this case, the subjects will be decided in line with national priorities and the national and regional authorities make their own choice of experts. The decision-makers and partners in the various Member States will subsequently organize seminars, workshops and forums.

The national and Community-level debates are set to begin in September. The conclusions of this valorization will be submitted to the decision-makers at the end of 1999 and widely disseminated.

A wide-ranging approach has been adopted in order to learn the lessons of concrete experience, make better decisions and take more effective action in the future. Currently at the experimental stage, valorization could ultimately be systematically applied and become a permanent observation tool in the field of vocational training.

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Leonardo da Vinci

The 11 subjects for valorization (Community level)

- Methods of anticipating new skills and adapting training systems
- Development of accreditation procedures for skills
- Initiatives encouraging the use of support technologies in training
- Language training and learning
- Transitional cooperation for sandwich courses, including apprenticeships
- Development of skills and innovation in companies, particularly SMEs
- Mobility of vocational training in Europe
- Methods and content to introduce those facing difficulties, in particular the long-term unemployed, to the job market
- Equal opportunities and women's access to vocational training
- Vocational training in the environment sector
- Vocational training in the cultural sector



Testing, testing

A profile of a small company leading a Leonardo da Vinci project to develop multi-purpose training software

From the global village to the information society, various new dawns have been announced in attempts to capture the often unpredictable effects of the spread of information technologies. The story of a small company in North Wales, E&L Instruments Ltd, illustrates some of the realities behind the scenarios.

The company's premises outside Wrexham are far removed from the glamour of Silicon Valley. Its assembly line is staffed by local women less immediately concerned with electronic visions of the 21st century than with picking up the shopping and the children. Yet it has a leading niche position in a potentially huge IT market that is largely invisible in the high street.

Measuring up in the market-place

E&L was established near Yale University, whose founder is coincidentally buried in Wrexham. Making measuring instruments to test electrical properties such as voltage and capacitance, the company set up in Wales 20 years ago, attracted by grants and a low £/\$ exchange rate, to service markets in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. Today, 70% of its £1.4 million turnover is sold overseas.

To create an assembly unit in 1981, just before the UK government declared an awareness-raising National IT Year, the company recruited a young electronics engineer, Idris Price, who was brought up on a small farm "until the day a nuclear power plant appeared in a nearby field and my father went to work for it". At 29 he was the technical manager and E&L had grown to 25 employees. Ten years ago, Mr Price and four colleagues led a management buyout and the company became wholly UK-owned. Now he is the managing director.

Paying off the loans has meant living without frills. Currently, E&L also manages without the assistance of trade unions, and without young male employees. "We used to recruit young lads, but women are much more reliable." And until 1991, it did without training. Then the company was introduced by the local higher education college, the North-East Wales Institute, to the European Community's Force programme for continuing training.

E&L was, and still is, too small to have a personnel department. Training was a problem, not least for the new owner-directors who themselves had to learn how to run a company. Since then training has become a solution in more ways than one because the vast need for education and training in the information society has provided the company with its principal business – creating and supplying electronics training kits, to both companies and the education sector. E&L still produces measuring and monitoring instruments, but 56% of its turnover is now education-related.

From beginners to high fliers

There is a wide range of demand for such learning packages. The national curriculum in the UK, for instance, requires children to learn about electrical circuits from the age of 9-10, so E&L provided a 'simple circuits' teaching kit for over 400 primary schools in North Wales, in a joint non-profit initiative with other local partners. "About 80% of the primary

teachers were women who taught reading, writing, singing and so on, but not electricity," Mr Price points out. In 1988 he designed one of the company's best-selling products, 'exploring electronics technology through a systems approach', for secondary schools. "It's still selling well in countries where they are introducing electronics to the curriculum, such as Spain."

At the other end of the scale, E&L designs both training products and instruments for clients such as the energy industry, Rolls Royce and the Royal Air Force. The RAF recently placed an order for 500 special circuit boards, for training avionics technicians.

A diverse product range requires a flexible workforce. "I wanted all our operators to be able to change easily from one product to another and the Force project seemed a good opportunity to tackle training and broaden our range of skills," Mr Price recalls. It also tied in with the company's aim to achieve compliance with the BS 5750 standard, a predecessor of ISO 9000 "which is a big door-opener in business".

A rude awakening

E&L started monitoring itself. "Looking at how many products would go through testing without requiring some reworking, we set ourselves a 95% target and found we were nowhere near it. We weren't meeting customer delivery dates either." What followed were testing times for the company as well as its products. Achieving BS 5750 compliance proved painful and E&L learned to be wary of consultants. But disciplines, procedures and quality improved.

The main value of the Force experience was internal, helping the company to achieve quality standards and identify its learning requirements. An offer of free training classes at NEWI was not then taken up by the 'operators', because "they didn't want to give up an hour and a half of their time"; yet, since last September, the company's offer of evening classes in word-processing has proved attractive, partly because E&L employees can bring along a partner of their choice. Mr Price's verdict: "It is now a part of E&L's life –if you work here, you'll get training. Without Force part-funding, we wouldn't have done it the way we did, or maybe at all."

At the same time, the company was increasingly concentrating on training involving programmable logic controllers, PLCs, the smart hardware devices that are becoming omnipresent in both industrial processes and in finished products, from warships to washing machines. E&L has alliances with the world's leading PLC suppliers from the USA, Japan and Europe. "These companies aim to get more people trained in their products. Because we came from an industrial background, we tried to put what industry was using into the education and training sector, at an affordable cost," Mr Price says. As a school governor himself, he is well aware that "so much industrial equipment is horrendously expensive".

The international dimension of the Force project partnership, with other small firms in Ireland, Portugal and Germany, was not then as significant as either these big business connections or the local dimension of the partnership, with NEWI and the Engineering and Marine Training Authority, EMTA. "To be

honest, it slowed things down." Contact with the Portuguese partner was lost. But the German connection indirectly led to a significant order, which helped allay doubts.

Smart move from teaching to learning

Then, as training developed and product design became more sophisticated, E&L entered a new phase. Idris Price sums it up as follows: "The market is changing for us, from hardware to software. Many colleges are telling us that they are changing from a teaching to a learning organization. I don't believe a technical subject can be taught only through a computer, but computer-assisted learning is increasingly vital because contact time with the lecturers is being reduced and the onus of learning is more on the individual student. We took on a software engineer four years ago; now our development team has three software and two hardware developers."

This is where SMART comes in, the Student Monitoring And Remote Tutoring project being developed by a Leonardo da Vinci partnership led by E&L. SMART is a kind of multimedia sandwich that can contain different training contents. While E&L is still teamed with NEWI and EMTA, all the other partners are now academic, from universities in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Italy.

"The academic partners have opened our eyes more than any other contact we have had with an outside organization," Mr Price feels. "Brainstorming with them on the learning process itself, on pedagogic and didactic concepts, has been very valuable –even if the professor from Palermo sometimes talks a couple of stratospheres over my head! And E&L is the commercial driving force in the partnership. This is the important thing in making the project a success. We will bring the product to market, and we already have a network of European distributors."

The learning curve has been steep for E&L in the 1990s, but it takes a learning organization to supply learning organizations. As for remote tutoring, if the very notion makes Elihu Yale turn in his grave, that is probably so that he can get a better look at the SMART project. □

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Knowledge every worker's stock in trade

If we want to earn, we need to learn. Because in a knowledge society wealth springs predominantly not from goods but from information. That's why lifelong learning has a place of its own in the 1999 EU employment guidelines.

The benefits of partnership

The new guidelines are the fruit of an arduous inter-disciplinary consultative process, stretching across the Commission, Member State ministries and social partners. First, a draft is hammered out within the Commission, and the Member States are then consulted. Keen to press the case for appropriate attention to be paid to education and training, DG XXII attends the bilateral meetings between the Commission and the Member States. A series of such meetings takes place each year, to discuss each Member State's progress towards implementing the employment guidelines through its National Action Plan. The meetings involve a number of ministries (not just the labour ministries) and the social partners. Thorny questions arising from these debates are fed into the Employment and Labour Market Committee (ELC), at which strategy is developed. This special committee has an independent chair elected from among the Member State representatives, and the Commission has equal status with the Member States.

The lesson that has been learnt from this process is the importance of having all the relevant partners on board: the national ministries, local and regional authorities and social partners. DG XXII feels that in 1998 the presence of these partners made a real difference in formulating and implementing the guidelines, and hopes for an even better involvement in 1999. This year, it is hoped also that education ministries will have a higher profile in the discussions and the design of National Action Plans.

It might seem to be a risk that following such a partnership approach could lead to bland, lowest common denominator policies. But in fact this does not seem to be the case – the tested machinery of checks and balances works well. In fact, getting all the interested partners around the same table makes it more likely that policies will be feasible, builds consensus so that they will actually be implemented, and also acts as something of a 'truth drug'. "Having the social partners¹ present means that when the governments explain their performance we get a more rounded view", says Ms Pilkington.

In other words, the social partners make sure their governments aren't just paying lip service to the employment strategy. Social partners are involved in all countries – to different degrees, of course, but as one would expect in today's consensus-seeking Europe, overall the role of the social partners is improving.

Education and training at the heart of employment policy

"Education and training are not just an add-on to an employment strategy, they are a key part of it" says DG XXII's expert Helen Pilkington. "Our objective is to ensure that education and training stay at the heart of the employment strategy, and substantive measures are introduced so that it can have a real effect. Within that, the three key areas we have concentrated on are lifelong learning, easing the transition from school to work and preventing drop-outs from school."

This year's guidelines, approved by the European Council in Vienna last December, do indeed place more emphasis on lifelong learning – in fact there is now an entire guideline devoted to this, which requires Member States and social partners to introduce strategies for lifelong learning, and particularly to take into account older workers' need for learning opportunities. The existence of this new guideline, and others concerning young people, show how seriously learning is taken in the employment strategy. Lifelong learning is a broad concept with a wide variety of practical applications, but in principle it has both labour market and citizenship dimensions. As far as employability goes, it means that people don't assume they can give up learning when they get a job, but go on constantly updating their skills. This means that they will always be qualified to get a job, despite the advent of new forms of work organisation, new technologies or new occupations. But lifelong learning has a wider significance, because it permits people to be full participants in a fast-changing society. It is in fact a vital part of democracy.

Employment has become the chief concern of the European Union and its member states. Since the Amsterdam summit of June 1997, national governments and the Commission have been working together in an unprecedented way to conceive and implement a coordinated European strategy on jobs. From transport to taxation, all areas of policy are being examined to see what contribution they can make to creating jobs. But perhaps no single policy has so close a bearing on employment as does education and training. Directorate General XXII is therefore playing an active role in the so-called 'Luxembourg process', the annual formulation, implementation and monitoring of a common set of employment guidelines by all the Member States.

For 1999 there are 22 guidelines, grouped under the same four 'pillars' as were set up in 1998: improving employability (people's ability to get and keep a job), developing entrepreneurship, encouraging adaptability in businesses and their employees, and strengthening equal opportunities between men and women. Unsurprisingly, well over half the guidelines have an education and training aspect.

¹ See article in previous issue

The 1999 employment guidelines with most relevance to education and training

- Member States will ensure that every unemployed young person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure.
- Member States will ensure that unemployed adults are also offered a fresh start before reaching twelve months of unemployment by one of the aforementioned means or, more generally, by accompanying individual vocational guidance.
- Each member State will endeavour to increase significantly the number of persons benefiting from active measures to improve their employability. In order to increase the numbers of unemployed who are offered training or any similar measure, it will in particular fix a target, in the light of its starting situation, of gradually achieving the average of the three most successful Member States, and at least 20%.
- Each Member State will review and, where appropriate, refocus its benefit and tax system and provide incentives for unemployed or inactive people to seek and take up work or measures to enhance their employability and for employers to create new jobs. In addition, it is important to develop, in the context of a policy for active ageing, measures such as maintaining working capacity, lifelong learning and other flexible working arrangements, so that older workers are also able to participate actively in working life.
- The social partners are urged, at their various levels of responsibility and action, to conclude as soon as possible agreements with a view to increasing the possibilities for training, work experience, traineeships or other measures likely to promote employability.
- In order to reinforce the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce, both Member States and the social partners will endeavour to develop possibilities for lifelong learning, particularly in the fields of information and communication technologies, and, in consultation with the Employment and Labour Market Committee, define lifelong learning in order to set a target according to national circumstances for participants benefiting from such measures. Easy access for older workers will be particularly important.
- Member States will improve the quality of their school systems in order to reduce substantially the number of young people who drop out of the school system early. Particular attention should also be given to young people with learning difficulties.
- Member States will make sure they equip young people with greater ability to adapt to technological and economic changes and with skills relevant to the labour market, where appropriate by implementing or developing apprenticeship training.
- In order to renew skill levels within enterprises Member States will re-examine the obstacles, in particular tax obstacles, to investment in human resources and possibly provide for tax or other incentives for the development of in-house training; they will also examine new regulations and review the existing regulatory framework to make sure they will contribute to reducing barriers to employment and help the labour market adapt to structural change in the economy.

It's official. The Europass-Training scheme will begin operating in January 2000, as planned. Individuals who have completed a period of training or work experience in another EU Member State (a "European pathway") will be able to get a Community information document – a kind of "passport" – attesting to what they have done.

Europass-Training on the starting blocks

Last December, the Council of Ministers adopted a decision¹ on promoting "European pathways for work-linked training, including apprenticeship". Since then the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States, has been working on the "system of mutual information and coordination" that is envisaged under the Europass-Training scheme. The "Europass" will be available to anyone who has done vocational training (involving structured periods of work-related training in a company or training establishment). Eligibility is not limited by age, or the level of the training involved, so it includes people in higher education. To become a Europass holder, you must have completed a "European pathway". This means any period of vocational training in a Member State other than what is called "the Member State of provenance" – in other words, the country where the work-linked training is undertaken.

The Europass is issued by the organization responsible for training in the Member State of provenance. It will provide relevant information on the work experience or training completed by the holder during his or her European pathway including such details as content and duration, the skills acquired and so on. The document will also contain information about the training followed in the Member State of provenance (including references to any qualifications or diplomas obtained as a result).

It is clear that the Europass concept is not the same as the equivalence of diplomas, and does not seek to alter the policies of the Member States. It involves a completely different approach. In enabling the candidate to receive an official, translated and complete attestation, the aim is to improve the transparency, and boost the profile, of training periods that he or she has completed.

The Europass is a "Community information document" which certifies that the holder has undergone training which meets certain quality standards. The content, form, aims and duration of the European pathway will be jointly agreed by the body responsible for the training in the Member State of provenance and the host partner.

Working closely with the Member States, the Commission now has the job of actually producing the Europass and bringing it to the attention of its target public. For the launch at national level, one or more agencies will be designated by each Member State to disseminate the information needed to facilitate access to Europe's new training passport. The social partners and, where appropriate, bodies responsible for work-related training, will also be involved. To assess the impact of Europass-Training on promoting mobility in work-related training, the Commission will submit a report to the European Parliament after three years (from the date of the Council decision) □

¹ OJ L 17 of 22 January 1999, p.45

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Forum on the transparency of qualifications

A simple diagnosis, but a complex problem

The first meeting of the Forum on the transparency of qualifications was held in Brussels on 18 and 19 February. The aim of this joint initiative by the Commission and Cedefop is to identify the obstacles through a better mutual understanding of Europe's certification systems and to highlight ways of making qualifications more visible and comprehensible.

Another task for the Member State representatives, the countries of the European Economic Area and the social partners organized at European level who make up the Forum is to follow up on innovations. One reason for this initiative is that the Forum facilitates exchanges of view and the sharing of national opinions on how to draw maximum benefit from the lessons learned by the Leonardo da Vinci programme in this field.

Obstacles to transparency identified during the discussions included undue complexity, a lack of flexibility in certification systems, the absence of information about the systems in

other countries and language barriers. A number of solutions were also highlighted, for example, the idea that all countries could use common terminology for the various certificates.

The aim is that the Forum's work should lead to a degree of consensus on the action to be taken by political decision-makers. At present, the climate for such action appears favourable. Economic integration is helping remove obstacles to mobility while technological changes such as the Internet create the prospect of much more efficient systems of information exchange and consultation.

Further debates are scheduled for June, September and December. These should help crystallize the issues, perhaps leading to the formulation of concrete proposals which could produce practical and useful results by the end of 1999. □

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What's new in vocational training in Europe?

Austria

Dialogue between higher education and the wider economy

The relationship between higher education and the wider economy has never been regarded as fully satisfactory, being viewed as either too close or too distant. If higher education institutions maintain close ties with the economy, they are criticized for merely reproducing "real life" conditions and therefore not developing them further. On the other hand, if relations are too distant, higher education is reproached for not recognizing and tackling real problems and of remaining, self-satisfied, in its ivory tower.

The search for new solutions to this relationship has been at the core of recent major education policy reforms. In higher education, this was the main reason for establishing new higher education institutions (Fachhochschulen).

Their establishment has changed the debate on the issue of practical relevance. At first, the focus was on questions about curricula and bringing external influences to bear on institutions, but now, cooperative education programmes have moved centre stage. The debate has been given added momentum by the concept of lifelong learning and by the question of whether qualifications acquired on the job should be acknowledged by the formal higher education system.

A conference on the 'dialogue' between the Fachhochschulen and the economy took place in Vienna in January. Introductory papers were presented on the role of Fachhochschulen within the society of learning and on a European pilot project that explores ways of achieving cooperation between higher education institutions and the economy. These were followed by a discussion on various measures to improve the practical relevance of higher education.

The social partners, who traditionally play an important role in education policy in Austria, co-organized this event, which was supported by the European Commission.

Source: ABF-Austria

Belgium Wallonia

Training vouchers for small and medium-sized enterprises

Wallonia has insufficient opportunities for training, a problem which often exacerbates the discrepancy between skills acquired at school and labour market needs. A 1996 survey carried out under the European Force programme and published by the Commission and Eurostat revealed that Belgian companies provide an average of just eight hours of training per worker per year. The figure for Wallonia is even lower.

Although large companies now offer more frequent training sessions for their employees, small businesses have still to be converted to the cause. This state of affairs prompted the Walloon Minister for Employment and Vocational Training to propose the training voucher: a simple, flexible and speedy mechanism for promoting training in SMEs in the commercial sector that employ fewer than 50 staff.

The scheme, which started on 1 December 1998, is open both to a firm's employees and to the employer, whether company director or self-employed.

The Walloon Region contributes BEF 600 (14,8 euro) per worker per hour of training. This will cover all or part of the cost, depending on the type of training involved. The annual ceiling per company is 400 training hours.

The training must either serve to promote company growth – which means that it can be in subjects such as data processing, languages, marketing or export – or, if it is more technical, be linked to the company's activity. Training is given during normal working hours by approved trainers, a list of whom is available from the *Office communautaire et régional de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi* (Forem). A special "training voucher" unit has been set up within Forem to coordinate activities and inform companies.

400 Walloon companies have already signed up for the scheme.

Source: Forem (Cidoc)

Denmark

"Compose your own training programme"

Two commercial colleges have had great success in letting students choose among different training modules and –so to speak– compose their own individual training programmes. This increased delegation of responsibility to individuals for their own training is found in two innovative projects financed by the Education Ministry.

The main objective of the projects was to strengthen the learning environment in a way that would benefit both strong and weak students. Strong students were to be presented with greater challenges while the prospects for the weaker ones completing their training were to be improved. This was done by giving students the freedom and responsibility to make individual choices within a framework of modular training courses. Support for the students in this process took the form of extended tutoring and counselling.

The projects involved a comprehensive restructuring of the initial aspects of commercial training, e.g. in relation to tutoring and counselling, teaching methods and learning evaluation, and student administration. To keep track of how students devised their individual training programmes, the schools developed a database, in which the acquired competences of the students are registered and categorized.

The basic principles involved –individualization, modularization, responsibility for one's own learning, and differentiation– are all key elements in the coming reform of vocational training in Denmark, Reform 2001.

Source: DEL, Copenhagen

Germany

Emergency training programme launched

The German government has an emergency programme which aims to reduce youth unemployment by providing all young women and men seeking training places with qualified vocational training. This approach is in line with the EU's employment guidelines and has the support of the European Social Fund. The plan is to offer concrete training and job opportunities to some 100,000 young people with no jobs or training places.

DM 2 billion (approx. € 1 billion) has been allocated in the 1999 draft budget of the Federal Employment Office for implementing the emergency programme. Grants from the European Social Fund amount to DM 600 million (about € 307 million).

At present the situation differs in the old and the new Federal States. The former saw a marked rise in the number of training contracts in 1998, but there was a noticeable decline in the latter. The shortage of in-company training places in the eastern part of Germany can only be offset by raising the number of publicly-funded ones.

The emergency programme is initially limited to one year, but it may be extended. It is possible to enter the programme up to December 1999. In all the schemes young women will be given proper consideration in line with their share in the total number of applicants who have not yet found a training place. The programme also offers extra support to foreign, disadvantaged and disabled youth to help them integrate into working life.

Source: BIBB, Berlin

The following short articles reflect common concerns in a number of countries.

- In France and Germany, the provision of training opportunities to young people having difficulties in entering the labour market.
- In Sweden and Austria, new approaches at the post-secondary level to the provision of workplace-relevant programmes.
- In Portugal and Belgium (Wallonia), initiatives to improve access to adult training, particularly in SMEs.

These items have been provided by the documentary information network of Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

France

New jobs for young people

In February, the French Government submitted a report to Parliament on the application of the law of 16 October 1997 which sets out measures to promote youth employment. The report can be consulted at the following address at the French Ministry for Employment and Solidarity, under "Nouveaux services, emplois jeunes": <http://www.travail.gouv.fr/actualites/rapport97-940.html>.

By the end of 1998, 158,451 new jobs had been recorded. 85,201 of these were with associations, local authorities, social support agencies, mixed economy companies, hospitals and public companies, 65,000 were in schools and 8,250 were with the National Police.

The office of the French Minister for Employment and Solidarity believes that the 14.08% fall in unemployment among young people under 25 recorded between June 1997 and November 1998 is largely the result of this programme.

Initial studies carried out by government departments reveal that thanks to the programme, it has been possible to meet many needs for new services in 'problem' urban neighbourhoods and rural areas. Despite this, there are still "marked differences" from one area to another.

The new services are having an impact on all sectors of activity. Around 15.5% of the projects are in the family-solidarity-health sector, 15.5% in the environment sector and 10.9% in culture. Then come sport, housing and living conditions, out-of-school and leisure activities, tourism, safety, transport and justice.

The jobs can be in new or emerging occupations, such as local social mediation, in existing occupations or in former ones that have been rediscovered and adapted to a new urban context or extended to a rural area. Examples in this last category include sports or cultural monitors, activities linked to protecting the environment or highlighting the heritage, and jobs connected with local development or tourism.

Source: Centre Inffo

Italy

Plans for longer compulsory schooling and integrated education and training

Within the broad framework of a new social pact signed in December 1998, the Italian government is seeking to introduce an integrated system of education and vocational training as a way of promoting growth and employment. It will eventually be compulsory to attend education or training up to the age of 18, a requirement which may be fulfilled at school, in vocational training or in apprenticeship. The skills thus acquired will have the value of training credits.

In 1999, compulsory education will be extended by one year to the age of 15, making a total of nine years. This is the first step in a process which aims to extend education and training to 18 years of age and 13 years' duration.

Measures will also be taken to combat the phenomenon of dropping out, and to train teachers. The government and the social partners plan to extend the use of in-company training periods for students, while apprentices will be required to train for at least 120 hours a year outside their place of employment.

A fund for continuing training is being set up with an endowment of 600 billion lire (€ 310 million) in 1999 and 500 billion lire (€ 258 million) per year in 2000 and 2001.

Source: Isfol

Portugal

"Employment-Training Rotation" Scheme

Portugal's working population suffers from a lack of qualifications. Hence the fundamental importance of developing initial and –perhaps most crucially– continuous training schemes. The organizational and technological modernization of many companies, and small businesses in particular, means that there is an urgent need for continuous training of workers.

The employment-training rotation scheme is designed to stimulate access to continuous training for people who work for SMEs. The text of the legislation defines employment-training rotation as a process that enables companies to offer workers the opportunity for continuous training while at the same time allowing the unemployed to gain work experience, in effect, by 'filling in' for the workers who are undergoing training.

Priority is given to companies employing up to 50 workers. The training must take place during normal working hours and last between one and 12 months. It must either be of direct benefit to the company or provide the workers with qualifying training.

Unemployed people registered at job centres then have the chance to gain work experience which will assist their integration or reintegration into the world of employment. This work experience could result in their being employed, on a temporary or permanent basis.

Source: Cict

Sweden

Expansion of post-secondary education

In late 1996 a pilot project involving Qualified Vocational Education (QVE) was launched in Sweden. This is a form of post-secondary education in which one third of the time is based on advanced application of theoretical knowledge at a workplace. The courses are open to school-leavers and to employees who wish to develop their skills within a defined area.

The project is based on close cooperation between companies and the various course providers and is intended to meet real needs in the employment market. It has grown rapidly and in spring 1998, the government announced that it would be expanded further and prolonged until 2001. In 1998, 8,000 QVE student places were approved. The figure for 1999 is 12,000.

There are no restrictions in terms of the sectors where QVE can be provided. However, due to current demand on the job market, a significant proportion of the 205 courses approved so far are in information technology and engineering. There are also courses in commerce, tourism, health care and environmental control.

The purpose of the QVE project is to gain experience about courses, new educational methods and new course providers. An investigation into the amount of interest this type of vocational educational attracts on the job market, and among the students involved, is being undertaken at the same time. So far, the results reveal a high degree of interest. Indeed, it has only been possible to approve one in three of the applications submitted by the various course providers while, on average, there are four applicants for each student place. To date, 1,061 students have completed a QVE. 72% of these found jobs within three months of graduating while 10% have gone on to further studies.

Source: SEP, Stockholm

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Lingua

Lingua E, spanning the length and breadth of Europe

The Portuguese example

Lingua E, in brief

- The Lingua chapter of the Socrates programme promotes language learning. It consists of five principal kinds of action. Action E concerns joint education projects (JEP).
- The main element of a JEP, which is usually bilateral, is not language training as such, but learning a language through work on another educational topic. If a partner country's language is not included in the pupils' curriculum, a preparatory language course is required in this partner language.
- The Commission promotes exchanges of pupils aged 14 and over. The minimum stay in the partner institution is 14 days. The stay is designed to allow pupils to work on a joint project and to use the language skills acquired. This period of exchanges, which constitutes the core of the JEP, must be preceded by intense preparation and culminate in finished products.
- Lingua Action E is a decentralized action: the Socrates national agency is therefore responsible for project administration and decision-making.
- Priority will be given to projects which:
 - concern the teaching of languages that are less widely spoken and taught in the European Union; and,
 - involve technical and vocational training institutions

In the wake of the Lisbon world fair, devoted to the oceans, the Lisbon Commercial College in the Olivais district of the city decided to establish links with the Vienna Business School. At the heart of this joint educational project supported by the Commission was the desire to discover cultural sites and monuments. This successful action is an excellent example of cooperation between the north and south of Europe.

Lisbon Commercial College follows Vasco da Gama's example

At the entrance to the commercial college the stars of the European flag and the black and white Lisbon banner flutter side by side in the wind. We are in the Olivais district, on the outskirts of the city. In the distance we can see the bridge named after Vasco da Gama, the famous navigator who discovered the sea route to the Indies. The ultra-modern construction spans the Tagus like a strip of white ribbon at a point where the river is several kilometres wide. The Vasco da Gama bridge links the north and south of Lisbon and is intended to symbolize Portugal's spirit of openness. On the other side of the road, just a stone's throw away, lies the EXPO '98 site, now used as a leisure area and the future location for the headquarters of the Portuguese cabinet.

EXPO '98! Throughout the year this was at the centre of the commercial college's educational project, involving its 250 pupils and some 30 teachers. The college was part of a pilot network of 100 Portuguese schools charged with presenting model projects to coincide with the world fair, whose theme was 'oceans'. It was the ideal subject for this school. As Piedade Pereira, its educational director, points out: "Commerce has always been linked to sea routes."

The subject chosen was: "Lisbon, from the past to the river; from the river to the future". This was the inspiration for a Lingua project between the Lisbon Commercial College and the Vienna Business School. In April last year, 12 Portuguese students visited the Austrian capital while students from the Business School visited Lisbon in September. Naturally, they made the most of the opportunity to explore EXPO 98 – but that was not all. Students at the commercial college proposed a number of other itineraries for their working trips – the result of an extensive survey they had carried out to list the capital's monuments and interesting cultural sites. A video was produced following these exchange visits, as well as a glossary of tourism terms in Portuguese, German and English.

In English... and using your hands

Ana and Sandra went on the Vienna trip, which also had a cultural aim. They are still in raptures about what they saw. Sandra: "For the first time in my life, I went to the opera. It was spectacular." But what most impressed all the young girls was the warm reception they received from the families they stayed with in Vienna. Ana stayed with a Turkish family and welcomed the chance to discover different customs and food. Sandra stayed with a very considerate Austrian family.

The Lisbon pupils already had some notions of German before going to Lisbon, thanks to their English teacher at the college, Fernanda Albuquerque. The lessons were given during the lunch break and students and teachers agree that they required great personal commitment. Although German was obviously useful in Austria, they found they also conversed in English with the students at the Business School and their host families. "In English... and using our hands," quipped Ana and Sandra.

Fernanda Albuquerque noticed a considerable improvement in the language skills of the students when they returned to Vienna. "The most interesting thing is that they had overcome their complexes. Even the most hesitant realized they were able to make a public presentation in English."

One day the young Portuguese students organized an activity in the lobby of one of the major Austrian banks, in the spirit of EXPO '98. They offered customers a glass of port and engaged them in conversation. But Sandra and Ana were not altogether happy with what they found. They were struck by how little the Austrians they met knew about Portugal and its cultural heritage.

A European opportunity for every pupil

In the classroom where we were seated at the commercial college, other students were anxious to talk about their activities. Jorge and Andre are part of a group that is preparing to travel to Vejle, in Denmark, in the province of Jutland – also with a Lingua E project.

These marketing students are going to compare the marketing strategies used by the Danish manufacturer Lego with those of the Portuguese firm which bottles the Portuguese rosé wine Mateus. Thanks to their Internet searches and direct contacts with the Danes, Jorge, Andre and their colleagues have produced a very professional and fully computerized visual presentation, in English. Teachers from a number of disciplines contribute to projects of this kind. Apart from everything else, Lingua E offers an incentive for cooperation between teachers and encourages a multidisciplinary approach.

As for Filipa, Pedro and Francisco, they are involved in a Comenius project on Lisbon, Vienna and Trieste (Italy). The aim is to analyse the history of trade in certain products in these port cities. Although it is usually only teachers who participate in European exchanges for this kind of activity, on this occasion the college made an exception and allowed a group of students to travel with the teachers.

The Lisbon Commercial College is proud of its Lisbon roots but also has its eyes firmly fixed on the future. It is in this convivial atmosphere of student-teacher participation that it works. "Our aim is for every student who spends three years at our college to have the opportunity to benefit from at least one European project," declared an optimistic Piedade Periera. □

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How can more schools be encouraged to participate in Lingua action E?
Maria de Jesus Filipe talks of the steps being taken in Portugal.

Socrates national agency spreads the message

Maria de Jesus Filipe has been working at the Socrates national agency in Portugal –the GAERI– for the past three years. Among other things, she is responsible for Lingua action E, handling about 100 applications a year. Her experience provides her with an overall view which allows her to detect trends. At the beginning, for example, it took quite a long time to make it understood that under Lingua E pupil exchanges are not an end in themselves but a means to allow schools to develop a genuine education project.

The Portuguese national agency does not just accept applications –it actively encourages them through a major proactive information effort. The first challenge is to solicit the participation of schools situated on the islands (the Azores and Madeira) and in the most disadvantaged rural areas, such as Tras-Os-Montes in the north and Alentejo in the south.

The Socrates agency uses the decentralized services of the national education authorities to organize regional information sessions attended by a large number of schools. The aim is to involve schools which have already benefited from European partnerships under Lingua alongside others which do not have this experience. Another objective is to achieve a mix of all kinds of institutions: vocational training schools, secondary schools providing general education, and also basic education schools covering the first nine years of compulsory education. Few of these basic education schools know that they are eligible to participate in Lingua E in respect of their pupils aged 15 or over. Again it is the Socrates agency which spreads the word.

Lingua E awards priority to vocational training and technical schools. In Portugal it is quite easy to involve this type of school as they tend to be more flexible and the kind of projects supported by Lingua E can be more easily integrated into the school curriculum.


Maria de Jesus Filipe cited the excellent example of a textile school in Guimarães which teamed up with a school in Manchester. Manchester specializes in velvet and Guimarães in embroidery. The two schools pooled their skills and developed a new technique for embroidering on velvet, an innovation in the field of 'ready-to-wear'. The major handicap for vocational training schools in Portugal is a linguistic one, however, as English is generally the only language taught.

It is quite a different situation in the secondary schools where language knowledge is better but there the problem is that they are less inclined to develop European projects with a specific educational aim. Progress has nevertheless been achieved with the adoption of new school management legislation which encourages secondary schools to follow the

example of vocational training schools and draw up an education project setting priorities for the year. Maria de Jesus Filipe is convinced that this has increased the participation of secondary schools in Lingua projects, few of which were involved initially.

"International cooperation is only really successful if there is synergy between European and national policies," she remarked. For projects to blossom, increase and share their positive results, "national networks must be set up in order to facilitate information, communication and the exchange of experience". In this respect, the plan by Portugal's Ministries for Education and Science & Technology to equip all the country's primary and secondary schools with the Internet will certainly give a considerable boost. □

How enlarge



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In the Alentejo region of southern Portugal, a class of pupils from the Serpa agricultural school has a rendezvous with other young people from Reggio Emilia in Italy. The reason? To see how the Italians succeeded in making Parmesan an internationally renowned cheese. And to learn some lessons about how better to promote their own local cheese. Among other things, languages are involved.

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Serpa cheese, with a Parmesan flavour...

Just two kilometres from the small town of Serpa, a narrow road leads to the agricultural school (EPAS). The building is surrounded by several rows of olive trees, among which the sheep graze peacefully. But this morning is not the time for bucolic daydreaming. It suddenly starts to rain hard. Quite exceptional weather for a region used to dry, sunny winters. The rain immediately puts everyone in a good mood. "Havia falta", they say: "Just what we needed!" Alentejo suffers from a cruel shortage of water – and its farming from severe drought.

We are welcomed by Mr Barradas, head teacher at the school. He explains the reason why he has just 72 pupils. The commune of Serpa and neighbouring areas have a very low population density. The region has lost more than half its population since the 1960s. The young grow up and leave, only the old remaining. "We are one of Europe's most disadvantaged regions," he explains. "What little industry there is consists entirely of small firms, all of them more or less linked to farming."

The challenge for this vocational training school is to get the young people to stay in the area and thus serve as a motor for local development. Like other such schools in Portugal, Serpa has its own education project. It has three aims: to reduce the rural exodus; to revitalize agriculture, among other things, by supplying a more skilled workforce; and to stimulate activities linked to agriculture. "Quality tourism is one area to be developed, as this is a locality with a well-preserved environment and great historical wealth," stresses Mr Barradas.

Links in the same chain

The Lingua E project initiated by the EPAS reflects this thinking. Serpa produces a cheese made from sheep's milk which is well known in Portugal and has a protected name. The problem is that the cheese is totally unknown outside the country. The Serpa label thus has considerable potential in terms of

the region's development. Provided, that is, it proves possible to increase production, improve quality control and develop a policy to promote it beyond the regional and national borders. This is why the Serpa vocational training school decided to establish links with a similar establishment in Italy, in the province of Reggio Emilia. It was a conscious choice, because it is in this part of Italy that Parmesan, a cheese known all over the world and with a protected label, is produced and sold. The aim in developing a partnership with this Italian school is to see how Parmesan, formerly produced by artisans, has achieved success as an industrial product, and to apply the lessons learned to Serpa.

Cheese production to revitalize Alentejo has become a veritable motto for the vocational training school. It has developed a number of projects over recent years in European partnerships with the aid of various Community programmes: Euroform and Petra in the past, then Leonardo de Vinci, Comenius and Lingua. On each occasion, attention focused on a particular aspect of the production chain. Contacts with a French village in the Massif Central, Sainte-Affrique, led to Serpa importing a new breed of sheep, the Lacaune, which produces more milk. A manual was published explaining how to set up your own farm and a training module produced which uses diskettes and video tapes to provide instruction on quality control in the agri-foodstuffs industry. With Reggio Emilia, the project is moving to a fourth level: marketing.

Italian, the English way

Another aspect of this project is the desire to widen the language skills of the young people involved. The 14 third-year pupils at the EPAS receive language instruction as part of the technical course in agri-foodstuffs industries. Beate, the English teacher at the school, who is of German origin,

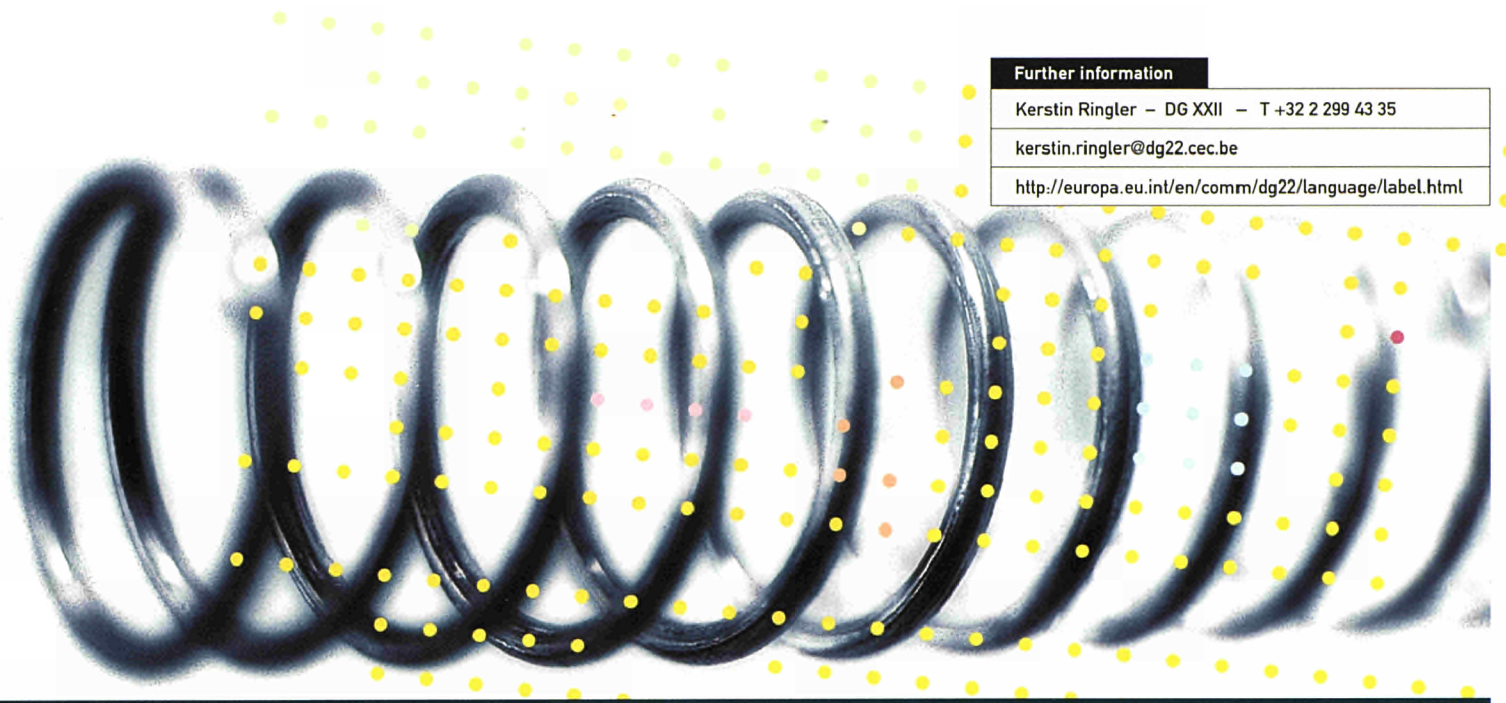
explains: "We are counting on exchange periods to build on the introductory courses in Italian and Portuguese. Serpa is just a few kilometres from the Spanish border so our pupils understand Spanish. That should make it possible for them to get by in Italian without any problem, as the languages are quite close. Paradoxically, the exchange is likely to have a particularly beneficial effect on their English. At an agricultural school such as ours the pupils do not naturally feel the need to speak English. But we are using the Internet a great deal in preparing these visits. And for that we use English, which is generating a new motivation to learn the language."

Ready for action

We find the group of 14 just before lunch, together with Maria-José, teacher of agri-foodstuffs techniques, who is responsible for implementing the project. Nuno, Pedro, Bruno and the others explain the work they have already done. In just a month's time, the class from Italy will be arriving in Serpa. Shortly after that, the Portuguese will be travelling to Reggio Emilia. As the deadlines draw near, the adrenaline starts to flow. Nuno acts as spokesman for the group. He explains how for most of them the trip will be the first time they have travelled abroad and have flown.

Maria-José is as enthusiastic as her pupils. She detects a different atmosphere in the class since they became involved with the Lingua E project. "They have learned to share information, to work together. Friendships have been forged."

Mr Barradas believes that this international experience will provide added value by helping the pupils break out of a kind of cultural isolation. "A young person of 18 living here only knows Europe through the television. The opportunity to meet Italian colleagues of the same age will have a stimulating and beneficial effect." □



Further information

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<http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/language/label.html>

Stimulating language learning: the European Label

The European Label for Innovative Projects in Language Teaching and Learning aims to encourage and identify new initiatives in language teaching and learning and to let as many people as possible know about them. The scheme developed from the Commission's 1995 White Paper *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society*, which set the objective of enabling all EU citizens to become proficient in three Community languages.

The European Label scheme is coordinated by the Commission, but managed by the participating countries – the EU Member States along with Norway and Iceland. Labels are awarded by national juries, which include a member from another participating country. Successful projects must meet a set of common European criteria; in some countries, additional national criteria also apply. Any initiative in the field of language teaching and learning is eligible for a Label, whatever type of organization is responsible and whatever the age or background of the learners. Successful applicants can use the Label and associated logo on their premises, and in information material.

So far, 80 projects have received the European Label. In March, 29 of the most interesting projects, from 17 different countries, went on show in Brussels at the invitation of the Commission.

This event, entitled "Stimulating Language Learning: the European Label", marked the conclusion of the successful pilot phase of the scheme, and was split into two parts. After a plenary session in the morning, the afternoon session took the form of an exhibition. Representatives of each invited project had the use of a stand, where they presented their work to their counterparts from other countries and to the numerous decision-makers and journalists who also took part.

Many of the presentations made use of the computer and video facilities available at the stands, as well as of posters, leaflets and other information material. Most important was the opportunity for informal personal contact between language teachers and trainers, administrators and academics from all over Europe. As one participant put it: "It is amazing how many ideas you can get from talking to people."

Projects exhibited ranged from a public self-access centre managed by Naples University in Italy to a group of seven schools in sparsely populated Lapland in Finland. The schools cooperate to offer pupils and their parents a choice of seven languages. These are taught not only in "traditional" language lessons but also through other subjects, including snow survival skills.

Examples of other projects included: a course in German for unemployed people, using a fictional company (Belgium); a foreign language poetry competition (Netherlands); and various computer simulation exercises based on problem-solving in foreign languages (Denmark, Germany and Norway). There were several projects aimed at early learning, in some cases for children as young as two.

A key message of the European Label, and of all the Commission's other activities in the field of language learning, is that language skills can be accessible to everybody in Europe. DG XXII director-general David O'Sullivan, in his speech opening the event, pointed out that 51% of European adults do not speak a foreign language¹. He said that the kind of "ingenuity and dedication" demonstrated by projects awarded the Label could help improve that figure:

"Those who have tried and failed to learn other languages have often been discouraged by the methods used: perhaps endless repetition of meaningless sentences or a continual diet of dry and academic grammar exercises. Many people would be astonished by the innovative projects here today, by their emphasis on effective communication, and on what people can do rather than what they cannot."

Mr O'Sullivan emphasised that the Commission, European Parliament and the Member States have long recognised the importance of language learning not only for personal development, but for European citizenship. Language skills are particularly important in ensuring that people can take advantage in practice of their right to live and work in other European countries. Languages are also a key factor in improving employability and the competitiveness of European enterprises. The European Union has for many years supported language education and training through the Lingua measures within the Socrates programme, and through the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

At the plenary session chaired by Domenico Lenarduzzi, DG XXII's director of action in education, representatives of each participating country gave a brief summary of the implementation of the Label scheme at national level.

Summaries and contact details for all the projects which took part in the event are included in a brochure to be published in 11 Community languages. It will be available from the Commission and via Internet.

Information on applying for a Label can be obtained from national contact points. Details can be found through the Internet address given with this article.

¹ Source: Eurobarometer 44 (April 1996 – survey carried out November 1995)

Thematic Network Project in the area of languages
<http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/tnp-fram.htm>

Conference interpreting website (currently being developed)
<http://www.sprachlabor.fu-berlin.de/conflnt>

Joint Interpreting and Conference Service of the European Commission
<http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/scic/scichome.htm>

The full text of core programme in Conference Interpreting is available from the JICS website and from the CEL/ELC Information Bulletin n°3.

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New Advanced Programme in Conference Interpreting: from a Network to a Curriculum

More universities are planning to offer specialist postgraduate courses for interpreters.

Within the Socrates/Erasmus programme the EU supports the development of new degree courses at advanced level (Master's type), undertaken jointly by universities from at least three participating countries, which seek to respond to European shortages of highly qualified human resources in the professional and economic environments. The same Socrates/Erasmus programme also supports European thematic networks, which are dedicated to a given academic discipline or interdisciplinary field and link a large number of universities, associations and representatives of the non-academic environments. One of their tasks is to identify changing needs with a view to working out proposals for new university programmes. It is only logical that thematic networks should be eager to initiate curriculum development projects designed to meet some of the needs identified by them.

There is considerable shortage of newly trained conference interpreters, especially of conference interpreters with combinations which include one or more of the less widely used and less taught languages. Traditionally, interpreting has formed part of first degree programmes covering both translation and interpreting – programmes which often devote considerable time to language practice and to theoretical issues and are not focused on the specific professional needs of conference interpreters.

The idea began in April 1997, within the project on "translation and interpreting" of the thematic network project (TNP) in languages: after consultations with DG XXII and the Commission's Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (JICS), the TNP coordinator invited universities offering pro-

grammes in interpreting to submit expressions of interest for a pilot project. The idea was to launch a short-term pilot project for the development of a draft programme and for preparing a proposal for a full-fledged curriculum development project at advanced level (CDA).

A broad partnership

The proposal brought a very positive response. No fewer than 30 institutions indicated their interest within a couple of months, and from them eight were invited to form a pilot project working group in the first year: Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (Austria), Hogeschool Antwerpen/Universitair Centrum Antwerpen (Belgium), Handelshøjskolen i København (Denmark), Universidad de la Laguna (Spain), Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris III) (France), University of Westminster (Great Britain), Universidade do Minho (Portugal), and Stockholms universitet (Sweden). Whilst some of these universities had experience in postgraduate courses in conference interpreting, others did not. In addition, the original eight institutions invited another six universities in the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Switzerland to join the partnership in the second year.

Within six months, the working group, assisted by the JICS, DG XXII, the European Parliament and the TNP, identified a number of key issues: The content of the core curriculum comprises theory of interpretation, practice of interpretation, consecutive interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, and the EU and international organizations, but no language practice as such. It specifies the minimum number of class contact

hours devoted to interpreting practice and makes the point that all interpreting sessions will be conducted by practising/experienced conference interpreters with teaching skills. Likewise, the assessment panels for both the aptitude test which forms the entry gate to the programme and for the final examination include a majority of experienced interpreters.

A guarantee for employers

According to Brian Fox, head of unit at the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service of the European Commission, which is the largest employer of conference interpreters in the world, "the project aims at ensuring high-quality training by developing a common core curriculum and promoting the spread of best practice throughout the EU and beyond. It has also taken on board a lot of the lessons learnt in terms of what is required in the professional life of a conference interpreter and what an employer is looking for. Moreover, the fact that this project constitutes a quality label recognized throughout Europe is a very important guarantee to any employer, all the more so since they can be confident that their point of view has contributed to shaping the content and requirements of the course. One of the fundamental beliefs of the EU is that all the Member State languages are equal – hence the EU's support for the less widely used and less taught languages. Our ambition is not only to cover them all but also, subsequently, to set up a coordination system to ensure that the partners achieve the best language coverage, the best use of resources and, it goes without saying, the best quality." □

Think of a number and multiply it by five... And the answer is excellent results and full marks for all those involved in both the coordination and participation of the latest Comenius venture. One of the new project's coordinators, Ronald Mackenzie, explains how expert European collaboration led to the launch and development of a successful school partnership.

Expertise 5X5 :

a Comenius project with a difference

In the summer of 1995 I attended a European education conference in Osnabrück. One of the main items for discussion was the new Comenius programme. Many lecturers were excited by this new venture: the possibility to learn about, experience and influence children's education throughout Europe not just through a university-based ICP, but in a more broadly-based and democratic way, through in-service contacts with teachers across Europe.

Like many of those present in Osnabrück, I enthusiastically assembled the basis for a lasting and fruitful partnership. I already had an excellent colleague in The Netherlands; he soon put me in touch with an outstanding partner in Germany. Then there was the brilliant Portuguese mathematician whom I had just met, and who was a good friend of my Dutch colleague; and the tall figure from Finland, who turned out to be a Welsh university teacher of English. I left Osnabrück knowing that I was lucky to belong to such a partnership.

A meeting of minds in Europe

But what about our theme, or themes? Our preparatory bid soon succeeded. And when we met in Birmingham in November, my four new partners collaborated skilfully to produce an innovative framework of five themes: interculturalism, languages and communication, special needs, new technologies and autonomous learning. But the real innovation in my colleagues' thinking lay in the further aspects of the framework that they were creating.

For in addition to laying the groundwork for a successful Comenius action 3 project bid in February 1996 (which began its first contractual year of three in October 1996), my colleagues envisaged something more broadly-based and rewarding. Each of us five university partners would recruit five schools in her/his own country. One of these schools in each country would launch an independent, but linked, Comenius action 1 transnational partnership (and bid) of five schools in Portugal, Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and the UK. Thus a Portuguese school would coordinate a five-school partnership on interculturalism, a German school would coordinate languages and communication, a Dutch school would coordinate special needs, a Finnish school would coordinate new technologies, and a UK school would coordinate autonomous learning. The title: Expanding European Resources for Teachers in In-service Education seemed appropriate – especially when it lent itself to an even better acronym: Expertise 5X5 (“They love acronyms,” said my Welsh Finnish friend.)

The five – or 25 – action 1 (school) bids all succeeded. The schools were most enthusiastic and the ingenious interlinking of the action 1 and action 3 projects was a gratifying example of synergy. The five action 1 partnerships soon displayed many strengths that have become more apparent during the three years of the projects. Firstly, they are conducted by dedicated and enthusiastic coordinators who have each given an individual and high-quality lead to the interpretation of each theme. Secondly, the five teachers in each partnership have built on this lead, so that each project is very distinctive and interesting. Thirdly, the other teachers and all the children in the 25 schools have taken to the five projects with great enthusiasm and skill. It has not mattered that there is a mix of primary and secondary schools – in many ways it has been an advantage.

Experiencing a rich mix of cultures

In the interculturalism group, the focus has been on the meaning of home in different European cultures. The languages and communication group has innovatively explored the rich mix of languages, among both majority and ethnic minority populations, across the partnership. The different interpretation of special needs, both at a European-wide level and in our partner countries, has proved very rewarding for that group. The new technologies partnership has fittingly combined technological expertise, including video-conferencing, with a practical concentration on important primary school themes such as water. The autonomous learning partnership has concentrated on the study of climate, among other topics.

Knowledge knows no boundaries

The action 3 partnership has also been busy. Dissemination and information meetings have taken place between university and school staff in the five partner countries. The action 3 partners planned a week-long Comenius course, advertised in the Comenius Catalogue in 1997, to take place in May 1998: “School Without Boundaries” – which would build logically on the five main project themes. With the help of the Socrates Technical Assistance Bureau, 29 teachers were recruited from 10 European countries, including two teachers each from the UK and the Czech Republic. My four colleagues all made expert presentations, as did three undergraduate students who had just undertaken three-month placements in the UK Comenius schools. Four Portuguese Socrates exchange students joined in. The course survived a major power cut in my college, which meant that there was no elec-

tric lighting or audio-visual equipment available for a whole morning; no matter, my Dutch and German colleagues sang instead. The weather was good; the Lord Mayor of Birmingham kindly paid us a visit; everyone learnt a great deal and enjoyed themselves enormously.

Plenty more good things to come

The Expertise 5X5 project has already been launched, and is in the process of further generating curriculum development and dissemination in many ways; here are seven of them. Firstly, head and senior teachers in the 25 schools have successfully bid for study visit grants, so that five common study meetings of the five partnerships, and thus of many of the 25 schools, have taken place: in Scheveningen, Birmingham, Jyväskylä, Porto and Kleve (this March). These common meetings have been extremely rewarding. Secondly, real curriculum development has taken place in all 25 schools; children have been interested in and excited by communicating directly with other children in schools in the other four countries. Thirdly, the project has led to both the writing of academic articles and to the production of other worthwhile project presentations. Fourthly, the 25 school and five university partners have learnt a lot about Europe and have expanded their interests to other European countries, particularly in Eastern Europe. Fifthly, the partners have begun to focus on new themes and challenges such as the euro. Sixthly, partners are planning new networks for the future, for the new round of Comenius for example. Lastly, as its major exercise in dissemination this year, the project partnership is developing its own website. □

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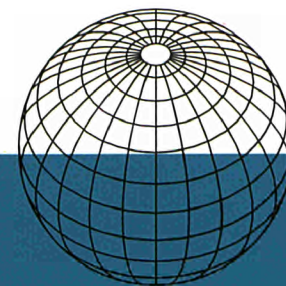
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Microchips in the freezer



Participants in the EU's Arion exchange programme did not brave Lapland's sub-zero chill to visit Santa Claus. They came to help piece together the jigsaw puzzle of education in Europe by witnessing first-hand how Finland is developing open and distance learning.

Further information

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Dancing the tango seems an odd thing to do north of the Arctic Circle, yet the slinky couples who arrive in January are only part of a stream of international visitors attracted to Lapland by a year-round programme of festivals.

The snowmobile rally, jazz festival, wood-carving contest, Golden Trout Trolling Competition, Midnight Sun Festival, Cloudberry Fair, all these and much more, plus the new Santapark centre for Christmas tourists, make this north-eastern corner of the European Union, halfway between the Ukraine and the North Pole, a fun place to go.

For the local people, however, the reality may be rather different. The tango festival is held in Kemijärvi, a small lakeside town where the death rate is higher than the birth rate and unemployment is around 20%. Only a third of the current population were born there, nearly 30% are retired and 300 people left the town last year. For all the region's unspoilt natural beauty and low crime rate, its main problem is emigration.

On a Sunday afternoon last December, a bus arrived in Kemijärvi bringing 13 visitors from 10 European countries. They were head teachers, civil servants and other education professionals taking part in the EU's Arion programme of exchanges. Their aim was to see how this sparsely populated region is coping with the problem of maintaining and developing high-quality education services, in particular through open and distance learning, despite a public funding squeeze and a recent economic downturn.

Finland, reputedly taciturn, has more cellular phones relative to population than any other country. The government aims to have all schools and libraries online by next year, and

in Helsinki there is a project to put all municipal authority services online so that the whole city is accessible through a multimedia network. Lapland plans to have a single network for all its schools in 2001, and Nokia is one of the main employers in Kemijärvi. Can information and communications technology solve the problem of schoolrooms that are not too crowded, but too empty?

Away from the bright lights

On arrival, the visitors are a little stunned by the temperature of -21° and the silence. The sky is black, the trees are white. A strange smell, from the local woodpulp factory, hangs over the town. Lapland claims to be Finland's most international province and the Kemijärvi Hotel's modest restaurant does offer reindeer-meat pizzas, but the TV that evening is screening the sedate whirl of the President's Independence Day Ball, the nation's principal social event, live from Helsinki. It is a reminder that the bright lights are down south.

Kemijärvi is conscious of its proximity to the Russian border and Independence Day prompts wartime and Cold War memories that are not entirely allayed by new initiatives such as the Alakurthi Technology Park, close to the nearest crossing point, which includes education and training for unemployed Russian soldiers. Many hopes are pinned on economic development projects designed to open up corridors for trade and tourism across the 1,300-kilometre border, using Finnish expertise, for instance, to exploit the winter sports potential of the Kirovsk area. However, the young generation seem little inclined to learn Russian. And Finland does not even import its

neighbour's timber for pulping, on ecological grounds, prompting a Russian official to comment: "Western children seem to think foxes are more important than people."

The Kemijärvi Education and Cultural Services Department is duly upbeat about such projects. Its logo is an eagle, not a fox, and its motto is 'Rise on your own wings'. But its more immediate preoccupations are with local schools, especially shrinking upper secondary schools and the primary schools, over half of which are now down to only two or three teachers. One has a mere 15 pupils. This year, the lower (primary) and upper secondary schools are being combined by the government into comprehensive schools for the full compulsory education range from ages seven to 16, but this national administrative reform does not automatically bring schools together under one roof. Young children outside Kemijärvi cannot simply be transported 30 kms or so into town. And their parents do not want to move – in Finland, it is not so much good fences as invisibility that makes good neighbours. Besides, who wants to put up with the smell of the woodpulp works?

Behind the scenes

After a Monday of introductory talks, the Arion group's second day begins with a visit to a typical rural primary school, Joutsijärvi, which had 100 pupils 30 years ago. Now it has 19, and two teachers. The children, in their socks, sing a reindeer song. Outside, in the schoolyard, there is a reindeer; inside, a pedal organ, Christmas decorations, a warm aroma of lunch and a gym, with carpentry workbenches folded up against



the walls. There are also three high-powered computers, laser printers and a pull-down screen for the overhead projector. The school has a home page, in Finnish, and the pupils create their own home pages, in English ('My name is Marjut. I like riding...'). CD-ROMs and the Internet provide information which they are encouraged to compare with their textbooks and their own observations in the countryside – it is an open learning environment, drawing on real life, designed to encourage critical thinking about information sources both ancient and modern.

The school puts everyone on more familiar ground. Ana Maria, from Portugal, enthuses about the "magical" atmosphere of storytime in primary classes. Bertalan, a former MP from Hungary, earnestly congratulates the teachers on the "exemplary" approach to open learning. Andrew, from the UK, finds it "laid back" and is startled to see a 10-year-old casually entering a computer's operating system to fix a technical problem. Gisli, from Iceland, says this is normal in Scandinavia: "Kids know about computers, more than teachers. They use them like phones or bikes. This is hobby country and one of the hobbies is information technology – there are lots of IT magazines." Lapland is laptoiland.

Investing in Finland's future

At the same time, for Arion visitors more used to decaying buildings and inner city pressures, the school is an unfamiliar haven of peace. Who does all the paperwork? How can the local authority afford to pay for the school transport as well as the computer running costs? Bertalan considers the investment justified by its effect on reducing future social problems. Meanwhile, Abdou from France is testing the online facilities. The previous evening, he had had his first experiences of a sauna and cross-country skiing in the dark.

The next stop is a secondary school in town, Isokylä, with 30 teachers and 250 pupils aged 12 to 16, studying 15 compulsory subjects. The school year has five seven-week terms; the school day (9.00 to 15.00hrs) has six lessons. Girls and boys are learning cookery in the domestic science class. The biology class has a colour printer the size of an oven.

By 14.30hrs it is twilight and the Arion group is in the Kemijärvi Upper Secondary School, with its 250 pupils aged 16-19 and 23 teachers, eight of whom are shared with the previous school. The students are "not particularly academic", one teacher feels. "Their parents own reindeer." Headmaster Timo Toukomies took part in an Arion visit the previous year, to Scotland, and is seeking school partnerships in the EU. Has anyone any suggestions? At the end of the school day, there is a ballroom dancing class in the gym.

After-school activities

Finnish teachers retire at 63. "I think we're out of date by then," says one. But attracting young teachers to Lapland is not easy, and for those already there teacher training courses are expensive to get to because of the high cost of transport in Finland. Lidia-Simona, from Romania, doing a Ph.D. in ODL, is a teacher trainer. Is there a shortage of trainees entering the profession in her country? "No, there are masses of them, but they don't necessarily want to be teachers."

Later, in the town's oldest primary school, built in 1949, an adult evening education class assembles. These are parents with children at the school, following a free course in information technology called "Learn your children's future". It is part of a centrally-led, government-backed, public-private sector initiative, "Finland to the Information Society", which was launched in autumn 1997 and now involves more than 800 schools and universities. The teachers are volunteers and the two sets of 12 one-hour lessons are based on self-learning packages, for complete beginners upwards (the Internet address is <http://www.huominen.net/uutiset.html>). It is a revealing glimpse into how Finland achieves its high level of electronic literacy, in a school-and-home partnership of teachers, parents and pupils.

The day ends with a Christmas concert at the town's music school, where a succession of short solos by small, prettily-dressed children turns a packed audience misty-eyed. Tomorrow's Arion schedule will cover vocational training, apprenticeship, adult education and then the first full overview of the open and distance learning environment in Kemijärvi. The temperature has dropped further (at the end of January, it reached -51° in northern Lapland); anyone who

has trouble breathing, during the 10-minute walk back to the hotel, is invited to inform the local organizers of the visit, Pirkko Hyvönen and Sari Lassila. "So far", Pirkko says, "you have only seen pieces of the puzzle".

Assembling the jigsaw puzzle of education in Europe is a good metaphor for Arion. The visiting specialists, with their widely differing national and professional backgrounds, have by now started to know each other and operate as a team, both in asking questions and in composing their conclusions in a joint report on the trip. The EU education programmes project coordinator from Helsinki, Piia Heinämäki, has meshed with her colleagues from the local education authority in the north; between them, they shepherd the group through the series of formal welcomes, presentations, performances by students and visits to classrooms, through local sensibilities and varying levels of English language ability, depending on goodwill and without EU funding to cover any costs incurred locally.

Some 150 Arion study visits are now organized every year with the European Commission and national agencies, each focused on a particular theme. The current annual programme involves 1,750 education professionals from 29 European countries. Often, they generate return invitations. The programme is one of the earliest forms of EU cooperation in education. Over 20 years, nearly 15,000 specialists have participated in it, picking up good ideas from colleagues abroad, swapping opinions and contributing bit by bit to the jigsaw puzzle – to widen professional awareness of how education systems throughout the EU are adapting to new demands and developments.

The Arion visit to Kemijärvi has already generated a number of follow-up projects, such as a proposed university link in open and distance learning between Romania and Finland, school partnerships between Hungary, Finland and the UK at upper secondary level, and the idea of developing an informal network across Europe for colleagues interested in open and distance learning. And the group's report on the visit concludes: "We recommend that the EU should continue to play a catalytic role in projects to harness the Internet as a learning tool to enable us to work together without reinventing the wheel." □

Four studies on failure at school

Between 10% and 20% of the European Union's young people leave school without any recognized qualification and 45.5% of young people aged between 15 and 24 are poorly qualified, to lower secondary level only. Four studies have been carried out on this problem under the Socrates programme: *Abandoning school and secondary education* (IARD, Milan), *Reforms in training devices to combat school and social failure in Europe* (Universita Autonoma de Barcelona), *Promoting access to basic skills for children who are victims of social exclusion* (Catholic University of Leuven) and *Pursuing training* (Catholic University of Louvain-la Neuve). The final reports and/or summaries of these studies are now available.

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The Socrates programme launches new Thematic network projects

The European Commission has approved the launch of nine new *Thematic network projects* between higher education establishments for the 1998/1999 academic year. This follows the 31 networks already launched in 1996 and 1997.

Supported by the Erasmus chapter of the Socrates programme, the projects are in six academic disciplines (civil engineering, food sciences, pharmacology, environmental sciences, literature and *gerontechnology*), and three subjects of common interest (women's studies, the European identity and citizenship of children, university administration).

Each of these networks brings together about 100 higher education institutions (university and non-university) together with a number of associations, public and private bodies and NGOs from the 24 countries participating in Socrates in 1998/1999.

Lingua Catalogue on the Internet

Are you looking for a multimedia course to help you learn Italian?
Are you a Spanish teacher looking for video material for your course?
Do you want to improve your Danish pronunciation?

The Lingua catalogue can provide you with the information you need. This database provides information on language learning materials developed by the European partners, especially for less widely spoken languages.

The information can be retrieved quickly and easily by introducing a number of key parameters, such as target language, type of material and learner group.

<http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/socrates.html>

Networks join forces to promote European open and distance learning

Nine European open and distance learning (ODL) associations agreed on 21 January to form a liaison committee to improve cooperation between the individual networks, and to act as a common interface on strategic and operational issues concerning the promotion and implementation of ODL in Europe. The Commission has encouraged the establishment of the committee.

The nine networks represent the main ODL specialists in Europe; they include private and public institutions such as open universities and specialized distance education institutes, networks of conventional universities providing open and flexible education, vocational training institutes and correspondence schools, as well as individual academics and professionals working in the field.

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A reference manual for equal opportunities between men and women

One of the specific projects supported by the European Commission in the field of cooperation in education is a reference manual for use by head teachers and managers in the field of general education which aims to promote equal opportunities in primary and secondary schools.

The manual was produced by the SAFE (*Service d'Action en Formation et en Emploi*) association in cooperation with the education ministries of Member States, and contains essential elements such as the legislation of EU countries or historical references, actions by the Community or UNESCO, and examples of good practice at national or Community level.

Projects are grouped by level of education or subject – teacher training, increasing the awareness of parents, for example. The subjects covered include both school orientation and the diversification of study and career choices and the stereotypes presented in traditional school books and manuals.

Also included are contact addresses by Member State or project, together with bibliographical references. The guide will be made available in the 11 official EU languages on the Commission's Europa/ DG 22 server later in the year.

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European Forum on quality in education

Quality is at the centre of the debate on education in Europe. Developing quality in education is the main purpose of EU cooperation as set out in article 149 of the Amsterdam Treaty.

The Commission is inviting all education professionals to discuss the main factors leading to quality in education at a three-day forum in Brussels in April 2000.

In a series of workshops, talks and round table discussions, education professionals, decision-makers, researchers, learners, parents, etc. will examine a range of current topics in education policy.

A pre-announcement of the European Forum and an expression of interest form will be included in the next issue of *Le Magazine*.

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Adult education

Europa's adult education site gives general information on the Commission's contribution to adult education and detailed information for those seeking to present projects under Socrates-Adult Education.

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg22/socrates/adult/home.html>

What's new in European education systems?

Greece

Special needs education

The education system should be in a position to educate all pupils equally, regardless of special difficulties and needs. This new principle is the basis of the recent law of the Ministry of National Education on special needs education in Greece. This law is aiming at the school integration, vocational training, and social integration of these pupils through the complete and subtle development of their personality, social acceptance and their smooth adaptation to it, and their participation in the production process.

The conditions to meet these goals are seen as the inclusion of pupils with special needs in mainstream rather than in special schools, establishing courses of vocational training addressing pupils with special needs especially in order to help them get into employment and gain financial and social independence.

Finland

Evaluation of learning results in state education

In accordance with the new education legislation (1998), the evaluation of primary and secondary education and training is the responsibility of the National Board of Education (NBE), the central agency under the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the obligation of self-evaluation is now prescribed for all providers of education.

The evaluation undertaken by the NBE is primarily evaluation of educational outcomes. The aim is to provide updated information for the development of education. The three pillars of the national evaluation system are evaluation of the educational outcomes, production of indicators, and thematic evaluation projects.

Italy

Extending compulsory education

Until the approval of a general reform of the school system, raising the upper age limit for compulsory education and training to 18 years, compulsory education covers a period of eight years. From the 1999/2000 school year, it will go up to nine years. This means that the first year of upper secondary education, for pupils aged 14 or 15, is now the last year of compulsory education. In accordance with the principles of autonomy defined in Article 21 of Law No 59 of 15 March 1997, schools must, during this first year of upper secondary education, provide for and introduce educational initiatives dealing with the main themes of contemporary culture, society and science in an effort to develop pupils' ability to exercise their critical judgement. Furthermore, schools must promote careers guidance initiatives with the aim of dissuading young people from dropping out of school, guaranteeing the right to education and training, enabling pupils to make the choices which are best suited to their personalities and life plans and helping them move from one kind of upper secondary education to another.

At the end of the period of compulsory education, pupils who have not obtained the diploma will be issued with a certificate testifying to the fact that they have completed their compulsory education. This certificate can be used as a training credit and indicates the educational programme followed and the level attained.

Portugal

Autonomy, Administration and Management System – Giving schools a chance to speak for themselves

The main aim of the *Regime de Autonomia, Administração e Gestão* (RAAG) [Autonomy, Administration and Management System] for nursery, primary and secondary schools, approved by Decree Law No 115-A/98 of 4 May, is to reorganize the way in which education is administered, based on decentralization and the development of school autonomy.

Such an aim requires the identity of each school to be developed and set out in its Education Plan and a flexible teaching system, so that the quality of state education can be guaranteed.

The most important elements in the process of establishing autonomy for schools are the **Education Plan**, **internal regulations** and the **annual activity plan**.

Spain

The new Minister of Education and Culture, Mr Rajoy, has outlined to Congress the guidelines he laid down for his period in office.

The process by which the **Autonomous Communities** will be able to have full responsibilities in education will be completed in the school year 1999/2000. At present there are only six Autonomous Communities, out of seventeen, directly run by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This will require a reorganization of the Ministry to ensure the basic unity of the education system.

In **non-university education**, the Ministry intends to provide schooling to all children at the age of three and to expand the network of educational establishments. The ratio of pupils per class will be reduced while foreign language teaching will be fostered in those educational levels where it is not compulsory. Moreover, specific vocational training will be enhanced by facilitating the transition from intermediate to higher level, and from this to university. A National Institute for Qualifications will be created to study the various professional fields so that studies are geared to suit the needs of the labour market.

At the level of university education, student mobility will be fostered by awarding grants and support while the working conditions of the lecturers will be improved as will the research programmes and international cooperation.

Sweden

The Swedish Minister for Schools and Adult Education, Ingegerd Wärnersson, has decided to make the area of basic democratic values in school one of the highest priorities. The aim is, among other things, to strengthen respect for and understanding of others and to combat violence, all forms of harassment and inequality between the sexes.

To take action within this framework, the Ministry of Education and Science is preparing a special project consisting of an initiative to raise awareness of basic democratic values in both schools and municipalities and to support work at local level in this area. Relevant national and international experiences will be analysed and action will be taken. The one-year project also aims to strengthen cooperation between different partners regarding these issues at both central and local level.

Young people at all levels are directly involved in the work. A special "youth council" has been established and linked to the Ministry project group. The council, consisting of ten 16 year-old pupils from different parts of Sweden, is discussing the best way of implementing democratic values in daily life in school and will put forward its suggestions for improvement.

United Kingdom (Scotland)

There will be a Scottish Parliament... These were the historic words greeting Scotland on 12 September 1997, the morning after the Scottish people voted overwhelmingly for the first Scottish Parliament in nearly 300 years. This Parliament will be responsible from 1 July 1999, for all policy and legislation in the devolved areas, including in particular education, at a most exciting time, as a major Scottish development, *Higher Still*, is about to be implemented. This new system of upper secondary qualifications, begins in August 1999.

The contributions below have been provided by the national units concerned in the Eurydice network.

More information is available on the Eurydice Internet web site <http://www.eurydice.org>
NEWS

It brings together – in one system – academic and vocational subjects. Qualifications will be available at five levels, all aimed at developing the core skills of communication, numeracy, problem solving, information technology and working with others.

Liechtenstein

The Internet and Intranet for schools in Liechtenstein

From December 1998, all pupils and teachers have been able to make use of a school-specific Intranet. This application provides everyone involved in the field of education with a unique platform for communication and exchange. Each school has access to several computers with connections to the Internet and internal Windows NT networks.

The introduction of the Internet in the schools represents a wise improvement to regular everyday teaching and offers pupils the opportunity to acquire basic qualifications for the future in a demanding environment characterised by social contact, high technology and cooperation. The new Intranet, "Schulnetz.li", makes distance learning possible between different schools and countries and provides access to the databases of the country's educational resource centre (*Didaktische Medienstelle*), the vocational guidance centres and the national library.

Norway

The competence reform/ Documentation of non-formal learning

The Norwegian parliament, the *Storting*, considered the Competence Reform on 19 January 1999 and passed a resolution concerning the establishment of a system to enable adults to document their non-formal learning. It covers the documentation of learning acquired through work both in Norway and abroad, through active participation in democratic life and through other voluntary work. This type of non-formal learning should be approved as "equivalent competence" even if it is not identical to what is laid down in syllabuses and required for public examinations.

The government is currently giving priority to work on the documentation of non-formal learning at upper secondary level. The system will give adults the opportunity of starting training at the appropriate level and also provide for an adapted provision. Its importance can be seen when considering the needs of the national economy and the requirements of fairness in society.

Czech Republic

The Higher Education Act

The Czech Parliament passed a new Higher Education Act in April 1998 and it took effect on 1 January 1999.

This law provides for a non-university type of higher education offering more vocationally oriented studies of a duration usually of three years, the possibility of establishing private higher education institutions, a diversification of the functions of higher education, changing the status of higher education institutions, evaluating higher education institutions and the quality of accredited activities by the Accreditation Commission, the preparation and publishing of an annual report on the activity and financing of all institutions and no payment of fees in public higher education institutions except where students prolong their studies beyond the prescribed standard by more than one year, except for administrative charges. (Private institutions can fix their own registration fees.)

Poland

The reform of the education system

The implementation of the reform of the education system will start on 1 September 1999. It embraces educational administration, structural organisation of the education system and curricula.

Changes in educational administration

Self-governing local authorities at the level of communes (*gminy*) or districts (*powiaty*) will be responsible for nursery, primary and secondary schools. Administrative and pedagogical supervision have been separated and the latter will be carried out by regional educational authorities (*kuratoria*).

The reformed structure of the education system

The school types being established are the 6-year primary school, 3-year lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*), 3-year specialised upper secondary school (*liceum*) and 2-year vocational school. Compulsory education will begin for all children at age 7 and last until age 18. Full-time compulsory schooling will last 9 years and cover the primary and *gimnazjum* school. At the end of each school, pupils will be assessed by means of external standardised tests or examinations. At the end of the 3-year specialised *liceum*, there will be an examination (*matura*) entitling pupils to enter higher education. Pupils successful at the end of the 2-year vocational schools will also be able to sit the *matura* on condition that they successfully complete the 2-year supplementary *liceum*. The new system of pupil assessment will lead to better evaluation and monitoring of the quality of school work.

New core curricula have been developed for all school types. They cover 80% of the activities included in the timetable, while the remaining 20% of the timetable is flexible, left to the school's own discretion.

Romania

The curriculum reforms

Developed in 1998, the education reform is continuing affecting curriculum reform, further education, distance learning, education research, the education infrastructure, management of education and international cooperation.

In 1999, the curriculum reform includes the full implementation of the new National Curriculum for primary education and its gradual implementation in lower and upper secondary education, the implementation of the new vocational curriculum in all vocational schools, the development of local components of the National Curriculum by schools and secondary schools, the individualisation of the study route through optional subjects that may be chosen, the training of students to deal with changing circumstances, for assuming initiatives and for becoming organised and efficient, the publication of new alternative textbooks corresponding to the new curricula, the extension of interdisciplinarity at higher levels, assurance

that the new curriculum is compatible with European standards, the reorganisation of the initial training of the teaching staff based on new educational technologies, the development of entrepreneurial skills, the expansion of modern language teaching, the extension of the aesthetical education for pre-university level, the development of a new curriculum corresponding to the extension of compulsory education to nine years, the internationalisation of syllabi based on international standards and evaluation criteria, and the introduction of curricular accreditation.

Slovenia

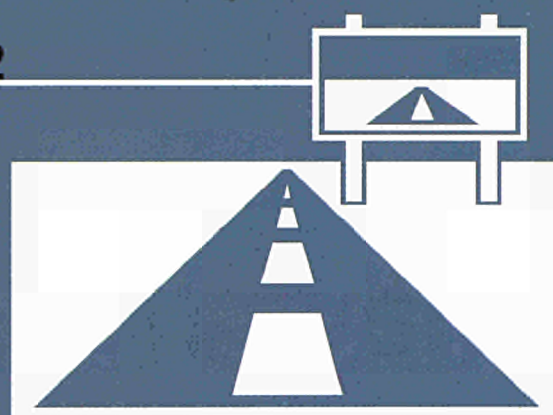
Major ongoing changes in higher education

Amendments to the 1993 Higher Education Act have been put before the National Assembly. In future, university senates will include not only full professors, but also representatives of all higher education teachers and their assistants as well as non-teaching staff and students. The amendment has been initiated by a group of higher education teachers and is supported by the opinions of foreign expert groups (CRE commission – Association of European Universities – in 1996 and a commission of the Council of Europe in 1995).

Other changes are being prepared, for example in relation to funding. In the middle of 1998, the government, universities and higher education trade unions agreed on lump sum financing. A new system has been outlined. It will be based on five categories of costs. The formula for the calculation of funding will take into account enrolment numbers and the number of graduates.



Fifth Framework Programme 1999-2002



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The Fifth Framework Programme covering all the European Union's research activities during the period 1999-2002 was officially launched at a conference organized by the Commission under the German Presidency in Essen on 25-26 February. Some 5,000 participants from more than 60 countries attended the policy presentations, participated in the practical seminars and watched the project demonstrations, 100 of which were grouped in a major exhibition.

With a budget of €14.96 billion – 4.6% more than for the previous programme – the Fifth Framework Programme does more than simply follow on from where its predecessor left off. The principal innovation lies in the way it seeks to establish links at European level between research activities and the major problems facing society, such as employment, health, the environment, transport and energy supplies.

It was in response to the many requests for information on the programme's new configuration that the Commission decided to organize the Essen conference. The success of the event indicates that the participants were satisfied.

Europe's only instrument of its kind

The Fifth Framework Programme provides a coherent and genuinely European support framework for research and technological development. It stimulates transnational cooperation, in particular between universities and companies, and the creation of networks of excellence. This is one of the essential objectives of the Community's research programmes.

It also seeks to create an environment conducive to innovation in Europe. This involves encouraging the transfer of technology, ensuring the availability of risk capital, helping to protect intellectual property rights, and developing human resources.

In brief, the Union's programmes stimulate the mobility of people and ideas. This is a role of fundamental importance as technical and scientific knowledge is now modern industry's principal raw material.

In such a context, a major focus of attention is training and mobility coupled with socio-economic research, an area which receives 30% more funding under the new programme. Nearly 6,000 *Marie Curie* fellowships will be awarded by the Fifth Framework Programme, including 700 for in-company placements and 300 for training in less advantaged regions. These grants are awarded to young researchers seeking to carry out research training in another country for a maximum of three years. The name *Marie Curie* was chosen to stress the excellence of the young scientists selected.

New directions for European research

Main characteristics of the Fifth Framework Programme

The Fifth Framework Programme consists of four thematic programmes¹ dealing with certain clearly identified problems, and three horizontal programmes² which cut across all fields to meet common needs.

It implements three principal categories of action:

Key actions. These seek to concentrate the resources and skills of all disciplines, all technologies and all the players involved on a number of clearly delimited social and economic problems. The approach is therefore a departure from the traditional organization of research into relatively compartmentalized disciplines. These key actions account for three-quarters of the total budget. Three are of particular relevance to education, training and youth: *Improving the socio-economic knowledge base, Innovative products, processes and organization*, and *Multimedia content and tools*.

¹ "Quality of life and management of living resources", "User-friendly information society", "Competitive and sustainable growth", "Energy, the environment and sustainable development".

² "Confirming the international role of Community research", "Promotion of innovation and encouragement of participation of SMEs", "Improving human research potential and the socio-economic research base".

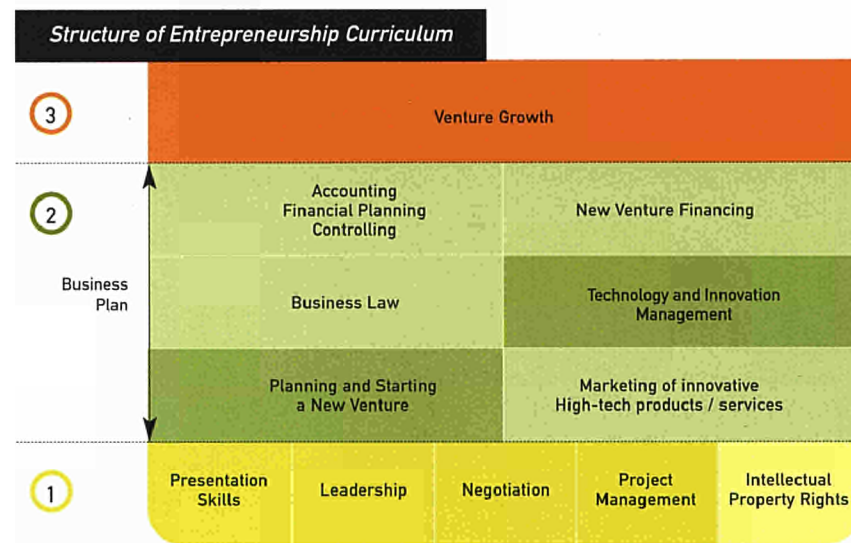
Essential points of the key actions

- 23 priority socio-economic objectives
- the integration of research, training and demonstration activities, etc.
- better coordination of the activities of Member States, non-member countries, international initiatives, etc.
- **Research activities of a generic nature.** These aim to make it possible to support research activities (including fundamental research) complementary to those undertaken in the key actions.
- **Support for research infrastructures.** Community support must ensure the optimal use of existing infrastructures and permit, through transnational cooperation, the rational and economically efficient development of research infrastructures.

The Fifth Framework Programme also brings innovation in the way the programmes are managed and implemented. The changes include, in particular: a simplification of procedures and more prompt payment; the increased participation of scientific and industrial circles and users, notably by setting up 17 expert groups to help Commission determine the content and direction of the key actions; the creation of a new partnership dynamic with SMEs, most notably through increased information and assistance. □

Entrepreneurship *Training* for *Researchers*

The JRC is targeting young researchers in a pilot training scheme designed to provide new skills and opportunities in the business of research.



The Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission launched a pilot training programme in entrepreneurship for its researchers in January 1999. The JRC provides scientific and technical support for the conception and implementation of European policies. The site selected for the pilot programme is the largest of the JRC's research centres and is located in Ispra, Italy. The main objectives of the programme are to

- provide JRC staff with new skills for the management of research
- increase the commercial awareness of researchers
- stimulate and support the creation of spin-offs.

The programme is aimed in particular at young researchers on short-term contracts, opening up new opportunities to staff in this category. Twenty participants were selected from 35 applications. The training programme aims to provide participants with practical skills in how to plan, set up and run a new technology-based business or innovation project. The curriculum is structured to support the three phases of the business life-cycle (planning, start-up, growth).

A three-pronged approach

The first part of the curriculum consists of training in project and interpersonal management skills (see diagram). A seminar on intellectual property rights is one of several intended to increase the commercial awareness of researchers. The second part of the programme is designed specifically to support the writing of a business plan. First, participants will be introduced to the importance of sound business platforms and a well-conceived business plan. Individual workshops then deal with feasibility studies and marketing, legal issues (such as how to structure ownership, contract and liability law) and finally financial management and financing. The workshops on technology and innovation management also address

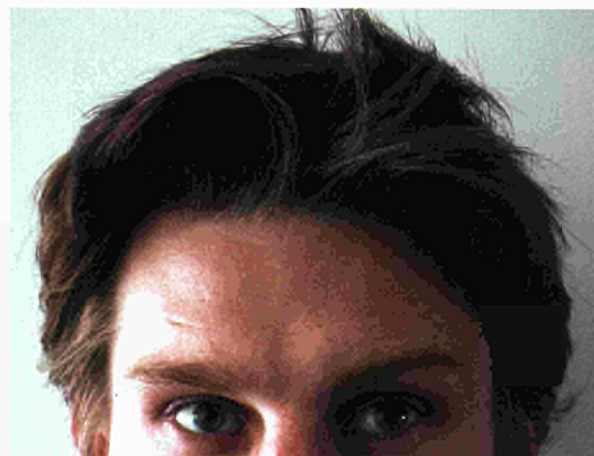
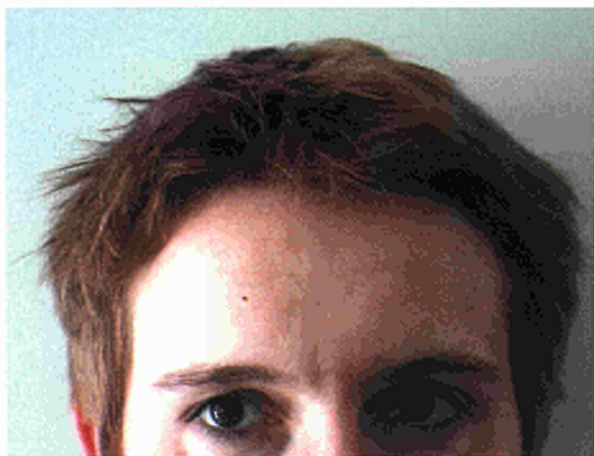
those participants whose product still requires substantial development before being marketable. The third part of the curriculum addresses the question of how to stimulate and manage the growth of the new venture.

The training is provided in the form of workshops which participants attend in addition to their normal work duties. A total of 18 two-day workshops starting mostly on Fridays are spread out over six months. The workshops are highly interactive, using group and individual exercises, role play, case studies and out-of-class project work. An important feature of the workshops is the extensive time allotted to individual feedback.

The trainers are teachers, incubator managers, consultants and other business professionals. Their selection was based on a best-practice analysis of some of the most innovative entrepreneurship initiatives in Europe. This analysis also served to define the curriculum, building on existing training courses at the JRC.

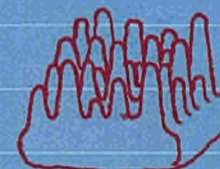
The entrepreneurship curriculum is part of a larger initiative promoting technology transfer at the JRC. The other two pillars of the entrepreneurship programme will be an independently managed seed-capital fund and an incubator, thus providing continuing support to potential entrepreneurs beyond the formal training.

The first phase of the training has just been concluded. Feedback from participants indicates that the practical focus of the training allows it to be put into immediate practice. For example, those participants with a business idea have started using project management techniques in planning their venture. □



Passing out in style

"You may turn over your paper and start writing". Soon, these words that have struck horror into many an impressionable heart may be heard no more. Instead, we will pick up our mice to take an exam.



It may seem inhuman to be examined by a computer, but it is the shape of things to come; and after all, machine-marked multiple-choice question papers have been around for decades. They might be a somewhat blunt instrument, but they are quick and cheap; they can be self-administered at the candidate's convenience; and they are incapable of discriminating against a minority candidate or in favour of a pretty one.

Automated self-assessment will become all the more necessary as the workforce of the future continually upgrades its skills. Yet we do not know how far we can go. In 1997, the Commission selected 16 pilot projects designed to tell us. Split between the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci pro-

grammes, the projects came to the half-way stage last summer, and were positively evaluated. In February, the Commission convened a two-day conference and demonstration for some 200 experts and potential users.

Domenico Lenarduzzi, education director in DG XXII, gave a detailed introduction to the event, explaining the importance of computerized testing. If we are to survive economically in what is fast becoming a globalized information society, he felt, we not only have to keep learning, but we have to be able to show off what we have learnt. Not everyone can afford to take time off work to take a college or university course, so cheap and flexible ways of gaining qualifications are needed.

"At present", he said, "the percentage of the European working population undertaking training in any one year is much too low, and we must find ways of increasing this. And once we have made the effort to learn new skills, they need to be recognized, in convenient and inexpensive ways. This is where computerized testing comes in."

The pilot projects have been under way for two years now, and should complete their work at the end of 1999, bringing potential benefits to unqualified school-leavers, young students who want to go into some topics more deeply than their curriculum allows, and people who want to reskill themselves to cope with changes in their profession. Many of the projects have already made their results wholly or partially available on the World Wide Web.

Of course, there are still some thorny issues to be resolved, and the pilot projects have formed themselves into a network which can work on them. Accreditation is one. At present, there is no intention to deliver 'on-line diplomas', because these depend on the existence of established institutions, and accrediting these is currently a national rather than a European matter. But what is feasible is to create a complement to the existing accreditation system, an alternative way of gaining skills and verifying that you have gained them. In a sense, the market – job-seekers and employers – will decide whether such new forms of qualification are valuable or not. □

The European Geography Test

"Utrecht University chose geography as its subject to explore the possibility of European testing because it is a question of general knowledge, and is not vocationally specific," says Stan Geertman, project leader at the Utrecht University. "We chose three domains – topography, map skills and urban geography – and compared school curricula in five countries, then developed three test levels in four languages. Pre-tests on 500 children revealed that the test is recognizably European, that the level is about right, that results do differentiate levels of performance, and that the test is interesting and good at motivating students."

The geography test has been developed by a broad academic partnership, led by Utrecht, with the backing of the European Geographical Association. Such links to a European partnership or network are one of the main strengths of the tests developed by the teams in Socrates, because they allow Europe-wide discussion and self-tuning, both technically and as regards content, of the test products.

The test is delivered via the Internet, which is free and easy to update. The underlying programme, written in HTML and Java, relies on a question bank from which questions are selected randomly. In the main it uses objective answer methods such as radio buttons, although at level 3 it progresses to an essay format, which requires students to look up resources on the web. There is no time limit. Students receive guidance on questions they get wrong, and a certificate can be printed.

Test yourself! The European Geography Test is online at: <http://www.egt.geog.uu.nl>

The European Computer Driving Licence

The ECDL is administered by CEPIS, an umbrella body of computer societies from across Europe, with the aims of improving computer skills in industry, and helping unemployed people to avoid exclusion. It offers a qualification comprising seven modules: basic IT concepts, file management, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentations and networks. Launched in 1996, it is administered at 200 accredited test centres, in 15 languages. So far 250,000 people have enrolled to take it, and by 2005 the organizers aim to have reached 5% of the workforce, that is some 10 million people.

According to Dudley Dolan of the ECDL Foundation in Dublin, it costs € 30-50 to register for the European Computer Driving Licence, and € 5-10 to sit each of the seven modules. In fact, the students usually end up with a licence almost by accident, because the test is thrown in at the end of a course. "The majority of our clients have a course and exam bought for them, normally by their employers, but sometimes by government agencies," he says. "Very few individuals sit the test off their own bat."

Test yourself! The European Computer Driving Licence is at: <http://pcie.nice.iway.fr>

The 16 projects range from the academic to the practical, covering mathematics, statistics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, water, environmental and food sciences, computing, adult learning, law, languages, key skills, marketing, banking and customer service. Details of and links to the 16 pilot projects can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/tests/index_en.html