

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(94) 502 final
Brussels, 11.11.1994

94/0001 (COD)

OPINION OF THE COMMISSION

pursuant to Article 189 b (2) (d) of the EC Treaty,
on the European Parliament's amendments
to the Council's common position regarding the
proposal for a
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL DECISION

**establishing the Community action programme
"S O C R A T E S"**

AMENDING THE PROPOSAL OF THE COMMISSION

pursuant to Article 189 a (2) of the EC Treaty

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

According to Article 189 B paragraph 2, sub-paragraph d) of the EC Treaty, the Commission expresses its opinion on the amendments from the second reading of the European Parliament.

In this document the Commission explains its opinion on the 22 amendments proposed by the European Parliament, and attaches, in accordance with Article 189 A, paragraph 2 of the EC Treaty, a modified proposal incorporating the 18 amendments of the European Parliament which have been accepted by the Commission.

1 Historic background

- a) On 3 March 1994, the Commission forwarded to the Council and to the European Parliament its proposal for a decision on the SOCRATES programme (COM(93) 708 final - 94/0001 (COD))
- b) On 27 April 1994, the Economic and Social Committee gave a favourable opinion
- c) On 18 May 1994, the Committee of the Regions gave a favourable opinion
- d) On 22 April 1994, the European Parliament adopted, at its first reading, a favourable resolution including 104 amendments to the Commission's proposal
- e) On 16 May 1994, the Commission adopted, on the basis of Article 189 A, paragraph 2 of the EC Treaty, a modified proposal which integrated either wholly or in part 48 of these amendments (COM(94) 180 final - 94/0001 (COD))
- f) On 18 July 1994, the Council adopted a common position
- g) On 15 July 1994, the Commission took note of this, and informed the European Parliament of the Commission's position on the common position (SEC(94) 1217 final - 94/0001 (COD))
- h) On 26 October 1994, the European Parliament adopted on its second reading a favourable resolution which included 22 amendments to the common position.

2 Purpose of the Decision

The proposal for a Decision is intended to encourage cooperation at Community level for all levels of education, as a significant contribution from the Community towards improving the quality of education. The "SOCRATES" programme arises from experience gained from the implementation of such Community programmes as ERASMUS and LINGUA, as well as from pilot projects developed by the Commission for other educational levels.

The programme shall run from 1995-1999, and it is divided into 3 chapters:

- higher education (interuniversity cooperation and student mobility)
- school education (school partnerships, schooling for children of migrant workers, and for gipsies, and updating of teachers' skills)
- horizontal measures (promotion of language learning, of open and distance education, and of information and exchange of experience).

OPINION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE AMENDMENTS OF THE EP

After considering the proposed amendments of the European Parliament's second reading, the Commission can support those:

- 1) which are in line with its own original proposal, or
- 2) which are in line with its position on the amendments of the European Parliament presented from its first reading, or
- 3) which bring useful clarifications to the text.

A. Amendments accepted by the Commission

1. The Commission accepts all amendments which had been already incorporated in its modified proposal of May 1994. It therefore now inserts them in the new modified proposal so that they can be reconsidered by the Council.

More precisely, these amendments fall into three categories:

a) Target groups

Amendments 2, 4 and 21, which refer to the accessibility of the programme's activities and structures, particularly for disadvantaged groups

b) Mobility

Amendments 3 and 16, which aim to assist mobility through reinforcing the social infrastructures, and Amendment 9, which aims to include in the Decision text the objective to have 10% mobility of students in higher education

c) Cultural aspects

Amendments 5, 8, 18 and 19, which aim to emphasise the need to promote an intercultural dimension to teaching, especially through language learning.

2. New amendments accepted by the Commission

a) Programme budget

Amendment 13, which removes mention of the sum deemed necessary for running the programme

b) Languages used in teaching

Amendment 1, which extends the linguistic activities of the programme, mentioning particularly those in higher education, to languages having a national status which are used in a substantial manner as teaching languages

c) Two amendments referring to the overall content have been accepted by the Commission but, for legal reasons, the wording has been altered:

- Amendment 7, referring to the entry into force of the programme
- Amendment 14, which intends to open the programme to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Malta and Cyprus

d) Amendments bringing clarification

Amendments 11, 12, 15 and 17, which bring useful clarification to the text.

B. Amendments rejected by the Commission

Amendments 6, 10, 20 and 22 are rejected by the Commission:

- Amendment 10 refers to the Programme Committee. It introduces the obligation for the Commission to submit the planned measures for programme execution to Parliament and to take into account priorities adopted by the Parliamentary Committee, in order, where necessary, to modify its decisions.

The Commission supports the form of Advisory Committee that it set out in its original proposal and does not accept any other form. An Advisory Committee is appropriate for the implementation of a programme such as "SOCRATES", given the non-normative nature of the measures to be taken in executing the Decision.

Moreover, the procedure of submitting to Parliament the planned measures for execution is inflexible and not practical for efficient implementation of the programme.

- Amendment 6, which envisages cooperation with OECD and UNESCO, is not necessary, given that the "competent international organisations" mentioned in Whereas 23 of the common position would include OECD and UNESCO.
- Amendment 20, referring to national languages for teaching, repeats the text already accepted under Amendment 1, and is not necessary.

- Amendment 22, which envisages information centres at all levels, is rejected. The Commission is of the view that the national authorities designated by the Member States in the framework of the programme would be able to undertake this task at the national level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Commission considers that the amendments incorporated in the modified proposal reinforce the text with particular regard to the groups targeted by the programme, and that they are fully compatible with the objectives of the proposal for a Decision.

The Commission wishes to confirm its willingness to contribute to the preparation of a satisfactory global agreement between the three institutions involved in the decision-making process.

Modified Proposal for a
DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL
establishing the Community Action Programme

SOCRATES

**(presented by the Commission in accordance with
Article 189 A, paragraph 2 of the EC Treaty)**

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Article 189 B, paragraph 2, sub-paragraph d) of the EC Treaty provides that the Commission should deliver an opinion on the amendments that the European Parliament intends to bring to the common position of the Council.

The Commission hereby presents, in accordance with Article 189 A, paragraph 2 of the EC Treaty, a modified proposal incorporating the eighteen amendments of the EP to the common position of the Council that it has accepted.

the following five new **Whereas** clauses should be added:

- 10 a.** Whereas certain languages, having a national statute without being official languages of the European Union, are used in a substantial manner as teaching languages in universities; whereas teaching in these languages should offer possibilities for access to parts of the programme concerning higher education;
- 15 a.** Whereas, in order to increase the efficiency of Community action so that it may perform a multiplier function, it must also be ensured that the assisted structures are open to a wider group of people than solely direct beneficiaries, which means that the structures must be organised in such a way as to allow non-assisted students to derive maximum benefit from the Community value added.
- 15 b.** Whereas the success of mobility depends to a great extent on the social infrastructure provided by the Member States and the host establishments.
- 17 a.** Whereas the Community and the Member States should promote access to education, particularly for the less-privileged, actively combating social exclusion, especially with regard to participation in mobility initiatives organised in the framework of the programme.
- 19 a.** Whereas it is necessary to promote an intercultural dimension to teaching for all pupils in the European Union so as to prepare them to live in a society which is increasingly characterised by cultural and linguistic diversity; whereas measures need to be taken to improve the quality of education for the children of migrant workers, of gypsies and of occupational travellers, and to combat racism and xenophobia.

Article 1

**Establishment of the Community Action
Programme "SOCRATES"**

1. This Decision establishes the Action Programme "SOCRATES", hereinafter referred to as "this programme", for the period 1 January 1995 to 31 December 1999.

This programme is intended to contribute to the development of quality education and training and the creation of an open European area for co-operation in education.

2. This programme shall comprise the following three areas of action which are set out in the Annex:

Chapter I – Higher education (ERASMUS)

Chapter II – School education (COMENIUS)

Chapter III – Horizontal activities in the areas of:

- language skills in the Community (LINGUA);
- open and distance education;
- promotion of the exchange of information and experience (including EURYDICE and ARION).

1. This Decision establishes the Action Programme "SOCRATES", hereinafter referred to as "this programme", to be applicable for 5 years from 1 January 1995

Article 3

Objectives

This programme shall encourage co-operation between Member States in the field of education; it shall support and supplement their action while fully respecting their responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation of educational systems, and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

In accordance with that aim, and to help to improve the quality of education, the specific objectives of the programme shall be:

- (a) to develop the European dimension in education at all levels so as to strengthen the spirit of European citizenship, drawing on the cultural heritage of each Member State;
- (b) to promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union, and in particular those which are least widely used and least taught, leading to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the European Union;
- (c) to promote wide-ranging and intensive co-operation between institutions in the Member States at all levels of education, enhancing their intellectual and teaching potential;
- (d) to encourage the mobility of teachers, so as to promote a European dimension in studies and to contribute to the qualitative improvement of their skills;
- (e) to encourage mobility for students, enabling them to complete part of their studies in another Member State, so as to contribute to the consolidation of the European dimension in education;

(b) a. to develop knowledge of the languages of the Community and promote the intercultural dimension to teaching so that the citizens who live in the Community may take advantage of opportunities arising from the establishment of the European Union, as well as leading to greater understanding and interaction;

e) to encourage mobility for students, enabling them to complete part of their studies in another Member State, so as to contribute to the consolidation of the European dimension in education and to reach the objective of 10% of all students of the European Union;

- (f) to encourage contacts among pupils in the European Union, and to promote the European dimension in their education;
- (g) to encourage the academic recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications, with the aim of facilitating the development of an open European area for co-operation in education;
- (h) to encourage open and distance education in the context of the activities of this programme;
- (i) to foster exchanges of information and experience so that the diversity and specificity of the educational systems in the Member States become a source of enrichment and of mutual stimulation.

Article 5**Implementation and selection procedure**

1. The Commission shall ensure the implementation of the programme in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Annex. It shall consult the social partners and the competent associations in the field of education at European level and shall inform the Committee of their opinions. It shall also ensure that the European Parliament is fully informed on the operation of the programme.

2. It shall take measures to ensure appropriate transition between those actions already developed in the framework of the ERASMUS and LINGUA programmes and other current actions and those to be implemented under this programme.

3. The Member States shall take the necessary steps to co-ordinate and organize the implementation of this programme at national level, in particular, by providing for the appropriate structures and mechanisms at national level.

4. The methods for proposing and selecting the projects referred to in the Annex are as follows:

- (a) Requests for financial assistance for projects under Chapter I, Action 1 of the Annex shall be sent to the Commission. The Commission shall inform the structures designated by the Member States of these requests. Before taking a final decision, the Commission shall submit the proposal based on the results of the selection to the Committee referred to in Article 4 for its opinion.

The national agencies provided for in Chapter I, Action 2 shall award the mobility grants provided for in Action 2 to students participating in the projects accepted in the context of Action 1.

- (b) Requests for financial assistance for projects mentioned in actions considered to be decentralised in Chapters II and III (Chapter II, Action 1 and Action 3; Chapter III, Action 1.2(b), (c), (e) and Action 3.3) shall be submitted to the structures designated by the Member

- b) Requests for financial assistance for projects mentioned in actions considered to be decentralised in Chapters II and III (Chapter II, Action 1 and Action 3.2; Chapter III, Action 1.2(b), (c), (e) and Action 3.3) shall be submitted to the structures designated by the Member

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States. These structures shall select and give Community financial assistance to the selected projects in accordance with the general guidelines established in accordance with Article 4.

- (c) Requests for financial assistance for projects in actions considered to be centralized in Chapter II (Action 2) shall be submitted by the project co-ordinators to the structures designated by Member States. Those structures shall forward the approved requests to the Commission for a final decision, to be taken after receiving the opinion of the Committee.

- (d) Requests for financial assistance for projects in actions considered to be centralised in Chapter III, (Action 1.2(a) and (d), Action 2 and Action 3 except point 3) shall be submitted by the project co-ordinators to the Commission and the structures designated by the Member States. Those structures shall inform the Commission of their opinion. Decisions on financial assistance for projects shall be taken by the Commission after consulting the Member States concerned and receiving the opinion of the Committee.

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States. These structures shall select and give Community financial assistance to the selected projects in accordance with the general guidelines established in accordance with Article 4.

- c) Requests for financial assistance for projects in actions considered to be centralized in Chapter II (Action 2 and Action 3.1) shall be submitted by the project co-ordinators to the structures designated by Member States. Those structures shall forward the approved requests to the Commission for a final decision, to be taken after receiving the opinion of the Committee.

Article 7

Budget

1. The funds estimated as necessary for the execution of this programme during the period referred to in Article 1 amount to ECU 760 million.

2. The annual appropriations necessary to cover the Community contribution to the measures provided for in this programme shall be established in the annual budgetary procedure in accordance with the current financial perspective.

First paragraph deleted.

Article 7 a (new)

The "SOCRATES" programme can be open, as appropriate (according to the elements desired), to participation from those countries of Central and Eastern Europe having signed association agreements with the Community, as well as to Cyprus and Malta, as far as appropriate additional financial resources are made available to this end.

ANNEX

The purpose of the SOCRATES programme is to support the transnational actions planned in the different chapters of the programme.

CHAPTER I

HIGHER EDUCATION (ERASMUS)

This chapter contains the two following actions aimed at:

- Action 1: promoting the European dimension in universities;
- Action 2: encouragement of student mobility and the financing of ERASMUS grants;

The resources to be committed under ERASMUS shall not be less than 55% of the overall budget available for the SOCRATES action programme.

The selection procedure for projects referred to in this Chapter is carried out in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 5 of this Decision.

ACTION 1

The promotion of the European dimension in universities

Drawing on experience gained from the ERASMUS and LINGUA programmes, the Community will encourage transnational co-operation between universities, especially through the development of inter-university co-operation programmes (ICPs), with the aim of gradually reinforcing the European dimension in higher education.

A. Inter-university co-operation

The Community may grant financial assistance for measures for the following activities:

- under ICPs:
 - (a) student mobility providing students of a university with an opportunity to

undertake a period of study in another Member State, accompanied by practical experience where appropriate, such periods being fully recognized as an integral part of their diploma or academic qualification;

- (b) promotion of the ECTS system (European credit transfer system) without calling into question the existence of any other similar systems;
- (c) joint development of initial or advanced curricula geared to facilitating academic recognition and contributing, through exchanges of experience, to the process of innovation and improvement of the quality of education at Community level;
- (d) mobility of teaching staff for the purpose of providing instruction forming an integral part of the curriculum in another Member State;
- (e) intensive short-term education courses aimed at students coming from several Member States, and particularly in fields of study which do not lend themselves to long stays abroad.

- e) intensive short-term education courses ("summer universities") aimed at students coming from several Member States, and particularly in fields of study which do not lend themselves to long stays abroad.

– outside ICPs:

- (f) study visits to pave the way for co-operation may be carried out by:
 - teachers;
 - administrative staff of universities,as well as by, if appropriate:
 - students associated with the preparation of co-operation projects.

ACTION 2

**Encouragement of student mobility
and financing of ERASMUS grants**

1. The following conditions must be fulfilled in order to ensure that periods of study spent abroad are of maximum benefit to students:

- (a) studies abroad will be carried out on a full-time basis and for a significant period of time (a minimum of three months or one term, and a maximum of one academic year);
- (b) studies undertaken in other Member States will be fully recognized by the university of origin;
- (c) students must have a satisfactory knowledge of the language in which courses are given by the host university;

c) a. Host universities should endeavour to resolve students' practical problems (particularly with respect to reasonably-priced accommodation):

- (d) host universities will not charge tuition fees to students participating in mobility schemes. They will take steps to facilitate the reception of students;
- (e) students in the first year of their studies will not be eligible for mobility grants.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL EDUCATION: (COMENIUS)

1. This chapter contains the three following actions intended to encourage:

- Action 1: Partnerships between schools;
- Action 2: Education of the children of migrant workers, as well as the children of occupational travellers, Travellers and Gypsies; intercultural education;
- Action 3: Updating and improving of skills of educational staff;

These activities are based on the experience gained through the LINGUA programme as well as the texts adopted by the Council and the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, on Community co-operation in education, including pilot projects undertaken in the areas of primary and secondary education, schooling for the children of migrant workers and Gypsies and the exchange of teachers.

The resources to be committed in the framework of school education shall not be less than 10% of the overall budget available for the SOCRATES programme.

2. The Community funds aimed at promoting Actions 1 and 3 will be shared between the Member States according to the following formula:

- (a) subject to budget availability, a minimum of ECU 200 000 will be allocated to each Member State;
- (b) the remainder will be allocated to various Member States depending on:
 - (i) the total number of pupils

2. The Community funds aimed at promoting Actions 1 and 3.2 will be shared between the Member States according to the following formula:

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attending school,

- (ii) the number of schools,
- (iii) the number of teaching staff,
- (iv) the gross domestic product by inhabitant,
- (v) the average cost of travel between the country of origin and the host country.

Annex, Chapter II

ACTION 1

Partnerships between schools

1. The Community will encourage the creation of multilateral partnerships between schools which are built around a European Education Project (EEP).

A multilateral partnership is a group of at least three schools, from three Member States; one of the schools, or an associated educational body, will act as the co-ordinator. The partnership might be bilateral if the aim is mainly to promote knowledge of languages of the European Union, particularly those which are least widely used and least taught.

An EEP aims to develop one or more subjects of European interest through a set of educational activities and measures integrated into the regular activities of the schools.

These activities and measures may include the following:

- the participation of pupils in projects of, if possible, a multidisciplinary nature;
- learning and improvement of the languages of the European Union;
- the mobility of pupils, particularly for those participating in partnerships where the aim is to improve knowledge of languages. Nursery pupils are excluded from this type of project;
- exchange of teaching materials and exchange of information and experience on innovatory teaching methods;

new paragraph:

Consideration shall be given to cooperation projects in the area of intercultural and language teaching involving European schools and schools within national educational systems which are geared towards disseminating the educational experiences of the European schools.

- the use of information and communication technologies, including the opportunities offered through open and distance education, in particular so that achievements and experiences of partnerships may be widely disseminated, benefiting schools not directly participating in the projects.

2. Financial aid may be allocated for financing new EEPs for a limited period. It will be granted for a maximum period of three years initially, subject to periodic review of the projects carried out.

In granting Community aid, priority will be given to projects having the following subjects of European interest:

- the European dimension in general, as well as other themes concerned with cultural heritage, protection of the environment, artistic education, and the promotion of science and technology;
- elements promoting equality of opportunity in education between boys and girls;
- elements aiming to improve the level of achievement of all pupils;
- elements aiming to meet the needs of children with specific educational needs and capacities.

If several projects satisfy the same conditions for selection, preference will be given to projects including schools which have not yet taken part in Community activities.

3. Financial aid may be allocated for visits to prepare partnerships, for a maximum period of one week, and for exchanges of staff between schools to support partnerships and to develop European Education Projects, up to a maximum period of four weeks.

- 3) a. The Community will organise competitions for pupils in subjects relating to the common cultural heritage, such as modern and classical languages, history, art and music, in close cooperation with the Council of Europe, in agreement with the Member States and in cooperation with the networks, with the aim of activating the individual's capacity for intercultural communication.

Annex, Chapter III, Action 1

3. As far as point 2(a) - (d) above are concerned, priority will be given to projects and activities:

- relating to the teaching of languages of the European Union which are least widely used and least taught;
- including the use of new educational technologies, and/or distance education.

= which are aimed at those who are less advantaged and therefore less likely to have the opportunity to learn foreign languages.

As far as point 2(e) above is concerned, priority will be given to projects in vocational or technical education which:

- develop innovation in the field of educational exchanges for foreign language learning;
- emphasize the European dimension in education;
- support the teaching of the least widely used and least taught languages of the European Union.

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