



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 16.07.1999
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96/0130 (COD)
96/0131 (COD)

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

pursuant to the second subparagraph of Article 251 (2) of the EC-Treaty

**Common positions with a view to adopting Parliament and Council
Decisions amending the basic decisions relating to the Socrates and
Youth for Europe III programmes to include Turkey among the
beneficiary countries
(COD 96/0130 and COD 96/0131)**

1. Background to the dossier

- Date of transmission of the proposal: 14 May 1996 (COM (96)199 final)
To the European Parliament and the Council (codecision procedure)
To the Council (cooperation procedure)
- Date of the opinion of the European Parliament, first reading: 25 February 1999
- Date of transmission of the amended proposal: not applicable
- Date of agreement to the decision and formal adoption of the common position: 12 July 1999
- Date of the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee: 20 March 1997, and of the Committee of the Regions: 3 June 1999

2. Object of the Commission's proposal

The Commission believes it is in the interests of both the Community and Turkey that Turkey should participate in these programmes. This would enable the beneficiaries under the programmes - students, academics and young people - to forge closer links with their EU counterparts. Turkey's participation will help to bolster democracy and the respect of human rights in the country.

The European Strategy, which the Cardiff European Council saw as a good basis for developing relations between the EU and Turkey, recommends that Turkey be allowed to participate in Community programmes. The Luxembourg European Council also envisaged Turkey's participation.

3. Comments on the common position

3.1 As the Council has accepted its proposal, the Commission has no general comments on the common position.

3.2 The Commission accepts amendments 1 to 4, and 6 (regarding the Socrates programme), and amendments 7 to 10, and 12 (regarding the Youth for Europe programme), and these are incorporated in the common position.

Amendments 5 (Socrates) and 11 (Youth for Europe) were partly accepted by both the Commission and the Council, who have agreed to amend the reference to minorities as follows:

“and also respecting the rights of minorities” instead of **“and bearing in mind the need to ensure fair representation of minorities”**.

The Commission's wording, taken up by the Council, implies that the respect of minority rights is to serve as a guiding principle for the selection of participants, without giving to understand that any form of quota is required.

4. Conclusions or general observations

The Commission agrees with the Council's common position.