

MEASURES FOR DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Council and Ministers adopted the conclusions set out below on measures for developing the European dimension in Higher Education. They also carried out a preliminary round of comments on the consultations begun in the Member States concerning the Commission's Memorandum on Higher Education in the Community.

CONCLUSIONS

- "1. The Council and the Ministers for Education meeting within the Council welcome the prominence given in the Commission's Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community to the need for a European dimension in higher education. Without prejudicing current discussions on the Memorandum in the Member States, these conclusions aim to identify some areas of special concern for the further development of the European dimension in higher education.

2. Any measures to this end can build on the tradition of a European and international outlook in the courses of study and the research of the higher education institutions of Europe, going back to the time of their foundation. The contemporary challenge in developing the European dimension is to respond to the wish - and the need - of the institutions, the teaching staff and the students to adapt to and contribute to increasing European co-operation: higher education has to offer access to the rich diversity of European culture and languages while maintaining common European values; it has to meet rapidly changing economic and manpower demands in the European single market. A product of these efforts should be an improvement in the quality of education and research in the Community. To meet the challenge of extending the availability of a European dimension, the need now is to strengthen its integration in higher education policy and practice at all levels.

The need to complement student mobility with other measures

3. In the promotion of the European dimension in higher education a major point of focus is student mobility. In addition to Member State initiatives, particularly in frontier regions, the COMETT, ERASMUS, LINGUA, and TEMPUS

programmes have become a distinctive feature of the life of higher education institutions in the Community and beyond. Within the framework of the Community programmes, and through separate actions of their own, many Member States already make significant funding contributions to student mobility, which should be sustained and expanded as circumstances permit.

4. However, the number of students who can benefit directly from mobility programmes will be limited, in view of the many calls on scarce resources and on higher education's capacity to respond. Moreover, there are many students whose personal situation will not allow them to spend time in another European Community country. The Council and the Ministers for Education therefore consider that, side by side with student mobility, other measures should be developed; in particular at institutional level, among teaching staff and for those students not benefiting from mobility.

Synthesis report

5. The Council and the Ministers for Education invite the Commission to make a synthesis report by the end of 1993 on complementary measures for developing the European dimension in higher education, drawing together existing experience, for the purpose of providing practical suggestions on successful practice for the institutions, as well as informing Member State and Community activity. Among measures to be considered in this respect are the reinforcement of inter-institutional links, teaching staff mobility, inter-institutional collaboration over the curriculum, and the contribution of distance learning.

More detailed consideration of these measures is contained in the Annex.

Annex

DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION SPECIFIC MEASURES

1. Inter-institutional links

In order for the European dimension to be successfully integrated into the overall policies and general activities of the higher education institutions,

the discussion of the possibilities of credit transfer, and an interim evaluation of the ECTS (European Community Course Credit Transfer System) is awaited with interest. A study should be made of ways of identifying and removing remaining obstacles to such curriculum co-operation.

4. The contribution of distance learning

Distance learning provides a means for bringing the European dimension to significant numbers of students. The Council and the Ministers for Education concluded at their meeting on 1 June 1992 ⁽¹⁾ that open and distance learning elements should be incorporated wherever justified into appropriate education and training programmes. There should be a study of ways in which distance learning methods can be utilized to broaden the availability of the European dimension to students."

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

The Council and Ministers adopted the following conclusions on actions on open and distance learning.

"Following the Commission Memorandum on open and distance learning, and the conference held at Coimbra under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency, the Council and Ministers meeting within the Council on 1 June 1992 ⁽¹⁾ confirmed their interest in receiving proposals in this area. With a view to assisting the Commission they now wish to clarify criteria for Community action in the field of open and distance learning.

Action taken by the Community in the field of open and distance learning should take into consideration the declaration of the European Council at Birmingham on 16 October 1992 and contribute especially to its development in those areas where it has yet to reach its full potential.

(1) OJ No C 151, 16.6.1992.

The Council and Ministers also exchanged views on the following three questions:

- the role of public and private providers of open and distance learning;
- trans-national access for users to accurate information about open and distance learning at post-secondary levels from public and private providers;
- the need for transparency of qualifications in the Community.

COMMUNITY UNITED STATES CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Council and Ministers adopted the following conclusions on Community United States co-operation in the field of education and training.

- "1. The Council and the Ministers for Education note the Commission communication on the development of EC/US co-operation in the field of education and training. They welcome this opportunity to examine the possibilities for strengthening mutual co-operation in the field of education, including academic exchanges, as provided for in the Transatlantic Declaration on EC/US relations agreed by the Community and its Member States and the United States in November 1990.
2. Fruitful bilateral activities between Member States and the USA exist in the education area and particularly in higher education. Special efforts have accordingly to be made to ensure that Community co-operation with the USA will provide added value to Member States' existing co-operation.
3. The Council and the Ministers accordingly express their readiness to assist the Commission in the consideration of future action, which should:
 - take account of existing bilateral programmes;
 - be closely tied to Community policies and programmes;
 - bring balanced benefits to both the EC and US sides;
 - make the most effective use of resources and provide a specific European added value.
4. They invite the Commission as soon as possible to enter into this consideration of future action, with a view to preparing a draft agreement with the USA."