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THE "YOUTH FOR EUROPE" PROGRAMME

ANNUAL REPORT 1990

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## I INTRODUCTION

1. The "Youth for Europe" Programme is an action programme for the promotion of youth exchanges in the European Community. The programme was adopted for the period 1 July 1988 to 31 December 1991 <sup>1</sup>.
2. A first report outlining the development of the Programme during its first 18 months of operation, from July 1988 until the end of 1989, was presented by the Commission on 1 August 1990 <sup>2</sup>.
3. This report covers the Programme's second year of implementation, as provided for in article 9 of the Council Decision. It focuses on the activities carried out in 1990, and examines the current state of the Programme's implementation, in conformity with the objectives of the Programme as set out in the Council Decision. The report also addresses the challenges which lie ahead in the third and final year of the implementation of "Youth for Europe". This report was written during the period when the Commission's proposal for the extension of the programme was being discussed. The second phase of the Programme was agreed by the Council at its first meeting called specifically to discuss youth matters, on 26 June 1991. At this meeting the Council also agreed a Resolution on priority actions in the Youth Field, which sets out four priority areas for Community operations, including the extension of youth exchange and mobility. The Commission looks forward to developing work in this field, in cooperation with the Member States, in the years to come.

## II THE STRUCTURE AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

4. The "Youth for Europe" Programme is designed to provide a range of incentive measures to promote the development of youth exchanges in the European Community, by increasing the number of youth exchanges in all the Member States and by according particular attention to the involvement of young people from regions in which few opportunities to meet young people from other Member States have previously existed.
5. The Programme is designed, in particular, to enable the participation of young people whose personal circumstances have previously prevented them from participating in existing exchanges between the Member States.
6. Improving the quality of youth exchanges is another of the Programme's main objectives, as is encouraging diversification in youth exchanges and improving the balance between Member States.

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1 Decision 88/348/EEC of 16 June 1988

2 COM (90) 378

7. The measures are primarily aimed at young people aged between 15 and 25 years. Supplementary measures are provided for multipliers such as youth organisations, youth workers, and bodies which can play a role in the promotion and organisation of exchanges, so as to enable young people to gain maximum benefit from their participation in exchanges.
8. The Programme provides for various actions aimed at developing and achieving its general objectives across the Member States :
  - Action A : direct financial support for youth exchanges;
  - Action B : support for the organisation of short study visits for youth workers;
  - Action C : support for non-governmental organisations for the setting up and development of a youth exchange infrastructure;
  - Action D : support for structures designated by the authorities in each Member State, as responsible for the coordination of the "Youth for Europe" programme in that Member State (the "National Agencies");
  - Action E : support for training activities for youth workers, particularly at a European level.

An estimated budget of some 15 million ECU was to finance the first phase of the Programme from 1989 to 1991, which should allow for some 80.000 young people between 15-25 years of age in the Community to benefit from the programme. The credits available for 1990 amounted to 6.5 million ECU.

### III THE OPERATIONAL AND ADVISORY INFRASTRUCTURE

9. The "Youth for Europe" Programme is implemented by the Commission in accordance with the Council Decision. To this end, the Commission works in active collaboration with the Member States.

#### **The "Youth for Europe" Advisory Committee**

10. The Commission is assisted in the implementation of the Programme by an Advisory Committee. This Committee is composed of two representatives from each Member State, who were appointed by the Commission on proposal of the respective Member States. The Council of Europe and the Youth Forum of the European Communities are invited to be present as observers in the Committee.
11. The Advisory Committee met twice during the period covered by this report. It was consulted as to the overall development of the Programme in the various Member States, in particular with regard to the budgetary, evaluation and training aspects, and was asked to advise the Commission on the second phase of the "Youth for Europe" Programme.

12. As a result of the cooperation between the Commission and the Committee, "Youth for Europe" is becoming an integral part of the Member States' youth policy activities. The Commission continues to regard the advice and support of the Committee as essential to the further development of the Programme.

#### **The National Agencies**

13. One of the Programme's particular features is its decentralised implementation in Member States. The Member States have each designated a body (the National Agency) responsible for the coordination of the Programme at national level in line with the Council Decision. In Belgium, there are three "National" Agencies, one for each of the three language communities.
14. In 1990, the National Agencies continued to develop, and to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the "Youth for Europe" Programme. One reason for the success of the Programme is the fact that the Agencies are in direct contact with the main beneficiaries of the Programme at national level, the young people themselves.
15. However, when compared to the period 1988/89, the focus of cooperation between the Commission and the National Agencies has shifted. During the launching phase of the Programme, the main objective was to establish viable operational structures. In the intermediate phase of the Programme, however, efforts were focussed on the implementation of specific aims of the Programme, such as providing educational guidance and practical support to young people.
16. The decentralised nature of the Programme requires regular communication between the National Agencies and between them and the Commission. In 1990, at three working meetings between the National Agencies and the Commission, work procedures and difficulties encountered by the Agencies were discussed. The meetings also enabled the Commission to keep abreast of developments in the Member States concerning the implementation of the programme, such as participation of priority target groups, and to discuss certain practical aspects of this implementation with the National Agencies.
17. In addition to the working meetings, the Irish National Agency organised a thematic seminar on the European dimension in youth exchanges in Galway, Ireland in March 1990, in cooperation with the Commission. The seminar explored the ways in which the "Youth for Europe" Programme is effectively heightening the European awareness of the young people participating. The seminar helped to identify key elements of the European dimension in youth exchanges, to examine the degree to which youth exchanges support the development of European awareness among young people and to determine the steps to be taken to reinforce the impact of this awareness.

#### **The European Community Youth Exchange Bureau**

18. The Commission is assisted by an external technical unit, the European Community Youth Exchange Bureau (ECYEB), in the implementation of the "Youth for Europe" Programme.

19. In 1990, the ECYEB assisted the Commission in particular with the dissemination of information on "Youth for Europe", the applications made by European non-governmental organisations to the Commission for financial support, the central management of Action B, the monitoring and the evaluation of the Programme, the overall coordination of the European-level training courses, and the preparation and follow-up of Advisory Committee and National Agency meetings. In addition, the ECYEB was of assistance to the Agencies in all aspects related to the implementation of the programme.

IV DEVELOPMENT AND RESULTS OF THE ACTIVITIES WITHIN ACTIONS A,B,C,D AND E OF THE PROGRAMME

**ACTION A: direct financial support for youth exchanges**

20. Support is given to bi- tri- or multilateral exchanges of a minimum duration of one week, which involve groups of young people aged between 15 and 25 years residing in a Member State of the Community. The projects must have an educational purpose and be theme-related. As explicitly set out in the Council Decision, priority is given to youth exchanges which :
- are conceived and organised by the young people themselves;
  - bring together young people from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds;
  - include, in particular, young people from regions of the Community where few opportunities to meet young people from other Member States have previously existed;
  - include young people who experience the most difficulties in being included in existing exchange programmes.
21. For the support of youth exchanges in 1990, National Agencies received a budget attributed to the various Member States, which was calculated on the parameters set out in the Council Decision.
22. Throughout 1989 National Agencies were operational in all Member States. In 1990, their working capacity extended, thereby improving the implementation of the Programme. However, the extent to which individual Agencies were fully operational varied considerably throughout 1990, and had an effect on the participation from and in certain Member States.
23. Action A, the core of the "Youth for Europe" Programme, continued to attract the interest and the participation of young people in youth exchanges throughout the Community. The further development of the National Agencies' working infrastructures enabled them to improve their response to the demand, the overall result being not only an increase in projects in quantitative terms but also in qualitative terms.
24. In quantitative terms, the National Agencies received more applications for youth exchanges in the first half of 1990 than they had received during the entire previous year. This was welcomed by all Agencies, but

also increased the need to consider the quality of youth exchanges as a priority. At the time of writing, the provisional statistics available indicate that in 1990, about 28.000 young people (see table 1) participated in exchanges supported by the Agencies within the framework of Action A of the Programme, as compared to some 24.000 in 1989 (see table 2). An estimated breakdown of these participants by sex, age and level of education is set out in tables 3-5.

25. During the launching of "Youth for Europe", the main objective was to make young people interested in the opportunities provided by the Programme. At this stage, emphasis is attached to the best possible exploitation of these opportunities, while interpreting the objectives set out in the Council Decision more closely : the disparity between the number of applications and the financial means available has obliged the National Agencies to apply priorities in the allocation of grants. In this context, National Agencies have extended their tasks to include providing advice and guidance : assisting in the preparation of projects, increasing the quality of projects and ensuring that young people themselves participate in the planning of the exchanges.
26. As a result of the extended advice and guidance provided by the Agencies, applicants in 1990 appeared to understand better the criteria and the specific nature of the "Youth for Europe" Programme. The projects awarded grants by all National Agencies were generally more theme-related, very often incorporating the European Dimension as an integral part of the exchange, and youth leaders have begun to realize that both preparation and evaluation are vital to the overall educational value of an exchange.
27. Due to the efforts made by the National Agencies throughout 1990, on average, 30% of all participants who benefited from the "Youth for Europe" Programme were young people who were not members of youth organisations and associations. The participation of youth organisations who have not traditionally been involved in youth exchanges also increased. However, young people with no previous experience of exchanges, but with the motivation and commitment to prepare an exchange, do not always find it easy to organise exchanges which fulfil the educational requirements set out in the Council Decision.
28. In some Member States, youth exchange in general is at a very early stage of development. For this reason, bilateral projects continued to be the most popular in 1990, though tri-and multilateral exchanges increased on average by 10% across the Community compared to 1989. The rate of this increase is linked to the fact that multilateral exchanges require specific educational and financial support. This may also prove an obstacle to projects initiated by young people themselves.
29. It should also be mentioned that multilateral exchanges incur higher costs, which could have serious financial consequences if the National Agencies were to increase the support allocated to such exchanges. For this reason, National Agencies, which have already attributed 20% of their youth exchange budget to multilateral activities, can forward further multilateral projects to the Commission for selection and grant allocation from the credits available.

30. The participation of disadvantaged young people is a priority within the Programme. In 1990, this participation increased, 1/3 of all participants being disadvantaged for socio-economic, geographical, cultural or physical reasons.
31. The attempts to improve the regional balance in youth exchanges across the Member States continued successfully in 1990. This did not only apply to Member States on the periphery of the Community, but also to the regional participation within Member States. In pursuing the regional diversification of youth exchanges, the National Agencies actively encouraged partnerships between regions less familiar with youth exchanges.

**ACTION B :** support for the organisation of short study visits for youth workers.

32. This Action is conceived as a measure supporting the implementation of Action A. As the quality of a youth exchange largely depends upon the level of exchange organisers' knowledge of the situation of young people in potential partner countries, Action B addresses an important preparatory activity.
33. Short study visits supported under Action B of the "Youth for Europe" Programme enable multilateral groups of youth workers to acquaint themselves with the situation of young people in other Member States, and provide them with the opportunity to make appropriate contacts with youth organisations and youth groups, and to establish links for the organisation of future exchanges within the Programme.
34. In 1989/90<sup>5</sup>, the Commission allocated 400 Action B bursaries to National Agencies. The recruitment, selection and preparation of the participants, as well as the practical organisation of the visits themselves were the responsibility of the National Agencies.
35. There is a growing trend to organise short study visits on a regional basis and National Agencies are increasingly assisted in doing this by bodies familiar with the respective regional youth services. In 1990, the feedback received on the basis of an evaluation questionnaire by the National Agencies from participants is very positive. Both the personal and professional objectives of participants in short study visit were shown as having been met. For most participants, such visits are their first experiences of a multilateral group of youth workers tackling a theme of common interest, in another Member State. Short study visits forged new contacts and provided the stimulus for a number of youth exchange projects in 1990/1991.

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5 The administration of Action B follows the academic year

36. In 1990, the National Agencies received, on average, three times more applications than bursaries available. As a consequence, higher qualitative criteria had to be applied in the recruitment and preparation of participants, and National Agencies placed more emphasis on the adequate preparation of participants, linking this Action to the wider context of European youth exchanges within the "Youth for Europe" Programme. Overall, the theme of most short study visits reflected the specific objectives of the "Youth for Europe" Programme. An increasing number of short study visits organised during 1990 dealt with the situation of disadvantaged young people in the Member States. A growing tendency to select participants in short study visits according to the theme of the visit was observed. A growing number of participants were youth workers at grass-root level, involved in youth groups and organisations working with disadvantaged young people. Such participants can subsequently act as multipliers in reaching disadvantaged young people.

**ACTION C :** support for non-governmental organisations for the setting up and development of a youth exchange infrastructure.

37. Under Action C, the Commission supports youth organisations represented in at least 6 Member States, who wish to expand their youth exchange activities. The support is limited to the launching of the infrastructure during the first two years : the grant for the second year is only paid if the continued existence of the infrastructure is guaranteed without Community support thereafter.
38. In 1990, the Commission received 20 applications, of which 8 were selected for funding. Three beneficiaries applied for second-year funding and 5 were first year beneficiaries. The projects funded in 1990 varied in their nature : they included the development of youth exchange infrastructures for disabled young people, for youth mobility in general, for disadvantaged young people, and for the setting up of an information network between associations supporting the integration of young people into local communities.

**ACTION D :** support for structures designated by the authorities in each Member State, as responsible for the coordination of the "Youth for Europe" programme in each Member State.

39. The Council Decision provides that the National Agencies shall be responsible for information, providing consultation facilities, training and the administration of grants for projects within the "Youth for Europe" Programme. The Commission contributes financially to the operation of the National Agencies.
40. During 1990, most Member States increased their financial contribution for the infrastructure of the Programme in their country. As youth exchange activities in a particular country increase, so generally does the supplementary financial contribution made by that country. It should be noted that, for the period covered by this report :

- all National Agencies had installed computerised facilities to deal with applications and the other administrative tasks;
  - telefax facilities have ensured that all Agencies were able to respect the deadlines established for consultation and coordination work;
  - all National Agencies were sufficiently staffed to ensure a full-time service for their public.
41. Throughout the year, National Agencies continued to disseminate information on "Youth for Europe", directed at young people, exchange organisers, and relevant bodies at regional and local level. Special attention was paid to not merely "spreading the word", but to concentrating efforts on the identification of specific information needs of target groups and on the means to respond to these needs.
42. The National Agencies did not launch wide-scale information campaigns in 1990 in order to avoid creating expectations which could not be met due to budgetary restrictions. Nevertheless, National Agencies were faced with a 60% increase of Action A applications overall as compared to 1989, which indicates a growth in general awareness for the "Youth for Europe" programme.
43. To respond to specific information needs, National Agencies formed active partnerships with regional and local structures in the Member States and :
- produced information kits, targeted at youth groups and organisations providing a basis for a better understanding of the support and application mechanisms within "Youth for Europe" for first-time applicants.
  - developed information material aimed at the priority target groups of the Programme - disadvantaged young people and youth workers with no previous experience in youth exchanges.
44. As a conclusion, the "Youth for Europe" National Agencies, in close cooperation with the Commission, offered a wide range of services in 1990 :
- a partner-linkage service for youth groups in the different Member States, in particular for those groups which have until now had little or no opportunity to participate in existing exchange schemes;
  - the promotion of the European dimension in exchange projects;
  - the provision of 'educational' guidance and practical support, improvement of the quality of exchanges and increasing the involvement of the priority target groups.
- ACTION E : support for training activities for youth workers, particularly at a European level.**

45. This support for training of youth workers is allocated to training activities bringing together participants from two or more Member States, in matters related to youth exchanges. In 1990, support for training courses was allocated to two series of activities. On the one hand, the funding of three pilot training courses at European level. The Commission set up an educational training group in close cooperation with all National Agencies and the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe. The group, coordinated on the Commission's behalf by the European Community Youth Exchange Bureau, prepared and carried out three pilot training courses in Spring 1990, respectively in Italy, Denmark and Greece, involving youth workers from all Member States.
46. The three courses were evaluated by their leadership teams and by the educational training group. The experience gained and the conclusions drawn from the three courses confirm the Commission's intention to give priority to the European level training and further training of youth workers for youth exchanges. The pilot training courses have led to new working structures in a number of Member States, in particular in those with less experience of European youth exchanges; and a European network of trainers was established. As a result, National Agencies now have available experienced trainers for further training activities at national level.
47. The Commission also supported three multilateral training activities in 1990 : two submitted by National Agencies and one submitted by a non-governmental organisation; overall, 70 youth workers participated in these courses.

#### V THE EVALUATION OF THE "YOUTH FOR EUROPE" PROGRAMME

48. At the beginning of 1990, the Commission held a series of bilateral evaluation discussions with national delegations from each Member State. The aim was to examine the current state of the implementation of the Programme, to discuss specific difficulties encountered and possible improvements to be envisaged.
49. The evaluation focussed on four areas :
- an analysis of the established organisational infrastructures;
  - the role and the degree of awareness in "Youth for Europe" in the various Member States;
  - the implementation of the political objectives and educational directives of the Council Decision by the National Agencies and youth organisations/groups;
  - the current development of the measures supporting youth exchanges, in particular the short study visits and the training and further training activities for youth workers.
50. The results obtained reflect a positive assessment of the "Youth for Europe" Programme and served as a basis for an evaluation of the Programme made by the Commission in response to the European Parliament Resolution of 16 February 1990 on the access of young people to Community education and training programmes. This evaluation gave an

initial breakdown of Action A participants by Member State and region, age, sex, educational level and social background (see point 28 and tables 1-5), and was based on information provided by National Agencies. A further evaluation of the Programme to be carried out in 1991, will be based on a direct survey of the young people taking part in Action A of the "Youth for Europe" Programme.

## VI FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

51. The "Youth for Europe" Programme has become an additional source for youth exchange activities in certain Member States with traditions in the youth exchange field, whereas in others it provides a new framework for mobility and exchange. In those Member States in particular where general knowledge and experience of European exchanges is very limited, "Youth for Europe" can play a leading role in the promotion of European awareness.
52. The growing awareness of the Programme throughout the Community is reflected in an increase in demand for financial support which by far outstrips the budget available.
53. As is recorded above (point 3), on 10 October 1990, the Commission presented its proposals for the second phase of the "Youth for Europe" Programme<sup>6</sup>; and the Decision adopting the extension of the Programme was adopted on 29 July 1991.
54. The second phase of the Programme will aim to promote youth exchange across the European Community, for the benefit of some 140,000 young people across the Community between 1 January 1992 and 31 December 1994. In particular, Ministers expressed their support for the increased involvement of disadvantaged young people in Youth for Europe II, whether this disadvantage be due to personal, socio-economic or geographical circumstances.
55. Under Action I, the Programme will continue to provide direct support for youth projects involving exchange and mobility, which bring together young people aged between 15 and 25 years. In line with the emphasis placed on the participation of disadvantaged young people, both by the Commission in its proposal and in the subsequent Council Decision, a minimum of one third of the credits available for the direct support of youth exchange activities will be earmarked for exchanges involving disadvantaged young people, and funding for such projects could cover up to 75% of the total costs.
56. For the first time, grants will be allocated on an experimental basis for transnational projects which enable young people to take part in voluntary service activities in another Member State. Priority will be accorded to voluntary activities which favour young people in the host country. The Programme will continue to support study visits and training for youth workers, so as to increase their understanding of the skills required for the successful organisation of youth exchanges, and their knowledge of the host countries involved.

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6 COM (90) 470

57. A series of accompanying measures are foreseen under Action II of Youth for Europe II. These include encouraging initiatives which promote youth mobility within the Member States and improving young people's access to services at national level; encouraging cooperation between Member States in the field of youth; informing young people and youth workers about Youth for Europe II.
58. Although the Commission had initially proposed an amount of 37 MECU, the Council agreed to an estimated budget of 25 MECU over the 3 years of the second phase of the Youth for Europe Programme, a sum that will be subject to review on the basis of the evaluation of the first phase of the Programme. The Commission regrets this reduction but trusts that the evaluation, in which Member States and National Agencies have declared their intention to cooperate, will easily justify the level of budget initially proposed.

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