



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 03.08.2000
COM(2000) 523 final

2000/0022 (COD)

Amended proposal for a

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND OF THE COUNCIL**

on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education

(presented by the Commission pursuant to Article 250 (2) of the EC Treaty)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

On 24 January 2000, the Commission presented a proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education [COM (1999) 709 final of 24 January 2000].

The proposal for a recommendation asks the Member States to establish transparent quality assurance systems and to encourage the self-evaluation and external evaluation of schools. The Commission, for its part, is asked to promote cooperation between schools and the national authorities involved in evaluating school education and to encourage their networking at European level.

In response to the opinion of the European Parliament at first reading on 6 July 2000, the Commission hereby presents, pursuant to Article 250(2) of the EC Treaty, an amended proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council containing, in substance or in part, all the 42 amendments tabled.

The Parliament's amendments seek to:

- strengthen the follow-up measures recommended in the Commission's proposal;
- introduce explicit references to the crucial role played by performance indicators and benchmarks;
- extend and clarify the political scope of the recommendation;
- introduce new recitals which clarify the proposal and stress the various objectives behind efforts to evaluate the quality of school education.

The amendments to the Commission's initial proposal have been highlighted by using the "strikethrough" function for passages which have been deleted and the "bold" and "underline" functions for the new or amended passages.

Amended proposal for a

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
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on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Articles 149(4) and Article 150(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission¹,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee²,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions³,

Acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 251 of the Treaty,

Whereas:

- (1) There is a need to promote a European dimension in education as it is an essential objective in building a people's Europe.**
- (2) High quality education is an one of the principal objectives of primary and secondary education, including vocational training, for all Member States in the context of the learning society.**
- (3) The quality of school education must be assured at all levels and in all areas of education, regardless of any differences in educational objectives, methods and needs, taking care to rule out the tendency to set up school excellence rankings;**
- (4) The resources devoted to education have increased in all industrialised countries during the last decades. Education is seen not only as a personal enrichment but also as the solution to a contribution towards social cohesion, social inclusion and the solving of problems of employment and social cohesion. Lifelong learning is the key to an important means of controlling one's future on a professional and personal level. High Quality education is essential in the light of labour market policies, and the free movement of workers within the European Union and the recognition of diplomas and teaching qualifications.**

¹ **COM (1999) 709 final of 24 January 2000**

² **CES 476/2000**

³ **CdR 21/2000**

- (5) Member States should aim to ensure that the syllabuses of the schools take account of developments in society.
- (6) Member States should aim to help the educational establishments to meet the educational and social requirements in the new millennium and to keep pace with the developments arising from them. Member States should therefore support the educational establishments to improve the quality of the services they provide by helping them to develop new initiatives geared to ensure the quality of teaching and by helping them to encourage both the movement of persons between countries and the transfer of knowledge.
- (73) In the area of labour market policies the Council adopts each year a set of employment guidelines building on quantitative target and indicators. In the 1999 employment guidelines⁴, Guideline 7 states that Member States will “improve the quality of their school systems in order to reduce substantially the number of young people who drop out of the school system early. Particular attention should also be given to young people with learning difficulties”. In Guideline 8 of the proposed 2000 employment guidelines⁵, the Commission is proposing that specific reference be made to developing computer literacy, to equipping schools with computer equipment and to facilitating student access to the Internet by 2002, which should positively impact on the quality of education and prepare the young for the digital age.
- (8) High-quality education will encourage mobility enshrined as an objective of the Community in Treaty Articles 149 and 150.
- (9) European cooperation and transnational exchanges of experiences will contribute to identify and disseminate effective and acceptable methods of evaluating quality.
- (10) Systems designed to ensure quality must remain flexible and be adaptable to the new situation created by changes in the structure and objectives of educational establishments, taking into account the cultural dimension of education.
- (11) Systems to ensure quality vary from one Member State and one educational establishment to another, given the diversity in the sizes, structures, financial circumstances, institutional character and educational approach of different establishments.
- (12) Quality evaluation and school self-evaluation in particular are tools well suited to the aim of reducing the number of young people who drop out of the school system early and social exclusion in general.
- (134) In order to achieve the objective of high quality education, a whole range of means are available. Quality evaluation is one of them and is a valuable contribution to securing and developing the quality of education within schools including, where appropriate, vocational education. The quality evaluation of education must seek to assess the capacity of schools to take account of the use of the new information

⁴ Council Resolution of 22 February 1999 on the 1999 employment guidelines, OJ C 69, 12.3.1999, p. 2.
⁵ COM(1999) 441 final.

~~technologies which are becoming more widespread, a method of monitoring and creating learning and improving schools, which are capable of transmitting knowledge and equipping students in the Community with the appropriate skills, qualifications and attitudes which are essential to meet future challenges.~~

(14) The networking at European level of institutions involved in quality evaluation in school education is of fundamental importance. Existing networks such as the European network of policy makers for the evaluation of education systems set up by the Member States in 1995 can provide invaluable aid to the implementation of this Recommendation.

~~(155) The Commission conducted a pilot project on quality evaluation in higher education in 1994 and 1995. Council Recommendation 98/561/EC of 24 September 1998 on European Cooperation in quality assurance in higher education⁶ underlines the importance of the exchange of information and experiences and cooperation regarding quality assurance with other Member States.~~

~~(166) The Socrates programme, in particular Action III.3.1, invites the Commission to promote the exchange of information and experience on questions of common interest. Evaluating quality in school education is one of the priority themes of the said Action.~~

~~(177) The Commission has, since March 1996, launched various studies and operational activities to examine the question of evaluation from different perspectives with the aim of describing the wide variety and wealth of approaches and education evaluation methodologies used at different levels.~~

~~(188) The Commission conducted a pilot project during the academic year 1997/1998 in 101 upper and lower secondary schools in the countries participating in the Socrates programme, **which raised awareness of quality issues and helped to improve the quality of education in those schools**⁷. An Advisory Working Party that brought together Member States⁷ appointed experts on education evaluation assisted the Commission in the implementation of the project.~~

~~(9) The participants in the project, including representatives of the 101 schools, decision-makers from national administrations, researchers, and school stakeholders adopted a declaration during a final conference in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998. That declaration states that “The Pilot Project has raised the awareness of quality issues in our schools and in almost all our schools, the project has helped to improve the quality of education during the project period⁸”.~~

~~(10) All 18 countries (EU Member States and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) taking part in the pilot project have written national reports exploring the impact of and their experiences during the pilot project. Those National Reports are predominantly positive and stress the importance of learning from one another internationally through the exchange of experiences and of good practices.~~

⁶ OJ L 270, 7.10.1998, p. 56.

⁷ **At the final conference of the pilot project in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998, the participants adopted a declaration on the results of the Pilot Project.**

⁸ ~~At the final conference of the pilot project in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998, the participants adopted a declaration.~~

(1944) The final European report⁹ emphasises a range of methodological elements as important elements for successful self-evaluation. Those elements include networking nationally and internationally and support and encouragement from national level.

(2042) In its conclusions of 16 December 1997¹⁰, the Council stated that evaluation is also an important element for assuring and where appropriate, improving quality.

(21) The Council Presidency declared in its conclusions at the Extraordinary European Council held in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000 that European education and training systems must adapt both to the needs of the information society and to the need to raise levels of employment and improve its quality.

(22) In the perspective of the enlargement of the Union, the accession countries should be involved in the European cooperation in the field of quality evaluation.

(2343) It is necessary to take account of the principle of subsidiarity and Member States' exclusive responsibilities for the organisation and structure of their education systems, **so that the particular cultural character and educational traditions of each State can flourish**, as well as the autonomy and independence of their educational institutions.

I. RECOMMEND:

THAT MEMBER STATES, WITHIN THEIR SPECIFIC ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT, WHILE TAKING DUE ACCOUNT OF THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION, SUPPORT THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY EVALUATION IN SCHOOL EDUCATION, BY:

1. Supporting and, where appropriate, establishing transparent quality evaluation systems with the following aims:

(a) to achieve high quality education and improve it, whilst promoting social inclusion,

(ba) to safeguard the quality of school education as a basis for lifelong learning, ~~within the specific economic, social and cultural context of each Member State while taking due account of the European dimension,~~

(cb) to encourage school self-evaluation as a method ~~to create~~ **of creating** learning and improving schools, within a balanced framework ~~between~~ **of** school self-evaluation and any external evaluations,

(d) to use techniques aimed at improving quality as a means of adapting more successfully to the requirements of a world in rapid and constant change,

⁹ Evaluation quality in school education, A European pilot project, Final report, June 1999.

¹⁰ OJ C 1, 3.1.1998, p. 4.

- (e) to clarify the purpose and the conditions for school self-evaluation, and to ensure that the approach to self-evaluation is consistent with other forms of regulation,
- (f) **to develop external evaluation in order to provide methodological support for school self-evaluation and to provide an outside view of the school, taking care that this is not restricted to purely administrative checks and encouraging a process of continuous improvement;**
2. **Encouraging and supporting and, where appropriate, the involvement of school stakeholders, namely teachers, pupils, management, parents and experts, in the process of external and self-evaluation in schools in order to promote shared responsibility for the improvement of schools.** ~~developing systems of external evaluation with the following aims:~~
- (a) ~~to monitor and provide methodological support and encouragement for school self-evaluation;~~
- (b) ~~to provide an outside view of the school ensuring that it is in a process of continuous improvement;~~
3. ~~Encouraging and supporting the involvement of all school stakeholders in the full process of evaluation in schools with the following aims:~~
- (a) ~~to add a decisive and creative element to school self-evaluation;~~
- (b) ~~to ensure shared responsibility for the improvement of schools;~~
34. **Supporting training in the management and the use of self-evaluation instruments with the following aims:**
- (a) to make school self-evaluation function effectively as an instrument strengthening schools' capacity to improve,
- (b) to ensure an efficient dissemination of examples of good practice and new instrument within self-evaluation;
45. **Supporting schools' capacity to learn from one another nationally and on a European scale, with the following aims:**
- (a) to identify **and disseminate** good practices, **and** efficient tools **such as indicators** and benchmarks **in the field of quality evaluation in school education,**
- (b) to form networks **between schools, also at a local and regional level,** to support each other and provide outside impetus to the evaluation process;
56. **Encouraging the cooperation between all the authorities responsible for involved in evaluating quality in school education and promote promoting European networking between them:**

This cooperation could cover some of the following areas:

- (a) the exchange of information and experiences, in particular on methodological developments and examples of good practice, **especially by using modern information and communication technologies, and when appropriate by organising European conferences, seminars and workshops,**
- (b) the development ~~collection~~ of comparable data **and the development of tools such as** indicators and benchmarks **of particular relevance for quality evaluation in schools,** ~~on national education systems to compare strength and weaknesses with a view to exchanging good practices,~~
- (c) **making use of the results of national and international surveys for the development of quality evaluation in schools,**
- (~~d~~e) ~~the building of European expertise in the area, which could be~~ **publication of results of school evaluation in accordance with the possibilities of each Member State and its educational establishments, to be** made available ~~for~~ **to** authorities in **the** Member States,
- (~~e~~d) promoting contact between experts **in order to build European expertise in this field**.~~internationally.~~

II. INVITE THE COMMISSION:

1. to encourage, in close cooperation with the Member States, and on the basis of existing **Community** programmes, and subject to their objectives and normal, open and transparent procedures, the cooperation referred to in points **4 and 5** ~~6~~ between the authorities responsible for quality in school education, also involving **relevant** organisations and associations ~~of school education institutions with a European remit and~~ **with** the necessary experience **in this field;** ~~in quality assessment and quality assurance;~~

In doing this, the Commission should ensure that full benefit is drawn from the expertise of the Eurydice network.

2. to establish, **on the basis of existing Community programmes,** a database for the dissemination of **effective** tools and instruments of school **quality** self-evaluation. The database should also contain examples of ~~best~~ **good** practice ~~within school evaluation. The database should~~ **and** be accessible on the Internet; **interactive use thereof should be ensured;**
3. **to make use of the resources within existing Community programmes, to incorporate the experience already gained into these programmes and to develop the existing networks;**
4. **to make, as a first step and on the basis of contributions from the Member States, an inventory of the instruments and strategies for quality evaluation in primary and secondary education already in use in the various Member States. In the light of the results of this inventory, a plan for a follow-up should be defined in close cooperation with the Member States and on a regular basis. The Council, the European Parliament, the**

Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions should be fully informed about this plan.

- 53.** to present, **on the basis of contributions from the Member States,** triennial **detailed** reports to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions **concerning the implementation of this Recommendation** ~~on progress in the development of quality assurance systems in the various Member States and on cooperation activities at European level including the progress achieved with respect to the objectives referred to above.~~

- 6. to draw conclusions and make proposals on the basis of these reports.**

Done at Brussels,

*For the European Parliament
The President*

*For the Council
The President*