



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 20.11.1997  
COM(97) 636 final

97/0103 (COD)

**OPINION OF THE COMMISSION**

pursuant to Article 189 b (2) (d) of the EC Treaty,  
on the European Parliament's amendment  
to the Council's common position regarding the

proposal for a  
**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL DECISION**

amending Decision 819/95/EC establishing  
the Community action programme  
**SOCRATES** <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Decision 819/95/EC of the EP and the Council of 14.3.95, OJ No L 87/10 of 20.4.95.



1. Pursuant to Article 189B, par. 2(d) of the EC Treaty, the Commission must deliver an opinion on the Parliament's proposal adopted at the second reading on 23 October 1997 for an amendment to the Council's common position of 22 September 1997.
2. The Commission is gratified by the Parliament's support for the Commission proposal to increase the financial resources of this programme, which is generally considered to be a key instrument in the strengthening of the European dimension of education, the improvement of European human resources, and in bringing the EU closer to its citizens. Socrates also plays a major role in the pre-accession context by gradually opening up to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus.
3. In its amended proposal of 26 June 1997<sup>2</sup> the Commission had taken account of most of the amendments tabled by the Parliament at the first reading with regard to the recitals of the decision. The Council very broadly followed in its common position the proposals of the European Parliament and of the Commission with regard to the recitals, which set out the grounds for a substantial increase in the programme's financial resources. In its opinion of 26 September 1997 on the Council's common position<sup>3</sup> the Commission accordingly stressed that the scale of the increase proposed by the Council, viz. ECU 25 million, is well below that required to enable the programme to continue to attain its objectives.
4. In the explanatory statement supporting the proposal for an amendment to the decision establishing the programme, the Commission stated that had the overall budget context been more favourable it would not have hesitated to propose a much bigger increase. However, in view of the continuing need for budgetary restraint, the Commission feels that its proposal for an increase of ECU 50 million is reasonable. It cannot therefore as things currently stand accept the amendment tabled by the European Parliament at the second reading with regard to the Council's common position, as this amendment seeks an increase of ECU 100 million, i.e. twice that proposed by the Commission.
5. The Commission is prepared to play to the full role given to it by the Treaty with regard to the conciliation procedure which lies ahead if the Council does not accept the Parliament's amendment. It will actively endeavour to favour a reconciliation of the respective positions of the European Parliament and the Council around the Commission's proposal.

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<sup>2</sup> COM(97) 338 final, OJ No C 262/3 of 28.8.97.

<sup>3</sup> SEC (97) 1761 final.

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