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**Commission Working document on bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Member States of the European Union and the central and east European countries in the area of higher education**

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## **1. 1) INTRODUCTION**

The education ministers of the European Union and their counterparts in the central and east European countries (Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) met informally for the first time at the Interministerial Conference held in Warsaw on 21-22 April 1997, and in their conclusions asked the Commission to submit to them a document on bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the Member States of the European Union and the central and east European countries (hereinafter referred to as the CEECs).

This document contains the findings of the analysis carried out in the area in question, based on contributions from the Member States and from three international organisations active in this area (the Council of Europe, the OECD and UNESCO) and on reports and assessments available on action carried out at the Community level.

While there is a long tradition of inter-university cooperation in Europe, formal cooperation in the area of education in general is comparatively new on the Community scene. Higher education is indeed the education sector which has always the most dynamic in seeking out and building up cooperation beyond the frontiers, which is why it is also the education sector in the Member States where the widest, richest and most varied experience with regard to the CEECs is to be found. This document accordingly focuses essentially on higher education, even if education in general and certain aspects of training are occasionally referred to as well.

The first part of the document will analyse cooperation in higher education between the European Community and the CEECs. Programmes of assistance, particularly under PHARE, have led to a broad range of cooperation activities among European higher education establishments, particularly under the Tempus/PHARE programme. This type of cooperation has also paved the way for a new type of relationship with the associated countries and particularly to the opening up to these countries, under the pre-accession strategy, of Community education, training and youth programmes. In addition, there is mutual consultation and information with these countries at various levels under programmes, association agreements, or on the occasion of ministerial meetings. At education ministers level this process was initiated by the structured dialogue for the 10 associated CEEC countries and consolidated by the Warsaw Conference, which will be followed by the Prague Conference at which this document will be officially presented.

The second part of the document will examine the cooperation activities pursued by international organisations and see how they dovetail with Community action.

The third part will be devoted to bilateral actions between the Member States and the CEECs and will sift out the main policy pointers deriving from these activities.

Lastly, the section on avenues of reflection will identify potential synergy between the different types of cooperation at the various levels and between the various players concerned.

## 2) **ACTION AT COMMUNITY LEVEL**

Cooperation in higher education between the EC and the CEECs has been in existence since the implementation of the PHARE programme for aid in the restructuring of these countries. Indeed one of the main priorities of PHARE from the outset was to build up human resources, which are essential to achieve durable restructuring of the changing societies and economies of the CEECs. The PHARE programme has since 1990 been pursued first in Hungary and Poland, and then subsequently in all the partner countries in order to restructure the education and training systems. The main instrument in the reform of higher education system is Tempus/PHARE.

### a) **Developments under the Tempus programme**

From the outset, the Tempus programme was designed to promote cooperation between higher education establishments in the Community on the one hand and in the CEECs on the other, having been set up principally as a programme of assistance. The reference to the notion of assistance is in fact contained in the fundamental objective of the programme, which is to contribute to the reform of the higher education systems resulting from decades of centralised planning, and to supply equipment and computer hardware to the universities of eastern Europe. At the same time, in order to attain these objectives the programme focused from the very first year on structural projects, the Joint European Projects (JEP), based on a network of universities having a Community dimension. The accent on transnationality and the multilateral dimension set in motion genuine cooperation which has been consolidated over the years.

Tempus has also proved very flexible and able to adapt to political changes and developments in the partner countries. After an initial phase (1990-94) characterised by a wholly bottom-up approach and comprehensive opening to all areas of study, the second phase of the programme (1994-98) has addressed the need to differentiate the approach between the partner countries and take their specific national features into account. A system of national priorities identified by the beneficiary country and the Commission has been introduced and this makes it possible to better target the impact of the programme on the most important sectors from the point of view of reforming higher education in each CEEC country. Secondly, the establishments of the partner countries have little by little been given the coordination, then the contractual responsibility for the projects, thanks to the progress accomplished and the confidence they have won in terms of management both from establishments in the Member States and the Community institutions.

In the second phase of the programme, the switch from an assistance-based approach to a cooperation-based approached has become an increasing feature and in general the higher education establishments of the partners countries have reached a level of development which means they can henceforth cooperate on an equal footing on the academic front with the Community establishments.

To have some idea of the impact of Tempus I and II in quantitative and budgetary terms, suffice it to mention that since 1990 the programme has allowed the funding of 1 593 Joint European Projects, 11 760 individual mobility grants (reserved for university staff), 66 843 instances of university staff mobility and 33 806 instances of study mobility under the JEPs, actively involving 1 075 higher education establishments in the Community and 398 establishments in the CEECs. Tempus has received a total budget of almost ECU 700 million, i.e. approximately 10% of the national allocations of the PHARE countries for the same period.

The internal development of Tempus, and the change of political framework which will be dealt with later on in this chapter, have taken the programme to another phase (Tempus IIa 1998-2000) which is formally an extension of Tempus II but which is in actual fact is a new factor of change of direction and priority as far as the associated CEECs are concerned. The universities in these countries are henceforth able to contribute actively in preparing their respective countries to become Member States of the EU. In accordance with the new PHARE guidelines, Community action benefiting the associated CEECs is now concentrated on two major thrusts, viz. investment and institution building. The latter implies preparing public administration, the liberal professions and the other specialised categories in society to apply the *acquis communautaire*. Under Tempus, this activity above all means preparing and delivering continuing training for public administration, magistrates, lawyers, accountants and all professional categories who will have a direct or indirect role to play in the build-up to accession. In addition, the medium and long-term approach which distinguishes Tempus will also make it possible for the universities of the associated CEECs to play a prominent part in the supply of educational products for lifelong learning (a theme which is central to the current educational debate at the European level). At the same time, they can acquire the structures and courses needed to train the generations who will have the task of longer term management of being part of the European Union.

Here are a few examples of what were already in fact institution building projects developed previously under Tempus: a Hungarian project on training on the new register system for 4 000 officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, a Romanian project for introducing training for economic development offices responsible for international relations in Romanian regional authorities, a Bulgarian project which has developed continuing training modules in the area of public finances for employees from the Ministry of Finance.

As for the non-associated CEECs who joined the programme later, the main objective of Tempus remains the reform of higher education systems and the modernisation of curricula. There is also in these countries substantial demand for university cooperation and internationalisation.

### **b) Other PHARE-funded programmes**

Community action is not restricted to Tempus. There are a whole series of specific PHARE-funded programmes in certain CEECs to contribute to the institution of reforms. Suffice it to mention, for instance, the multi-country programme for cooperation in the area of higher education (1995-97, ECU 4.8 million) intended to develop transnational quality assurance arrangements, to promote the recognition of

qualifications and to integrate the partner countries in the system of international indicators in education. Another example of multi-country programme is that for the development of distance learning (1994-97, ECU 14 million) which instituted a network of national contact points and regional distance study centres. The Commission entrusted the management of these two programmes to the European Training Foundation (ETF).

Another example of programmes funded by PHARE nationally is the programme for the reform of the Romanian higher education system (1996-1998, ECU 8 million) which accompanied the new law on higher education with a range of actions for training and dissemination targeting eight pivot universities. This kind of programme has contributed to modernising the universities of the East through a top-down approach, in conjunction in every instance with the Ministry of Education and as a supplement to the Tempus-based approach.

Mention should also be made of the support given by PHARE to setting up Jean Monnet chairs in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, in order to introduce into university syllabuses in these countries subjects concerning European integration.

### **c) Opening up of Community education and training programmes**

A fundamental point to be considered when analysing cooperation activities is the opening up of the Community programmes in education, training and youth to the associated CEECs. This policy, decided by the June 1993 Copenhagen European Council and confirmed in the subsequent European Councils, is an integral part of the pre-accession strategy, the point being on the one hand to allow future members of the EU to familiarise themselves with the procedures, objectives and operation of Community programmes which seek cooperation in the strict sense. Their aims have a horizontal nature at the Community level and generally seek to improve the quality of education and training, and at the same time promote mobility. In addition, opening up the programmes will permit more comprehensive cooperation with the establishments of the associated CEECs; this cooperation will henceforth affect all levels of teaching.

This opening up, which is part of the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth for Europe programmes, becomes operational following a procedure which involves the Community institutions and the bodies of the respective Association Councils. The procedure has already been finalised in the case of Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. The participation of five other countries (the three Baltic states, Bulgaria and Slovenia) is envisaged for the second half of 1998 or for 1999. In budgetary terms, each associated CEEC will pay the full cost of its participation, by allocating for this purpose part of its national budget and, if it so desires, of its PHARE budget (the share of the PHARE budget to be reduced over time). It may also apply for PHARE aid which may come on top of the subsidies the final beneficiaries will receive from the programmes.

Cooperation between the EC and the associated CEECs in higher education will be all the greater as Socrates and Leonardo open up, since several activities funded by these programmes target universities. With regard to Socrates, particularly the Erasmus chapter, which deals with student and teacher mobility, the development of common

curricula at the initial and advanced level, intensive programmes and the thematic network projects, will allow the universities of eastern Europe to further extend links and networks they have developed under Tempus and to continue to cooperate with Community universities within a reference framework which is no longer assistance-based. Thanks to Leonardo, the universities of the associated CEECs can continue to cooperate with the business sector and give their students the benefit of in-company placements in the European Community as an integral part of their courses.

At European level, Community action with regard to the associated CEECs is thus moving firmly towards cooperation under Community programmes. This allows the universities of the East to be on an equal footing with universities in the Member States. Similarly, in the wake of the conclusions of the Luxembourg European Council, the applicant States should be allowed to take part, as observers and for the points which concern them, in the management committees responsible for monitoring the programmes to which they contribute financially, under specific arrangements adapted to the case in question. These activities dovetail with those which are eligible under Tempus, as this programme henceforth concentrates on the institution building aspect of pre-accession strategy and takes advantage of the cooperation built up over the years by European universities to contribute to preparing future Member States.

#### d) Interministerial conferences

Community action is not restricted to programmes or support measures for national higher education systems. It also fosters cooperation at the highest level between the Ministers of Education of the EU and their counterparts in the CEECs. In a formal framework, experience under the structured dialogue (Brussels, 20 November 1996 and 21 November 1997) proved very useful in creating contact between the European Education Ministers and allowing very profitable exchanges of views and information. In the light of this experience, the dialogue will be pursued in other forms. The Interministerial Conferences, the first of which took place in Warsaw in 1997 and the second scheduled in Prague on 25-27 June 1998, will provide Ministers *inter alia* with an informal working forum where they can discuss the main problems concerning the education systems and develop new cooperation strategies.

The Warsaw Conference was the first of its kind and brought together the Education Ministers of the Member States and those of the CEECs on the theme "*A common European house of education*". This event produced profitable exchanges of views on the quality of teaching, mobility, the European dimension, the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning, teacher training and new cooperation arrangements. In the Conference conclusions, the Ministers asked the Commission to prepare this document and take account of the results of the Conference when preparing the new generation of education and training programmes. A process of common policy strategy reflection on the role of education and training in enlargement began in Warsaw and a new conference in 1998 was requested so that Ministers could continue to ponder issues together.

This new conference will take place in Prague. As a follow-up to Warsaw, the non-associated CEECs will be invited to attend as observers, as this conference will be part of the pre-accession context. The conference will work on the theme: "*Partners in Europe: learning together – the construction of the common European house of*

*education*". The main themes of the conference include the quality of school education as a basis for lifelong learning, cooperation in higher education between the Member States of the EU and the CEECs and the new generation of Community education and training programmes.

These conferences are an opportunity to supplement at the ministerial level the cooperation built up under Community programmes of assistance and cooperation.

### **3) COOPERATION PURSUED BY INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

Some international organisations to which all the Member States of the EU belong are very active in the area of cooperation in higher education with the CEECs. In particular the Council of Europe, the OECD and UNESCO have a clear policy and specific actions with regard to these countries. It is therefore essential to analyse their activities in this area in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the actual situation.

The World Bank deserves a separate mention inasmuch as this international organisation which provides low-cost long-term loans and technical assistance has intervened in certain CEECs in the area of higher education.

#### **a) The Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe in 1992 launched the programme for legislative reform, of which the CEECs are the beneficiaries and which has two essential aims, viz. to provide detailed opinions on legal and policy developments in the education systems and to assist the CEECs in their implementation. This action is part of the Council of Europe's fundamental policy mission, i.e. to promote cohesion and multiculturalism in Europe, and the reform of the higher education systems is very important in this context.

The types of activity which can be supported by the programme are experts' missions in the countries concerned in order to give opinions on specific details of the reform process, multilateral thematic workshops on matters relating to the development of higher education in Europe, multilateral study visits and publications. The legislative reform programme has made a tangible contribution in all the CEECs. Its budget was approximately ECU 350 000 in 1997.

The Council of Europe is also active under the CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies) programme (a joint initiative by the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES), which encourages student mobility and academic recognition of periods spent abroad. The Council of Europe cooperates closely on this point with UNESCO and the European Commission, particularly through the joint annual meetings of the ENIC/NARIC (national academic recognition information centres).

Other Council of Europe activities in this area are *ad hoc* actions for certain teaching sectors, studies and working parties.

## **b) The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development**

The OECD has developed a vast range of activities under the CCET (Centre for Cooperation with Economies in Transition) programme. A major regional conference was organised in 1992 to identify the main problems and trends in higher education in Europe. The conference conclusions provided the OECD with guidelines for its action in higher education in the CEECs, such as the need to change teaching methods and the importance of listening to the beneficiaries when preparing reforms to the systems.

On this basis, a series of analyses on education policies in the CEECs were carried out, with recommendations which stimulated discussions and prompted legal changes. The methods used to carry out these analyses are very interesting. First of all, the CEEC concerned carries out its own analysis of the situation, then external examiners visit the country and prepare an individual report which is subsequently discussed with the competent minister. The experts finalise the report which is then submitted to the approval of the OECD's Education Committee. The text thus approved is published by the OECD.

As for other activities, several seminars have been organised on horizontal themes of relevance to higher education. A start has been made on identifying pointers for education for certain CEECs. In cooperation with PHARE, the OECD has also launched a project on regional cooperation focusing on accreditation and quality, mobility, teaching, research and occupational and social skills. *Ad hoc* projects have been developed to go into specific issues in depth. There is a wide range of bibliography which includes a comparative description of the education systems of 11 CEECs, which supplements the work of the OECD in this sector.

## **c) The CEPES**

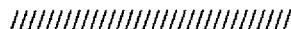
UNESCO is pursuing cooperation with the CEECs in the area of higher education mainly through the CEPES (European Centre for Higher Education) set up in 1972 and based in Bucharest. The aims of the CEPES in this context are to assist with reforms to the higher education systems in countries in transition, to promote inter-university cooperation and develop recognition of qualifications.

As regards the first of these aims, the CEPES provides technical assistance to the coordination unit of the multi-country PHARE programme in the area of higher education. Bilaterally, the CEPES takes part in the PHARE programme for the reform of higher education in Romania and in other programmes of assistance for reform in a number of CEECs.

As to the second aim, the CEPES actively encourages inter-university cooperation under the UNITWIN programme which gives researchers and students in the CEECs the opportunity to undertake research and training at an advanced interdisciplinary level in order to create centres of excellence. In addition, the CEPES has helped to establish and monitor several UNESCO chairs in Romania and Bulgaria.

The CEPES has also been responsible for the European Regional Forum on "A European agenda for change for higher education in the 21st century", which took place in Palermo in 1997 in the run-up to the UNESCO World Conference on higher

education and which identified four aspects of change: teaching, learning, research and the transmission of cultural values. The CEPES publishes a quarterly review of higher education in Europe and monographs by country.



In this vast range of bilateral and multilateral activities pursued by the international organisations, the different avenues of action are consistent with the missions of each organisation, and the actions dovetail with one another and with the programmes and policy pursued by the European Commission. Each organisation promotes the activities which are most appropriate to its ethos, its methods of work and its sources of funding. At the same time, whether we are talking about reforms to the higher education systems, the management of systems, quality assurance, mobility or recognition of qualifications, all the activities supported by these organisations address different aspects of matters tackled using different approaches, which are all useful in terms of attaining the overall objective.

Good coordination between the Community activities and those of the three organisations is secured particularly through the ENIC/NARIC in the area of academic recognition and thanks to certain PHARE programmes for which use has been of the specific expertise of the different organisations.

#### **4) BILATERAL COOPERATION BY THE MEMBER STATES**

Before analysing the activities of the Member States in relation to the CEECs, it has to be said that this analysis covers only actions promoted or undertaken by the ministries or agencies responsible, and does not therefore cover cooperation activities – sometimes extensive – pursued by the universities and other higher education establishments, nor those which may be funded by foundations, banks, the business sector, etc. In all the Member States, the universities are independent and can develop their own European policy by giving priority to relations with certain universities in certain CEECs. But an analysis of this kind would go beyond the scope of this document, which purports essentially to list the avenues of cooperation which exist between the CEECs and the Member States individually or as members of international organisations. All the information given here is based on contributions from the ministries responsible in the Member States.

##### **a) Introduction**

This section seeks to provide an overall picture of bilateral cooperation pursued by the Member States of the EU with the CEECs in higher education. All the details on the various actions are given in the background study which sets out *inter alia* the reports provided by the Member States and which is obtainable on request.

It has unfortunately not been possible to estimate the sums allocated by each Member State to the cooperation actions analysed here, as in most cases the sums come under different expenditure headings or originate in co-funding arrangements which are difficult to quantify. In addition, in certain countries information on the activity pursued

outside ministries and ministerial bodies is centralised, whereas in others the structures which exist make no provision for centralising information even for statistical purposes.

### b) Analysis by Member State

The different Member States have approaches which are sometimes similar and sometimes not when it comes to bilateral cooperation with the CEECs. It is therefore useful to provide an outline of the types of activity pursued by each of them.

In **Belgium**, the Dutch-speaking community and French-speaking community have two different and clear cut policies. The Dutch-speaking community has bilateral agreements for student and teacher exchanges with most CEECs based on the principle of reciprocity. The French-speaking community concentrates its activities on the first six associated countries and attaches substantial importance to the dissemination of the ideas and values of the French-speaking world and the study of Franco-Belgian literature particularly by sending French language assistants and donating texts and books in French.

**Denmark** is closely following the process of democratisation in the CEECs through its policy in general and in higher education in particular. Priority goes to the Baltic countries and to Poland. Several sectoral and assistance programmes are supported by the Ministry of Education. In addition a specific programme of aid to the pre-accession process has made it possible to introduce programmes to improve or set up higher education structures.

**Germany** has a general policy of aid for the reform of the higher education systems in the CEECs which includes mobility grants, specialised languages courses and work placements for advanced students.

The administration of programmes and projects has been delegated by the Federal Education Ministry to the DAAD (*Deutscher Akademischer Ausstauschdienst* - Agency for German Academic Exchange Services) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. There are also institutional partnerships for reforms in the studies of German and the development of specific bilateral projects.

**Spain** has signed cultural agreements with a number of CEECs countries which often involve programmes to develop Hispanic studies. The demand for linguistic cooperation is particularly high in Bulgaria.

**France** has agreements with all the CEECs (except Bosnia), designed primarily to disseminate the teaching of Slav languages in France and French language and literature in the CEECs.

**Greece** has signed cultural agreements with many CEECs and the Greek government offers individual grants to certain of these countries on a unilateral basis.

**Ireland** is beginning to draft a cooperation policy with the countries concerned and the first cultural agreements are with Hungary and Poland.

**Italy** has several cultural agreements with these countries involving exchange of students, teachers and language assistants. Italy has a special relationship with Albania

and has provided support for a programme of aid for the restructuring of its higher education system.

**Luxembourg** has signed cultural agreements with a few CEECs (BG, H, PL, RO).

The **Netherlands** have a vast programme of aid to assist the transition of the CEECs to pluralist and democratic societies (MATRA programme). This programme is applied to many areas, including higher education. Several cultural agreements have been signed with a number of CEECs and other specific projects have been developed, particularly with Hungary.

**Austria** has a very active cooperation policy with these countries. It participates in CEEPUS and has signed several bilateral mobility agreements with these countries. A noteworthy feature of certain agreements is the growing trend to move from an assistance base to a cooperation base from the point of view of the financial involvement of the countries concerned. Much attention is also devoted to sending out German language assistants. Austria is above all active in its own region and the adjacent countries.

**Portugal** has concluded cultural agreements with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

**Finland** is very active, particularly in the Nordic region, but also with the other associated countries, and endeavours to promote the language and culture of the CEECs. Study grants are reserved for nationals of the Baltic States.

**Sweden** has a fairly comprehensive cooperation policy with the CEECs in its region (especially Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) which is run in a decentralised way, by entrusting the funds allocated for cooperation with the CEECs to its universities.

The **United Kingdom** has no formal agreements at government level on cooperation with the CEECs but encourages bilateral activities among educational establishments. Several sources of funding come from bodies and agencies such as the British Council or the Know-How Fund.

### c) Analysis by type of cooperation

This brief overview brings out the similarities and differences of approach and the bilateral activities of the Member States. Above all, all the Member States make provision in one way or another for mobility and grants, often applying the principle of reciprocity. This type of activity accounts for most of the cultural agreements which are usually the first step towards more comprehensive cooperation activities. A distinction must also be drawn between cultural agreements which precede the political upheaval of 1989 and subsequent cultural agreements. The former have often had to be reviewed in the light of the recent political developments.

A more advanced type of cooperation is provided by agreements or programmes on very specific policy aims, e.g. assistance for restructuring the higher education systems or democratisation of society. In the normal run of events, these programmes do not cover

all the CEECs, but there are instances in which equally ambitious programmes apply to all the associated countries.

Another type of agreement which has a more specific end in view than in the case of cultural agreements is the language-orientated agreement relating to the exchange of language assistants and the allocation of grants for language courses. This type of agreement is promoted by several countries in order to secure some extent of dissemination of its language and culture eastwards. The objective of reciprocity often features in these agreements but is rarely attained.

It is also interesting to note that in a significant portion of cases, it is the foreign ministry rather than the ministry of education which is responsible for concluding and funding agreements. This is particularly true in the case of cultural agreements relating to various areas (even if higher education is usually the sector to which most of the funds go), and which are the result of an overall cooperation strategy of the country in relation to its partner.

Another significant element is the importance of geographical proximity and historical ties in the choice of cooperation of Member States. Geographical proximity and common borders are one of the main factors which prompt a Member State to enter into special relations with certain CEECs. This is the case, for instance, of the Scandinavian countries which tend to concentrate cooperation activities on the Baltic States and Poland; Austria which is very interested in cooperation with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and Slovenia; and also Italy and Greece which have very close relations with Albania. Germany also has a very active policy in relation to its neighbouring countries while having an overall cooperation approach with the CEECs. France has a definite interest in Poland and Romania because of historical, linguistic and cultural ties with these countries. On the other hand, the countries further west, such as Portugal, Spain and Ireland, which have no real tradition of contacts with the CEECs, have started to step up cooperation in this sector only in recent years. Other countries, such as the Netherlands and Belgium, focus on aid in the process of democratisation rather than on a certain group of countries.

From the point of view of partner countries, the only country present in the cooperation actions of all the Member State is Hungary (for reasons which can easily be understood from recent history). Poland and the Czech Republic are also very active, while the cooperation of the Member States is less evident in the Balkans (except the very recent programmes of aid to Bosnia Herzegovina but which come in the aftermath of the civil war). This is a completely understandable situation as each country selects its external policy and cooperation priorities as a function of its historical and diplomatic traditions and of its geographic proximity with the partner country; all this involves budgetary constraints which prevent it from giving the same level of priority to all the CEECs.

## **5) AVENUES OF REFLECTION: COMPLEMENTARITY AND SYNERGY**

The framework described above for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in higher education between the Member States of the EU and the CEECs highlights the main features of the various types and levels of action and prompts thought as to what complementarity and synergy might be possible between them.

### **a) Complementarity**

Careful analysis of the cooperation actions pursued by the EC, those promoted by certain international organisations and those organised by the Member States illustrate firstly that these actions are supported in conformity with the Community's mission, the nature of the international organisations and the policy priorities of the Member States. It is therefore difficult to identify a process of prior consultation for implementing the different actions by these three categories of players. In some instances account has been taken of existing actions in order to avoid duplication of effort, but there has never been any formal mechanism for reciprocal consultation and information.

This first observation does not mean to say that these actions necessarily do duplicate one another. In actual fact, the reference frameworks and the methods of the three groups of players would appear to be sufficiently different to avoid this. Duplication may have occurred only in very marginal cases, a further argument for wider dissemination of information on activities promoted by all the players involved (and this document is also a contribution to a better exchange of information).

The complementarity of the different actions is highlighted by the analysis carried out. Firstly, Community level activities cater for the policy priorities defined by the Essen European Council: democratic principles, respect of the rights of minorities, and a stable and performing market economy. The Tempus programme, the other specific PHARE programmes in higher education, the opening up of the Community programmes, and the way the future generation of education and training programmes are being prepared, are in line with these priorities and make a major contribution to their fulfilment. In addition, Community action in these areas follows the rules and procedures peculiar to it, that is to say, a global approach, multilateralism, providing the potential beneficiaries with instruments tailored to the circumstances. The overall amount of financial resources used is comparatively high in absolute terms, but it is obvious that it cannot cater for all needs in CEECs in the area of higher education. Moreover, only certain types of action are eligible.

Secondly, the programmes and actions pursued by the international organisations most active in this area are in the main studies and seminars/conferences designed to help to structure the higher education systems of the CEECs. This type of activity is very marginal at the Community level and always caters for *ad hoc* requests, whereas the Council of Europe, the OECD and the CEPES have consistent guidelines and by way of preference use these two categories of resources to attain their aims. The other fundamental element to be noted is that in many instances close cooperation between the Community and one or other of these three organisations already exists. Examples are the joint ENIC/NARIC meetings or the participation of the OECD and the CEPES in

certain PHARE multi-country programmes. In the first of these examples, the various institutions have been brought together within a common activity because they share a common objective, while in the second the Commission draws on the specific expertise of one of the organisations in order to carry out a specific project. This also shows that each of the three organisations has developed a corpus of know-how which is acknowledged and specific and thus makes concerted action in this area increasingly effective.

Thirdly, the Member States finance on the basis of their cultural or cooperation agreements with the CEECs exchanges of students, teachers, researchers, and (in specific instances) relatively complex programmes in order to contribute to the process of democratisation of the CEECs. These two types of cooperation activities are very important in that they consolidate relations between the Europe of the west and the Europe of the east, and pave the way for the accession of the associated countries. In addition, the promotion of mobility bilaterally is essential because what is done at the Community level remains quantitatively very modest. Similarly, the other types of programmes created by the Member States make it possible to strengthen the endeavours towards democratisation and modernisation of the CEECs. In the same way, language training agreements make a contribution to the Community's policy on multilingualism which can be pursued only to a limited extent via the Community programmes.

The framework of existing activities thus offers a fairly satisfactory general picture. Resources are used for the objectives of each institution and each Member State on the basis of consistent and complementary guidelines which make it possible to avoid duplication.

### b) Synergy

In the light of the complementarity identified, a high level of synergy could be envisaged between the different types of actions. The first step in this direction would undoubtedly be a better dissemination of information on the various cooperation activities on a regular basis. The Commission in this connection intends to update the survey on these activities periodically and disseminate it as widely as possible using the new information technologies. This increased dissemination of information will enable the different players involved to be better posted on other initiatives and if appropriate to adjust their activities accordingly or pool their efforts.

Another initiative which will enable the Member States to share their experiences and prepare their joint actions is the organisation of *ad hoc* conferences of education ministers from the Member States and from the CEECs. This type of conference, which has already taken place in Warsaw in 1997 and which will be repeated in Prague in 1998, provides an opportunity for the European Ministers to discuss the most important issues affecting education and to develop bilateral and multilateral projects. These conferences also make it possible to replace the structured dialogue with the associated countries. The Commission is ready to assist in their organisation as it has done up to now, in conjunction with the Presidency which takes the initiative and with the host country.

A third element which will emerge during the year is the new generation of Community education and training programmes, giving the associated CEECs the opportunity to take part on an equal footing with the Member States and to thus strengthen their cooperation with the EU.

As for the future of Tempus, it is foreseen that the new proposal on the adoption of Tempus III will continue to include among its beneficiaries the non-associated CEECs. At the same time, the associated CEECs ought to be involved in the programme as partners in accordance with appropriately adjusted procedures.

## 6) CONCLUSIONS

This Document setting out a preliminary inventory of bilateral and multilateral cooperation activities between the Member States and the CEECs provides the starting point for in-depth reflection on the complementarity and synergy of these actions. The education ministers have felt the need to analyse the situation in order to be able to act in full awareness of the facts and if necessary pool their efforts to attain the same objectives: restructuring of the higher education systems of the CEECs, democratisation of education procedures and structures, adjustment of curricula to the market economy, contributing to the pre-accession strategy. All these objectives are to a greater or lesser extent shared by all the players active in this area and the time has come to seek out potential synergy in the wake of the momentum built up in terms of cooperation and after seeing how most of the action taken dovetails.

Avenues of reflection and action can more easily be identified on this basis. In particular, the time has perhaps come to ponder the feasibility of introducing a genuine external education policy at the Community level for the CEECs, the opening up of the education-training and youth-related programmes being only one aspect of this process. Indeed this type of approach is already present in the research sector at the Community level, and its application to education can only make Community action more consistent and effective. This external education policy would be based on the notion that cooperation, not only between the Member States but also between them and non-Community countries, makes it possible to improve the quality of education systems, to disseminate the European dimension beyond the EU and to promote the image and the role of Europe.

The introduction of a Community external education policy would also foster the complementarity and consistency of this policy with the policy on research, training and lifelong learning, for it would prompt consideration of the university as an active player in the society of which it is part and consequently having responsibilities not simply restricted to teaching but extending also to many other areas. The Community research policy has included a specific allocation for cooperation with the CEECs since 1992, enabling the Community to make a significant contribution to stabilising the scientific potential of these countries and in particular to help universities adapt to the new conditions. Until there is an external education policy it will not be possible to successfully integrate fragmented and *ad hoc* activities with clearly-defined sectoral policies.

The Commission will act within the limits of its responsibilities to draw the attention of the Member States, international organisations and the CEEC's to these factors, contributing actively to the introduction of arrangements to promote reflection and synergy, e.g. *ad hoc* interministerial conferences. In a more direct manner, through Tempus III and the new generation of education and training programmes, the Commission will endeavour to consolidate and further extend the scope of cooperation in order to pave the way for the establishment of a genuine external dimension whereby the European education area can come into its own.