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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL

ERASMUS PROGRAMME

FIRST RESULTS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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Communication from the Commission to the Council

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The completion of the Internal Market in 1992 and the adoption of the Single European Act herald a new phase in European construction and outline new objectives for a People's Europe.

The world of education cannot afford to remain apart from this movement. On the contrary, inter-university cooperation within the Community, already promoted by the Commission within the framework of the action programme in the field of education from 1976, is called upon to make a significant contribution to the development of a People's Europe.

By stimulating the free movement of students and teaching staff within the Community the ERASMUS Programme foreshadows the completion of the Single Market while representing at the same time a practical instrument for the preparation of those men and women who will constitute its future operators.

2. The ERASMUS Programme includes four lines of action:

- the establishment and operation of a European cooperation network between universities;
- direct financial support for students pursuing a period of study at a university in another Member State;
- measures to improve the academic recognition of diplomas and study periods in another Member State and credit transfer;
- a number of complementary measures to promote the mobility of students and teaching staff.

The results of the first two years of operation have demonstrated the ever-increasing interest of the academic world and of students in broader inter-university cooperation and greater mobility for staff and students. The total amount of financial support requested in 1987/88 and 1988/89 (137 MECU) represented more than three times the budget available (41,2 MECU).

Within the framework of the establishment of a European university network support is being provided for 1091 inter-university cooperation programmes, of which 948 include a student mobility programme.

3. An estimated 16.000 students have until now spent periods of study varying from three months to one year in another Member State. As was the case for the inter-university cooperation programmes, student grant requests amounted to approximately three times the available budget.

4. The success of the ERASMUS Programme has also been underlined by its enthusiastic reception among university teachers and administrators. The rate of growth in the number of applications for visit grants submitted to the Commission has been considerable. In 1988/89 1267 projects have been accepted which will allow no less than 2611 persons to carry out study and teaching visits to universities in other Member States. It is both encouraging and promising for the future that the biggest increase in applications for visit grants came from Member States hitherto under-represented within the framework of inter-university cooperation programmes.

5. Finally, the ERASMUS Programme includes measures aimed at promoting mobility through the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study carried out in another Member State. A milestone in this respect has been the finalization of the preparatory work necessary for the launch of the pilot phase of the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in 1989/90. ECTS constitutes an innovative approach to academic recognition for students who wish to pursue their studies in another Member State. A call for expressions of interest from universities wishing to participate in the pilot phase of ECTS was issued in the Official Journal of the European Communities on 27.07.1988. This project has aroused a considerable amount of interest among universities within the Community. The pilot phase will involve a total of some 80 universities who will be selected by the Commission to participate and will cover following five subject areas: Business Administration, Chemistry, History, Mechanical Engineering and Medicine.

II. EVALUATION OF THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME

In view of the enormous interest which the Programme has aroused since its adoption in June 1987 the Commission felt that the time had come to take stock of experience with the implementation of the Programme hitherto. Having regard to the importance of this step for the future development of the Programme, the Commission considered it essential to consult the ERASMUS Advisory Committee.

The Committee met at the University of Nancy II from 28-30 September 1988 in order to discuss major questions which have emerged during the first two years of the Programme and to consider the consequences with regard to the design and implementation of appropriate measures for the evaluation of the Programme as a whole.

This meeting confirmed beyond any doubt the enormous interest which the Programme has engendered in the academic world. There was general agreement among Committee members that the ERASMUS Programme is making universities consider inter-university cooperation at European level for the first time as an important element in their institutional development strategy. The importance of the European university network as the basis for the long-term development of the Programme was also confirmed.

1. Interuniversity Cooperation Programmes

The Advisory Committee underlined the necessity of transforming the time span of support for inter-university cooperation programmes, both for the European university network and for students' grants from an annual into a system of pluriannual grants. There was general agreement that this would be the only way to guarantee long-term commitment on the part of the universities concerned. A more balanced representation of academic disciplines within the Programme was considered to be highly desirable. At present the relatively limited number of Programmes supported (1091) almost inevitably means that the possibilities for participation are restricted, and this often in favour of more established disciplines such as modern languages or business administration.

Moreover, there was widespread consensus with regard to the need for a critical evaluation of the parameters used to determine the total amount of the student grants' allocation made to each Member State. In particular, the Committee considered it as indispensable for each Member State to be provided with a minimum grant allocation also taking into consideration the level of student demand in the country in question.

There have also been considerable difficulties with the application at national level of the criteria laid down in the Council Decision for the allocation and distribution of grants. Thus in most Member States the total amount awarded to each individual student by the respective National Grant Awarding Authorities has been very small. This question is closely linked to the very different grant-awarding systems in operation at national level which in some cases make it difficult to ensure complementarity of national grants and ERASMUS grants.

2. Balanced participation

The Committee also reaffirmed the importance attached to ensuring a balanced representation of all Member States and of all regions within the ERASMUS Programme. Although considerable progress has been made in this respect since the adoption of the Programme special action in the field of information is still necessary to attain this objective.

3. Preparation and reception of students

Another important question discussed at length by the members of the Advisory Committee during the Nancy meeting was the cultural and linguistic preparation of ERASMUS students. The need to ensure good cultural and linguistic preparation of all students spending a period of study in another Member State was recognized as being crucial. Measures to encourage the teaching of less widely taught languages as well as in respect of the linguistic preparation of students specializing in disciplines other than languages were considered to be particularly important. There was also some considerable discussion of the related question of how to provide students with satisfactory reception services on their arrival at a university in another Member State without at the same time depriving them of all opportunity for personal initiative. The aim always remains the most complete integration possible of students in the host institution.

4. Budgetary situation

Committee members expressed concern and some disappointment at the inadequacy of the available budget in relation to the enormous demand for support from both the universities and their students. This meant that in general only one in three projects could be accepted. As the majority of requests for support contain all necessary guarantees of quality this makes the task of selection and of justifying rejection all the more difficult. Moreover, closer examination of the study visit grants awarded to university staff demonstrates that roughly two in every three applications are concerned with a visit for the purpose of preparing new cooperation agreements. This fact, along with other information currently to hand, means that, even in the short term, a doubling of applications can be expected. In this context the Commission would like to underline the initiative taken by the European Parliament during its first reading of the 1989/90 budget in proposing an increase of 10 MECU in the funds assigned to the ERASMUS Programme. This would mean an increase in the amount of money available for 1989/90 from 45 to 55 MECU.

III. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Within the context of the future development and adaptation of the ERASMUS Programme the envisaged evaluation exercise, the main aims of which were defined during the meeting of the ERASMUS Advisory Committee, is of supreme importance. In the short term, more operational aspects will be paramount: the preparation both of the reports on the functioning of the Programme required by the Council Decision of June 1987 and of a draft of possible adaptations to the Decision Text itself, in as far as these are considered necessary. The aim of the Commission in preparing proposals to adapt the Decision Text - which will be submitted to the Council within the course of 1989 and implemented as from the academic year 1991/92 - is to make improvements in the implementation of the Programme and to substantially increase the number of students participating from all Member States.

One effect of the ERASMUS Programme has been to highlight the serious problems faced by participants in respect of their linguistic preparation. In the light of this, the Commission will soon submit to the Council a proposal for an action programme "Lingua" in the field of modern language teaching within the Community.

Proposals put forward for the second phase of ERASMUS will refer in particular to the inclusion in the ERASMUS Programme of certain groups of students excluded until now and to the improvement of the cultural, and, above all, of the linguistic preparation of students. A reappraisal of the parameters according to which, until now, funds available for student grants have been allocated to each Member State will also take place in order to take into consideration to a greater degree than at present student demand in the country concerned. More generally, an extension of the Programme is considered indispensable in view of the perspectives offered by the completion of the internal market in 1992 and the key role which education and training will play in this process. It is absolutely essential for the ERASMUS Programme to be able to respond in a realistic way to the growing pressure of demand in the field of interuniversity cooperation and mobility of students and university staff, demand stimulated to a large degree by the more widespread economic and social cohesion becoming apparent at community level.

At present there are approximately 6 1/2 million students in the Community, roughly 16.000 of whom have taken part in ERASMUS exchange programmes in 1987 and 1988. It is, however, not just a question of increasing the volume of the Programme at Community level. If the declared objective of the Commission of enabling a minimum of 10% of all students as from 1992 to spend an integrated period of study in another Member State, an objective which also has the support of the European Parliament, is to be achieved, a considerable effort is also required within each Member State, not only on the part of the universities (including those responsible for student services) but also from national administrations.

IV. CONCLUSION

At the end of January 1989 the Commission will submit to the Council the report on the functioning of the ERASMUS Programme in its second year.

After discussion with the ERASMUS Advisory Committee at the beginning of 1989 the Commission will transmit a proposal to adapt the ERASMUS Decision to the Council. The aim of this proposal will be to improve the quality and the coverage of the Programme for the period 1991-95.

The Commission hopes that this second phase of ERASMUS will represent an instrument better suited to respond to the needs of the implementation of the Internal Market and to the development of a People's Europe.

Table 1: Inter-university Cooperation Programmes 1988/9: General Overview by Member State.

Member State	Coordinating Institution		Total Number of Involvements			
			Accepted ICP		Accepted ICP	
			Number	%	Number	%
B			89	8.2	191	17.5
D			144	13.2	449	41.1
DK			25	2.3	73	6.7
E			103	9.4	314	28.8
F			225	20.6	578	53.0
G			20	1.8	74	6.8
I			124	11.4	291	26.7
IRL			26	2.4	95	8.8
L			0	0	4	0.4
NL			96	8.8	260	23.8
P			29	2.7	101	9.0
UK			210	19.2	571	52.3
Total			1,091	100		

Table 2: Inter-University Cooperation Programmes: General Overview by Subject Area

Subject Area	Accepted ICPs	
	Number	%
Agriculture	39	3.6
Architecture	39	3.6
Fine Arts/Music	31	2.8
Business	102	9.3
Education	23	2.1
Engineering	158	14.5
Geography/Geology	26	2.3
Humanities	61	5.5
Languages	208	18.9
Law	72	6.9
Mathematics/Informatics	39	3.6
Medical Sciences/Psychology	63	5.8
Natural Sciences	103	9.4
Social Sciences	100	9.2
Miscellaneous	28	2.6
Total	1,091	100

Table 3: Student Mobility Programmes by Member State

Member State	Success rate in relation to application	Rate of participation in student mobility programmes	
		1987/88	1988/89
Belgium	62.5%	10.8%	15.3%
Germany	59.8%	43.2%	41.4%
Denmark	70.4%	6.5%	6.0%
Spain	67.4%	22.9%	28.4%
France	60.6%	53.8%	53.3%
Greece	64.5%	7.8%	6.3%
Italy	70.5%	21.4%	26.5%
Ireland	57.1%	7.3%	7.1%
Luxembourg	-	0.3%	0.1%
Netherlands	68.0%	16.6%	21.7%
Portugal	76.5%	5.0%	7.9%
United Kingdom	60.8%	59.8%	51.1%

Table 4: Visit Grants: grants awarded by Member State and subject area

Subject Area	Member State from which application originated												Tot.
	B	D	DK	E	F	G	I	IRL	L	NL	P	UK	
Agriculture	2	4	2	2	12	13	14	2	0	4	8	4	67
Architecture	2	2	3	4	3	8	12	0	0	1	2	9	46
Fine Arts	0	1	1	15	5	2	4	2	0	7	13	10	60
Business	0	9	0	3	12	7	1	5	0	5	6	12	60
Education	4	12	1	16	4	5	3	0	0	3	22	7	77
Engineering	10	15	3	19	11	9	12	13	0	7	7	20	126
Geography	1	1	0	5	5	3	5	0	0	3	3	11	37
Humanities	5	4	2	16	10	4	35	1	0	3	4	11	95
Languages	10	16	3	22	13	12	31	3	1	9	5	18	140
Law	6	6	0	17	8	5	11	1	0	2	2	6	64
Mathematics	8	4	2	6	1	10	20	6	0	3	3	9	72
Medical Sciences	12	6	2	33	8	16	7	3	0	9	3	10	109
Natural Sciences	3	7	1	18	4	9	8	5	0	2	12	19	88
Social Sciences	13	7	4	13	10	14	12	3	1	6	18	11	112
Others	2	3	5	10	5	8	9	5	0	4	8	6	65
Higher Education	4	4	3	3	6	3	14	3	0	1	3	2	46
Total	82	101	32	202	117	128	198	52	2	69	119	165	1257