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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth

on the information memo from the Commission of the European Communities
concerning the allocation of aid to higher education institutions

Rapporteur: Mrs T. CARETONI ROMAGNOLI

By letter of 12 March 1975 the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth requested authorization to draw up a report on the information memo concerning the allocation of aid to higher education institutions.

By letter of 14 April 1975 the President of the European Parliament authorized the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth to draw up a report on this memo, and asked the Committee on Budgets for its opinion.

On 16 April 1975 the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth appointed Mrs CARETTONI ROMAGNOLI rapporteur. It considered the draft report at its meetings of 16 April 1975, 21 May 1975 and 10 June 1975. At the latter meeting it unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement.

Present: Mr Broeks, chairman; Mrs Caretoni Romagnoli, rapporteur; Mr Boano (deputizing for Mr Klepsch), Mr Corrie, Mr Deschamps, Mr Gibbons (deputizing for Mr Howell), Mr Johnston (deputizing for Mr de Broglie), Mr Kavanagh (deputizing for Mr Calewaert), Lord Lothian, Mr K. Nielsen, Mr Suck and Mr Thornley.

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The Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the information memo from the Commission of the European Communities concerning the allocation of aid to higher education institutions.

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the information memo from the Commission of the European Communities concerning the allocation of aid to higher education institutions (SEC(75) 655),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth (Doc. 148/75),
1. Believes that the Community should, by financial assistance given as an incentive, encourage higher education institutions whose aim is to organize the teaching of subjects related to European integration or to introduce courses on such subjects;
 2. Considers that the sums hitherto allocated have made only limited action possible, and thus reduce the credibility of the Community's efforts;
 3. Shares the Commission's views that aid must primarily take the form of incentives but that the budgetary authorities may decide to allocate grants to certain existing institutions whose activities are not already financed by the national authorities;
 4. Requests the Commission to study needs in this field within the Community, and, on the basis of a cost analysis, to propose larger appropriations; requests it moreover to ensure that suitable publicity is given to these appropriations so as to avoid any discrimination, and that effective control is exercised over the funds allocated;
 5. Urges closer cooperation between higher education institutions studying the problems of European integration or organizing courses on this subject and requests the Commission to encourage cooperation among institutions receiving Community funds;

6. Believes that the financing, in accordance with the particular needs of each country, of higher education institutions involved with European integration is primarily the responsibility of the Member States, and requests them to make greater efforts in this area;
7. Hopes that efforts will also be made to provide information on European integration in secondary schools;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. Introduction

1. The memo sent out by the Commission (Doc. SEC(75) 655) is the outcome of specific proposals made by the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth: amendment No.31 tabled by Mr Seefeld, the committee's draftsman of an opinion on the budget, Mr Vandewiele's request for an increase in the grant to the College of Bruges, and also Mr Aigner's intervention in the course of the budget procedure.

At its meeting of 7/8 January 1975 the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth unanimously agreed to ask for 12,000 u.a. to be given to the College of Europe on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of its foundation, and for the introduction of a comprehensive programme of aid to institutions of higher education, but making a distinction between European institutions, and institutions merely having a European Chair.

II. Contents of the Commission's memo

2. The Commission's memo gives information on the sum set aside under the 1974 budget (Bfrs 3,250,000) and the procedure adopted by the Commission. Applications are submitted to the Secretariat-General, which assesses their eligibility and the amount to be committed and they are then considered by the departments and Members of the Commission. If they are approved, a detailed proposal is drawn up under the responsibility of the President of the Commission and the Commissioner responsible and submitted to the Commission for a decision.

3. Article 410 provides for a fixed expenditure of Bfrs 600,000 for the Robert Schuman Chair at the College of Europe in Bruges. The criteria for the allocation of aid from the balance of appropriations under this article, Bfrs 2,650,000, are as follows:

- the application must come from a higher education institution in a Member State;
- the funds requested must be for continuing programmes of study in fields concerning European integration or the introduction of courses on this subject;
- as the subsidy is essentially an incentive - and the committee will consider this point further - it can only be allocated if the applicant undertakes to find the funds needed to continue the project; the assistance granted by the Commission is thus temporary and does not finance the entire project.

4. The Commission document then lists the subsidies granted in 1974.

The information provided by the Commission indicates that in addition to the Bfrs 600,000 aid granted annually to the College of Europe, the contribution of Bfrs 200,000 to the ILO International Institute for Labour Studies, the Bfrs 400,000 aid to the CEDECE and the Bfrs 25,000 aid to the International Association of Comparative Law are to be considered as fixed expenditure recurring in each year's budget.

The addition of Bfrs 400,000 which must be allocated to institutes organizing courses on customs legislation gives a total figure of Bfrs 1,625,000. The sum that can be distributed among new applicants is therefore only Bfrs 1,625,000.

The appropriation for the financial year 1975 has been increased to 80,000 u.a., i.e. Bfrs 4,000,000.

III. Questions arising from the Commission's memo

5. The Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth, in response to a report emanating from Parliament, had to give its opinion on the first problem, which may be stated in the following terms:

- must these criteria be maintained, with the addition of the one suggested in the meeting of 7/8 January concerning the distinction between European institutions and institutions with a European Chair?
- must Article 410 be subdivided into two items, the first containing the larger and fixed subsidies allocated to institutions concerned entirely with European integration, and the second showing subsidies of a temporary nature granted as an incentive to other institutions only partially devoted to European integration?

6. The committee has requested further information from the Commission on the Articles under Chapter 41 headed 'Subsidies and financial contributions', namely:

- Article 411: Subsidies to European movements;
- Article 412: Participation in the organization of congresses and events marking occasions;
- Article 413: Scholarships;
- Article 414: European prizes

In reply to the question of whether any higher education institutions or foundations had received aid from these articles in 1974, the Commission stated that only the College of Europe had received a sum of Bfrs 200,000 for the organization of 'Bruges Week' from appropriations under Article 412 and that no aid had been granted under Article 411.

The criteria for the allocation of subsidies were the same as for Article 410.

As regards 'European prizes' and research scholarships, the Commission gave the following information:

European prizes: Introduced in 1959 at the initiative of the ECSC's press and information department (known at the time as the 'ECSC Prize'), the European Communities Prize is one of the instruments used by the Commission as part of its information policy in universities to encourage interest in the construction of Europe.

It is granted every two years on a competitive basis for doctoral theses which make an original and important contribution to the study of European Integration.

Research scholarships: Whereas assistance with printing costs and the European Communities Prize may be considered rewards for work accomplished, DG X has another means of encouraging research into European integration: research scholarships, which are awarded to young postgraduates, lecturers or assistant lecturers, upon presentation of a specific and detailed research project.

The amount of the scholarship varies, with a ceiling of Bfrs 120,000.

Higher education institutes also receive occasional aid from the information appropriations under Article 273 (Kreyssig Fund).

IV. General problems on which the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth has given its opinion

7. The Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth has tackled a number of more general problems, feeling that if a constructive job was to be done, certain basic questions had to be answered first.

The first question was whether the European Community should give this type of aid or, put another way, was it up to the Community to finance higher education institutions?

The Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth believes that the Community should, in principle, by financial assistance granted as an incentive, encourage institutions teaching subjects related to European integration. Thus it makes no distinction between 'European' institutions and other institutions or faculties with European chairs, and does not support the idea of contributing to the functioning of the first-mentioned category by the allocation of fixed grants. Furthermore, the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth considers that funds should no longer be allocated in such an unconvincing manner, and that the Commission's aid should not be merely symbolic. The figure of Bfrs 25,000 quoted by the Commission is such a small sum that it can only have symbolic value and is not enough to organize a real course on the Community.

8. The Commission must review the sums allocated and make a study of actual needs with a view to including the necessary appropriations in the budget. It should endeavour to concentrate aid given as an incentive, and to prevent the appropriations being dispersed too widely.

9. The budgetary authorities should decide to allocate grants to certain institutions whose activities are not already financed by the national authorities.

10. A system of publicity should also be introduced, in order to prevent discrimination.

The Commission has not shown what kind of publicity is given to appropriations available under Article 410. It is perhaps afraid that too much publicity for such small sums would give rise to problems. The number of applicants would probably be too large and the Community would have to reject them or keep them waiting.

Publicity for research grants and European prizes, however, is assured in universities and higher education institutions in the form of notices (Articles 413 and 414).

11. With the reservations expressed above, the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth believes that action should be taken on a larger scale in this field, and that it should be made the responsibility of the appropriate Commissioner and the Directorate-General for Education. Up to now it was perhaps not unreasonable that responsibility for a few projects and the administration of the very small sums involved in this sector should be left in the hands of the Commission's Secretariat. The rapporteur believes, however, that a radical review of the size of the appropriations should be accompanied by a transfer of responsibilities within the Commission.

Moreover, it is essential that there be close coordination between the information and education departments. The Commission should instruct the Directorate-General for education to make a thorough study of needs in higher education and cost these needs.

At the same time the Commission could help to develop cooperation and exchanges between the various institutes.

12. Efforts should be made to inform students in secondary schools about the activities of the Community and European integration. It is clearly easier for students in higher education, during both their studies and, subsequently, their professional training, to acquire such information. It is more difficult, on the other hand, for some of those who have only had a secondary education. It would thus be preferable for students to be given this information at school.

V. Conclusions

13. When the figures are taken, it can be seen that in reality the sums are of small significance. The Commission has far more funds available for other sectors; spending on agriculture, for instance is a case in point. But we must be especially careful when dealing with small sums lest they give rise to what we might describe, without intending any offence, as small-scale sponging.

The Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth should confirm that the concept of giving money for scholarships and research is worthwhile but only when the projects concerned are serious; otherwise the credibility of these same institutions may be laid open to argument. The credibility of all action of this kind is based on two elements: firstly, a study of the project and its significance; secondly, the size of the sum involved, since this can also be taken to assess the value attached by the Community to the project.

14. In conclusion, the position of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth on the questions raised may be summed up as follows:

The Commission's criteria for granting aid are regarded as acceptable.

Aid will primarily be granted as an incentive.

By special decision of the budgetary authorities (the Council and Parliament) grants could be awarded to certain institutions.

The financing of higher education institutions involved with European integration is primarily the responsibility of the Member States.