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Implementation of the White Paper "Teaching and learning – Towards the learning society"

SUMMARY

I.	FROM THE LEARNING SOCIETY TO A EUROPE OF KNOWLEDGE: WHAT CONTRIBUTION HAS THE WHITE PAPER MADE?	5
1.	DEVELOPING THE EMPLOYABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORKERS: KNOWLEDGE, APTITUDES AND SKILLS.....	5
2.	BOOSTING KNOWLEDGE POTENTIAL.....	6
3.	HELPING TO BUILD A PEOPLE'S EUROPE	6
II.	FIRST RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE WHITE PAPER'S FIVE OBJECTIVES.....	6
1.	EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS	7
A)	AUTOMATED TESTS FOR EVALUATING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS.....	7
B)	SECOND-CHANCE SCHOOLS	8
C)	EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE	9
D)	THE EUROPEAN LABEL FOR INITIATIVES ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE LEARNING.....	10
2.	ACTION UNDER COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES	11
	OBJECTIVE I: ENCOURAGING THE ACQUISITION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE.....	11
	OBJECTIVE II: BRINGING SCHOOLS AND THE BUSINESS SECTOR CLOSER TOGETHER	11
	OBJECTIVE III: COMBATING EXCLUSION.....	12
	OBJECTIVE IV: BECOMING PROFICIENT IN THREE COMMUNITY LANGUAGES.....	12
	OBJECTIVE V: TREATING CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND INVESTMENT IN TRAINING ON AN EQUAL BASIS.....	13
3.	NEW IDEAS AND EXCHANGES OF EXPERIENCE	13
III.	THE WHITE PAPER'S METHODOLOGICAL INPUT ON THE INNOVATION FRONT	15
1.	THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE INNOVATION EFFORT	16
2.	COOPERATION WITH THE MEMBER STATES.....	16
3.	PAYING HEED TO THE INDIVIDUAL'S EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS	17
	CONCLUSION	18
	ANNEX	
Annex 1	AUTOMATIC TESTS FOR ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	19
Annex 2	SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS.....	20
Annex 3	PRIORITY THEMES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING	22

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHITE PAPER "TEACHING AND LEARNING – TOWARDS THE LEARNING SOCIETY"

The aim of this report is to describe¹ the experimental, action and study phase implementing the five objectives which were laid down in November 1995 in the Commission's White Paper "Teaching and learning - towards the learning society"²:

- Objective I : Encourage the acquisition of new knowledge;
- Objective II : Bring schools and the business sector closer together;
- Objective III : Combat exclusion;
- Objective IV : Proficiency in three Community languages;
- Objective V : Treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis.

Following its adoption, the European Commission initiated a broad debate on the subjects covered by the White Paper. The various Community institutions – the Council³, the European Parliament⁴, the Economic and Social Committee⁵, and the Committee of the Regions⁶ likewise debated the problems raised by the White Paper. The Commission took stock of all these discussions in 1997 in a Communication entitled "Review of reactions to the White Paper – Teaching and learning: towards the learning society"⁷. The various Community institutions and bodies, the Member States, the social partners, higher education and research institutions and the NGOs have all made contributions leading up to the series of experiments conducted under the various existing action programmes in the areas of education, training and youth⁸.

This is not the place to conduct a full-scale final assessment of the way the five objectives have been implemented, since many of the measures are still in progress. However, after a review of the **contribution the White Paper has made to the concept of a Europe of knowledge** (Chapter I), it is nonetheless possible to take stock, at the end of 1999, of what has been done (Chapter II) and evaluate the methodological input in relation to innovative

¹ The Commission is thereby complying with the undertakings entered into at the Council of 27 June 1997, the conclusions (OJ C 303, 4.10.1997) to which state: "*The Council notes with interest that the Commission has undertaken a series of experiments concerning the various objectives on which it will report to the Council...*".

² (Luxembourg : Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 1996)

³ Council conclusions of 6 May 1996 on the White Paper; OJ C 195, 6.7.1996

⁴ Resolution on the Commission's White Paper on education and training; OJ C 115, 14.4.1997

⁵ Economic and Social Committee opinion on the Commission's White Paper on education and training; OJ C 295, 7.10.1996.

⁶ Committee of the Regions opinion on the Commission's White Paper on education and training; OJ C 182, 24.6.1996

⁷ (COM(97) 256 final).

⁸ This report does not cover the ensemble of Community actions in the fields discussed, such as those under the European Social Fund.

measures conducted on the initiative of the Community institutions and bodies in conjunction with the Member States (Chapter III)⁹ .

I. FROM THE LEARNING SOCIETY TO A EUROPE OF KNOWLEDGE: WHAT CONTRIBUTION HAS THE WHITE PAPER MADE?

The debate which was prompted by the White Paper on the place of education and training in tomorrow's Europe helped to lay the foundations for the concept of a "**Europe of knowledge**". The **Amsterdam Treaty**, which was signed on 2 October 1997, expresses in its preamble the signatories' desire "*to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating*". In its **Agenda 2000**, the European Union made the policies which are the driving forces behind the "society of knowledge" (viz. innovation, research, education and training) one of the four main thrusts of its internal policies. The **extraordinary European Council held in Luxembourg** in 1997 formulated a coordinated European employment strategy, placing particular stress on the importance of education and training.

The Commission's communication of November 1997 (COM(97)563) "For a Europe of knowledge" presented guidelines for future programmes in the fields of education, training and youth for the period 2000-2006 and was geared primarily towards the **gradual building of an open and dynamic European educational area**.

Implementation of the White Paper has helped define the **three main dimensions** of work on building a **Europe of knowledge**:

- developing the employability and adaptability of young people and workers;
- boosting knowledge potential;
- helping to build a People's Europe.

1. DEVELOPING THE EMPLOYABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORKERS: KNOWLEDGE, APTITUDES AND SKILLS

This is one of the main concerns of the White Paper:

- **Open new avenues for validating skills**, by making it possible for individuals to have their skills recognised under a flexible and permanent system, e.g. by setting up credible evaluation and validation tests.
- **Develop apprenticeship/trainee schemes in Europe**. In December 1998, the Council adopted a decision setting up the "EUROPASS-Training Scheme", comprising a "Community information document". The Commission is joining forces with the Member States to set in motion a plan for this scheme to be implemented from 1 January 2000.
- **Reintegrate young people into the world of work by way of a tailor-made training pathway for young people** affected by social exclusion, by getting them into second-chance schools or other types of experimental measures in the Member States.
- **Launch the European voluntary service** scheme, conceived as a very important "learning by doing" scheme to enable young people to develop their personalities and acquire experience. It gives young people the chance to take part in a

⁹ A number of other initiatives have been taken by the Member States or other players affected by the White Paper's various objectives; it has not been possible to deal with those in this report.

collective activity and acquire new skills and qualities to boost their employability.

- **Develop language teaching and learning** to make people more mobile and help them to find a job.
- **Encourage workers to invest** in their own aptitudes and skills within a general framework of lifelong learning and in a spirit of shared responsibility.

2. BOOSTING KNOWLEDGE POTENTIAL

The White Paper proposed the following practical measures:

- **Open up new ways of validating knowledge** by developing automated evaluation tests for a range of general or more vocational knowledge – e.g. chemistry, informatics, management – to encourage people to go in for lifelong learning.
- **Strengthen cooperation between schools and business**, more especially by developing partnerships between schools and businesses and by focusing on teacher training, with a view to improving teachers' knowledge of the business environment.
- **Tackle the exclusion problem** and encourage lifelong access for all to education and training. As well as the second-chance schools, there are other ways in which individuals can acquire the necessary basic knowledge and add on new elements.
- **Become proficient in at least three Community languages**, and improve everyone's language skills, in line with their vocational abilities.
- Get the various players concerned to **mobilise the necessary funding** to enable people to acquire the highest possible level of knowledge.

3. HELPING TO BUILD A PEOPLE'S EUROPE

Creating a shared "educational area" means giving everyone in Europe a **real sense of belonging to a common social and cultural area**. This is not something that will come from the range of knowledge and skills that Europeans have in common – it will also depend on their acquired skill in sharing "active solidarity" and on a **mutual understanding of the diverse cultures** which make up the originality and rich fabric of Europe.

It also means giving everyone **equal access to these values** and their practical expression. In a Europe of knowledge, we cannot accept situations where some people have access to knowledge while others are excluded. That is why the White Paper stressed the need to seek quality and effectiveness in the teaching and learning of languages and cultures, taking the view that a **knowledge of languages and cultures** is an essential element in practical citizenship skills.

II. FIRST RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE WHITE PAPER'S FIVE OBJECTIVES

The White Paper set highly ambitious education and training targets, such as combating exclusion and being proficient in three Community languages. At the same time, though, it proposed a series of limited and clearly defined measures, such as creating second-chance schools and awarding a "European quality label" to encourage language learning. For each of the general objectives, the White Paper gives examples, in text boxes, of *experimental projects* which could be run at Community level and are intended to give a lead to others.

By the end of 1999, the Commission had reached the following stage in the five areas pinpointed by the White Paper:

- a number of **experimental projects** (1); the European voluntary service scheme has even given rise to a new Community action programme;
- additional work on measures **which were already in progress under existing programmes**; and a number of new measures (2);
- **new ideas** and studies to **find ways and means of putting these idea into effect** (3); the Commission has also taken steps to publicise and circulate its findings.

1. **EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS**

a) **Automated tests for evaluating knowledge and skills**

The Commission contacted organisations which had responded to the call for proposals under the Leonardo da Vinci programmes and to the university thematic networks set up under the Socrates programme. There were a number of pilot projects (See Annex I) concerned with the **development of prototypes for assessing and validating knowledge and skills** in the following fields:

- *Socrates* pilot projects: law, geography, environmental and food sciences, biology, chemistry, environment/water, languages, statistics for engineers
- *Leonardo da Vinci* pilot projects: mathematics, physics, written expression, informatics, key skills, marketing, banking, customer service, assembly

These projects terminate at the end of 1999.

The Commission has kept a close eye on these projects with a view to:

- consolidating the structure of the tests from the point of view of content and technology (software);
- carrying out pre-tests with academic and professional partners and among a limited number of potential users;
- making socio-economic players aware of this new pathway for acquiring knowledge and validating the results of self-assessment;
- producing feedback and guides for applicants in the tests.

An Internet site has been created on the Europa server, setting out general information on what the Community is doing and a brief description of existing projects.

In the interests of quality assurance, the projects were subjected to an **interim evaluation by a group of independent experts** in June and July 1998. The group noted the great potential of the various prototypes, and went on to make a series of recommendations for a number of the projects concerning, for example, the need to define the target groups, the nature of the tests (training, certification or a mixture of the two) and the need to incorporate a "local" approach to the various questions and images so as to reflect the cultural traditions of the various countries and the diversity of languages. Following this evaluation exercise, the project coordinators were asked to finalise the products with a view to tightening up and expanding the content of the tests and consolidating the technical and technological aspects. This phase is due for **completion at the end of 1999**.

With a view to getting the acceptability of products verified by potential accreditors and users, the Commission organised a session in February 1999 at which selected prototypes were presented for a selected group of European organisations representing higher education

establishments and learned societies, the social partners, professional bodies, students and representatives of the European institutions.

The prototype tests developed in the course of these experimental projects showed that automated tests can be used as an assessment tool, particularly with a view to skills recognition, and can also act:

- as a tool for the self-assessment of individually acquired knowledge (the aim being to introduce more individual autonomy into skills-building) and
- as a tool for the management and support of human resources training in firms.
- They cover a **number of target groups**, viz.
- **students** wishing to acquire additional knowledge in their specific field of studies, or in fields outside their curriculum;
- **young people** who have not had the opportunity to complete their studies in a formal system of education and who now wish to acquire knowledge in a specific field;
- **adults:**
 - interested in widening their field of knowledge to meet the needs of the labour market or to cope with changes in society in general,
 - wishing to improve or refresh their knowledge with a view to re-entering the labour market;
- **any individual** who has not completed the compulsory education system or who has not been through formal education;
- **any professional** who wishes to improve or extend his/her knowledge in specific fields of education.

The Commission plans, at the beginning of 2000, to organise a **campaign** to make people more aware of this new way of validating knowledge acquisition, particularly among the various "networks", and given the multiplier role played by the transnational partnerships. Encouraging projects of this type is one of the new activities provided for in the new phase of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci Community programmes.

b) Second-chance schools

"Second-chance schools" pilot projects are targeted at young people who are "socially excluded", who have left the education system, who are beyond the compulsory schooling age and who have neither the qualifications nor the skills needed to find a job or to get into existing vocational training programmes. The important thing here is to reintegrate young people into society and the world of work by giving them a wide range of quality training opportunities, geared to their individual needs and targeted specifically at getting a job.

Clearly, the **characteristics** of this kind of approach depend to a large extent on conditions and needs specific to the local and national levels. Nonetheless it was possible to define certain key elements which should apply in all projects:

- a **target public made up exclusively of young people** who are in all respects beyond their period of compulsory schooling;
- an **active partnership** of local/regional authorities, social services, social associations and the private sector;

- an **educational approach targeted** at the needs, aspirations and abilities of the individual, and designed to stimulate active and constructive learning, with a central role going to the acquisition of **computer skills** and skills in the other new technologies;
- **flexible use of time** combining the learning of basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic and expression) and practical training modules taught by and in firms;
- to ensure an integrated strategy of urban renewal, designed to give new perspectives to young people and their environment, most of the projects are **located in disadvantaged areas** where the young people live and meet.

The Commission has adopted a strategy for identifying pilot projects in close conjunction with the national and local authorities. This process has involved two sequential phases:

- **in the first phase**, the Commission supported, on the basis of an initiative from the schools themselves, **one pilot project per country**, in close conjunction with the national ministries. Spain, France and Germany each hosted two pilot projects;
- given the marked success of the first phase, the Commission then **encouraged Member States** with a high level of demand to **set up networks** or national arrangements for connecting together all the second-chance schools or their equivalents. In France (the "New Chances" programme), the United Kingdom (the "New Start" programme and the "Learning Cities" initiative) and in Italy (Resource Centre programme against educational dispersion), there are very clear perspectives, while in Greece, there is a new education law which has introduced second-chance schools into the education system.

At the same time, the Commission set up a so-called "**second pillar**" in May 1998. This is an attempt to bring together all successful measures for achieving the integration of the worst problem groups of young people. The measures concerned emanate from the Member States, regional or urban authorities, and companies. A **European association** of cities with second-chance schools was created on 4 June 1999 to facilitate contacts between schools, to consolidate the whole second-chance schools idea, and to give help to towns and cities setting out to develop a second-chance school system. The aim was also to encourage exchanges and examples of good practice so as to circulate outcomes, discover what are the most transferable elements, and encourage new experiments.

A number of second-chance schools have now, as planned, been included in the **Action Framework for Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union**¹⁰. School drop-outs and school failure constitute one of the guidelines in the **National Employment Action Plans**, while the Parliamentary Assembly of the **Council of Europe** adopted a resolution, on 23 June 1999, on the setting-up of "second-chance school" pilot projects in the 41 member countries of the Council of Europe.

In the first half of 2000, the Commission will draw up a report setting out the first results obtained by the second-chance schools and detailing the theoretical and methodological input they can make towards tackling the problem of socially excluded and unskilled young people.

¹⁰ COM (1998) 605 final.

c) **European Voluntary Service**

The European Voluntary Service pilot project has developed the concept already present in the Youth for Europe programme of enabling young people to spend between six and 12 months on voluntary service away from their country of origin, both within the European Community and outside it. The pilot project preceded the fully-fledged programme European Voluntary Service, which was adopted in 1998. It enabled more than 2 500 young people to make their contribution towards the quality of life in their host community. Young volunteers work full-time on non-profit projects for the common good; it constitutes a period of personal, social and/or intercultural learning.

The pilot project was a useful means of trying out innovative management tools for placing and looking after young people and for addressing their training needs before and during their period of service. Based on a close partnership between the sending and the host structures, the European Voluntary Service scheme is a good illustration of young people's commitment to the needs of disadvantaged people and communities. It is also an alternative means of enabling young people to design their own personal pathway towards integration and social participation.

d) **The European label for initiatives encouraging language learning**

Under Objective IV, the White Paper proposes the creation of a "European quality label". Following discussions with the Member States, it has been agreed that the European label should be awarded not to classes, but to European initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning, with a view to disseminating information on innovative approaches and encouraging people to initiate projects. This approach, which has the Member States' backing, benefits from decentralised management.

There is a working party made up of representatives of the Member States, who help define the project and see to it that it is put into practice in the various countries. **The national authorities are responsible for implementation at national level:** they are free to add national criteria to the existing European criteria; they decide how to identify projects; they decide on the structure for dealing with applications and they set up the selection board, which has to include one representative from a different Member State of the European Union. It is **up to the Commission to safeguard the European nature of the label**, by making arrangements for the collection and exchange of information and by supporting the information campaign in the various participating countries (the European Union plus Iceland and Norway). The Commission also helps with the dissemination of information on labelled projects.

Despite the short time available for information campaigns, and the very limited scale of Community and national resources, the pilot project for the European label generated a great deal of interest. A total of 545 applications for the label were received by the national authorities, and 123 labels were awarded, broken down as follows (the total comes to more than 100% because, in many cases, a single project covers more than one group and/or more than one language): 41% to projects addressing young learners of between 13 and 18 years; 30% to adult education or training; 18% to primary schools; 4% to the pre-school sector; 15% to in-service training for teachers or trainers; and 2% to the parents of pupils. All the Community's official languages were covered, although the lion's share went to the most widely used languages: 50% of the labelled projects were concerned with English (and often with other languages too); 43% were French and 30% German.

The pilot project reached a satisfactory conclusion in March 1999 with a European event in Brussels, bringing together 29 projects typical of those which had been awarded the label. This served to make the projects known to colleagues in other countries and to decision-makers and journalists. There was also a publication, a revised version of which will soon be

available on the Commission's website
(<http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/language/label.html>).

A project for assessing the pilot phase has already been discussed with the group of representatives from the participating countries, and is now being finalised. The assessment reveals a unanimous desire on the part of the participating countries to continue the initiative in 2000 and beyond. Future priorities will be to:

- pinpoint, in cooperation with the Member States, the possibilities for:
 - * bringing the scheme more closely into line with the Socrates and Leonardo programmes to which the European label has close connections;
 - * making it easier to commit Community funds, designed to help meet the cost of information campaigns, to the national management organisations;
- continue to work on the "lifelong learning" aspect by covering all stages of education and training;
- continue to ensure broad language coverage and, as far as possible, increase the number of applications from projects concerned with the less widely-used and taught languages in the European Union;
- set up a regular timetable for the label, with coordination at European level, to encourage all the participating countries to go in for annual and open calls for proposals, and to award labels and organise the award ceremonies between September and December of each year.

2. ACTION UNDER COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

In addition to the specific pilot projects mentioned above, mention should also be made of a number of measures advocated in the White Paper, which normally run under the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe programmes.

Objective I: Encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge

- **Mobility:** the above programmes enable more than 250 000 young people each year to take part in an educational mobility scheme.
- **Recognition of skills:** The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) facilitates the recognition of study periods abroad and removes one of the obstacles facing students who wish to study abroad. A number of Member States are busy adapting their national credit systems to make them compatible with the ECTS.
- **Making use of the new information and communication technologies** for educational ends: In December 1996, the Multimedia Educational Software Task Force launched an invitation to tender covering six Commission programmes: Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, Esprit, TAP, TEN-TELECOM and TSER. 47 of the 800 proposals received have been given funding, the principal objective being to support innovation in the field of educational and multimedia software, whether it be technological innovation for developing new tools and services, teaching-related innovation for experimental educational services, or innovation in the field of vocational training to encourage more effective and more diverse approaches. Something like 500 organisations and firms are involved in these ongoing project partnerships, which got underway at the beginning of 1998.

Objective II: Bringing schools and the business sector closer together

Transnational mobility schemes for the initial training sector have multiplied, the aim being to develop a transnational approach to the Leonardo da Vinci programme and encourage cooperation between schools and the business sector. In five years, something like 150 000 young people will have received help in one mobility scheme or another – young apprentices or young people in work-linked training schemes, young job seekers and students. More than 50% of the budget for the second phase of the programme is supposed to be devoted to the mobility aspect. The stated objective is to assist 560 000 young people in initial vocational training over a seven-year period (2000-2006).

There are a number of pilot projects which seek to bring companies and education/training institutions closer together; these have been developed around the "**Europass**" **work-linked training scheme**. Under the Leonardo da Vinci II programme, the stress has been placed on greater participation on the part of small and medium-sized businesses and the craft trades and the support provided for exchanges between universities and training instituts and enterprises is continuing.

The Socrates programme is also keen on bringing schools and businesses closer together by supporting a **large number of school-business partnerships**. Special efforts have also been made to **train teachers** and bring them closer to the reality of the business environment. What is more, training placements in firms for students whose courses prescribe a phase of practical experience have now passed the 100 000 mark under Socrates alone.

Objective III: Combating exclusion

The Commission has adopted a two-pronged approach to intensifying the drive to combat exclusion. In agreement with national governments, it is using the Structural Funds to support local and regional authorities working on "second-chance schools" pilot projects. In addition, the Commission has used the Information Society DG's "Information Society Project Office" (ISPO) to **upgrade and network the various ways and means of combating exclusion in the Member States**. A number of innovative, shared projects will be launched shortly, with backing from the CONNECT programme, one of the aims being to test promising ways of combating failure at school and addressing such issues as social and entrepreneurial skills.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme is currently funding a project which seeks to pinpoint and categorise the skills and qualifications required of "teachers working in second-chance schools". Further openings might be available under the new Objective 2 urban strand and the Objective 3 "human resources" under the Structural Funds.

Objective IV: Becoming proficient in three Community languages

The Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes have provided funding for pilot projects, bearing in mind the subjects pinpointed as priority by the White Paper. As a result, the selection of projects concerned with developing student materials and teacher training has been geared more to:

- **early learning**, to make best use of young children's well-known ability to learn languages early;
- **teaching other subjects by way of foreign languages** (also known as multilingual/bilingual teaching);
- **multilingual comprehension**, meaning learning to understand other languages without learning to speak them or write them, by concentrating on similarities between languages belonging to the same family.

The following projects have also received funding:

- a publication, designed for policy-makers and the public at large, analysing existing experience in the field of early learning and enabling the basic conditions for success to be pinpointed;
- creation of a network (*Euroclit*) for supporting persons active in the teaching of other subjects by way of foreign languages; the network is responsible, for instance, for publishing a bulletin and creating a website (<http://www.euroclit.net>): exchange forum for teachers, data base for teaching materials;
- creation of a website giving access to available information on multilingual comprehension, subsequent to a specialist seminar (<http://inalco.fr/recomu/>);
- publication of a guide on the quality of language learning methods and materials; a booklet setting out the structure and content is available;
- development of a virtual resource centre on language teaching and learning (Lingu@net-Europa) with multilingual access.

Results to date have been satisfactory. By combining activities on the ground and activities targeting the political decision-makers, the White Paper has helped to put the whole idea of promoting language teaching and learning (which is a long-term process) well and truly on the map. In addition, the projects have helped to advance the application of priority innovative approaches.

Objective V: Treating capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis

This is one of the priority objectives under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. A number of projects designed to promote innovative approaches to investment have been launched over recent years, helping to:

- **promote access to in-house continuing training**, by way of human resources development strategies and plans, individual career plans, new approaches to the organisation of work, taking account of new forms of working relations and new learning tools;
- developing **partnerships between training establishments**, especially at local and regional levels, with a view to eliminating the kind of obstacles that prevent access to in-house continuing training, particularly in small and medium-sized businesses;
- **getting the social partners** involved in the development of investment and joint investment arrangements.

3. NEW IDEAS AND EXCHANGES OF EXPERIENCE

For Objective I – Encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge – the Commission is working on the basis that all European countries are seeking to pinpoint key knowledge and skills and to find the best way of acquiring, evaluating and certifying them. The Commission is therefore continuing to look into ways of addressing and disseminating the most appropriate definitions, methods and practices.

The partners in the 18 pilot projects launched by the Commission firmly believe that the automated tests should be encouraged so as to cover an optimum range of knowledge and skills, albeit at a quality level which is guaranteed at European level. The Commission has encouraged the pilot project coordinators to look into the feasibility of setting up a **European structure** run by the coordinators themselves, who would be responsible for such matters as guaranteeing the quality of existing or future projects.

For Objective II - Bringing schools and the business sector closer together – the Council adopted, on 21 December 1998, a Decision on the promotion of European pathways in work-linked training, including apprenticeship. This lays down the content and common principles for European training pathways and creates the "EUROPASS- Training" scheme, this being a Community information document testifying to the successful completion of a European course. 1999 was a preparatory year; implementation proper will commence from 1 January 2000.

The approach used under this Decision deserves to be developed for all forms of mobility concerned with work-linked training (including apprenticeships), whatever the framework for that mobility. As far as Europass is concerned, the Leonardo da Vinci programme remains, for the time being, the most suitable means of developing European courses, either in the form of pilot projects, or – more especially – in the form of placement and exchange programmes (although other forms are not excluded).

For Objective III – Combating exclusion – the Commission has organised a number of meetings to bring together **people responsible for second-chance schools**. A number of special seminars have been held to put forward new ideas and ways of putting them into collaborative practice, relating, e.g. to **entrepreneurship on the part of marginalised young people**, and the European-level development of the "Job-Connect" software (software for guidance on the labour market); there was also a seminar to prepare a "CVCART" software development plan (building in new, more interactive and dynamic methods for identifying and upgrading skills), which requires Community pump-priming investment.

The challenge now is to create a real European dimension for second-chance schools by way of transnational exchanges for teachers and pupils and by organising **cultural and sports events for the children**, e.g. second-chance schools sports tournaments.

A further important stage was the **electronic networking of the various pilot sites**, to enable each school to have its own site master and to set up a **database** for the assessment and comparison of data from the various schools. Apart from that, the Commission has recently produced a **young people's newsletter**, with contributions from children in the various schools, and on a **guide** for the implementation of second-chance schools.

For Objective IV – Proficiency in three Community languages – the Commission has organised meetings of **groups of experts** to consider what should be the priorities for each of the selected themes (the list is set out in Annex III). There have also been a number of seminars. To take an example, the conference bringing together early learning experts and decision-takers produced a highly interesting debate between two groups who rarely get together. The report of proceedings was circulated widely.

A seminar which brought together the limited expertise currently available on multilingual comprehension helped greatly to broaden the debate on the subject and launch add-on projects; a summary of the proceedings was published and generated a website (see point 2 above). It will be a quick matter to take stock of work since the first seminar and ascertain what progress has been made on developing a multilingual comprehension strategy.

A number of other conferences and seminars have been held on the subject of teaching other subjects through foreign languages; these were in addition to the development of the support network (see point 2 above); they have enabled information to be circulated and the approach to be developed. A website on innovative language learning has been opened on the Europa server to give access to information on the Commission's wide range of initiatives in this field.

For Objective V – Treating capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis – the Commission, mindful of the complexity of the subject, commissioned a study to **establish an inventory of fiscal and accounting provisions in the Member States**. The

scope of the study covered firms and individual investment on the part of workers – a particularly important aspect given that the lifelong acquisition of skills requires workers to take an active part in developing their own armoury of skills.

Based on the preliminary results of this study, an **expert workshop** was organised in May 1998 to bring together specialists from organisations with expertise in the field (such as the OECD) and representatives of the social partners. The basic conclusion was that it is important to ensure equal treatment for investment in human resources by attaching **balanced importance to the material and non-material factors, despite the inherent difficulties in this type of (by definition intangible) investment**, and given that the effects are difficult to discern and are generally spread among a number of players (e.g. firms, individuals and society in general). The European employment strategy, adopted at the extraordinary European Council in Luxembourg in November 1997, makes explicit mention of the need to examine the question of incentives – particularly tax incentives – for investment in human resources.

The Commission is currently looking into the possibility of developing a policy framework with a view to giving coordinated support to a range of initiatives at four separate levels:

- Promoting the development of human resources as a business strategy (*this is the management and micro-economic dimension*), e.g. by benchmarking good practice in firms, in terms of competitiveness, or by using indicators to bring out the cost of investment and the benefits, for firms and workers alike.
- Improving access to the financial markets (*the capital market dimension*) and more generally to sources of finance, by improving information on the firm's "richness" in terms of intangible capital; and its investment in human resources (e.g. "social balances" on a voluntary basis). To take an example, transnational cooperation networks could help establish comparable methods to supplement the traditional form of balances.
- Strengthening employment and growth by developing human resources (*the fiscal and macro-economic dimension*); this would benefit from qualitative and quantitative macro-economic indicators, assigning the various costs and benefits to private and social levels by way of Community statistics which should incorporate more information on non-material investment. It would also be useful to have an exchange of good practice in terms of fiscal policies to encourage investment in training.
- Encouragement should be given to developing mechanisms for co-financing lifelong training (*the social partners dimension*) in accordance with the various interests, and building in the principle of shared responsibility. In this context, transparent forms of funding might be developed and negotiated, and concrete form could be given to the concept of staggered investment in flexible working conditions.

III. THE WHITE PAPER'S METHODOLOGICAL INPUT ON THE INNOVATION FRONT

Taking stock of the results of the White Paper at the end of 1999 enables us to examine the various methods used to achieve them. There are, in fact, three different levels: the Community institutions; the Member States; and the individual. Innovation can only lead to a successful conclusion, as far as building a knowledge-based Europe is concerned, if the scheme involves the European Union, the Member States and the various national and local organisations and, above all, the individual's own needs.

1. THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE INNOVATION EFFORT

Under the Treaty, the Commission is entitled to propose innovative measures which are in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. By proposing experimental measures to apply the objectives laid down in the White Paper, the Commission has been acting as an innovator and has had to **reply to a wide range of questions**.

It had to explain the importance of the problem it was addressing, the relevance of the measures it was proposing and the need to take appropriate steps at European level.

Although, in general terms, the objectives pinpointed in the White Paper met with broad agreement among the Community institutions and bodies and the Member States, the proposed activities inevitably required some amount of clarification of concepts and approaches; as a result, some of the experiments were late starting. Nonetheless, it was possible in the end, and after much discussion, to make progress on the various objectives in full accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

The Commission has also demonstrated the value added in **opting for the European level** of action. This may be fairly obvious for European work-linked courses or for transnational mobility schemes, but things are not quite so clear for, say, automated assessment tests, knowledge validation, or second-chance schools. The fact is, though, that, by encouraging this kind of innovation, the Commission has helped give them a European dimension right from the outset. The people responsible for these projects have been able to take part in meetings and transnational exchanges and have been given good examples of sound practice and reduced development costs. To pinpoint what might, for instance, be deemed an "innovative initiative in language teaching and learning", the Commission has, together with the Member States, drawn up a list of characteristics and common criteria which all projects have to meet. The Commission is thus acting as a **guarantor of the quality** of the experiments it is encouraging.

The Commission has always been mindful of each project's essential character and setting, and has endeavoured to provide **effective aid** for the innovative effort. This aid has taken on a variety of forms.

The Commission has sought all the available **expertise** to help back innovative initiative, calling on the help of high-level groups of experts. It has called in consultants of the highest calibre. It has organised seminars and symposia to give researchers and other players the chance to compare and contrast their respective approaches. It has also commissioned studies which it has subsequently published and circulated.

In general terms, the Commission has given all possible assistance within its financial constraints, ranging from helping to **disseminate information**, at the project launch stage, to the **close monitoring** and **dissemination of results**, as soon as the first information emerged. This systematic information campaign has used multimedia, particularly websites and electronic networks, to enable all concerned to compare and improve their respective approaches.

2. COOPERATION WITH THE MEMBER STATES

The innovative work has been conducted systematically in conjunction with the Member States. The representatives of the Member States, the various committees – including the Education Committee – and the directors general for vocational training have been kept informed and consulted on the best way of conducting the experimental work. The various concepts and their characteristics have been defined in common. In some cases, as for the label award procedure, responsibility for national implementation has even been decentralised and assigned to the national authorities.

In carrying through these initiatives, the Commission has been able to count on the **backing from local and regional authorities, the various decision-makers, and all persons responsible** in firms, universities, associations and on the ground. The Commission has, of its own volition, **favoured a flexible approach**, taking care always to take into account the specific characteristics of each project and its environment.

The Commission has frequently adopted a dual approach, initiating experiments and, at the same time, collecting and using examples of **measures already in operation in the Member States**. This is the case for existing skill validation procedures in the Member States, which do not lend themselves to automated assessment and validation testing. It is also the case with the "second pillar" detailing significant examples of measures in operation in the Member States to combat the social exclusion of young school-leavers. The Commission has established a network for these existing provisions, in the process promoting exchanges of experience and transnational cooperation projects.

3. PAYING HEED TO THE INDIVIDUAL'S EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS

The centrality of the individual and the attention paid to the individual's specific needs constitute the most original element in the White Paper's proposed approach, an element which has been fully implemented by all the players.

The new needs, on the part of young people and adults alike, in a Europe based on knowledge have been closely studied, and the prime objective of the various measures has been to respond to the need for lifelong training, social integration, better language skills, etc. Such innovations are only of any use, though, if they meet people's real expectations and are put to practical use. However, there are ways of encouraging and stimulating their utilisation. Individuals have to be motivated to develop their highest possible level of knowledge and to update their knowledge throughout their lives. Motivation to learn will only work, though, if people's investment in learning can be readily and systematically put into practice.

Projects have set out to **make tailor-made courses** available to all, in the belief that the individuals themselves should take the lead and assume responsibility. New methods of assessing knowledge and skills must therefore introduce more individual autonomy into qualification-building, and should re-instil a desire for training and encourage people to go in for lifelong learning. The European work-linked training pathway, including apprenticeships, is based on a pedagogical project of its own. In the second-chance schools, there has been a systematic drive for individualised courses: young people have received individual attention, and their specific skills, needs and aspirations have been individually assessed. They have personally been involved in devising their individual pathway and are expected to run things themselves.

The **European Voluntary Service** scheme likewise offers young people the opportunity to opt for an original way of acquiring social and personal skills to facilitate their transition to active life and citizenship. Nearly half of all young volunteers see their period of European voluntary service as a means of acquiring hands-on experience of active life and autonomy. The experience they gain can be upgraded, confirmed or developed by a "future capital" project attracting Community support at the end of the period of volunteer service. This is a tailor-made scheme to give young people the wherewithal to take the initiative in their career pathways.

In all cases, particular attention has been paid to **supervision, the quality of teachers, trainers and tutors, and the choice of active teaching methods**. For instance, pupils at second-chance schools have received personalised supervision by a tutor who is also responsible for assessing the pupil's progress (including his/her behavioural progress). The success of the European work-linked training scheme will depend very strongly on the qualities of the tutor and the personalised assistance he will be able to give. Language

teaching and learning are also strongly influenced by the quality of teachers and trainers (which is what Community action is systematically seeking to enhance).

The individualisation of training provision is underpinned by the new information and communication technologies, be it in terms of self-assessment on the Internet, or as a training aid. Under the second-chance schools scheme, software has been developed to teach the basic skills (reading, writing and arithmetic) and to provide guidance for young people on the job market (e.g. the "Job connect" software developed for the Leeds second-chance school).

CONCLUSION

It is clear that some progress has been made in implementing the White Paper. Innovative experiments and activities have made a very active contribution to creating a Europe of knowledge. The Commission, in conjunction with the Member States, will continue to think about and discuss the matter, based on studies, seminars and experts' reports. Symposia will be organised at the appropriate times to take stock of the experimental phase and to continue discussions with the Member States on the relative merits of the various experiments.

Provision has been made in the second phase of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes and in the new Youth programme (embracing the European Voluntary Service scheme and Youth for Europe) to introduce new (formal and informal) education and training schemes to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills by all groups in European society. Further innovative projects are based on the same approach, such as "Flexible University" and "School of Tomorrow" funded under the RTD programme "Information Society Technologies". The Decision promoting work-linked training schemes has been adopted; further legal instruments are planned or are already at the decision-making stage. The Commission has thus used documents like the White Paper as a basis for promoting and prioritising innovation.

The people of Europe have to be perpetual innovators. The Commission will support them in their drive for innovation. It is in the field of knowledge and skills that the battle for the future will be fought and won.

ANNEX I

AUTOMATIC TESTS FOR ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

ONGOING PROJECTS	SUBJECT FIELD	CO-FUNDED BY THE PROGRAMME:
AEVEM	Mathematics	Leonardo
MAC	Physics	Leonardo
EVALING	Written expression	Leonardo
ECDL	Informatics	Leonardo
MAPS	Key skills	Leonardo
MESAS	Marketing	Leonardo
Banking skills card	Banking	Leonardo
REPERES	Customer service	Leonardo
MECAM	Assembly	Leonardo
MEDIA-EVAL	Industrial processes	Leonardo
TEBE	Biology	Socrates
EACC	Chemistry	Socrates
ISOCRATES	Law	Socrates
Water testing	Environment/water	Socrates
Food and environmental sciences	Food/environment	Socrates
Statistics for engineers	Statistics	Socrates
Geography	Geography	Socrates
DIALANG (15 Community languages)	Languages	Socrates

ANNEX II

SECOND-CHANCE SCHOOLS

(State of play)

Country	Town	Number of pupils (start up number and maximum capacity)	Start up
<i>France</i>	Marseilles	60 – 400	School operational (Nov 97)
	Bordeaux	50 – 150	2000
<i>Spain</i>	Bilbao	40 – 150	School operational (Nov. 97)
	Barcelona	300	School operational (Nov 98)
<i>Italy</i> ¹¹	Catania	60	School operational (Feb 99)
<i>Germany</i>	Halle	50	School operational (Nov 97)
	Cologne	150 – 600	School operational (Nov 97)
<i>Finland</i>	Hameenlinna	100 – 100	School operational (Nov 97)
<i>Portugal</i>	Seixal	60	January 2000 (ESF funding still to be confirmed)
<i>Greece</i>	Athens	80	After the summer of 1999
<i>United Kingdom</i> ¹²	Leeds	50 – 300	School operational (March 98)
<i>Denmark</i>	Svendborg	250	End of 99
<i>Netherlands</i>	Heerlen	30 – 100 (to be confirmed)	Operational (April 99)
<i>Sweden</i>	Norrköping	30 – 100	Operational (Jan 99)
<i>Luxembourg</i>	To be decided	To be decided	Provision has been made in the new government's coalition agreement for a pilot project.

¹¹ Provision has been made for the creation of a national network.

¹² Provision has been made for the creation of a national network of 20-30 towns and cities; "New Start" programme beneficiaries will be included.

The location of each project was selected by the Member State concerned on a proposal from the EC. In total, the Commission received more than 90 **spontaneous expressions of interest** from various authorities. There was particularly strong interest in the United Kingdom (25), France (17), Spain (10), Germany and Italy (7 each).

ANNEX III

PRIORITY THEMES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

- **Early language learning:** quite apart from making use of young children's well documented ability to learn languages, early learning can free up resources for further learning at a later stage.
- Using foreign languages to teach other subjects, otherwise known as **multilingual/bilingual teaching:** from a given time, a second language can be used as a teaching vehicle.
- **Multilingual comprehension:** learning to understand other languages without learning to speak or write them (i.e. developing partial skills), by making use of similarities between languages belonging to the same family: this approach facilitates language learning by using languages which are already known or have been learnt; it is a first stage in acquiring "full" skills.
- Evaluating the **quality of learning methods and materials:** with the growing range of learning methods and materials, there is an equally pressing need for a tool setting out quality indicators for developers and users.
- **Exchange of information,** creation of a virtual resource centre: because of the growing range of language teaching and learning resources, there is a commensurate need for better structured information exchange arrangements.
- **Languages and cultures:** this theme cuts across all the others.

Two other complementary themes were pinpointed during discussions on the White Paper: **language teachers,** and language learning by **adults.**