

Le Magazine

EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN EUROPE

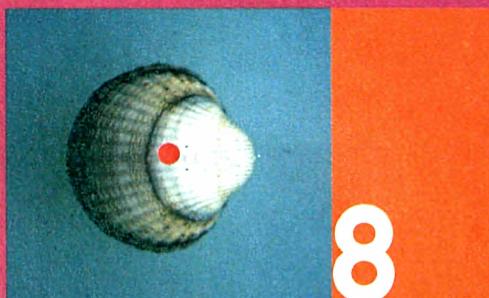
PUBLISHED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION - NUMBER 12 - 1999





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The new Youth (covering the former Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service programmes), Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes are being launched in 2000 for a seven-year period. How will the transition be managed? What are the principal changes in store, in terms of the content and functioning of these three programmes?



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200 Comenius projects from various European countries met in Santiago de Compostela. During these three days they presented their practical achievements to date and outlined ideas for future cooperation. Le Magazine reports "live" from the meeting.



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We highlight the Media programme, designed to make the European film and audiovisual industry more competitive. Europe makes very good films, but is not so good at selling and distributing them – a weakness that the Media programme is successfully correcting.



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Almost 100 young people set out on a very special Mediterranean voyage last summer. Organized under the Youth for Europe programme, it received the backing of the World Scout Association, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Le Magazine met up with the young volunteers in Gaza, Palestine, and again in Haifa, Israel.

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Publisher: Domenico Lenarduzzi - Journalism: ESN, European Service Network, Brussels

Graphic design and illustrations: Signé Lazer, Brussels

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2000

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LE MAGAZINE

in brief



Who publishes Le Magazine?

Le Magazine is published by the Education and Culture Directorate-General of the European Commission.

Who does what?

The Director-General of the Education and Culture DG is Le Magazine's editor-in-chief. Editorial policy is decided by an editorial committee within the Commission, managed by the Education and Culture DG's Coordination and information on programmes and actions unit.

When is it published and in what languages?

Le Magazine is published twice a year, in June and December, in three language versions: English, French and German.

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One of the tasks given to the Commission by EU governments is to help raise educational standards – to "contribute to the development of quality education" – through European cooperation. Practically all forms of learning and all European countries will be involved in the new education, training and youth programmes being launched this year. Yet the question of what constitutes quality, how to measure it and how best to improve it remains contentious.

Intense debates, accompanied by a succession of policy initiatives, have pitched together professional, political and public opinion on this issue in many countries in recent years. Whatever means are devised to assess educational performance, teachers and parents in particular know that exam results and qualifications, however important to career prospects, are only a narrow indicator of personal development in the broader social and cultural context.

In recognition of this, education and culture have now been brought together for the first time at the Commission in a single department. In both cases, they are broadly defined. Cultural initiatives, to support creativity and safeguard the best of Europe's diverse heritage, are extended to sport and the audiovisual sector, including cinema and television. EU education and training opportunities include both formal and informal learning, for people of all ages and abilities. A denominator common to both fields is the concept of active citizenship, to counter the isolation that comes in the wake of rapid social and economic change.

Whether in culture or sport, education or training, talent and intelligence are the vital raw materials. They cannot be increased by Acts of Parliament. Yet they are the inherent advantages which are already most evenly distributed across the whole population. The debates on how best to nurture them reflect a fundamental consensus, recently expressed as follows by a politician who could have been speaking for many others, past and present: "My main engine for improving social problems would be education. I would have high expectations of our children. They should be taught not just about work but about cultural diversity, humanity and all the splendours of the nation we live in."

All our European nations have "splendours" to offer. And European cooperation has proved that it has a great deal to offer, both to the quality of education and in making the best of cultural diversity, by widening access to our collective reserves of experience, knowledge and talent. In my view, the prospect of more European cooperation in culture and education is a tonic, not only a medicine for social or economic problems.

"You can't fall in love with a single currency", Jacques Delors once remarked. Neither was untangling all the techno-legislative obstacles to create a single European market anyone's idea of fun. Now these foundations are laid, making the best of Europe's vast potential for all kinds of education and culture is a different prospect, to which the great majority of people can relate in everyday life. It is an exciting, relatively new field of EU cooperation which I very much look forward to developing.

Viviane Reding
Member of the Commission, responsible for education and culture

The new programmes

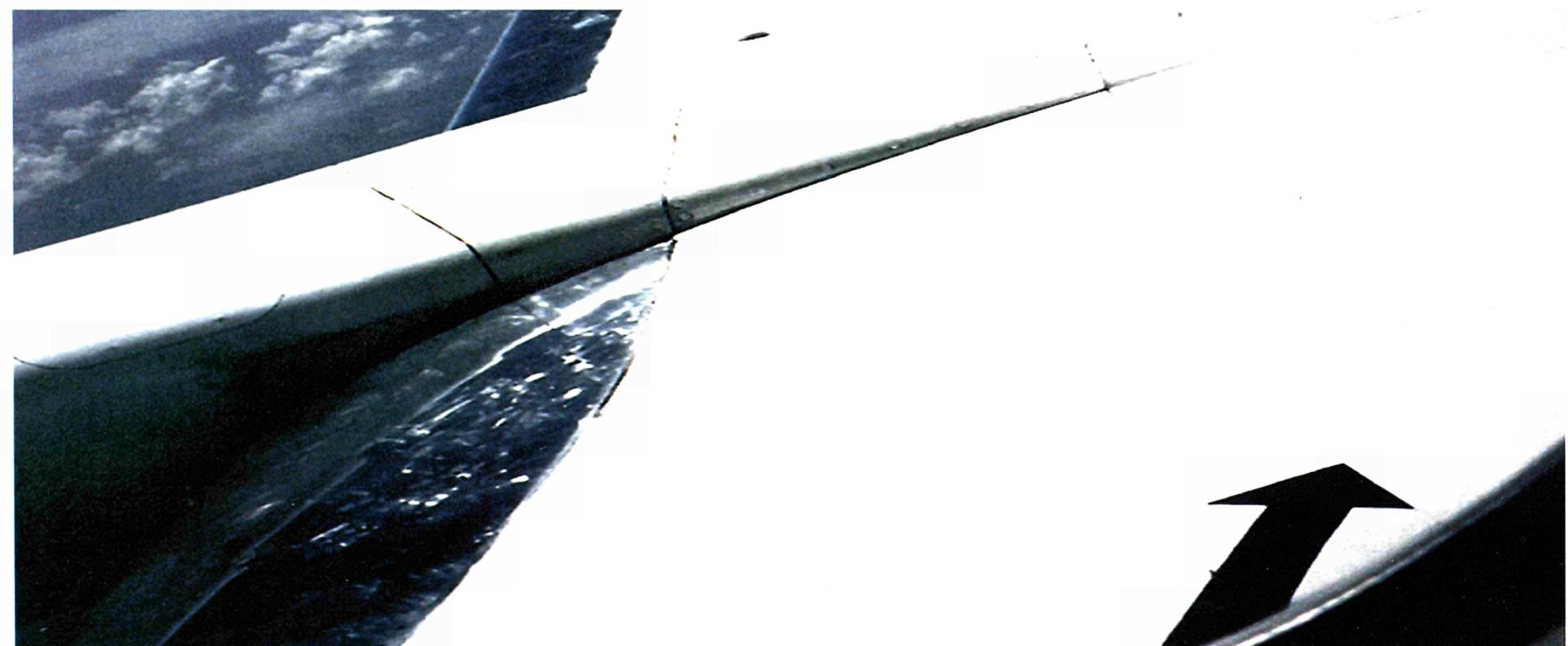
January 1, 2000 in the case of Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training) and Socrates (education), and just a little later for Youth, will mark the launch of these three major European programmes, this time for seven years. What are the principal changes, in terms of objectives, content and operation?

A major conference to launch the new Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth programmes will be held under the Portuguese presidency in Lisbon on 17 and 18 March 2000.



Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth

changes in store





Socrates II

Duration of Socrates II: from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2006

Budget: € 1,850 million for seven years

Participating countries: 31 in all. The 15 European Union Member States, the three EFTA/EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), the associated Central and Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), Cyprus, Malta and Turkey.

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Socrates: throughout life

To understand the practical impact of the new programme it is necessary to look at the present situation, what will happen in the near future, and how the transition from Socrates I to Socrates II will be managed

By December 1999, an agreement had been reached on the future Socrates programme (2000-2006) under the conciliation procedure between the Council and the European Parliament. This agreement was due to be officially approved by the two institutions before the end of the year. This meant, most importantly, that the new programme was set to enter into force as scheduled on 1 January 2000.

However, because the decision did not come earlier, it was not possible officially to agree the documents for implementing Socrates II in 1999. Arrangements therefore had to be made for a two-stage transition, in 2000 and 2001. The general principle is as follows: in 2000 all the Socrates II actions which existed under Socrates I will be managed in the same way as during the first phase of the programme. Totally new actions will nevertheless come into force in this first year. Then, in 2001, the various Socrates reforms will be applied in full, including the integration of part of Lingua into Comenius and the decentralization of teacher exchanges under Erasmus (see below).

The set of Guidelines for Applicants for the year 2000 is ready. This sets out the procedures for the immediate future and the deadlines for the various calls for proposals¹. Two key dates should be noted: 1 March 2000 and 15 November 2000. The Guidelines for 2001, covering Socrates II in its entirety, should be available by spring 2000.

New architecture

Socrates II brings many significant changes, which also affect the structure of the programme. In the past, the universities (Erasmus) dominated, receiving 55% of the total budget, while the schools (Comenius) received the smallest share of just 10%.

In future, the first three actions will be defined in terms of the various stages in the process of lifelong learning. Comenius, action 1, is strengthened and will receive 27% of the budget. Erasmus, action 2, is to get "no more" than 51% of the total. Grundtvig, action 3, relating to adult education and other educational pathways, will receive 7% -three times the budget under the previous Socrates.

Strong emphasis is placed on a number of priority themes, irrespective of the particular action. These include the fight against racism, equal opportunities for women and men and the integration of disabled people. Generally speaking, Socrates II provides more systematic support to people in difficulties. There is also more stress placed on the social dimension in education. Another across-the-board priority is learning in an intercultural context.

Comenius gains in importance

The changes affect each action. Action 1, Comenius (from pre-school to secondary education), sees some radical reforms. Perhaps most importantly, Comenius will incorporate the former Lingua chapter, concerned with school partnerships and the training of teachers and supervisory staff. Also, school partnerships based on a particular educational theme will permit the mobility -albeit limited- of pupils, which was not the case before. New types of school development projects are also to be introduced. These are aimed at individual schools which will be invited to enter into European partnerships as a means of exchanging ideas and good practice on key questions concerning their management, strategy and general organization. This new dynamic should promote a better quality of education.

Comenius also brings new impetus to the drive to involve all players in the educational community. As part of this approach, partnerships between schools and their local community are also to be encouraged.

Erasmus: new rules of play

Action 2, Erasmus, sees relatively few changes. There was, in fact, already a marked shift of direction in year three of Socrates I, with the introduction of "institutional contracts". Under Socrates II, it is principally the management method which is set to change. Teacher mobility management will now be decentralized. The thematic networks are included in the institutional contracts. Also, the allocation of funding to Member States will in future be based on the number of students leaving university with a degree, rather than simply on the total number of students registered.

Grundtvig: a broad vision

Action 3, Grundtvig, is a major new element in Socrates II. Not only is funding increased, but the concept of adult education is now extended to other educational pathways, including self-teaching. There will be three principal strands to Grundtvig: adult education proper, whether provided in a formal or informal setting; the issue of second chance schools; and the validation of skills acquired in different fields and at different places.

There will be a move towards greater decentralization, with projects managed directly by the national agencies. This will apply to the mobility of trainers, visits and exchanges of experience through joint seminars, and low-key cooperation initiatives between establishments in the field.

As under Comenius, support will be given to the creation of European networks. These will be made up of experts, officials in a given sector, or participants in European projects who want to remain in contact. These networks will help ensure that information is widely circulated and that innovative experiences are shared.

Lingua and Minerva: better targeted

Lingua, action 4, is completely remodelled -the school component now fully included under Comenius. Lingua has a twofold mission: horizontally to coordinate language matters within the various Socrates actions; and to concentrate as a specific action on sensitive issues relating to the learning of European languages. The new Lingua action will focus on two main areas. First, it will increase awareness of language learning and the networking of resource centres (a new activity). Secondly, it will provide support, through European cooperation, for the development of language learning tools: the job of action D under the former Lingua programme.

Minerva, action 5, is also a horizontal programme. This is concerned with the new information and communication technologies (ICTs), endeavouring to open up a field for experimentation and innovation while at the same time taking into account educational needs. Unlike the generally small ICT projects under Comenius, Erasmus and Grundtvig, Minerva concentrates on large-scale initiatives. Another difference is that, under Minerva, the ICT element must be central to the project.

Flexibility, integration and information

Action 6 -observation and innovation- introduces the new element of "innovative initiatives". These aim to adapt Socrates to the new needs arising in the field, responding to topical questions. For this reason it is important for the programme to remain flexible throughout its seven years.

Action 7 -joint actions- is also new. This will make it possible to develop integrated projects covering the three programmes: Youth, Socrates (education), and Leonardo da Vinci (educational training).

Finally, action 8 -accompanying measures- supports a range of activities in various fields. It brings a number of new emphases. Particular priority is given, for example, to disseminating the results of Socrates and supporting European associations working in the field of education as well as the Socrates national agencies.

¹ See "In brief" on page 13.



Leonardo da Vinci II

On 1 January 2000, Leonardo da Vinci II entered into force for a period of seven years.

What will be the principal changes? We take a close look at the new Community programme for vocational training.

Slightly in advance of the initial timetable, and thanks to the combined efforts of the German presidency of the Council and the European Parliament, the Leonardo da Vinci II programme was formally approved by the Council of Ministers on 26 April 1999. The decision entered into force on 11 June, following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities.¹ Leonardo da Vinci II was therefore on track for operational start-up on 1 January 2000, with a first call for proposals in mid-January. What are its objectives and methods? How will it operate? What are the principal changes to expect?

The transition can perhaps best be described as "change in continuity". The basic aims remain the same, namely to develop a European education and training area in response to the challenge of growth and competitiveness and to keep ahead of technological and industrial changes. Like its predecessor, Leonardo da Vinci II also seeks to promote the development of skills and abilities in order to increase opportunities for participation in working life and thus combat unemployment in the European Union. The programme will continue to support transnational projects with the aim of encouraging the development of new teaching aids, new methods for acquiring skills, and the exchange and transfer of good practice and innovation in the field of training. The pillars of the edifice will hardly move, certainly –but the changes are more than cosmetic. They will impact at every level.

Some changes are immediately evident. First, the duration. Leonardo da Vinci I ran for five years. Phase II will run for seven: from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2006. Next, the budget. This is up from € 730 million for the previous period to € 1.15 billion for the second period. This represents an increase of close to 12%.

In 1995 there were 18 participating countries, and in 1999 there were 29. In 2000 there will probably be 31: the 15 Member States, the three EEA/EFTA countries, the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) preparing to join, and Malta, Cyprus and Turkey.

The key words are concentration and simplification. The 19 objectives of Leonardo da Vinci I are reduced to just three. The means of action –that is, the measures or types of projects supported– now number five rather than the previous 23 (see next page).

Decentralization, simplification

Another significant change is in the direction of greater decentralization. Under Leonardo da Vinci II the tendency is to delegate more management responsibility to the Member States and other participating countries, meaning increased responsibilities for the national agencies. An estimated 75% of funds will now be managed at national level. Proposals will be selected under one of three types of evaluation procedure:

Procedure A is totally decentralized. This means that each Member State and participating country is allocated a global budget. Proposals will be addressed directly to the national agencies which will decide which projects to select, in agreement with the national authorities. This procedure will apply to all mobility actions.

Procedure B is a mixed procedure consisting of two stages: the presentation of pre-proposals and of final proposals. In both cases the proposals will be submitted to the national agencies. The first stage in the selection process is at national level, the second involving a dual national and Community assessment, with the Commission deciding on the final list of selected proposals after consulting the programme committee. Nevertheless, the national agencies will be responsible for concluding contracts and ensuring project follow-up. This procedure applies to pilot projects (except for thematic actions), projects to promote language skills and transnational networks.

Procedure C is centralized and also includes two stages. Pre-proposals, then proposals, are transmitted to the Commission for evaluation. The list of selected proposals is drawn up after hearing the opinion of the programme committee. But the actual contracts are signed with the Commission. This procedure applies to reference materials, thematic actions, joint actions and projects submitted by European organizations.

Submitting proposals will also be easier. Under Leonardo da Vinci I, calls for proposals were made annually, setting out the priorities, timetable and conditions of acceptance. This means that the framework changed every 12 months. Leonardo da Vinci II brings greater stability. There will be just three calls for proposals. The first, in January 2000, will be valid for three years. The next two will be in 2002 and 2004, each valid for two years. Proposals can nevertheless be submitted every year in line with the deadlines set by the calls.

New emphases

There are also new emphases in the content of Leonardo da Vinci. All the measures, and in particular the pilot projects, strongly encourage the use of information and communication technologies. Whereas Leonardo da Vinci I made a distinction between initial and continuing training, the second phase of the programme focuses more on lifelong training. Like the previous programme, Leonardo da Vinci II pays particular attention to the underprivileged and the principle of equal opportunities. However, this time there is explicit mention of disabled people, with specific devices which can be promoted in order to increase their participation in placements or exchanges. Another innovation is the special support to thematic actions, in other words a limited number of pilot projects on subjects of particular interest at Community level. These could include, for example, the development of new methods to promote transparency (new forms of certification or accreditation of skills acquired during vocational training) or the development of European orientation and training devices in the field of services to companies.

Finally, there will be support for joint actions with other Community programmes, in particular Socrates II and Youth, or other programmes which relate to vocational training, such as the European Social Fund or the Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

¹ Council Decision EC/382/99 of 26 April 1999
(OJ L 146, of 11 June 1999, page 33)

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Youth

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Youth becomes a genuinely integrated programme, bringing together the former Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service programmes. The other major change is its increased flexibility, in terms of content and financing of the projects selected.

The three objectives

- To improve the skills and competences of people, especially young people, in initial vocational training, in particular through work-linked training.
- To improve the quality of, and access to, continuing vocational training and the life-long acquisition of skills and competences
- To promote and reinforce the contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation, with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship

The five types of Community measures

1 Mobility

- transnational placements
- transnational exchanges
- study visits.

2 Pilot projects

These can apply to:

- the development and/or dissemination of innovation in the field of vocational training
- improving the quality of vocational training
- the development of new methods of vocational training and vocational orientation in the context of lifelong learning.

Thematic actions

Pilot projects on themes of particular interest at Community level.

3 Language skills

Support for projects to promote language and cultural skills in the context of vocational training.

4 Transnational networks

Support for European networks of Community competence aimed at:

- bringing together, synthesising and developing European competences and innovative approaches
- disseminating network and project products and results throughout the Union.

5 Reference materials

- To compile comparative data on vocational training systems
- To carry out surveys and analyses, observe and disseminate good practices.

Compared to Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training) and Socrates (education), the launch of Youth has been slightly delayed. As the conciliation procedure between the Council and European Parliament only finally got under way at the beginning of January, the programme will not be officially adopted until April 2000. Fortunately, project users and promoters will not suffer as a result. During the transitional period (January to April 2000), the submission of projects for youth exchanges will continue to apply. So all is set to run smoothly. The other deadlines come after the programme's formal adoption and thus within a normal framework.

The new Youth programme does not signify a radical break with the previous Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service programmes, but it does bring a number of major developments. It should be remembered that Youth for Europe itself underwent a number of changes during its three first phases in order to adapt to political requirements and practical considerations. In many respects it also broke new ground compared to the other programmes of the former DG XXII: it was, for example, very early in decentralizing most of its actions.

A common thread

Beginning in 2000, the principal innovation will lie in the fact that Youth will incorporate –within an integrated framework– Youth for Europe and European Voluntary Service, two programmes that were previously separate despite sharing the same spirit. Youth will operate as a coherent whole, with a common thread leading in a logical fashion from one action to another. Let us take a concrete example. A young person participates in an exchange scheme offering a first contact with Europe, in the field of intercultural learning. At a later point this may encourage him or her to participate in European Voluntary Service. Following this, he or she may launch an original initiative under Future Capital by setting up a non-profit association, for example. This youth association will then have the option of benefiting from Commission support in order to cooperate with other youth organizations of the same kind in Europe.

A second change lies in the degree of flexibility injected into the new Youth programme. This new flexibility initially concerns project content, which will in future be selected on the basis of criteria that are more qualitative than formal. Previously, for example, cultural festivals and sports meetings were excluded from the projects eligible under Youth for Europe. Youth, on the other hand, can be open to culture and sport provided the activities in these fields include informal educational aspects.

The same flexibility is found in the funding of projects. There will be more lump-sum funding which makes life much easier for project promoters. In the

past, promoters were entitled to a percentage of the sum requested, but this varied according to the finance available. In future, project managers will know in advance the sums they can legitimately receive under the programme. This will be of considerable benefit to them.

Opening up

Youth consists of five distinct actions.

Action 1 – Youth for Europe – covers all mobility actions based on transnational partnerships between groups of young people. The new feature is that young people from third countries (Mediterranean Basin, Latin America, Africa, for example) can now also take part in the exchanges. Under Youth for Europe, cooperation with non-member countries was the subject of independent action. Under Youth, it is included in a number of actions.

Action 2 is European Voluntary Service. There are a number of changes here. First of all, the associated countries will be included for the first time. As to non-member states, the rule of reciprocity will now prevail. This means that young people from these countries (in Latin America or the Mediterranean Basin, for example) can also spend a period of voluntary service in the European Union. This will bring a very significant increase in the number of countries participating in this area of Youth.

Action 3 relates to Opportunity for Youth. This chapter includes the former youth initiatives under Youth for Europe together with the European Voluntary Service projects, formerly known as Future Capital, under which a volunteer can extend his or her experience by participating in a creative project.

Informing more widely

Action 4 – joint actions – permits support for integrated projects including youth, vocational training or education, as under the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes. As different start-up dates and procedures apply to the three programmes, these joint actions will only begin in 2001, when the programmes have been fully synchronized.

Action 5 – accompanying measures – is another innovation. This covers everything relating to cooperation in the field of youth between organizations, local authorities, and national authorities. It also includes matters relating to education and training for young people, in which it will have a twofold aim. The action will ensure a wider dissemination of European information, including at local level, and extend this to include advisory activities for young people –for example on how to set up a project. Finally, this fifth action also has a training role. Formerly limited to the training of youth workers, it now extends to all those active in the field of youth, including also European project managers, advisers, and so on.



Schools open to the world...

A conference on school partnerships under the Comenius and Lingua chapters of the Socrates programme, held at Santiago de Compostela in Spain from 23 to 25 September on the initiative of the Galicia Xunta and with the support of the European Commission, brought together 400 teachers and pupils from 22 countries representing 200 projects. It provided a fitting way to mark the end of the first phase of the Socrates programme.

The location was highly symbolic. Was not the Way of St James, taken by millions of pilgrims over the centuries, the Old World's first genuinely European route?

In her message to participants, Commissioner Viviane Reding expressed her pleasure at seeing school pupils present. She also welcomed the coming together of the Comenius and Lingua programmes for the occasion, in itself an indication of the Commission's new priorities.

Marja Karjalainen, head of unit at the Commission's Education and Culture DG, made an initial assessment of European school cooperation under Socrates, reporting that almost 12,000 schools participated in Comenius and Lingua activities during 1998, a third of them primary schools. She also highlighted some of the particular strengths of the new Socrates II programme.

Throughout these three days, teachers and pupils alike presented their project results and outlined their ideas for future cooperation. In addition to the various workshops and plenary sessions, an exhibition of projects was on display.

The following are just a few examples of initiatives for a "school open to the world" – the theme of the conference.

Luxembourg-Romania: culture shock

Alain Carion teaches French at the Fieldgen technical school in Luxembourg. In March 1999, Alain and his commerce and management class (21 pupils out of a total of 23) spent two

weeks in Romania, at the Mihail Sadoveanu general secondary school in Bucharest. The object of this Lingua exchange action was to make a comparative analysis of advertising media.

Alain Carion had specifically sought a partner in a poorer eastern European country; hence Romania. But it was a choice which caused considerable controversy at his own school, with some of his colleagues taking a rather patronizing view of Romania. His pupils were also far from enthusiastic about travelling to this distant country.

Yet once they were there, the chemistry worked and minds opened. "We really felt a sense of solidarity," explains Nadia, one of the pupils on the Romanian trip. A particularly positive result of the stay in Bucharest was that new relationships started to form within the class between pupils of Luxembourg origin and those of Portuguese extraction. Previously, the two groups had largely kept to themselves.

In the Romanian capital, the Luxembourgers were struck by the warm welcome extended by their host families. Some had redecorated their homes for the occasion, while others slept on the sofa, giving up their beds for the visiting pupils. The second strong impression was of the stark conditions at the partner school. "The school buildings are old and dilapidated. There is a shortage of everything, particularly school textbooks."

The experience produced genuine culture shock. Nadia admits that she no longer sees Luxembourg in quite the same way. "I now realize just how fortunate we are." Alain Carion also believes there are lessons the Luxembourgers can learn from the Romanians. "We tend to think that unless a school has 30 computers, it is impossible to do anything." The Romanians show that teaching is not just a matter of technology. "In day-to-day life they find pleasure in simple things. In Romania, people still take the time to stop and say hello in the street."

Norway: at the school of citizenship

How can people live together peacefully in increasingly multicultural societies? Above all, what are the skills and abilities that schools can offer young people to enable them to exercise their citizenship in this respect? These are the questions at the heart of the Comenius project running from August 1996 to March 2000, with the support of secondary schools in Belgium, Ireland and Norway. In Norway, the partner is the secondary school in Tamberg, a town of 25,000 inhabitants to the north of Oslo. Ivar Brandt, a teacher at the school, explains how the initiative was born during an English lesson, a course which under the Norwegian curriculum also covers socio-political subjects.

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Together with the Belgian and Irish partners, the idea was to use the technique of conflict resolution as a teaching aid. Mock sessions of the European Parliament, attended by 16 to 19-year-old pupils from the three schools, were held consecutively in Belgium, Ireland and Norway. The Tamberg session took place in the spring of 1999. Six specialist committees were set up for the occasion, on such sensitive issues as the environment, the protection of minority cultures, education and the media. Within each of these groups, pupils made precise proposals which were then submitted to general debate. They had to try to reach the widest possible consensus between sometimes divergent points of view, before holding a final vote on resolutions in the plenary session.

Simen, aged 18, chaired the parliamentary sessions in Tamberg: "I was not to give my personal opinion," he explains, "because my job was above all to take account of everyone else's views." A number of subjects sparked a lively debate. In one session, for example, the students considered what to do in political negotiations, such as those taking place in the Northern Ireland conflict, if one of the parties resorted to violence. Some pupils felt the party should be excluded from the talks; others did not. Finally, a delicate balance was found. The organization which used violence should be allowed to remain at the negotiating table, but its weight would be reduced.

Ivar Brandt believes that this parliamentary experience produced some very positive results; so much so that Tamberg has decided to apply this teaching method outside the English class with its socio-political content, to other school subjects.

Spain: in the footsteps of Islam

In the various European countries, and the major cities in particular, the school population is an increasingly mixed group. Among pupils of immigrant origin, many are North African with their roots in Muslim culture. These differences are giving rise to growing tensions and, sadly, to increased examples of racism. The majority of cases arise from ignorance. When one makes an effort to get to know another person, the reasons for hatred disappear.

This was the thinking behind a Comenius project undertaken by a secondary school in Fuenlebrada, a commuter town just outside Madrid, in partnership with the towns of Lecce and Ravenna in Italy, and Champigny in the Paris suburbs. These schools wanted to highlight the significance of Islam in relation to literature, history, the arts, sciences and geography. Given such strong influences, it was important for this educational initiative to cut across subjects and to involve as many teachers as possible within each school.

As an initial step, the pupils in France, Italy and Spain produced a video and CD to introduce themselves to each other. At Fuenlebrada, the video adopted a humorous approach which featured a number of striking images. Pupils were reminded,

for example, that 1.7 million Spaniards have emigrated to foreign countries whereas Spain itself is home to around 600,000 immigrants – quite a modest total by all accounts.

The three countries also broached the controversial subject of wearing veils in school. There was no condemnation, but rather an attempt to understand the situation. The pupils met young Muslim girls who explained what wearing the veil meant to them. Yet understanding does not amount to a justification of all attitudes. That would be a violation of the rules which form the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this connection, pupils at the Fuenlebrada school worked together with an NGO in organizing a photo exhibition denouncing the treatment of Afghan women by the Taliban.

Belgium: from past to present

Unlike some other major European cities, the centre of the Belgian capital is home to a disadvantaged population, while the better-off inhabitants opt to reside in the greener suburbs. Located right in the heart of Brussels, the Gatti de Gamond school reflects this situation. Its pupils generally come from modest backgrounds. André Lecocq teaches geography at the school, at the same time seeking to instil an appreciation of culture in his 4th year pupils in technical education studying for a tourism diploma. Oddly enough these pupils, many of whom will become tourist guides or be employed in travel agencies, know little about the city they live in. André believes it is important for them to know more about the history and architectural wealth of their own neighbourhoods. By rediscovering one's roots, one can discover at the same time a sense of pride which can be put to use in the present.

This was why Gatti de Gamond decided to participate in a Comenius project to highlight the art nouveau movement which, in the 19th century, represented an alternative to traditional architectural thinking. This action was carried out in cooperation with schools in Nancy (France), Barcelona (Spain), Vienna (Austria) and Darmstadt (Germany). Each of the schools produced different projects on the subject which they then exchanged through the European network.

Comenius has not to date financed student mobility. But André Lecocq believes that "direct contacts have a much more dynamic educational effect than simply sending e-mails". Gatti de Gamond therefore decided to self-finance a visit by its own students to Nancy, with a return visit by a delegation from the hotel and catering school in the French town. But arranging foreign travel for classes of pupils when most of them come from underprivileged backgrounds is a particularly difficult undertaking. So the Belgian teacher proposed that, with phase II of Comenius, the Commission should encourage "positive discrimination" in its financing mechanisms and thereby allow the least favoured schools to benefit from mobility just as much as others.

Personal testimonies**Diego, 17 SPAIN**

Diego attends the Rosalia de Castro secondary school in the town of Maja Da Honda, near Madrid. He participated in a project designed to compare Spanish lifestyles, both inside and outside school, with those in Slovakia and Ireland. What did he learn from the experience? "Unlike what I originally thought, I realized that all young people, whether in Spain, Ireland or Slovakia, think in very similar ways." Diego has devised his own slogan to sum up his view: "The (European) Union makes us strong."

Klara, 15 CZECH REPUBLIC

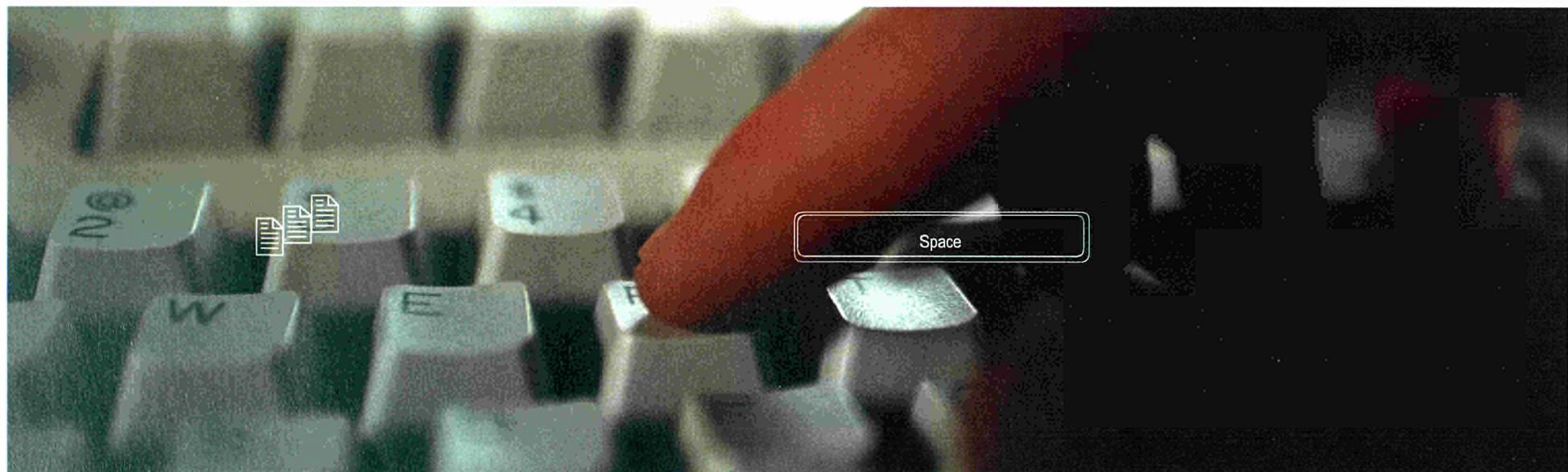
As part of her school project – a comparative study of Belgian and Czech architecture – Klara and her classmates received basic teaching in Dutch. But she nevertheless prefers to express herself in English. She found the project very rewarding. "We met new people and learned about other cultures. The project was hard work, but I liked it a lot because there were also many very good times. If I could take part in another project of this kind, I would not hesitate for a moment."

Jean-Marie Declercq BELGIAN TEACHER

How to explain to children the mysteries of electricity? With the help of Comenius, Jean-Marie Declercq, a teacher in the Liège region (in eastern Belgium), was able to develop teaching packs in association with primary schools in Sweden, Italy and Spain. The project proved so successful that even infant school teachers wanted to use his materials, which had not been initially planned. Several of them even attended the international meetings. "People who are at ease in front of children are generally more reticent when it comes to addressing adults. It was great to see how, when abroad, they learned to express themselves in public in a clear and relaxed manner."

Educational use of the Internet

Internet access has grown rapidly since 1995. Sites are being set up in different countries to give teachers access to databases, reference texts, teaching materials or educational software.¹ A mass of information of variable quality is becoming available. Associations of teachers from different disciplines, educational documentation centres, museums and universities are all contributing to this heterogeneous supply.



When it comes to exchange, the Internet should open up new dialogues between teachers and students, or with educational partners outside the teaching system. Videoconferencing techniques, for example, allow students to "attend" a conference given in another European country by an expert of international renown.² They can then correspond with the expert or other students via the Internet. E-mail correspondence is developing at every level, with a pooling of resources and sharing of knowledge for the benefit of pupils and teachers alike.

Projects launched under Socrates since 1995, especially around the ODL³ and Netd@ys actions, already provide a quantity of evidence for evaluating these complex developments – aspects of which are set out briefly below. The Minerva action, under the new Socrates programme, will continue this analysis, focusing in particular on examining and understanding teaching methods linked to Internet use.

The pitfalls...

Given the number of "innovative" projects, it seems that many such experiments are considered to be of marginal importance by the heads or directors of the establishments involved. This marginalization is sometimes linked to the anecdotal character of the applications: they are relevant in a given context but represent no more than a specific component. The critical mass is not attained. In other cases the application produced lies outside the curriculum, which impedes any general application.

Furthermore, experience reveals practical difficulties in surfing the Net. Virtual movement around large volumes of texts requires a number of skills which are essential to mastering the tools: command of the mother tongue, and sometimes a foreign language also, as well as of the technical environment. It must also be possible to memorize essential information in the course of a largely random route in order to be able to return to it when required. These are all prerequisites for a successful information search.

Lack of experience in group electronic communication damages the most promising applications; face-to-face contact is too often forgotten, despite the fact that it is sometimes the essential complement to electronic exchanges or media. Too much focus on the equipment sometimes causes other essential elements to be forgotten, such as the importance of human support, the increased workload for the teacher, or long-term technical developments.

...and how to avoid them

To avoid these pitfalls it is important to look at the full range of questions raised by changes in the education system rather than technology alone. For example, the new links being forged between schools and local partners, as a result of action by teachers, parents, school heads and business managers, must be taken into account. And related teaching methods have to be understood. The objectives of education should be considered afresh, and whether they are in line

with the proposed innovations or not. Motivation is essential. Based on subjects which inspire the pupils, projects can, for example, reach into different disciplines and offer virtual environments which combine information and communication. An example? At the risk of being judged Utopian or poetic, one expert in the field suggests that a theme such as love can provide a way of approaching a number of disciplines: philosophy, biology, literature, etc. More prosaically, the town is a possible area for learning, the meeting point for a number of subjects. Other examples could be the euro or European citizenship.

The new Minerva action makes up part of this global perspective, in which technology becomes one of the elements in a much wider system where educational, economic and organizational aspects must all be taken into account. This will provide a base for the possible wider application of the most constructive innovations.

¹ See the EUN project (European Schoolnet) aimed at pooling the efforts of 19 ministries of education for this purpose: <http://www.eun.org>, and the article in Le Magazine 10, page 12

² See the Humanities project, financed under Socrates - ODL, from 1995 to 1998, which brought together 26 European universities: <http://www.dipoli.hut.fi/org/humanities>

³ ODL (Open and Distance Learning) action: the first results can be found at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/minerva/index.htm>

Adult education

Circus workers in the spotlight



Under Socrates, the Commission supports European cooperation projects in adult education. One example, from Portugal, is a comparative analysis of the training needs of some of the most underprivileged sections of the population, including circus workers.

A number of particularly underprivileged sections of the population –immigrants, gypsies, seasonal workers, peddlars– have a very low level of education, if they are not totally illiterate. Different European countries run a variety of remedial education schemes but, unfortunately, adult education courses reach very few of these people living on the fringes of society. In order to increase their participation, it is first necessary to look at their living conditions, study their specific needs, and then develop appropriate teaching tools.

This is the aim of the European project known as Claim-ED, initiated by the basic education department of the Portuguese Ministry of Education. Research actions were first carried out in five countries –Portugal, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium– among various groups of workers experiencing social difficulties. The findings of these field studies were then compared, country by country, stimulating more detailed reflection and practical proposals for courses which would be better targeted and therefore more effective.

In Portugal, for example, the research focused on circus workers, a particularly neglected and marginal group.

The project concentrated on the Carnide district of Lisbon where an area is set aside especially for circus people, housed in caravans. The site is equipped with washrooms and toilets and was originally used by retired circus workers. Today, it is home to younger people and families in the intervals when they are not on the road with their shows. Twenty-five circus families living in Carnide were interviewed under the Claim-ED project. Among a total of 46 adults, more than half had not completed the first four years of primary education. Circus workers may be part of one big family, but this nevertheless tends to be a rather inward-looking family, largely cut off from the outside world. The field study also uncovered an overall deterioration in the social conditions of circus workers in Portugal. Poorly paid and with arbitrary contractual arrangements, they are finding it increasingly difficult to get employment.

The Portuguese education ministry drew a number of lessons from these findings. Circus workers should be given the opportunity to receive basic education outside official establishments, at less formal and more decentralized sites. More flexible hours would also be useful and learning methods should do more to take into account the skills circus workers have acquired in their day-to-day lives. As for the instructors, they need to adopt specific approaches suited to the groups they teach and to show a better grasp of the multicultural dimension of their work.

It took three years for the Claim-ED project to develop from actions in the field to the formulation of more theoretical conclusions at European level. Finally, at the end of this extensive networking experience, a number of tools were produced, including videos, an Internet site and, most importantly, practical guides setting out proposals for improving teaching methods and materials for some of Europe's most underprivileged adults.

Student and teacher mobility

For richer, for poorer

Thanks to Erasmus, 600,000 students and several thousand teachers have benefited from mobility in Europe over the past 11 years. Among the 1,800 participating universities, some have shown particular dynamism and creativity. In Brussels, for example, the ULB has developed a means-tested system for awarding grants to students.

Over recent years the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) has been facing an increased demand from students wishing to take advantage of opportunities for mobility under the Erasmus programme. As the available budget remained fixed, the first reaction was to reduce the amount of each grant. But this did not really satisfy anyone. For students from well-off backgrounds, these grants are not really necessary. At the same time they are insufficient, if not discouraging, for many other candidates with an excellent academic record.

So, the ULB's international department came up with a plan to modify the amount of Erasmus money awarded to take account of individual students' real incomes. This would effectively allow more students to participate in the mobility schemes.

But how could students' incomes be objectively assessed? In cooperation with two other French-speaking universities,

Liège (ULG) and the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL), the ULB developed a reliable method of calculation. The disposable income of each student is estimated on the basis of a series of indicators such as parents' tax returns and family composition. This is set against the annual cost of university studies, estimated at € 6,250 plus another € 2,500 for the added costs of Erasmus mobility, making a total of € 8,750.

Three categories of students are then identified. Those whose annual theoretical incomes are above € 8,750 receive free transport and the Erasmus label but no grant. Those whose incomes are under € 4,375 are entitled to a grant of up to € 250 a month. The other students receive intermediary aid of € 125 a month.

This new system was applied on an experimental basis in 1997/1998 at the three universities. Chantal Zoller, who heads the international department at the ULB, explains: "27% of

Erasmus students received the label only, 26% received 'improved' grants and 47% received an average grant." By all accounts, this new regime is more egalitarian. It permitted an increase in the total number of participants, up from 300 to 350. As this shows, observes Chantal Zoller, "lack of funds is no longer an insurmountable obstacle".

Encouraged by this success, the three universities decided to maintain the system of modified grants during the 1998/1999 academic year, while at the same time making certain improvements. An in-depth survey was carried out on the real cost of living in a number of large European cities, and the difference was found to be enormous. As a result, they decided to increase the Erasmus grant by 10% for the most expensive destinations, and to reduce it by the same percentage for Europe's less pricey cities.

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Community media face the digital threat

Using the mass media to improve local democracy is no contradiction. Europe's 1,500 community radio stations are giving local people – particularly young people – a space where they can have their say and learn to play a public role. But technological change – or ill-considered reaction to it – risks shutting down the entire sector. Le Magazine went to Sheffield to talk to Brian Carty, coordinator of Amarc Europe, the European section of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters.



What exactly is community radio?

Community-based media serve geographical communities or communities of special interest, have social and public service objectives, are locally accountable and are editorially independent of government and commercial media companies. They are a medium of social and cultural expression, information and education and provide direct access for citizens and associations to mass media.

Why is community radio important?

Radio is important because it is quite simple. It is a cheap way to reach a mass audience. It is one of the more accessible forms of communication. A lot of broadcasting is remote from people's lives – MTV, for instance, is fantastic but it doesn't really have much impact on the lives of your average Sheffield 16-year-old. Whereas radio does more than let people receive; it gives people a space where what they have to say is important. So the shift needs to be made in terms of how people relate to media, how people become actors rather than consumers.

Radio is also one of the easiest ways of training somebody in communications. One person can go into a studio and over a period of time learn all the things that need to be done to get a radio programme out. In contrast, television is much more complicated, so people have to specialize at a much earlier stage, and the training process cannot be so thorough.

It will soon be possible to listen to the world's radio on your portable telephone connected to the Internet.

Is community radio still relevant in these days of rapid 'media convergence'?

Convergence raises many issues. FM radio is well-suited to serve local geographical communities, but for communities of interest which are more spread-out – Somalis or Kurds in Europe, for instance – then the Internet has a lot of potential.

The Internet also gives people the same possibility to interact: anybody with a computer and a modem can put up a web page. But not everybody has access to the Internet. The advantage of a radio is that it's cheap and it's portable – you can take it to the beach. How you relate to a radio is very different from how you relate to a desktop computer. It has a different role.

We still see radio very much as the instrument of developing, engaging and empowering the community, but as a tool for cooperation between stations the Internet is increasingly important.

Is the European Union taking community media into account in its policies?

We get a fair hearing – I think the European Commission and Parliament recognize we can't compete with the resources of the big public and private sector broadcasters. So we have, for example, managed to introduce the concept of community media into the European Parliament's green paper on media convergence. But we'd like clearer recognition of the value of this sector in all sorts of ways. The EU can help create an atmosphere where it is recognized that a space should exist which is neither a state nor commercial broadcaster, but which is about involving and empowering people and creating a space within which people can communicate themselves, within which they are not consumers of information but creators of and contributors to information.

Is Europe's media policy going in the right direction?

In some ways yes, in others no. The move to digital broadcasting, for example, poses a huge threat to the whole community radio sector. The technological choices have not been properly thought through. The equipment manufacturers prefer a 'big bang' approach, which would mean that the current

analogue signals will simply be switched off on a predetermined date. And the proposal to allocate channels only through so-called 'multiplexes', where 10 or 12 signals are carried across a large area, will drastically limit access. It would mean that only one multiplex would exist in any given region – even a city like London – and access to it would be controlled by a single organization. With so few channels available, community stations, which do not generate vast profits, would be very likely to suffer.

"Part of the radio spectrum should remain allocated to analogue broadcasting until an adequate and affordable replacement technology is in place."

People have in their heads an idea that digital broadcasting will increase choice, but as things stand there are all sorts of problems around design, access, cost and ownership. What needs to happen is that part of the radio spectrum should remain allocated to analogue broadcasting until an adequate and affordable replacement technology is in place.

How could the EU's media policy be adapted to improve the lot of young people?

I think an important part of it is young people knowing what is going on out there, in Europe, and expressing their opinion – information as a two-way process. Recent Commission initiatives like the Youth Conference and Dialogue Youth are positive steps in this direction, and community radio is one way of reaching people and getting them involved. It's about promoting active citizenship, and getting them to take responsibility, to be engaged and active.

There is a level of alienation of young people from all sorts of social institutions. They get involved with groups on single issues such as race or environment, but are more reluctant

Amarc-Europe, which represents some 1,500 community radio stations in 40 European countries, is making good use of European Union training programmes. Its 7-country Women On Line programme, supported by Leonardo da Vinci, is developing training materials which will help more women to rise to positions of responsibility in the media. There is a lot of transferability in what different community radio stations are doing, and the wide range of training materials on radio production and management are being disseminated and put on-line as part of the Amarc Europe Training Network. Amarc also has a European Voluntary Service project involving 12 people, as well as being involved in media training supported by the European Social Fund.

But in many ways Amarc's flagship project has been Radio Voix sans Frontières, which is part of the Youth for Europe programme. This project brings together young people from all over Europe to put out a day-long radio broadcast to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March. Material is contributed from various localities, relayed by satellite and Internet, and then rebroadcast by stations in at least 30 European countries. This year's programme happened to go out three days before the start of NATO bombing in Serbia, and this lent an audible tension to the live segment from Amarc member Radio B92 in Belgrade, one of the foremost critics of the Milosevic regime.

to engage in politics as such. Radio is one of the ways in which people can have their say – they are, quite literally, being listened to by someone out there. What other channels do they have for political expression: write a letter to their MP? Join a political party? Fewer and fewer people want to do that. Radio is one way of empowering people, getting them to think about what they are doing that might be able to change society.

Could the political process use community media, and radio in particular, better, to bring young people back from that alienated state?

I think it could. Part of the problem is that what politicians are prepared to say in front of a microphone or a camera is very strictly controlled. Replies are formulaic. Politicians tend to censor themselves when they appear in the media, rather than opening up to a real dialogue. What could be useful is that we try to create space for a more genuine dialogue between the elected and the electors. Of course, it is the politicians themselves who have to want to start this dialogue. But if the political will is there then I think that community media can be a place where it can be explored, which is a little bit outside the glare of the mainstream media spotlight. After all, somebody has to be optimistic!

Contact

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In brief

European networking

Action 2 of Comenius targets intercultural education and the education of the children of migrant workers, occupational travellers, travellers and gypsies. It funds several networks in this field.

The European Federation for the Children of Occupational Travellers, Efecot, coordinates a network of projects which aim to improve educational provision for the children of occupational travellers and seasonal workers. Projects deal with such topics as open and distance education, multimedia, links between schools and families, and pedagogical follow-up for the children.

Contact: Efecot - T +32 2 2274060 - www.efecot.net

Arcomin, a network coordinated by Sietar/France, focuses on improving the education of gypsy children. The project produces pedagogical materials, promotes the use of the gypsy language, gathers information on gypsy history, and publishes an information bulletin called Interface.

Contact: Centre de Recherches Tziganes
T +33 1 42 86 21 12

Developing Intercultural Education through Cooperation between European Cities, Diecēc began coordinating a network called Race in autumn 1999. The network focuses on raising the school achievement levels of pupils with ethnic minority backgrounds and of those who risk being excluded from the educational system.

Contact: Diecēc - T +44 1274 751 731
www.bradford.gov.uk/educate/diecēc/

The European Federation for Intercultural Education, Efil, is setting up a network of organisations, schools and trainers. The network will address themes such as democracy and development, environmental education, intercultural education and human rights and peace education.

Contact: Efil – T +32 2 514 52 50 – www.afs.org/efil

Further information

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Socrates II - new closing dates

In the new Socrates II programme, the closing date for applications for transnational projects has changed. The new deadline is **1 March 2000**.

- **Grundtvig** – European cooperation projects in Adult Education;
- **Lingua / Action A** – European Cooperation Programmes for language teacher training (ECPs);
- **Lingua / Action D** – Development of language teaching and assessment instruments;
- **Minerva** - Transnational projects in the field of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education.

For more information, contact your Socrates National Agency or the Socrates Technical Assistance Office, Rue Montoyer 70, B-1000 Brussels. T +32-2 233.01.11, F +32-2 233.01.50, e-mail: info@socrates-youth.be.

The information can also be found on the European Commission's Internet site:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates.htm>

EU and Unesco work together

to promote adult education

In July 1997, the 5th International Conference on Adult Education (Confintea) was held in Hamburg. The event was organized by Unesco, with the European Commission as an active partner. During the conference, two policy statements were adopted, setting out guidelines and an action plan for adult learning in the next century.

Various follow-up activities have since been organized to monitor and promote the implementation of the policies agreed at Confintea. In June 1999, DG XXII hosted a seminar in Brussels to discuss current European trends in adult education and to identify issues for further work and cooperation.

The seminar focused on a number of key themes, including basic skills and access to formal education systems. The issues that were considered most vital for improving the overall system of adult education in Europe: access, validation, accreditation, research and networking are all included in the scope of the new Grundtvig action, confirming that Grundtvig will form an effective framework for managing current and future challenges.

Further information

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Attention Album!

What do picture books for the under-10s tell and show our children? What role models do they give to boys and girls? And how do children relate to them?

A research action entitled Attention Album! carried out in three European countries – France, Italy and Spain – studied the representations and impact of symbolic images on children and adults. Children, parents, teachers, educationalists, librarians, authors, illustrators and publishers were all involved in the project.

The results of the statistical analysis of a body of about 1,000 works show that picture books perpetuate stereotypes which are sometimes no more than caricatures and describe situations which totally fail to reflect changes in contemporary society. The picture book is a world of sexual segregation. It largely presents a male-dominated world, set apart from that of mother/child relationships, with little evidence of equality between the sexes.

Two attractive brochures illustrate these findings. What role models for girls? and What do children see in picture books? provide a synthesis or examples of the most pertinent comments. A bibliography on sexism, an inventory of channels for increasing awareness and methods for analysing existing legal instruments have also been produced.

These works are available from the European association Du Côté des Filles : 8 rue Baillou, 75014 Paris, France – F +32 1 40 55 99 32 (French and Italian versions), or from the Fondacion Germàn Sánchez Ruiperez/Centro internacional del libro infantil y juvenil, Peña Primera 14 y 16, 37002 Salamanca, España – F +34 923 21 63 17 (Spanish version).

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What's new in education systems

Austria

English from primary school onwards and a new school entry phase

The Education Committee in the Austrian Parliament has adopted a comprehensive set of educational provisions.

From the 1998/99 school year, a foreign language will be taught in the first two years of primary school in the form of a compulsory exercise (without assessment) in the teaching of compulsory subjects.

To ensure that children who have reached the required age do not miss their initial compulsory primary schooling, pre-primary education is being integrated with the first stage of primary school (first and second years). Moreover, pupils in either year of the first stage and pre-school children may be taught within a single class at the same time.

Subject to the agreement of the school partners, grading by marks in the first and second years of primary school may be supplemented by a descriptive assessment of pupil attainment. Moreover, 25% of all primary or special schools may test alternative forms of assessment.

Highly gifted pupils are allowed to skip one year at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. In theory, they are able to sit the university entrance exam at the age of 15.

Czech Republic

Strategic aims of educational policy

The new strategic aims of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport were presented for public discussion in May 1999, as follows:

- develop educational opportunities and provide equal access to education, to enable 60-75% of young people to take a final upper secondary school examination (*maturitní zkouška*);
- extend the average period of schooling from 14.7 to 16.7 years by the year 2005 in order to reach the European average;
- introduce conceptual changes into both the content of education and the nature of school;
- prepare a strategy for the development of continuing education (including its legislative framework and methods of funding);
- ensure that teachers enjoy high quality initial and in-service training, as well as fair remuneration and optimal career prospects, and increase public expenditure on education from less than 4.5% of GDP to 6% in 2002.

Finland

Before entering primary school in Finland, generally at the age of 7, children may receive a year of preparatory education provided mainly by the social welfare authorities in daycare centres which charge fees; only some 10% of pre-school education is administered by school authorities. At present, around 70% of the age group obtain such education.

The stated aim of the present government, elected in spring 1999, is to provide pre-school education free of charge to all six-year-olds by the year 2001.

A report concerning legislative amendments proposes the introduction of this reform in the municipalities on a voluntary basis from this autumn. This means that the right of children to free pre-school education

(on an optional basis) and the obligation of municipalities to provide it would be confirmed in autumn 2001.

Pre-school education might be offered at school, a daycare centre or some other suitable location, while remaining subject to the legislation governing basic education. The National Board of Education will draw up the national core curriculum for pre-school education in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health. Each teacher will be expected to approve the local curriculum with reference to the national one.

It is estimated that, in the autumn of the year 2001, the number of six-year-olds in free pre-school education will rise to 59,000, or some 90% of the age-group

Italy

School autonomy

School autonomy in teaching methods, organization, research, experimentation and development is aimed at encouraging the creation of schools that are more open, responsible, free, creative and independent. Autonomy is also intended to encourage cultural pluralism.

The regulation on autonomy provides, in particular, for the drafting of a *Piano dell'offerta formativa* (plan for educational provision) by schools, with the participation of all those directly involved in their activity. This plan is meant to establish their cultural identity and teaching programmes, spelling out the basic approach as regards plans for the curriculum, extra-curricular activity, teaching and organization. Still in an experimental phase, autonomy is due for full implementation from 1 September 2000. A project to monitor teacher training has been introduced in order to support this wholesale transformation of the Italian school system.

Latvia

A new Law on Education

In force since 1 June 1999, the Law is concerned mainly with programmes for all levels and kinds of education and all its target groups. It states that basic education is compulsory up to the age of 18. The new Law also plans for the introduction of compulsory pre-primary education for children aged 5-6. Recent laws on general and vocational education determine how curricula for both will be implemented in schools.

Norway

New structure for cooperation between higher education and the world of work

In June 1999, the Norwegian Council of State Colleges and the Norwegian Council of Universities, in cooperation with a variety of public and private organizations and enterprises, presented a report concerning third-level continuing education and training. The two councils are now planning to establish with interested bodies a cooperative endeavour known as Norgesuniversitetet (the University of Norway).

With its own permanent secretariat, the University will function as a meeting-place and network for skills development and work-related higher education. The report proposes the establishment of a database covering all the courses offered at higher education institutions (including those offered jointly with foreign institutions) as well as an internet-based kurstorg, or 'market-place for courses', bringing together training providers and enterprises keen to improve the skills of their staff.

The contribution below have been provided by the national units concerned in the Eurydice network.

More information is available on the Eurydice Internet website (<http://www.eurydice.org>) in the news section.

Portugal

Early childhood education

The main aims of pre-school education – which is considered to be the first stage in a process of lifelong learning – are set out in Law 5/97 relating to this level of schooling. The Jardim de Infância (kindergarten) is devised in accordance with the needs of children and working parents. It takes in children between the ages of 3 and 5 (until they enter formal schooling).

In isolated sparsely populated rural areas, itinerant teachers may provide regular activities for children who stay with their families, or meet for a few hours a day.

In urban areas, both Ministries concerned (Education, and Work and Solidarity) make every effort to support parents at work through after-school activities, the provision of meals, etc., besides exercising responsibility for educational activity.

Curricular guidelines have been prepared for all state and private kindergartens throughout the country. These guidelines reflect current professional knowledge in this area, and aim to enhance the profile of pre-school education and make for easier continuity with primary school.

Slovenia

Legalization of good practice

'The Matura represents one of the best prepared and most important educational projects in Slovenia,' says Dr Slavko Gaber, Slovenian Minister of Education and Sport. This secondary school leaving examination has replaced all university entrance examinations.

The Matura gave rise to extensive discussion, especially as regards students choosing between mathematics and a foreign language as compulsory subjects. Indeed, this remains the only real outstanding problem in the draft legislation on the examination

Sweden

A national programme for information and communication technologies in schools

Sweden is implementing the National Action Plan for information and communication technologies in schools (ItiS). The three-year Plan (1999-2001) seeks to support teachers in acquiring and exploiting the opportunities these technologies offer them, and will involve 60,000 teachers (about 40% of the workforce) who will receive in-service training. Teachers taking part will have a multimedia computer at their disposal. The Plan also provides for state grants to improve school access to the Internet, personal e-mail addresses for all teachers and pupils, support for developing the Swedish and European Schoolnets, and measures for pupils with special needs.

SEK 1.5 billion have been invested in the programme, which covers all types of schools for pupils aged between 6 and 19.

United Kingdom

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

As a result of wide-ranging legislation passed last year, a number of reforms came into force on 1 September 1999. Following the passing of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, all maintained schools in England and Wales entered new legal categories of Community, Foundation or Voluntary schools at the beginning of September. New arrangements for school governance and funding have also been introduced.

Other reforms in schools include the requirement for school discipline policies to include anti-bullying strategies and for the implementation of new arrangements for school exclusions. Schools are also required to draw up home-school agreements, which state the mutual responsibilities of the school, parents and pupils.

Following the National Year of Reading (1998/99), the year 2000 has been designated National Year of Maths. As part of these initiatives, all primary and special schools in England are expected to have a daily maths lesson of up to an hour from 1 September 1999. Strong emphasis is given to oral and mental work. This aspect of the Numeracy Strategy complements the daily literacy hour taught in primary schools since autumn 1998. Schools in Wales and Northern Ireland will also participate in Maths Year 2000.

The teaching profession is another area of modernization. The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 now requires Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in England to complete an induction year when they start teaching. The period of induction combines

an individualized programme of monitoring and support, with an assessment of the NQT's performance. There are also plans to implement an induction year in Wales. In Northern Ireland, new teachers already take part in an induction year, followed by a programme of Early Professional Development.

Scotland

The Scottish Parliament was officially opened on 1 July in Edinburgh. Education will principally be the responsibility of two Ministers, for Children and Education, and Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, respectively. Both Ministers will have Deputy Ministers. The former Scottish Office will now be known as the Scottish Executive.

In August 1999, the Higher Still framework of upper secondary qualifications was launched. It brings together, in one system, academic and vocational subjects at five levels of difficulty and will seek to raise attainment, improve progression, and incorporate core skills in the curriculum.

On top of the world

After decades of being treated as an icy desert, a source of natural riches or a strategic military zone, the Arctic is emerging as a distinct entity. Northern peoples are finding cooperative 'circumpolar' solutions to common threats. Universities and colleges have a key role in helping the region by enhancing northern expertise. A multi-partner, joint EU-Canada education project has given life to a wider grouping by promoting student mobility with the eventual intention of encouraging students to stay in the north.



Further information

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Arctic territories and peoples have long shared common challenges. These include threats to the sustainability of their environment, economy, security and cultural identities. The end of the Cold War helped dismantle barriers of mutual suspicion which hid the many similarities among the peoples of the north. Now closer relationships are being established not only between the northern peripheral peoples of the USA, Canada and Europe but increasingly with Russia, Japan and now even China.

Education and research have a crucial role, in examining the issues involved, in determining how to teach such subjects over the vast distances involved and in sharing this information around the whole Arctic region.

The bilateral programme on higher education between the EU and Canada, established in 1995, has been funding a pilot project in student mobility between the far north of Canada and peripheral areas of northern EU countries. It was designed to improve understanding and encourage transfer of knowledge, as well as encouraging students to study and stay in the north with their expertise.

Treating common themes

In 1989, George Waller – the president of Lakeland University in Canada – organized an informal debate on the role of universities in northern regional development. The main decision was to organize a series of conferences.

The second conference took place at the University of Lapland in Finland in 1992, and led to the establishment of the Circumpolar Universities Association (CUA). Its objectives were to encourage cooperation and promote higher learning and research in northern areas. In 1995, a permanent secretariat was set up, initially at the University of Lapland. Outi Snellman from the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland was nominated as the first secretary general.

"We began to establish databases and created a forum to talk about northern education and deal with common themes such as sustainable development, northern cultures and languages, indigenous peoples and migration, international politics, and access to education in remote regions," she explains. "We now have 70 institutions from Canada, China, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the UK and the USA."

Encouraging cooperation

The formation of the CUA helped individual member institutions to cooperate in projects such as those within the European Commission Framework Programmes on Research and Technological Development and the DG XXII Erasmus and Socrates programmes.

It also provided support for the DG XXII EU-Canada North Consortium project, one of the first to be funded under the 1995 bilateral agreement on higher education between the EU and Canada (see opposite). "We see this as a development of student mobility programmes organized under Erasmus and Socrates and equally important in terms of giving students a sense of their own region," explains Mrs Snellman.

"The North Consortium is almost a pilot project for the University of the Arctic," she points out. The concept of a University of the Arctic emerged from a feasibility study carried out by a CUA study group commissioned by the Arctic Council, whose ministerial meeting in 1998 announced the establishment of the University of the Arctic. This is based on a network of existing institutions

throughout the area with extensive use of distance learning and will develop an undergraduate Polar Studies bachelors degree (baccalaureate) programme.

When the talking has to stop

However, as Aaron Senkpiel of Yukon College in Canada points out, while the University of the Arctic concept provides a broad view, exchanges so far have been only at faculty and administrative levels – a student dimension was needed.

Student involvement is a key element in the development of a genuine activity, insists Mr Senkpiel, Canadian coordinator for the North Consortium – but money has always been an obstacle. Flying from one of the northern colleges to southern Canada can be more expensive than flying from Canada to Europe. So, the first call for projects under the EU-Canada higher education programme in January 1996 offered a perfect opportunity.

In Canada, the proposal involved three small northern colleges – Yukon College as well as Aurora College and Nunavut Arctic College (the two original halves of the former Arctic College, covering respectively the western and eastern Canadian Arctic areas) – together with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

Interest in Europe came from the University of Lapland, the Universities of Umeå and Luleå in Sweden, and the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Mrs Snelman became involved as European coordinator.

Student-centred cooperation was the basis of the North Consortium proposal. It aimed to promote the establishment of an international network amongst students – and teachers – to contribute to the economic, cultural and political development of northern, peripheral regions of the EU and Canada. It targeted students with studies of strategic importance to northern development – from preservation of native cultures to agriculture.

Enthusiastic reception

Over 60 proposals resulted from the first call under the EU-Canada programme. Some 14 or 15 were shortlisted to give a range of subjects and countries, but limited finance meant that only six could be funded.

"The North Consortium was the first project jointly selected with our Canadian partners," says Brendan Cardiff of the Commission education and culture department (DG EAC). "Three-year funding may be limiting but it is seed

money, providing access for faculties and students that would not otherwise get funding. It also helps start institutional change, allowing some colleges to cooperate across the Atlantic for the first time (as with Aurora and Nunavut)."

"Our application actually covered four years with one year up front to develop our networks, two years for moving students and then a fourth unfunded year for analysis," explains Mr Senkpiel. "Evaluation was important. The institutions involved have to learn how to do these things."

"The number of students participating was small – we aimed at 24 for each of the two years with 12 each from Europe and Canada. We were involving small institutions, so quality not quantity counted – and it required high personal investment by the students."

The first year was essential to establish networks, difficult in Canada because of the complexity of provincial and federal responsibilities with conflicting institutional administrations. There was also the problem of academic equivalencies.

"In Canada, we saw academic requirements for undergraduates, while the Europeans saw the programme more for postgraduates. As a result, we gained a huge boost in academic resources in Canada as we got more graduate students." This has added significantly to the northern knowledge base.

Wide range of disciplines

Some 43 students participated, from a wide range of disciplines including anthropology, business administration, forestry, international studies and political science. Funding covered a single four-month term but students could and did stay longer, although no additional money was paid.

Most students were enthusiastic about their visits and their future in the north (see below). While many have continued active involvement in the development of their home institutions or region, one or two students continue to work abroad. Others have become involved in the development of the University of the Arctic.

Several exchanges also took place between teaching staff, although few were funded through the project itself. This has led to lasting partnerships between faculty members in the institutions involved. "My personal view is that the project has been very successful – we've delivered. We met our goals and on budget. And the relationships established did not finish at the end of the project," says Mr Senkpiel.

Positive experience for students

Student experience of the North Consortium project was particularly positive, according to a student evaluation exercise. Over half the students participated in the survey, which indicated that the project overall was a positive experience with 76% of students either satisfied or very satisfied with the formal education they received. On the whole, students felt they had gained a greater understanding of northern peripheral regions on both sides of the Atlantic, it had increased their interest in travelling, learning and living in the north and the majority felt they were now more involved in their region. Interestingly, most students felt the project was of more benefit to their host than to their home institution.

Building bridges across the Atlantic

The bilateral agreement on higher education and training came out of the 1990 Transatlantic Declaration on EU-Canada relations. It led to a cooperative programme to encourage joint projects by higher education and training institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. The programme is administered for the EU by the Commission (education and culture DG).

In Canada, it is handled by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

The programme started at the end of 1995 with an annual budget of € 600,000 on the EU side and Can\$ 1 million from the Canadians. "We are hoping to increase funding slightly if there is a second phase after 2000, but this must depend on decisions by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament," says Brendan Cardiff of DG EAC.

"The purpose of the programme is building people-to-people bridges across the Atlantic," he explains. An important role is acting as a doorway for North American participation in European networks. Usually, the lead institutions on each side will have had some prior international experience.

To avoid the problem of split federal/Member State responsibilities – direct bilateral relations between a Canadian state or territory and an individual European country would be handled at that level – consortia must have a minimum of three organizations from different Member States and Provinces on each side of the Atlantic. "The three-plus-three structure provides a strong European dimension," stresses Mr Cardiff. Only a small number of the proposals received can be funded. All proposals are subject to independent review and the Commission is ready to explain why a negative decision has been made. And at the end of a project, there is always an independent external evaluation.

High-level Arctic forum

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 in Ottawa as an inter-governmental forum to address common concerns and challenges facing Arctic governments and people. The Council meets at ministerial level every two years. It focuses on protecting the Arctic environment and sustainable development to improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of the north. Members are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the USA. Permanent participants include: the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation; the Inuit Circumpolar Conference; the Saami Council; and the Aleutian International Association.

Specific goals for North Consortium project

- Increase interest and involvement of student and teaching staff in the development of northern communities in Canada and the EU;
- Improve technical and training opportunities in northern, peripheral regions;
- Increase collaboration amongst northern institutions and improve the transfer of knowledge and skills amongst their teaching staff and students;
- Stimulate interest in northern regions and increase the likelihood of students remaining in the region and contributing to its development; and,
- Promote greater understanding of important cultural, linguistic, political, environmental and economic features that distinguish northern, peripheral regions.



Strategic reflections in Potsdam

A conference was organized in Potsdam last June by the German Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with the European Commission, to take stock of the achievements of Leonardo da Vinci I and make proposals in connection with Leonardo da Vinci II.

In her opening address, Edelgard Bulmahn, the German minister responsible for training and research, stressed how the Potsdam Conference came at a key moment for the Community programme. She pointed out that it was under the German Presidency that Leonardo da Vinci Phase II was officially approved, with a budget of € 1.15 billion.

Domenico Lenarduzzi, acting director-general of the European Commission's DG XXII (now the Education and Culture DG), made the point that "in the vast field of vocational training, Germany is often a source of inspiration for neighbouring countries". In particular, he stressed the need progressively to create a "European education area". Between 2000 and 2006 this area will be developed by doubling the numbers participating in mobility in the field of education, training and youth. In all, "almost 2,500,000 Europeans should benefit from this mobility".

A "product fair" was also held in Potsdam to coincide with the debates, presenting the results of around 40 projects covering a very wide range of subjects and sectors, and a seminar on Qualification for Europe – results and prospects for cross-border cooperation in vocational training was attended by 250 participants, including a wide range of political decision-makers – government and Commission representatives and MEPs – together with the social partners, heads of training institutes and universities, and project promoters.

Results of the project selection following the 1999 call for proposals

The call for proposals for the last year of the programme brought in 2,140 project applications. At the end of the evaluation process, based on qualitative analysis criteria, 753 projects (622 from the 18 countries of the European Economic Area and 131 from the countries applying for EU membership) were selected, in accordance with the five priorities defined by the Commission and following the opinion of the programme committee. The total funding awarded to the selected projects is over € 94 million, including € 13 million for countries preparing for EU membership. In 1999 Bulgaria and Slovenia joined the other Central and Eastern European countries in this latter group, bringing the number of countries participating in the programme to 29.

Projects selected

The 753 transnational projects consist of 535 pilot projects and 218 placement and exchange programmes. Under the latter, 8,500 students and training organizers are benefiting from mobility at European level. A total of € 41.2 million has been granted to mobility actions involving nearly 28,000 people in all, the vast majority being young people undergoing initial training, apprentices, young workers and young job-seekers, as well as trainers and tutors.

Decentralization

Leonardo da Vinci II is placing even more emphasis on mobility. Under the new programme, some 250,000 young people should be able to follow training or undertake an in-company placement abroad. Mobility as a whole (initial training, young workers and university students and graduates) will be decentralized, with project funding allocated by the Member States.

Participating countries

Since 1999, 29 countries have been participating in Leonardo da Vinci and its mobility actions: the 15 EU Member States; Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein; Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Cyprus (1997); Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (1998); Bulgaria and Slovenia (1999).

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da Vinci I

Young people on the move

Between 1995 and 1998, 93,200 young people took advantage of mobility under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. These transnational placements not only had a positive and lasting impact on the young people themselves, but also on the training establishments and companies involved.

Mobility, through transnational placements and exchanges, is a central pillar of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. In 1999, for example, it accounted for 45.03% of the programme's budget, a higher percentage than that allocated to pilot projects and surveys/analyses, the two other types of measures. Between 1995 and 1998 a total of 103,400 people benefited from this mobility, the vast majority (90%) of them young. Exchanges of trainers, tutors and managers made up the remaining 10%.

Closer examination reveals three types of mobility, depending on the young people involved.

The first variety is aimed at young people following initial training. These are students at non-university level, attending a technical or occupational school, for example. In their case the placements abroad vary from three to 12 weeks or from three to nine months.

A second form of mobility is for young apprentices, young workers and young job-seekers without a university degree. In this case the placements can be for anything between three and nine months.

A criterion common to these two categories is the maximum age limit of 28. In both cases too, the actions are decentralized at national level. In practical terms this means that each Member State receives a global amount from the European Commission which it then allocates to mobility projects in line with its own priorities. Between 1995 and 1998, 40,000 young people in initial training participated in mobility schemes as well as 23,900 young workers and job-seekers.

Finally, the third type of mobility is the in-company placement of final year university students or new graduates as part of university/enterprise cooperation. These young people spend between three and 12 months in the foreign country and the actions are centralized by the Commission. During the four years, 29,300 young people took up these opportunities.

Looking beyond the figures

Considering these three groups together, a total of 93,200 young people took advantage of Leonardo da Vinci mobility schemes during the four years, and almost 130,000 if 1999 is also included. Quite a low figure then, compared to Erasmus? Yes and no. Because the comparison cannot be made in terms of numbers alone. Other criteria must be taken into account.

First of all, there can be successive and complementary mobility. A university student may receive an Erasmus grant during his or her first years at university and then later receive support under Leonardo da Vinci to spend a further period abroad at the end of those studies. Another point is that the Leonardo da Vinci grant - maximum € 5,000 - is higher than an Erasmus grant. Furthermore, it is very often combined with other aid, from the regions for example.

Exchanges and placements in the field of vocational training encounter obstacles that are specific to the groups of young people in question or the organization of systems in the Member States. For example, a job-seeker wanting to train in another EU country forfeits unemployment benefit and social security cover if the training lasts for more than three months¹. Another difficulty is that vocational training abroad is not automatically recognized in the Member State of origin. The launch of the Training Europass on 1 January 2000 is certainly a step in the right direction in helping to overcome this particular obstacle².

Positive impact

Finally, the mobility of young people under Leonardo da Vinci should also be measured against the lasting changes it produces. Between November 1998 and February 1999, the Commission urged Member States to hold meetings in order to assess progress at this level, in cooperation with the National Coordination Units and project promoters. The meetings produced a wealth of ideas and proposals and showed the very real and positive impact of young people's mobility on businesses and training establishments.

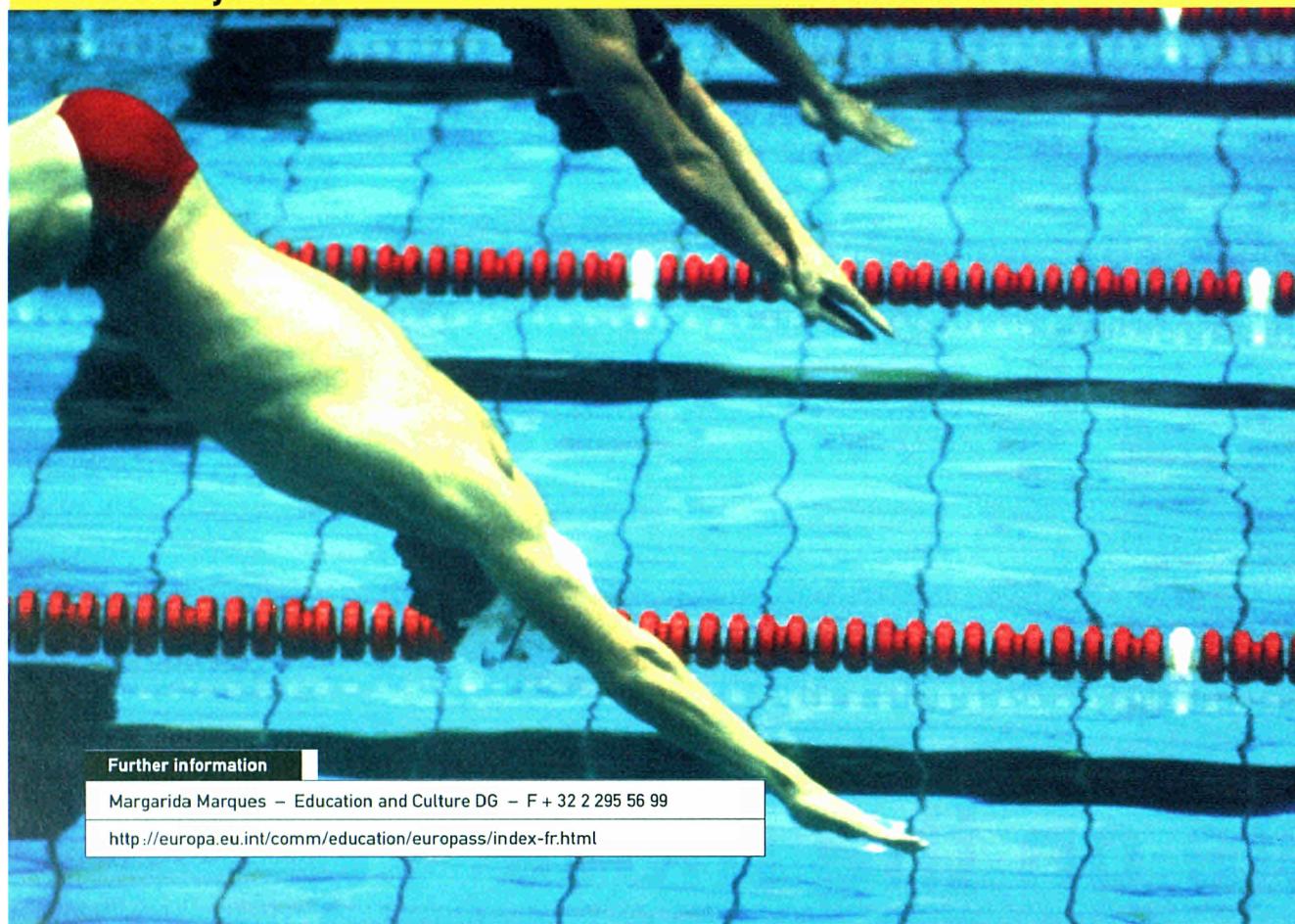
These exchanges and placements allow young people to acquire key skills, learn how to fend for themselves, take the initiative, speak a foreign language, solve problems, work as part of a team, and open their minds to Europe. The training establishments also benefit. Mobility makes it possible to increase the flow of know-how between the world of study and the world of work. The result is that training content tends to become better adapted to new job profiles.

For their part, businesses are becoming increasingly enthusiastic about employing these trainees. They see it as an opportunity to meet and test motivated candidates who they may ultimately hire. The ideal situation would be if, in the future, these companies themselves took the initiative to welcome large numbers of young foreigners. ■

¹ In its Green Paper "Education, Training, Research – Obstacles to Transnational Mobility", the European Commission has drawn up a comprehensive list of these obstacles (see European Union Newsletter – supplement 5/96)

² See next page.

1 January 2000



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Training Europass: a smooth launch

The Training Europass was launched on 1 January 2000. This document will validate periods of training spent in another country. Together with the Member States, the European Commission has been redoubling its efforts to spread information about the scheme and attract the largest number of potential users.

Contrary to what some people may think, the Training Europass is not a passport for crossing borders. It is a document, a European standard, which provides evidence of participation in a European 'pathway' of work-linked training abroad. The Europass is available to anyone who follows such a course of education, involving training both at school and in the workplace, in a European Union country. Age and level of studies are irrelevant. This means that a young apprentice can benefit from the Europass in exactly the same way as a university student or an unemployed person on a retraining programme.

In order to take advantage of this pass, students or trainees must first find a company, school or training centre in another country which is ready to accept them. This organization becomes the host partner. After this, the establishment where the individual is already studying and the host organization agree on the detailed training arrangements (content, objective, duration, monitoring). Before setting off abroad, the trainee receives his or her Training Europass, one section of which must be completed by the home training establishment. The

Europass holder then undertakes his or her European pathway at the host firm or institution, in line with the training plan determined in advance. A personal tutor will help the student to become integrated throughout this period. On completion of the European pathway, the host partner completes the Training Europass (in its own language), thereby attesting to the training received.

When the trainee returns home, this attestation is translated. The home establishment –and this is the crucial principle– thereby officially recognizes this European pathway followed abroad as an integral part of the individual's training.

Priority for information

The Training Europass was created following the Council Decision (of 21 December 1998) aimed at the "promotion of European pathways in work-linked training, including apprenticeships", which entered into force on 1 January 2000.

The Europass is being promoted by the European Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States. A committee

of national experts has worked hard to prepare a smooth launch. In cooperation with the Commission, it met on two occasions, in May and October, to decide on the best strategy for the widest possible promotion of the Europass. This includes a charter to help ensure that the document and its purpose is understood in the same way in each Member State. Arrangements have also been made to ensure close cooperation with the social partners and a programme of national presentation seminars is scheduled. Giving priority to information, the European Commission has published a general information brochure on the Europass, available in 11 languages. A page setting out all the relevant information can also be consulted at the Education and Culture DG's website. This gives a complete list of the national bodies from which further details can be obtained. Among other things, these national bodies are responsible for issuing the Europass. But have no fear: there is no danger of stocks running out. The Commission has decided to publish no fewer than 300,000 copies of the document.

The move from training to general education

Vocational training does not always get a good press. One of the most frequent criticisms is that it fails to provide access to general education, and to higher education in particular. But it seems this pessimistic view needs some qualification. Key Data on Young People's Vocational Training, recently published by the European Commission, provides a more complete – and encouraging – picture.

This sensitive question is clearly of major interest in the EU Member States. A recent survey¹ by Jyväskylä University in Finland analysed current reforms to improve vocational training in seven European countries. One of the principal measures it identified was the reappraisal of vocational training diplomas in order to make them comparable to general education diplomas. Some countries, France and the United Kingdom for example, are trying to develop a formal parity status between the two streams of education by linking them both to a common system of diplomas. This ensures that all students are able to go on to more advanced training and transfer from one system to the other by giving equal value to their qualifications.

The results of another survey just published by the European Commission has now shed more light on this very topical issue. Key Data On Young People's Vocational Training, which includes a separate chapter on opportunities for continuing education beyond upper secondary level vocational training, presents some very interesting figures from the period 1995/1996. Despite what many people believe, bridges between the two streams do exist, even if they could be more coherent.

These Key Data show that 48% of young people on vocational training programmes (at upper secondary level) have access – at least in theory – to general education courses.

Moreover, 40% of these young people are able to pursue their studies in just the same way as young people coming out of the general education system. However, this European average conceals some major differences between individual countries. Germany has the lowest percentage of young people gaining access to general education (18%). At the other end of the spectrum, all young people in Sweden have, in theory, the possibility of following a broader education.

The overall percentage of youngsters who are able to gain access to higher general education after having undertaken technical or occupational training at secondary level is lower, just 41%.

Finally, the Key Data indicate that 69% of young people are able to go on to higher education, whether vocational or general.

Key Data on Training 1999 now available

In 1997 the European Commission published the first version of the Key Data on Vocational Training in the European Union, in cooperation with Eurostat and Cedefop. In its second edition, published at the end of 1999, the Commission has chosen to concentrate (on the basis of figures relating to 1995/1996) on one of the five chapters from the first study: initial vocational training. The report offers a full picture of vocational training for young people, with eight chapters corresponding to eight key issues:

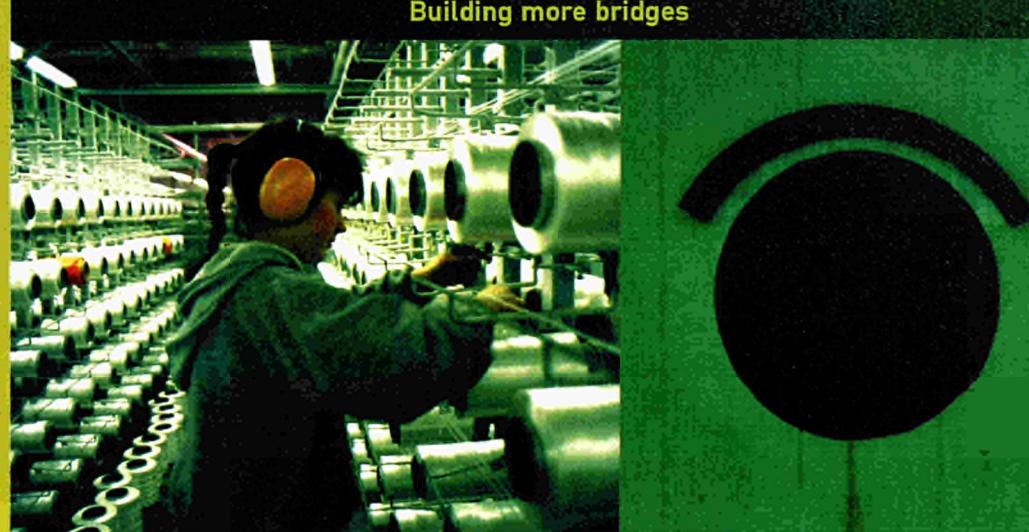
- training and vocational education systems
- the enterprise, an active partner in vocational education and training
- apprenticeship
- continuing with training
- participation in vocational education and training
- equal opportunities for men and women
- European Union programmes and initiatives.

¹ This survey was coordinated by the Centre for Educational Research at Jyväskylä University and carried out over a period of two years (1996-1997). It received support from the Leonardo da Vinci programme. Eight different education systems were studied in seven countries: Germany, the United Kingdom (England and Scotland), Austria, Finland, France, Sweden and Norway.

Further information

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Building more bridges



What's new in vocational education and training?

Raising standards in vocational education and training (VET) and improving access are common overall themes of the following contributions, but they are dealt with in a number of different contexts. Preventing exclusion is the concern of the French, Portuguese, Danish and Dutch. In the United Kingdom a further comprehensive reform of the structures for financing and delivering VET is proposed, while Ireland is establishing an overall qualifications structure and Belgium (Wallonia) is looking to a 2004 horizon.

The articles have been contributed by members of Cedefop's documentary information network. It is intended in future, with the aid of the European Training Foundation (ETF), to include brief reports concerning reforms in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Space however is very limited and readers interested in VET development should make contact with the ETF and Cedefop, particularly through the Electronic Training Village site (www.trainingvillage.gr) which offers a large amount of material on VET systems and their development.

Belgium

Wallonia horizon 2004: innovating and mobilizing

In its regional policy statement approved by the Walloon parliament last July, the Walloon regional government advocated an increased regional training effort and greater synergy between education and training.

As a general rule, training should meet collective and individual needs, both present and future, and endeavour to provide the trainee with the necessary tools to update his or her skills. In addition, the social partners should be more closely involved in course development. In order to guarantee equal opportunities, special attention must be paid to training unskilled job-seekers and actions to combat illiteracy. A mechanism will be introduced to allow young people, especially those who failed to complete their school education, to follow vocational education from the age of 16, irrespective of their school history.

The regional government also plans to increase apprenticeships and work-linked training organized by SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises). More specifically, job-seekers will be given the chance to follow vocational training in the form of a "training credit". These courses will be covered by a "training credit contract" which organizes the training, the various stages in the integration process and anchorage in the related job. In the field of in-company training for employees, the regional government will continue to develop the system of "training vouchers" for workers in SMEs, to simplify access to regional mechanisms and to coordinate its action with the sectoral social partners.

Source: Forem (Cidoc)

Denmark

Room for all in the education and training system

Each year the Minister of Education holds a meeting to discuss a theme of major interest with representatives of the entire Danish education system. In 1999 the theme was how to create a flexible system with room for all, regardless of their capabilities and social background, and which considers everybody's strengths and potential.

The background for the discussion is that 17% of a Danish youth cohort never enters, or drops out of, youth education and training. A report prepared for the Ministry of Education had screened reports on existing education and training schemes targeted at the residual group and described which initiatives had been successful and why. It concluded firstly that the 'residual' group covers many different groups of young people and that the current knowledge of it and its characteristics is rather limited. Secondly, the programmes organized in accordance with individual needs, wishes and capabilities that were launched in the beginning of the 1990s have proved successful. Thirdly, individualized guidance plays a major role in helping young people from the residual group to complete an education and training programme, often going far beyond simple educational guidance and compensating for the lack of parental support. Finally, the report concluded that enterprises are shirking their responsibility in relation to the residual group.

Source: DEL

France

Combating illiteracy, a national priority

In June 1998 the French government commissioned a report designed to give new impetus to its policy of combating illiteracy. The report was published in April 1999 (<http://www.centre-inffo.fr>).

The seven proposals reinforce the message that the anti-exclusion law identified the campaign against illiteracy as a national priority. The recommendations are:

- To improve the identification and orientation of the population in question.
- To organize and improve the training response, after having drawn up an inventory of the training supply.
- To situate training within an overall policy running from the school to the enterprise.
- To translate this policy into methods of financing.
- To develop a territorial training organization by means of a programming in each region.
- To assess the impact of the actions carried out, the quality of the training, the teaching aids.
- To create a national coordination and support body that could take the form of a GIP ("public interest grouping").

These recommendations are in response to a clearly identified need. Since an interministerial committee was set up in 1984 – the GPLI or "Anti-Illiteracy Standing Group" – the actions carried out have achieved many results. On the other hand, there is an evident lack of a genuine public policy. Finally, there is a need for greater professionalism with regard to the players and the results assessment.

Source: Centre Inffo

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Ireland

New framework for qualifications

A comprehensive qualifications framework has been established in Ireland for the first time under the terms of the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act. Based largely on the work of TEASTAS, the interim National Qualifications Authority, the Act covers the areas of further and higher education.

A Further Education and Training Awards Council will incorporate the current further education and training certification functions of the main training institutions. A Higher Education and Training Awards Council will incorporate the higher education and training functions of the National Council for Educational Awards.

Overseeing these bodies will be the National Qualifications Authority, which will be the overall guarantor of the quality of further and higher education and training. An important aspect of its work will be to promote access, transfer and progression within education and training and between courses and colleges, and to cooperate with international bodies to promote mutual recognition of qualifications. Flexibility of provision for the full-time and part-time student, accreditation of prior learning and representation of learners' interests will be part of the brief of the new authority.

Source: FAS

Netherlands

**Early school leaving:
a central role for municipal authorities**

In the Netherlands, too many young people leave the educational system without a diploma. "The prospects for young people without a starting qualification often come down to long-term or frequent unemployment, poor chances for future personal development, alienation from society and, possibly, even to criminality," in the view of the Dutch Inspectorate for Education. The government is committed to reducing early school leaving and published an action plan last May.

Early school leavers are those who fail to acquire a 'starting qualification', i.e. who did not successfully conclude training at the basic level or qualify for a diploma in senior general secondary education. The problem concerns about 30% of all young people, often from an ethnic minority background, and occurs mostly in big cities.

The action plan describes three lines of action: prevention, better registration and special measures.

- To prevent early school leaving, schools have to make special arrangements to reduce the risk during the transition from pre-vocational to vocational education, by working together on a regional level, exchanging student dossiers and organizing methods for intake and assessment.
- Adequate registration is necessary to identify individuals who are dropping out of the system. The school-leaving age is 16 in the Netherlands. Each municipality has an office to check whether all young people under 16 actually attend school. The authority of this office has now been extended to young people up to the age of 23.
- 48 million guilders (€23.7 million) will be made available to subsidize targeted areas and activities, some of them in line with successful initiatives executed in recent years in, for example, Gouda and the Rotterdam region.

Source: CINOP

Portugal

**The information society and people
with special needs**

A Green Paper on the Information Society, issued by the Portuguese government in April 1997, took the view that information technologies provide considerable scope for improving the integration of people with disabilities into society.

The council of ministers has now set up the National Initiative for People with Special Needs – in particular physically or mentally handicapped people, elderly people and the bedridden – in order to help them draw full benefit from the new information and communication technologies in promoting their social integration and improving their quality of life.

The initiative is based on the following principles, which must provide a guiding framework for measures and initiatives allowing people with special needs to enjoy their rights of citizenship:

- Priority for the development of economically accessible products and services for people with special needs.
- Promotion of the concept of "universal design", which consists of the design and development of technological products and environments that can be used by the greatest number of people.
- Research and development of knowledge and skills for promoting the integration of people with special needs.
- More dynamic cooperation between the sectors (public and private) and users in the development of technologically advanced products adapted to people's needs.
- Greater awareness aimed at integrating people with special needs. .

Source: Cides

United Kingdom

Shake-up of post-16 system

A White Paper published last June, Learning to Succeed, sets out a completely new framework for post-16 education and training. The new structure follows a wide-ranging review and consultation process which showed the existing system to be complex, confusing and bureaucratic.

The new proposals include the establishment of a national body, the Learning and Skills Council, to coordinate all aspects of VET, both for 16-19 year-olds and for adult learning. The new agency will have an annual budget of around £5 billion (€ 7.6 billion). It will fund further education and sixth form colleges (upper secondary schools) which currently depend on the Further Education Funding Council, as well as work-based vocational training which is currently funded by 84 Training and Enterprise Councils. The national Learning & Skills Council will work with a network of 40 to 50 local councils which will ensure that the skills and learning needs of local labour markets and communities are adequately provided for.

In line with the government's commitment to raising standards in education and training, the White Paper set out plans to rationalize the inspection system. The existing government inspection body Ofsted will take responsibility for all school- and college-based provision, and a new inspection body will be set up with responsibility for work-based provision.

The new structure also includes a shake-up of the careers advisory service with extra guidance and support being provided for students, based on a network of personal advisers. Personal advisers will support all young people from age 13 to ensure a smooth transition from compulsory schooling to post-16 learning, and they will work with 16- and 17-year-olds who need extra guidance and support to benefit from mainstream learning.

Source: IPD



2001

Further information

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The European Year of Languages



The Commission is proposing that 2001 should be the European Year of Languages.

The central message will be that learning foreign languages opens the door to understanding other cultures and to improving career prospects. Language skills make it easier to take full advantage of European citizenship, including living and working in other EU countries.

The Commission will manage the Year in cooperation with the Council of Europe. The proposed budget for the European Union is €8 million. There will be a wide range of activities, accessible to all.

The long-term goal¹ is to help all European citizens speak two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue. Currently, 51% of adult European adults² and 29% of young people between 15 and 24³ do not speak any foreign language well enough to hold a conversation. The European Year should help to improve this situation.

A key theme of the Year will be the celebration of linguistic diversity. The aim is not merely to encourage people to learn widely spoken languages such as English. To live among or to have successful contacts with people requires a knowledge of their language and their culture. Mastering a range of languages is also important in career terms. Employers can find plenty of people who speak English. But European businesses need other languages, too.

This will not be the first European Year on an educational theme. 1996 was the European Year of Lifelong Learning. That initiative was very successful. The Commission will build on that experience in organizing the Year of Languages, which will underline the importance of beginning to learn languages at primary school or before and of continuing throughout working life and beyond.

The centrepiece of the Year will be a Community-wide information campaign aimed at the general public, with a logo and a multilingual set of slogans. The Commission will organize the campaign in consultation with communications experts. Television and other mass media, in particular the press and the Internet, will play an important part.

A short Guide for Language Learners will be produced, in the form of a booklet explaining what to look for in a good language course and suggesting techniques for learning successfully. There will be exhibitions and events open to the public, including open days at the European institutions. European competitions, aimed at schoolchildren and adults, will be organized. Celebrities will be asked to support the European Year and to help spread its message.

Member States will be asked to set up national and regional information relays, so that citizens can find out about language learning opportunities near their homes. Co-finance will be available for national and transnational projects aiming to

reinforce the message of the European Year and to increase opportunities for successful language learning.

The European Year will complement existing Community activities supporting language learning. The new Socrates programme includes this under different headings. For example, Comenius (school education) provides measures for the initial or further training of language teachers, and backing for language learning projects based on exchanges between school classes. Lingua, under Socrates, will take a more targeted approach, aiming at the promotion of language learning and the development of teaching methods and materials. And the Leonardo da Vinci programme encourages learning in vocational training through transnational projects and exchanges.

The proposal for the European Year was adopted by the Commission on 13 October 1999. It will now be debated in the European Parliament and in the Council of Ministers, and a final decision should be taken before summer 2000. Meanwhile, the Commission has proposed an additional budget of €4 million to allow proper preparation for the launch of the Year. ■

¹ See the Commission's White Paper: Teaching and learning – Towards the learning society (based on COM (95)590 final, 29 November 1995), Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1996

² Eurobarometer 44 (April 1996 - survey November 1995)

³ Eurobarometer 47.2, 1997

A programme for regional and minority languages

Education and Culture Commissioner Viviane Reding has told the European Parliament that she intends to submit a multi-annual programme proposal on regional and/or minority languages. This would contribute to the development of the European dimension in education through the learning, promotion and dissemination of such languages.

The programme will probably be adopted in 2001.

Further information

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Culture hits the headlines

After Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphaël, the Culture framework programme (2000-2004) is soon to start up. Cultural Europe is on the march and gaining ground.

First came economic integration, then social, only later followed by the cultural dimension of European construction. The earliest initiatives date back to 1974, when the European Parliament encouraged the Community to move into the cultural sphere. Since 1985, a European Council of Culture Ministers has met regularly. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 brought a major step forward. Thanks to the new Article 128, culture became a field of action under Community competence, complete with the appropriate legal basis. European activity in this area was founded henceforth on the two essential principles of cultural diversity and subsidiarity.

The launch

From 1996 onwards, the Commission was able to launch real action programmes designed to promote cultural cooperation in Europe and the creation and spread of culture, and to encourage the preservation of the Community heritage. Kaleidoscope was the first, supporting artistic and cultural activities with a European dimension. Originally adopted in 1996 for a three-year period, the programme was renewed for a further year in 1999. Over the four years, a total of 518 projects have been supported, with a budget of € 36.7 million.

Ariane is concerned with books and reading and supports, in particular, projects to translate literary, theatrical and reference works. Initially set to run for two years (1997-1998), it too was extended for a further year. With a budget of € 11.1 million, it aided almost 600 European projects during its three-year existence.

Raphaël contributes to the preservation and promotion of Europe's cultural heritage. This four-year programme (1997-2000) has already supported over 400 projects involving 1,500 cultural players across Europe.

In addition to these three programmes, a specific action has been conducted for the designation, every year, of a "European City of Culture". Weimar was chosen in 1999, receiving Community aid of € 600,000 made available through the Kaleidoscope programme.

Raphaël, Ariane and Kaleidoscope have produced concrete results and generated dynamic European initiatives. However, the Commission's approach was felt to be fragmented. There was a need for a more global plan, a better integrated approach and a single financing instrument. That is why, in June 1999, the Council proposed the launch of the 2000-2004 Culture framework programme. The proposal met with some reservations on the part of the European Parliament which

wanted to increase the budget from € 167 million to 250 m. Nevertheless, by the end of 1999 a compromise was in sight and the new Culture programme was set to be approved.

Some transitional measures have been taken while the new proposal has been awaiting adoption and implementation. Since last year, the European Commission has set aside € 7 million to fund a number of pilot projects in preparation for the future programme. Also in 1999, the Commission benefited from a new Community budget line, Connect, aimed at supporting preparatory actions based on a synergy between culture and training, which would incorporate research and new technologies. Connect received a budget of € 15 million.

A global approach

The 2000-2004 Culture framework programme will cover three types of action. The "specific, innovative and/or experimental" actions will generally cover projects initiated under the three earlier programmes, Ariane, Raphaël and Kaleidoscope. The "cultural, structured and multi-annual cooperation agreements" are new, providing aid for up to three years designed to promote the launch of ambitious cultural and artistic cooperation actions.

Finally, a third group of measures is aimed at "special cultural events with a European or international dimension". The European City of Culture scheme will come into this category.

From the economy to culture

In addition to the specific measures under the framework programme, the Commission aims to include the cultural dimension in all its policies. Notable progress has been made recently in this respect. In the fiscal field, the Commission submitted a proposal to the Council to try out a new system of reduced VAT rates for labour-intensive services to restore the cultural heritage, which will not be exposed to cross-border competition. The restoration and maintenance of historical buildings could fall into this category.

Support for cultural infrastructures under the Structural Funds (the Feder, for example) is also to be increased. It was decided at the Berlin Council in March 1999 that regional development projects linked to tourism could explicitly include cultural projects, provided they created jobs and were incorporated into regional development strategies.

This is to recognize that culture, of inherent value in itself, also creates a social link and generates economic wealth.

Further information

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European Cities of Culture

The following have already been selected:

2000: Avignon, Bergen (Norway), Bologna, Brussels, Cracow, Helsinki, Prague, Reykjavik, Santiago de Compostela
2001: Porto, Rotterdam
2002: Bruges, Salamanca
2003: Graz
2004: Genoa, Lille

The budget for cultural action, awarded by the Commission (in millions of euro)

1991	9.627	1996	26
1992	11.962	1997	27.925
1993	12.355	1998	30.9
1994	14.8	1999	37.6
1995	19.4		

The impact of culture on employment

Recent evaluations put the number of jobs in the cultural sector, in the 15 European Union countries, at around 2.5 million in 1995. This is about 2% of total employment in Europe. Of particular note is the exceptionally strong growth of the cultural sector over the past decade, easily outstripping employment growth as a whole.

Highlighting the Media programme

Europe makes very good films and audiovisual products. But it is a different story when it comes to sales and distribution. The Media programme was set up to correct this structural weakness, providing European aid where it is most needed: upstream and downstream of production.

A few figures immediately make the point about the European audiovisual industry. On the one hand, American productions dominate 85% of the market (and as much as 99% in some countries). On the other hand, 80% of European output does not leave the country where it was produced. Europe is lagging behind. Yet it makes just as many films as the United States, and very good ones at that. So where is the problem?

You could say that Europe 'thinks culture' whereas the US makes money. In the States it is not unusual for as much money to be invested in marketing a film as in making it – which is not the case in Europe. Here the market is split up into 15 countries and 11 languages, and productions find it very difficult to cross national borders due to the diversity of customs and cultural tastes. In the US, seven major distribution networks share worldwide film distribution. In Europe, we have 1,000 distributors and a sector dominated by small companies (SMEs).

The sensitive points

With its Media programme, the European Commission is trying to correct the balance. It aims to boost the competitiveness of the cinematographic, audiovisual and multimedia industry and create an environment favourable to the sector's growth. After an experimental phase (1986-1990), an initial Media I programme was launched for 1991-1995. This was followed by Media II, 1996-2000, with a budget of € 310 million. This may seem like a lot of money, but perhaps not so much when you consider that the average cost of a Hollywood production is \$78 million. Clearly, Media II was not going to limit itself to just a few European mega-productions. Equally out of the question was support for "europudding" productions, without any real local flavour. Europe is rich in cultural diversity and must remain so.

For maximum effectiveness, Media had to make a careful study of the weak points of the audiovisual industry. When it comes to production, Europe is in pretty good shape. As a rule, countries give dynamic support to their film industries,

providing aid amounting to some € 500 million a year. The problem lies more upstream and downstream of production, in setting up the initial project and, later, in distributing the completed work. The Commission therefore decided to concentrate its efforts in these two sensitive areas.

Media II pursues three main lines of action: training, development and distribution. To promote training, the Commission allocated € 45 million to support transnational projects in areas such as sales, financial and legal management, the use of new technologies and scriptwriting. Development, also an upstream activity, is concerned with pre-production: screenplays, financial engineering, the search for partners, etc. The aim is to encourage the making of films and other audiovisual productions which will be better suited to the market.

As to the downstream activity of distribution, this is a key aspect. Media II seeks both to assist with the distribution of European works inside the EU and to promote the circulation of national productions from one country to another. The "development" and "distribution" actions receive funding of € 265 million.

European added value

What is the impact of these programmes? An assessment carried out halfway through Media II yielded some interesting information. In one way or other, Media II manages to reach about 40% of the sector's professionals in Europe, with 1,200 cooperation contracts signed with the Commission every year. In strictly quantitative terms, the Media II programme is not particularly significant, representing just 0.5% of the total cinema, audiovisual and multimedia budget. But the funds produce much greater indirect results. On average, every euro invested serves to generate € 5.75 in the industry. Distribution produces the highest ratio of 7.2/1.

At the same time, US penetration of the European market has remained stable. No doubt the full effects of European policy

will only be felt in the long term. But this does not mean that Europe has not already scored some notable successes. Animation, for example, was a field dominated by the Japanese, where Media invested heavily. Today, Belgian, British, German, French, Spanish and Italian cartoons have established their place in both European and global markets. Thanks to Media, Europe has chalked up an industrial victory.

A technological revolution

As the year 2000 starts, attention is turning to "post" Media II. In December 1999, the Commission approved the guidelines for a new programme: Media +. In addition to the three existing strands of training, development and distribution, there will now be support for promotion proper, separate from distribution. One of the challenges will be to achieve bigger audiences for productions outside the European market. Support for distribution will remain the priority, as it is here that European added value is most substantial. The budget is also to be increased, to € 400 million.

Media + will also aim to promote new technologies, such as on-line access to films and digital technology. In particular, a revolutionary new technology, DVD, is set to change the audiovisual landscape. This will make it possible to store digital films on CD Rom, in eight language versions and as many as 32 subtitled versions. In practice, this means that someone who buys a Spanish film (in DVD) in Germany can immediately opt for the version that is either dubbed or subtitled in German. The big advantage of this technology – which may one day also permit the recording of TV programme – is that it enables the same cultural product to be simultaneously distributed throughout Europe.

In order to promote Media II throughout Europe, provide information to sector professionals and, when necessary, offer help in completing funding applications, 30 Media II information offices (Media Desks) currently operate in the 15 European Union countries.

The drug test confronting a modern sporting challenge

Doping is a scourge as old as civilization itself. But today it has taken on new and worrying dimensions.

The European Commission is responding by adopting a Community support plan to combat doping in sport.

The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all used opium to boost their athletic prowess. At the end of the 19th century, heroin and morphine made their appearance in sports such as cycling, boxing and horse racing. In the 1950s, amphetamines and anabolic steroids hit the headlines, followed in recent years by new substances such as EPOs.

Man has always striven to improve his performance – this is the very essence of sport. But this must not be confused with doping: a means of artificially boosting physical performance which is both ethically unacceptable and a threat to the physical and mental wellbeing of the athlete.

Doping has changed over the years, and today the alarm bells are ringing. The scandals surrounding the 1998 Tour de France, resulting in the exclusion of several teams, revealed the full extent of the problem to public opinion worldwide. The problem is corrupting nearly all sporting sectors at the highest level. The East German swimmers doped on hormones and the disqualification of the Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson, in 1988, are just two examples which drew extensive media coverage.

Doping has taken on new and worrying forms. The products used by some of today's athletes are more and more sophisticated, increasingly difficult to detect, and increasingly dangerous to the men and women who take them. This is becoming a real public health problem, affecting not just top-class athletes but amateurs and young people too. Over recent years money and the media have exerted increasing pressure on athletes who are expected to record ever-better performances at an increasingly young age. Their sporting calendars are too full, and rest periods too short. Of course this does not inevitably lead to doping – but it does encourage it. At the same time, the trade in doping products is becoming

increasingly "industrialized" with international circuits and networks structured along the lines of drug trafficking.

The sporting bodies previously responsible for detecting and eradicating doping are finding themselves powerless to combat the scourge alone. Hence the crucial importance of international action, undertaken jointly by sports organizations and public authorities, which must become more involved.

Europe at the forefront

Europe must be at the forefront of the crusade against doping, if only because it is here that most top-level sporting events are held. No fewer than 77 world championships and 102 European championships took place on this continent in 1999.

Europe has not remained inactive. As early as 16 November 1989, the Council of Europe adopted an anti-doping convention. Moreover, on being appointed Commission President, Romano Prodi immediately told the European Parliament that this issue was high on his list of priorities as a matter which affects all Europe's citizens. Action soon followed and on 24 November 1999, on the initiative of Commissioner Viviane Reding, the Commission adopted a communication based on a "Community support plan to combat doping in sport". There are three main components to this action plan.

The first involves providing support for a European Ethics Group, made up of experts, whose task is to examine the problem and formulate proposals. The Group recommends introducing a system of health control for athletes and a directive for the protection of young sportspeople.

Secondly, the Commission wants to be actively involved in setting up a World Anti-Doping Agency, in close cooperation with the International Olympic Committee. The innovative

feature of this agency, officially launched on 10 November 1999, is that it will include representatives from the world of sport and the public authorities, on a parity basis. Both the EU and the Council of Europe will be directly involved. In particular, the agency will work on drawing up a joint list of banned drugs and on harmonizing the methods used for drug tests on athletes. It will also have considerable moral authority. The aim is for it to be fully operational before the Olympic Games, in Sydney, in September 2000.

Mobilizing all the instruments

Thirdly, the Commission aims to mobilize all the Community instruments at its disposal. This means action in the field of public health, making use of every opportunity offered by police and judicial cooperation programmes, and enlisting education, vocational training and youth programmes in the service of information and training, awareness-raising and prevention.

Finally, there is a need to step up research into the drugs used, detection methods and the health impact of doping. A number of high-tech projects in very sensitive fields have already been launched under the Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, with the support of the Commission. One example relates to EPOs. The fight against these new drugs is at present handicapped by the fact that the indicator used to detect their presence – the haematocrit ratio in the blood – is imprecise and unreliable. European research will make it possible to develop more precise and more reliable EPO detection methods.



Further information

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A voyage for peace in the Mediterranean





With the support of Unesco, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, 96 young people from countries bordering the Mediterranean set sail on a peace cruise last summer. Could the friendships formed at sea help to defuse the tensions on land?

The leaders of the world-wide Scout Association learned in 1997 that their Polish branch was the owner of a magnificent three-masted sailing ship, the 36-metre Chevalier noir. What is more, it was available for hire. As chance would have it, at that time the Scout Association was thinking of setting up a project to encourage youth organization leaders in the Mediterranean to explore the benefits of regional cooperation, with the accent on tolerance and breaking down prejudices. This idea, combined with the fortuitous availability of the Chevalier noir, gave rise to a "peace cruise" project and the chance for youth workers from Mediterranean countries to embark on a journey from port to port.

The first proposal – a trip to Italy, the Balkans and the Black Sea – was abandoned in favour of a visit to the Middle East and the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Contacts were made, meetings set up and a broad partnership created in support of the peace cruise. Unesco, the Council of Europe's North-South Centre and the European Commission all decided to back this initiative. The European Union Youth Forum and the Mediterranean Youth Forum were both directly involved in the project, which was determined to involve youth organizations on both sides of the Mediterranean. Scouts made up half the cruise participants; the other half were representatives of other member organizations from these two fora.

Four groups of 24 young people

Organizing a peace cruise of this kind is a complex operation in which no detail can be overlooked. After talks with the local authorities, the exact route was decided. The sailing ship would lift anchor in early August in Alexandria and set sail for Gaza, Haifa, Larnaka, Beirut, Istanbul, Antalya and Thessalonica, arriving at Piraeus in Athens at the end of September. But it was not all plain sailing, and the route had to be modified at the last minute due to political opposition in several of these countries.

In addition to the professional sailors, 24 young people from European and non-European Mediterranean countries, representing a wide range of cultures, joined the ship for periods of 10 days. The young crew was replaced on three occasions, first in Larnaka (Cyprus) and then in Antalya and Istanbul (Turkey). A total of 96 young people therefore joined the cruise at some stage or other. On board, the peace sailors were not solely occupied with the day-to-day physical chores of life at sea. They also attended training sessions in mediation and conflict solving in line with the cruise's primarily educational function. The instructors – all youth workers – had themselves been specially prepared for the mission by the Centre of Applied Studies in International Negotiation in Geneva. There were 16 of them in all, four for each group of 24 young people.

The participants were carefully selected, on the basis of their ability to transfer the skills acquired during their time on the Chevalier noir to their own organization, for example, by setting up training sessions on conflict solving.

Peace events

"Peace events" were another key element in the whole project. The cruise was not seen as an end in itself, but as a catalyst for organizing events at each port of call which would be linked to the theme of peace, involve a large number of youth organizations, and establish contact with the political authorities. In the non-European Mediterranean countries in particular, there was a desire to help the youth organizations make themselves better known and respected and at the same time to establish cooperation links between countries and regions. These events received support from the national and local authorities, reflecting their commitment to the cause of peace.

At the peace cruise's official presentation in Brussels, in July 1999, the project's principal 'sponsors' had made a special point of stressing its political importance. Miguel Angel Martinez, MEP and president of the Council of Europe's

A question of education

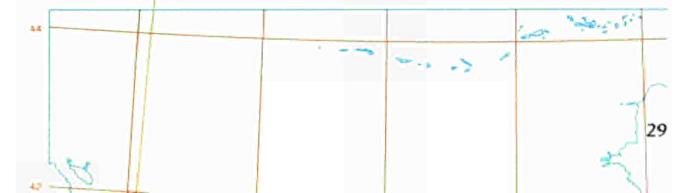
"Peace cannot be secured entirely by commercial interests, military alliances, general disarmament or mutual treaties, unless the spirit of peace is there in the minds and wills of the peoples. This is a matter of education."

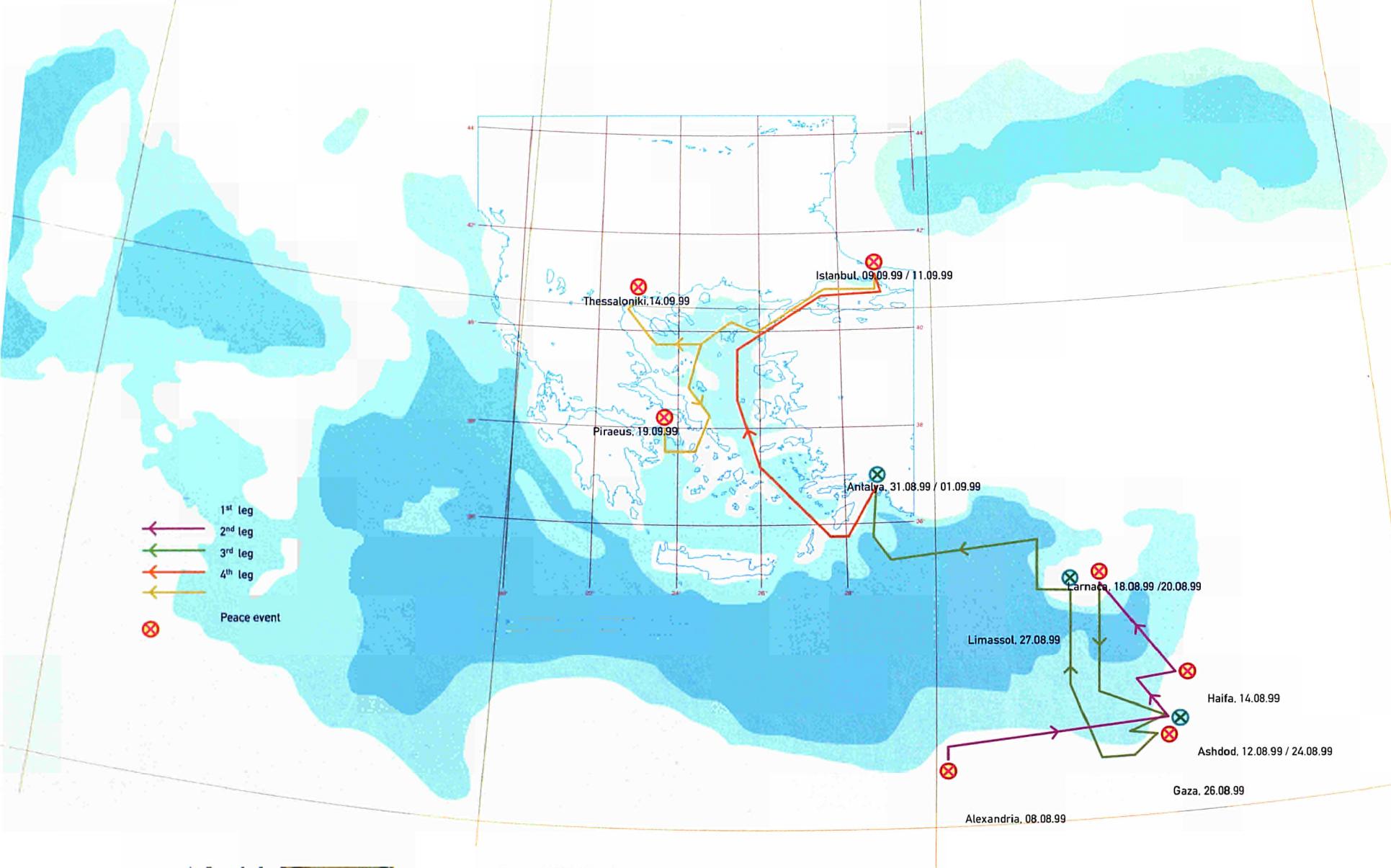
Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Scout movement.

North-South Centre, welcomed the fact "that there are still people to build Utopias and translate them into reality". Monique Porsperger of the European Commission stressed the real significance of the peace events. "This project," she told Le Magazine, "shows that young people are active players in the peaceful co-existence of communities. Young people adopt the right approach. Their behaviour is different to that of adult politicians. Young people actually 'do it' and do not just say 'we are going to do it'." She also emphasised how, since 1995, the Youth for Europe programme has supported projects related to cooperation between Israel and Palestine, using intervention methods tried and tested in solving conflicts between Northern Ireland's Catholic and Protestant communities.

An investment for the future

Richard Amalvy, 35, general coordinator of the operation, was keen to explain how the cruise was in keeping with the underlying philosophy for action of the Scout movement. Far from being a narrow-minded organization – which is how some people still see it – the Scout movement is open and socially committed. "Working for peace is inherent in the very foundations of scouting and making the world a better place is part of our ideal. Our movement has been banned by the most hard-line regimes, whether the Nazis or totalitarian communists," he stressed, not without a certain satisfaction. "It was banned because it fights for freedom and pluralism. We must make politicians understand that a youth organization is a place where young people learn to exercise citizenship. Youth organizations are not solely concerned with leisure activities. They generate activities. They train individuals who later take up positions within responsible structures with new social, economic and political commitments." In this respect, Richard Amalvy views the peace cruise as an investment for the future.





Euro-MED Youth

The cruise, which received financial support from the Commission through the Youth for Europe programme, was very much in keeping with the objectives of Euro-MED Youth, the new European Commission programme adopted in October 1998. Since 1995 and the launch of the third phase of Youth for Europe, there has been a special drive to promote youth exchanges with non-member Mediterranean countries. Today, 12 countries to the east and south of the Mediterranean basin are involved.

Euro-MED Youth, which runs until 31 December 2000, will permit a further stepping up of efforts, benefiting from additional financial support of € 6 million under the MEDA programme.

Responding to the desire expressed by foreign ministers from the two Mediterranean zones (the European Union and non-member countries) meeting in Barcelona in 1995, Euro-MED Youth seeks to stimulate active citizenship and promote the involvement of young people in the Mediterranean countries. This new programme brings three principal initiatives. First of all – and this is new – it will allow NGOs in non-member Mediterranean countries to submit financing requests for exchange projects under Youth for Europe. In future, young people from these countries will also be able to participate, for short periods, in European Voluntary Service. Secondly, in each country concerned, Euro-MED Youth grants financial aid for the appointment of youth coordinators. Finally, in May 1998 the Commission's DG XXII supported, in cooperation with the European Union Youth Forum, the creation of a Mediterranean Youth Forum. Modelled on the European Union Forum, this aims to provide a coordination platform for youth organizations based in non-member Mediterranean countries. More than a place to meet or set up joint projects, its principal role is to represent the organizations in these countries and relay their ideas.

Following the peace cruise operation, Euro-MED Youth decided to support another ambitious project - a conference, organized by the British Council in Malta in October and attended by young people from the Member States and Mediterranean countries. They exchanged ideas and defined possible strategic approaches on a number of key subjects such as culture and identities, wealth and poverty, security and instability, and also ecology and life around the sea.



Leaving the Egyptian port of Alexandria on 8 August, the peace ship was due to stop at Gaza, in Palestinian territory, on 11 August. But it was forced to change its route and head instead for Haifa, in northern Israel. Le Magazine was present in Gaza and Haifa, from where we now bring you a "live" report on four very significant days.

The Israeli authorities refused to grant authorization for the peace ship to enter the waters of Gaza. The Palestinians responded by cancelling the scheduled peace event. Following a failed first attempt, the Chevalier noir later returned to lie just offshore of the Palestinian territory. At that point a compromise between the two parties was extremely close, but once again the young sailors were refused permission to land, despite the fact that the Scout Association had organized a full programme of celebrations. The road to peace is certainly long and tortuous.

Wednesday, 11 August. It is not yet 8 o'clock in the evening, but already the sun is setting over the Mediterranean. The light is very beautiful. The air is warm; the atmosphere peaceful. But the seafront at Gaza is not at all like a scene from a postcard. There are no bathers, no deckchairs on the beach, no walkers, no attractive shops. There is nothing to make you think you are at a seaside resort. Apart from a few new hotels, the place is empty, abandoned. Clearly everything remains to be built. A couple of hundred yards away is the port of Gaza. It doesn't look as if much is going on there either. There is a handful of small fishing-boats, but no ocean-going vessels. Since the Israeli army occupation of Gaza in 1967, no international vessel has been allowed to dock there. The Israelis have kept up the blockade since the territory passed to Palestinian control, thereby denying Gaza supplies by sea.

This perhaps gives some idea of just how much the Palestinians are looking forward to the arrival of the peace ship. After years of isolation, it has become a symbol of opening up to the outside world.

The peace cruise is scheduled to put in at Gaza in the evening. Yet strangely, at the entrance to the port, there is no welcoming committee, no sign that it is expected. When asked, the two soldiers guarding the entrance to the little port state bluntly that: "The peace ship will not be arriving here, not this evening, not tonight!" They will be drawn no further.

What has happened? A little later Le Magazine manages to establish telephone contact with the boat. The explanation is clear and uncompromising. Just before entering Palestinian waters, the captain received, by radio, the Israeli order not to enter Gaza. It came from the very highest political level.

The Chevalier noir had no alternative but to change its route and head for the neighbouring Israeli port of Ashdod. But the young people on board the peace ship have not given up hope – they plan to travel to Gaza the next day, by bus.

Difficult negotiations

The next morning it is off to the headquarters of the Palestinian Scouts, who were organizing the peace ship's reception. They should know all about the present plans.

A warm welcome greets us when we arrive. About 50 boys and girls come pouring out of a briefing meeting. In an adjoining room, the officials are talking. Abed Ghanem, secretary general of the association of Palestinian Scouts, surrounded by his principal assistants, is on the telephone to the governor of Gaza. On his right, the head of the Scout Association's Arab section, Egyptian Fawzi Fargali, is attempting to mediate.

It is a critical moment. In the face of the Israeli refusal, seen here as a genuine humiliation, the Palestinian Authority is tempted to ban the entry of the peace sailors to Gaza. Negotiations are going to be long and difficult. There is no point waiting.

Mohamed Hassani, a member of the Palestinian Scouts regional executive committee, suggests we accompany him. He is going to Gaza international airport, near the Egyptian border. This provides a good opportunity to visit Gaza. The traffic is chaotic, and crowds of people cram the pavements and the streets. The first impression is of a city teeming with life. Gaza's population is already 1.2 million and is growing fast, confirms Mohamed. Every family has an average of five or six children. More than 60% of the inhabitants are under 25.

The roads need repair, many buildings are unfinished and rubbish litters the streets. The poverty is clearly extreme and the public services short of funds. But Mohamed, 41 and a teacher, says he is satisfied, despite the day-to-day difficulties. Gaza is lacking even the most elementary resources. But since it came under the Palestinian Authority, the quality of life has improved. "During the occupation we were worried about our future, for our children. We now feel a sense of security and that is crucial."

In order to reach the airport the driver has to take a number of turns. Gaza is a strip of land 40 km long and just 10 km wide, a territory amputated from the rest of Palestinian territory by 22 Israeli colonies. Certain roads are prohibited to Palestinians, which means detours must be made.

A mass movement

Mohamed explains to us that the Scout movement has 33,000 members in Palestine, both boys and girls, including 17,000 in Gaza. "Scouting is a very attractive leisure activity for young people here," he confirms, "and, very importantly, it is a movement accepted by parents. That explains why so many girls are involved."

"There are scout groups at every school," he continues. "Our organization transmits basic values such as honesty, helping others, and getting involved in rebuilding our territory. We are trying to change attitudes by convincing young people that they must show friendship to others. These are all principles," stresses Mohamed, "that we are also trying to instill as teachers."

Time passes quickly as we talk. It is 3 o'clock before we know it and we find ourselves back at the scout headquarters in Gaza. A decision has just been made: in the face of Israeli intransigence, the Palestinian authorities have reacted firmly. The "peace sailors" cannot come to Gaza, not even on foot. All the peace celebrations must be cancelled. That means we must travel to Haifa by passing back through the roadblocks and military border controls.

Mohamed Hassani does not hide his disappointment. "For the past three months," he explains, "we have been working so hard to prepare the peace event." A full programme of visits had been planned, culminating with a major peace rally attended by the young people of Gaza and Yasser Arafat himself. All has now come to nothing. "I am sad, very sad," repeats Mohamed. Banning the boat is an affront – a patent failure. But there is no trace of anger, neither in his voice nor his eyes. There will be many more pitfalls along the road that leads to peace. "But peace can, and will, come in the end."

A final attempt

The peace sailors are a stubborn bunch. A failure in Gaza? No matter! On 25 August, after visiting Cyprus, the Chevalier noir again appears off Palestinian territory. In the meantime the Israeli authorities have given their permission for the boat to enter the limited access zone, on the edge of the Gaza fishing area. But the Palestinians have found this gesture inadequate. They believe the boat should be able to anchor openly in the fishing zone. The distance in dispute is just 150 metres, but 150 highly symbolic metres. The peace sailors finally have to return towards Turkey, calling in at Cyprus for maintenance. In the small port of Gaza, on 26 August, a crowd of 3,000 people gathered to welcome the peace sailors ashore.

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Disembarkation in Haifa

After two days' sail from Ashdod, the peace ship arrives at Haifa, in Israel. The young people are tired, but happy. They speak of life on board and of the bonds of solidarity built up across cultural and political divides. What is more, plans are already taking shape for cooperation projects between youth organizations once the cruise is over.

Saturday 14 August, 10 o'clock in the morning. In the port of Haifa, the Chevalier noir slides silently through the water. As it threads its way between the war ships, its United Nations flag fluttering in the breeze, there is something quaintly rebellious about this little three-master. It pulls in at the quayside and quickly ties up. First ashore is the Polish captain. With his impeccable white jacket, formal cap and earring, he is every bit the comic book hero. While he talks in excellent English with the port authorities, the young people remain on board. Before anything else, the gangway must be lowered, the tarpaulins laid, and everything on the boat cleaned, scoured and put away. Everyone participates, with the precise movements of people who know exactly what they are doing and why.

"We are tired," are the first words we hear. Ana and Ana Maria, two Spanish girls, sum up the general feeling after a week at sea since leaving Alexandria. "It's hard but nice," says Ana, a student at Salamanca and member of the Spanish Youth Council. Ana Maria, from Catalonia, works for the Mobility International association, an organization which represents disabled people. "It is so great to work together like this," they all say.

Amina is from Algeria, where she is a member of the RAJ (Youth Action Rally) movement which campaigns for human rights and democratic freedoms. She speaks of life on board. "You have to clean the boat, make dinner, do the washing up, hoist the sails. The work never stops, not even at night, when you work in four-hour shifts. In addition to the daily chores there are the training sessions, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon." It is exhausting. But she is happy at having had the opportunity to take part in this adventure. "I have met a lot of people. I have learned how you can solve conflicts. My English has improved, too." Most of all, she is proud of having steered the boat all by herself at night: "Quite a responsibility!"

Everyone approaches everyone else

In addition to the busy schedule, living conditions are far from easy. Comfort on board the Chevalier noir is rudimentary, with the 25 young people sleeping, working and eating in the same confined space. The heat, with the thermometer rising to around 40° in the daytime, is often unbearable.

Christina, one of the four instructors, admits that the days at sea are "harder than I expected, due to the tiredness and the heat. Life on a boat is a challenge. Everybody just has to pull together. It takes organization to live together in such a confined space –you have to take turns to sleep. It is not easy to find a balance." But the chemistry has worked better than anyone could have hoped. "Very quickly, in just 48 hours, the young people came together and all mixed in, forming friendships." This was not something which could be taken for granted; not when you consider the initial differences separating Adi, a young reserve officer in the Israeli army, and Mahmoud, a Palestinian from Gaza who, at the age of 15, at the height of

the intifada, received three bullets in the leg as he was coming out of school. But they all came together. "Everybody wanted to establish contacts," says Christina.

Adi, the Israeli, also testifies to this mutual goodwill. "I found no difficulty at all in forming relationships with the Palestinians. I spoke to them as friends right from the start. I believe every individual should be seen for what they are, for their inherent qualities." But he found it a pity everybody did not speak English as that would have helped communication.

Emilie, a young French girl, explains that after a week of living with all the others her view of the Middle East conflict has evolved. "My approach to the subject is now much less rigid," she says.

Making the best of it

Two days earlier, on the Thursday, the peace cruise witnessed some dramatic scenes after the Palestinians refused to allow the ship to dock at Gaza. The situation on board was very tense, but in the end the youngsters found the courage to make the best of it. Paradoxically, the failure brought the group even closer together.

Themis, a young Greek and official with the Students of Europe Association, and Giuseppe, a scout from the Naples area of Italy, speak of this difficult episode. The Palestinians were crying, out of rage and a sense of powerlessness. "We all shared their disappointment. We met in groups and then all together in order to try and analyse the situation. Everyone gave their opinion. The Palestinians then made an impressive joint statement saying that they remained committed to the group and regarded them all as brothers." Mahmoud, from Gaza, gives his account of the events. "We had made it a point of honour to show the others our country. At first, when faced with this situation, we wanted to protest, make a stand, organize a sit-in, wear a black armband. But we thought again. We came to the conclusion that the most important thing was to ensure the peace cruise was a success and to remain united until the end."

The Israeli blockade of Gaza caused great discontent. But in a region where relations between countries are often very tense, intolerance is not confined to one country alone. The initial plan of putting in at Beirut, after Cyprus, runs into difficulties. The reason given by the Lebanese government to oppose the operation is that the boat has previously stopped in Israel. As for the young Algerians, they confess that they have taken a considerable personal risk by coming on the cruise. They tell us that they could go to prison for having an Israeli stamp on their passport. Fortunately, the stamp was placed on a separate sheet by officials who understood the situation...

Social conditions crucial for peace

Saturday in Israel is the Shabbat, the day of rest when all work stops. The peace events and meetings with youth organizations and local authorities will therefore take place during Sunday and Monday. A very busy programme of visits and meetings has been prepared by the Israeli hosts, including a visit to Jerusalem during which they are to meet the Israeli deputy foreign minister, Nawaf Masalcha, who is of Arab origin. In Tel Aviv the young people are to have the chance to talk with Shimon Peres, former Israeli prime minister and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

But in the meantime there is no question of the peace sailors remaining idle. Early on the Saturday afternoon the Sea Scouts propose a navigation exercise on small yachts. A few of the young people nevertheless prefer to rest on the quayside. These include Lana, a young Palestinian from Naplouse. A member of the Scout movement, she is preparing to go to university to study law. She explains how life for the young people of Naplouse has changed since it came under Palestinian control. "Before, people were being killed, inhabitants expelled and the schools were often closed. Now you can study in safety." She is a firm believer in peace. But she does not believe peace will be possible unless social conditions improve. For her country this means guaranteeing basic rights such as access to jobs, housing and water.

Projects for the future

And after the peace cruise? The experience will have certainly made a lasting personal impression on these young people. But that is not all. Several of them already have some very concrete projects in mind. When he returns to Gaza, Mahmoud is thinking of organizing an event titled "Give peace a chance". It will be a conference aimed at ensuring that the lessons learned about the techniques of conflict solving are shared as widely as possible.

Mohamed, a 25-year-old Algerian, and like Amina a member of the RAJ, speaks at length of his plans for when he returns home. "When I return to Algeria, I would like to organize training based on what I have learned during this cruise." The present regime in his country is creating many obstacles for the youth movement. "As soon as we want to organize a concert or conference, we are banned." In such a domestic climate, any opportunity for contacts with youth movements campaigning for human rights in other countries becomes very valuable indeed. Over recent years the RAJ has managed to establish close links with European Union countries. On the other hand, contacts with neighbouring Arab countries are much more difficult. But thanks to the peace ship, Mohamed has forged relations with Palestine, Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt. He stresses how much this will help in future in setting up regional cooperation between youth movements.

Role playing

After the activities at sea off Haifa, the young sailors spend the next few nights at a youth hostel in the town, during the peace events in Israel. In the late afternoon, a training session brings together all the participants, led by Christina and another instructor, Mirko, a young German and member of the European bureau of conscientious objectors. After having studied the origins of conflicts and the means of preventing them, the young people are now looking at ways of solving them. A practical exercise is proposed. But before coming together in a plenary session for a series of role plays, the peace sailors are invited to work in small groups of four or five. A young girl from the Israeli delegation teams up with Palestinians and other Arab delegates. Fady, a young socio-cultural worker from Gaza, proudly wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt, joins some Israelis. At this moment in time, people start really to believe that, after the peace cruise, nothing will ever be the same again... ■

European Voluntary Service

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The windmill



The pyramid

to Weimar, at the heart of Germany

Weimar, in Thuringia, was designated 1999 European City of Culture. This quiet town of 60,000 inhabitants, the home of Goethe, was the centre of German culture at its apogee in the 18th century. Yet just a few kilometres away lies the former concentration camp of Buchenwald. Weimar, Buchenwald... two totally contrasting symbols of the same history. During this exceptional year, these two sites welcomed several groups of young European volunteers. What were their impressions?

When Goethe settled in Weimar in 1775 to take up the position of minister to the young Duke Charles Auguste, aged just 18, he himself was only 25. (Both of them would have thus been eligible to participate in European Voluntary Service). Thanks to Werther, he was already a celebrity. Goethe spent 50 years of his life in Weimar, leaving behind him a body of work which left its mark on the town, which celebrated its 250th anniversary on 28 August 1999.

Petra, aged 22, a Czech volunteer on a project call Special Event working for the bureau of representatives for foreigners, remains calm in the midst of the excitement surrounding German culture's spiritual father. Among other things, she is responsible for making arrangements for Weimar's popular intercultural festival on 19 September. In perfect German, she describes her work and the innumerable telephone calls she has to make in order to ensure everything goes smoothly. There will be information stands, cultural events, dance and music, designed to strengthen a spirit of mutual understanding and promote a knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. "I am just so pleased to be involved in such concrete action to combat prejudice and racism," she enthuses.

On her return to the Czech Republic, Petra plans to become a teacher of German and geography. Like Daniel, from Romania, she is a member of a group of eight volunteers who were trained in 1998 in preparation for their work in Weimar. As this is the first time that young people from the Central and Eastern European countries have been able to participate in European voluntary service, they are being supported –exceptionally– by the Youth for Europe programme. "Their presence is particularly important," explains Carsten Fröhlich, coordinator of the Special Event for the managing association LEB e.v. (Ländliche Erwachsenbildung –training

of adults in a rural area). "This European experience is very valuable for these young people and will be a big advantage in finding a job when they return home."

Daniel is working with the children's representatives in Weimar, helping in particular with the Pyramid project. The Pyramid is a steel structure presenting 400 triangular images. A total of 2,000 triangles were received from all over Europe. The "artists" who sent them in were between five and 23 years old. The results now exhibited are certainly impressive. "This montage bears witness to the Europe of today seen through the eyes of children and young people. It sends a message to the new millennium," explains Steffi Engelstädter, children's representative from Weimar.

Ada, Rebecca and David also have a message. This one is not for the millennium but concerning a radio programme which goes out between 3 and 4 o'clock on Friday afternoons on FM 106.6. The Special Event project includes two radio workshops, each one running for three weeks. The three volunteers received training for their work last year and are now working with groups of 10 young people to make radio programmes, including technical production, interviews and sound. "Volunteers in Weimar are working with many organizations. We provide targeted information on their activities, in order to document the Special Event, and at the end we will produce a CD with the best contributions," explains Ada, who was born in Poland but now lives in Krefeld.

Inspired by their experience in Weimar, the young volunteers are now hatching other projects for the future. David, who participated in the radio workshops, wants to remain active in the field of youth media. He is collecting ideas for a Future Capital project¹ which he plans to start on when he returns to Spain.

All colours become one in Buchenwald

Just a few kilometres from Weimar lies the former concentration camp of Buchenwald. Twelve young people –half of them with European voluntary service– have spent a year here. Benoît, from France, and Robin, from the United Kingdom, explain what took place at the camp. Built by the Nazis in 1937, Buchenwald became a death camp for 56,000 people who suffered hunger, typhus fever and diphtheria, forced labour and executions. Between 1945 and 1950 the camp was used as part of the policy of "denazification", with another 8,000 people meeting their deaths.

In addition to the artistic projects jointly produced by the volunteers, school and student groups and other visitors from the volunteers' home countries have been invited. They have organized guided tours and international meetings and established contacts with various organizations in Weimar.

The dozen young volunteers have set up a project entitled What was buried in Buchenwald. This represents an attempt by the young people to give creative expression to their individual experiences of being confronted with the crimes committed here. Zsusza'nna, for example, built a windmill. The corners show the colours used in Buchenwald in order to segregate and mark the prisoners. Red for political, black for asocial, green for criminal, yellow for Jewish, brown for gypsy, blue for emigrant, pink for homosexual. "The wind of Buchenwald blows through the trees, the sails turn and the significance of the colours disappears as they merge to become one," she observes. "The colours mix with the rotating action, in a symbolic act of solidarity. No single category can be distinguished any longer from another. All are equal. All that counts is their human existence, their individuality and their dignity."

¹ With Future Capital, the European Commission awards grants (up to € 5,000) to former young European volunteers so that they can undertake personal projects in their country of origin.

Young gypsies launch Euroternnet

Freely living their identity, while at the same time becoming full players in civil society, is how young gypsies see their future in Europe. "European integration must not and cannot fail to include us," affirms Juan Silva de los Reyes, chairman of the newly formed Euroternnet association. This network of Europe's young gypsies is determined to be recognized as their representative body by European institutions.

The gypsies are a people with a paradoxical destiny. Numbering about 10 million in all, their community is one of Europe's most ancient. Nomads by tradition, the only borders they once recognized were those imposed by nature. Yet today they are trapped on the fringes of society, the constant victims of discrimination.

The violation of fundamental rights, endemic racism, negation of the right of asylum, refusal to grant nationality, the banning of the Romany language – they encounter all these obstacles throughout Europe, but most acutely in the Central and Eastern European countries. The Balkan wars and collapse of the communist regimes have further curtailed their freedoms in these areas. Many of them have taken the road of exodus. In the former Czechoslovakia most of the gypsies are stateless persons. As refugees they are sometimes repatriated as if they were no more than merchandise. In the former Yugoslavia the situation is critical.

It seems nothing has been learned from the horror of the Nazi holocaust and the extermination of 500,000 gypsies. "On the contrary, for us it marked the beginning of oblivion," explains Juan Silva. "But this does not have to be our fate. The new generation is standing up for its rights. The illiteracy rate is falling. More and more young gypsies are entering higher education and, once qualified, they are determined to defend the cultural and social identity of their people and show their contribution to European cultures."

In November 1997, a first congress of young gypsies was held in Barcelona. Supported by the European Commission's Youth for Europe programme, this marked a major step

forward in their history. This meeting of 300 delegates from 30 European countries produced a series of proposals, including the establishment of a European network of young gypsies. The principle of Euroternnet, an acronym of Europe-Tern (Terniven is the Romany word for "youth") and Net, was born: a pan-European association for the social, cultural, individual and collective promotion of young gypsies. "To join Euroternnet is to have a stake in our future."

Three fields of action

A general assembly of young gypsy leaders, held last year in Valencia, drew up the articles of the association and appointed a first board of directors. Chaired by Juan Silva de los Reyes¹, Euroternnet is supported by the European Union which sees it as the prime representative body on all matters concerning young gypsies. Working through the European gypsy network, Euroternnet has set itself three goals:

- To centralize and distribute all information concerning the various meetings of young gypsies, study grants and in-company training. Euroternnet is also responsible for identifying European funds which could support different projects.
- To promote and coordinate mobility programmes for young gypsies in European countries.
- To act as mouthpiece and adviser to the local, regional, national and supranational authorities on matters relating to young gypsies.

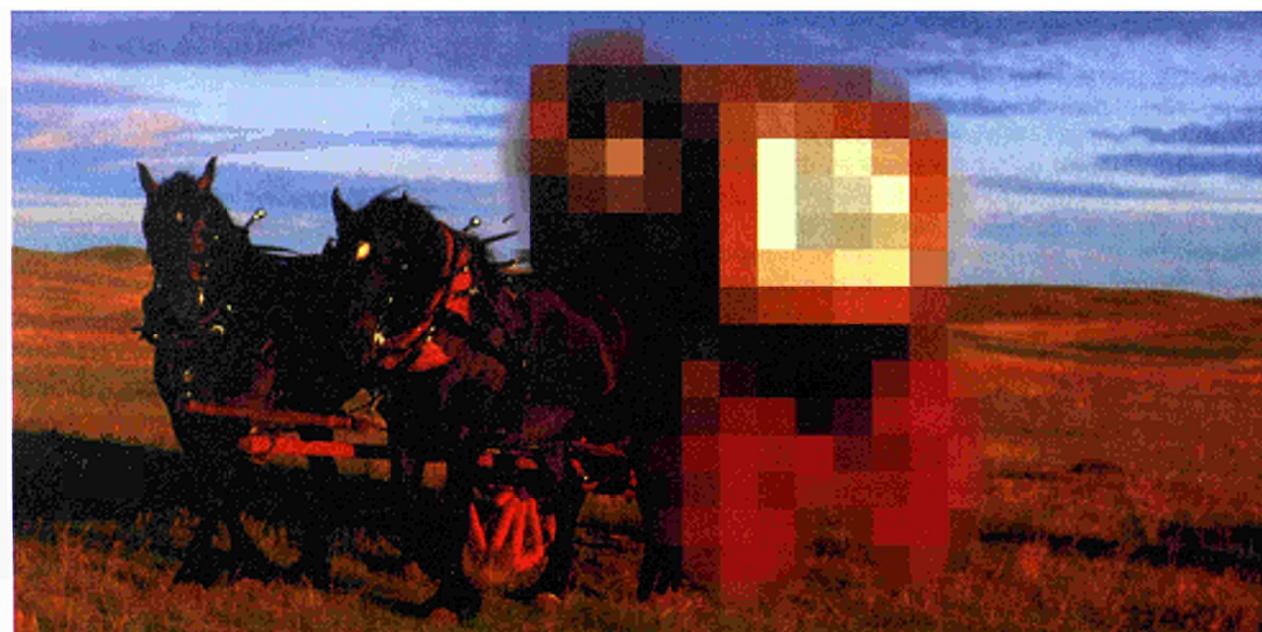
A long-held European conviction

The network will spread its message through congresses, newsletters and the Internet site. But is there not a problem – a paradox even – in seeking to structure such a mobile people? "The nomadism of gypsies is something of a cliché," explains Juan Silva. "It does not really reflect our way of life today. The vast majority of gypsies are now sedentary. If the national associations fulfil their role of spreading our activity, we are convinced that Euroternnet will quickly prove a success. We have long been firm believers in an integrated Europe. Our network has 150 members at present. But once our plans have been completed, we expect to unite several thousand members – at least 60,000. In our community, messages are also very effectively conveyed by word of mouth."

Euroternnet is an embryo organization, but it already has a permanent secretariat at the European Youth Forum. In October, young gypsy leaders from 15 European countries assembled in Brussels in order to discuss the election of Euroternnet representatives by proportional representation, the general network communication framework, and the launch of a newsletter.

Not forgetting minorities

"One of our first demands will be the inclusion of Romany in the family of European languages," continues Juan Silva, "and recognition of our legitimate right to be gypsies within society. That is our hope for a united Europe: it cannot be achieved if minorities are ignored. But we strongly believe in it, because we are confident of our own ability to succeed. There is also an ancient gypsy proverb which sums up very effectively our ability to overcome all obstacles: The gypsy child does not need teeth, he is born with them."



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¹ Juan Silva de los Reyes is 25 years old and a gypsy from the Seville area. A law graduate, he combines his responsibilities as Euroternnet chairman with that of itinerant trader in order to support his family. It is a difficult combination, but testimony to his determination to secure a future for Europe's young gypsies.

² See the Euroternnet page at site www.unionromani.org. All young gypsies aged between 14 and 30 can become members of the association and benefit from its services. They can also attend the general meeting.



Young people display their creativity

Further information

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The Youthmedia 99 conference in Dusseldorf last June brought together young people, the media, scientists, politicians, and 40 projects revealing the breadth of creativity displayed by young people in their use of the new information technologies.

Nobody will argue with the fact that Gutenberg's invention of printing changed the world. Culture combined with paper and came of age, ideas spread and information became accessible – and all of this at a previously unimagined speed. But the development of information technologies is incomparably more rapid. Anyone who thinks he or she is up-to-date after buying – at great cost – a powerful PC is invariably confronted with the fact, just a few months later, that new, even faster and more powerful processors are already available.

Youthmedia 99 looked at this and other issues, none of which are seen as a problem by today's young people, as the projects presented at Dusseldorf demonstrated.

Youth-web (www.youth-web.net) provides direct access to websites created by young people themselves. Direct communication is facilitated by the division into 10 categories, such as music, literature, politics, or professions. The inquisitive visitor can find a wonderful mix of websites, with no scientific pretensions and covering a whole range of subjects of interest to young people. Florian's site presents his favourite football club, for example, tells us about his favourite beer, and mentions that he belongs to a political party. Christian shows his snapshots of a trip to Paris and a small gallery of photos of the American actress Sandra Bullock. Maria, aged 13 (who thinks she is small at 1.75 metres!) is working on a "never-ending story" and asks for other young people to contribute. The next link leads to a search engine for children (www.blinde-kuh.de). This site explains how children can create their own home page.

Is exclusion a threat?

Today, almost two-thirds of workers are employed in sectors which require the use of a PC. For it is not just in offices, but in craft and service industries too, that the use of information technologies is a necessity. As technology develops at ever-increasing

speed, nobody can ever again boast of having finished training. To participate in the information society, learning must necessarily be lifelong. The acquisition of media skills has become a key qualification which concerns everyone, whether student or pupil, consumer, worker or citizen. The ability to use, shape in a creative manner, and display a critical judgement towards these media is set to become a cultural skill in much the same way as reading or writing.

The Youthmedia 99 participants all agreed on the need to set up a framework which will allow all social groups to participate in the "new and marvellous world of media". Certain young people, disadvantaged by their social background or incomplete education, are at risk of being excluded. And a young person denied access to communication and information technologies, whether in private or professional life, will find it very difficult to get a job.

By young people, for young people

Does this mean that young people see the information society as a threat? No, they see it more as an exciting challenge. The Yomag.net (www.yomag.net) illustrates this attitude. This project consists of an on-line magazine for young European consumers, all the articles written by young people themselves. "We not only want to inform and entertain, but also discuss." The subjects relate to consumer issues: music, fashion, advertising, food, travel, etc. The aim is to provide practical information and at the same time consider the social and political consequences of how young people behave as consumers.

As these few examples illustrate, there is a vast amount of information available. But this can also be a source of confusion. Is it not then the responsibility of youth policy to provide guidance on how to make effective use of all the material on offer?

Quotes from Dusseldorf

- **Christine Bergman**, German youth minister: "Public debates are at present too often focused on subjects such as technical standards and methods of electronic transmission, economic requirements and strategic alliances. Too little attention is paid to content, cultural criteria and objectives in terms of training."
- **Otto Dibelius**, director at the European Commission: "Training and education must help young people to find their way around an increasingly complex world marked by a diversity of information and media, globalization and intercultural exchanges."
- **Alexandros Tsolakis**, head of the European Commission's youth unit: "I am convinced that Youthmedia 99 is helping to highlight the importance of the information media for practitioners on the spot and that this event can result in increased efforts in this field, in the same way as the Netd@ys initiative, for example."

Backing from Youth for Europe

Youthmedia 99 (www.youthmedia.org) was held at the Heinrich Heine university in Düsseldorf. Initiated by the German Ministry for the Family, Elderly People, Women and Youth (www.bmfsfj.de) the meeting was supported by the European Commission in the framework of the "information for young people" action under the Youth for Europe programme (www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth.html). The practical arrangements were handled by the Internationalen Jugendaustausch- und Besucherdienste der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Youth visits and exchange service of the Federal Republic of Germany).



EUROPE DIRECT

A public EU information service

Do the European institutions organize lotteries?

How can I trace the owner of a foreign car if I only know the car numberplate?

Could we have a copy of the code relating to uniforms/dress standards of EU officials?

Could you please translate the word "twenty-five" in all Community languages?

How do I get a job in Tonga?

Many are the questions put by European citizens to the Commission every day. Usually, they are well-defined and targeted. Occasionally, they are based on the assumption that the European Commission is at the heart of everything that moves in Europe. Whatever their relevance to the Commission, most questions deserve an answer.

EUROPE DIRECT is the Commission service which replies to questions from citizens by e-mail or telephone. This information service, launched in June 1998, has quickly become a key instrument in helping to bridge the gap between the citizen and the European institutions and to create a genuine dialogue between the two. Through its President, Romano Prodi, the new Commission has committed itself to put Europe truly at the service of its citizens. This means talking to people, listening to them, feeding back their thoughts and concerns to the policy-making bodies and providing information on topics people are interested in.

Since October last year, Europe Direct has been integrated into the new Education and Culture DG, in a special Directorate designated "Citizenship and Youth".

Most questions highly relevant

Obviously, the somewhat amusing questions mentioned above are not a representative sample. The vast bulk of the 1,200 questions Europe Direct receives by e-mail every month are precise and serious inquiries, mainly from postgraduate students, small companies or citizens in general. Most of the clients are seeking business partners, financial assistance, specific directives or general information on citizen's rights or

other European policies. In the field of education and culture, the bulk of the questions are about scholarships, financial aid, opportunities for study in another EU country or cultural cooperation in general.

The following are typical of the questions we receive in the field of education and culture:

- Is a university degree obtained in one EU country automatically accepted by the others?
- Is there any possibility of receiving financial assistance to organize a Youth in Europe festival?
- How can we find partners for a Comenius project?
- What is the legal status of Leonardo students in foreign firms?
- How does a monument qualify for the title of "European monument?"
- Are there any subsidies translating books?
- What is the impact of sport in the EU?
- Why is Europe Day not more widely advertised?

Answers by mail or telephone

Europe Direct gives the answer either by referring to the relevant websites of the Europa server or by offering additional help through the competent service in the Commission. Europe Direct can also be reached via free telephone numbers from all Member States. A new and strengthened Call Centre is being put in place as from 1 March 2000, with the potential to handle up to 25,000 calls a month. A wide-ranging newspaper promotion campaign will raise the awareness of the service among European citizens.

Contacts	
Austria	0800 29 6811
Belgium	0800 92039 (F)
	0800 92038 (N)
Denmark	8001 0201
Finland	08001 13191
France	0800 90 9700
Germany	0800 1 850 400
Greece	0800 3212254
Ireland	1 800 2553188
Italy	800 876 166
Luxembourg	0800 2550
Netherlands	0800 8051
Portugal	0800 222001
Spain	900 983198
Sweden	020 794949
United Kingdom	0800 581591

Talkative northerners

Whereas Germans are the most frequent users of e-mail when they wish to put a question to the European Commission, Spaniards top the list for telephone queries. At present some 5,000 people pick up the phone each month to order guides and factsheets about the rights and conditions for working, living and studying in another EU country. Different nationalities tend to have different priorities. For Greeks and Finns, the main interest is in working in another Member States while Spaniards are more likely to inquire about study opportunities. Among inquiries from the Netherlands and the UK, living elsewhere in the EU features prominently.

For anyone interested in odd statistics, it can now be revealed that Nordic callers have the longest average "talk time" when calling Europe Direct.

Many grateful e-mails and telephone calls testify to the success and usefulness of the service as perceived by the citizens. The following message from the United Kingdom summarises the general impression: "I received the document today. Thank you very much. My experience with the Europe Direct initiative so far indicates that the name is well chosen!"

Europe Direct and its services were also presented in number 11/99 of Le Magazine. Europe Direct can be contacted through: <http://europa.eu.int/europedirect>.