



Position Paper on the European
Commission's Communication on the
'New Generation of Community Education
and Training Programmes after 2006'

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BACKGROUND

In 2007, a new generation of EU education, training and youth programmes will come into place. In order to prepare for this, the Commission has been asked to present a draft proposal for the new programmes to the European Parliament and the Council in 2004. The European Youth Forum co-operated very closely with the Commission in the consultation it held with current users of the programmes in 2003. We also presented a policy paper to the Commission in May 2003 outlining our vision of the future Youth Programme. On 9 March 2004, the Commission adopted two Communications, one which deals with the future Youth Programme and the other dealing with the future Education and Training Programmes. This paper will present the Youth Forum's position with regard to the latter.

INTRODUCTION

In the policy paper on the future of the Education, Training and Youth Programmes, the Youth Forum argued for a separate Youth Programme. Therefore, the European Youth Forum welcomes the Commission Communication on the 'New Generation of Community Education and Training Programmes after 2006' as an important step in highlighting the future distinction that will be made between the education and training programmes on the one hand and the youth programme on the other.

While the European Youth Forum promotes the *non-formal education* that takes place through participation in the activities of the Youth Programme, we welcome the provisions made in the Communication which allow these *formal education* programmes to serve as an important instrument for inter-cultural learning and exchange for young people.

It is important to note that under the current Programmes, €1850 million in funding has been allocated to the Socrates II Programme (2000-2006), while merely €520 million has been allocated to the Youth Programme (2000-2006). The European Youth Forum welcomes the fact that the budget for the future education and training programme has been increased four times.

THE YOUTH FORUM CALLS FOR A JUNIOR ERASMUS

The European Youth Forum welcomes the aim mentioned in the Communication to have at least 10% of school pupils and teachers involved in Comenius 2007-2013 and the aim to target three million Erasmus students by 2010¹. The current Comenius Language Projects programme funds group exchanges for primary and secondary school pupils who stay with host families for a two week period. However, the Youth Forum would like to see this extended as three months is the minimum amount of time necessary for

¹ Communication from the Commission on the New Generation of Community Education and Training Programmes after 2006, p.17

a young person to integrate into school and community life in the host country and maximise the learning potential of the intercultural experience.

The Youth Forum therefore calls for the introduction of a new action for secondary school students similar to the Erasmus programme currently being funded for third level students. This programme would allow students aged 15-17 to attend school for three to twelve months in another programme country. Schools could be given responsibility for advertising the programme with support from the European Commission. They should be strongly encouraged to engage in partnership with youth exchange organisations in order to ensure and achieve the same levels of quality in terms of preparation, support and follow-up of the exchange period drawing on the expertise gained by youth exchange organisations during decades of practice. A scholarship should be granted to cover the expenses of the exchange. The school student would stay with a family in order to ensure her/his full integration into the host country.

While the EU would be responsible for providing a scholarship to cover travel and basic expenses, the governments of the programme countries could supplement this funding based on their own priorities (twinning arrangements, specific destinations, specific target groups etc) The EU should promote mutual academic recognition of the period spent abroad. It would also be responsible for information campaigns, research and evaluation and dissemination of the results of the programme.

THE YOUTH FORUM ASKS THAT SPECIAL LEGAL MEASURES BE TAKEN WITH THE PROGRAMME TO REMOVE ALL OBSTACLES TO TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY (ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING IN TEMPUS PLUS)

The present Socrates decision² calls on Member States to 'adopt such measures as they deem appropriate to remove legal and administrative obstacles to access this programme'.³ Measure 1a of the Mobility Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on mobility within the Community of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers⁴ also calls on Member States to remove 'legal and administrative obstacles to mobility'. However, the report on the follow-up to the Recommendation published on 23 January 2004 mentions that there is a lack of clarity about the term 'obstacle' in the Member States and as a result, the removal of barriers has not been given specific attention.⁵

² Decision No 153/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 January 2000 establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates'

³ *ibid.*, p.4

⁴ Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2010 on mobility within the Community of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers and teachers and trainers'

⁵ Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the follow-up to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 10 July 2010 on mobility within the Community of students, persons undergoing training, volunteers and teachers and trainers', 23 January, 2004.

Therefore, the Youth Forum asks that a clear definition be given of 'legal and administrative obstacles' in the text of the decision on the future Education and Training programmes to ensure that the programme countries are clear as to what their obligations are in this respect.

The Youth Forum welcomes the proposal for a new 'Tempus Plus' Programme as an instrument to develop the 'new neighbourhood' policy set out in the 2003 Commission Communication on this subject⁶ and as a tool to develop the capacity of lifelong learning institutions and organisations in these countries. We believe that Europe can only play a positive role in the world if its citizens are open to the rest of the world and particularly Europe's neighbouring regions.⁷

The Youth Forum also believes that exchanges between Europeans and non-Europeans have a great potential in contributing to the development of a shared European identity by encouraging greater understanding and respect for differences. Young people are an invaluable resource in promoting co-operation between Europe with other regions of the world. Therefore, the EU must encourage exchanges of young people in Europe and young people in other regions.⁸

THE YOUTH FORUM'S SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW THE PROGRAMME COULD BE SIMPLIFIED

The Youth Forum welcomes the fact that 'legislative decisions will be written in a much less detailed manner, making it easier both to understand their content and to adapt it to future developments'.⁹ In order to respond to the Communication's demand for 'suggestions how the programmes and their operation could be simplified'¹⁰ we believe that the following measures are essential for the efficient running of the programme:

- a) The Communication states that 'the Commission would propose a very substantial increase in the decentralised actions'.¹¹ The Youth Forum asks that the National Agencies are provided with sufficient resources to deal with this increase in workload.

⁶ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, 'Wider Europe- Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours'

⁷ see also European Youth Forum's contribution to the European Convention 'Bringing Europe closer to its young citizens', adopted by the Council of Members, Brussels, April 2002 (COMEM 0196-02)

⁸ Participation in association: Visions for a Future EU Youth Programme Encouraging Participation and Active Citizenship Among Young People in Europe, p.8

⁹ Communication from the Commission on the New Generation of Community Education and Training Programmes after 2006, p.22

¹⁰ Communication from the Commission on the New Generation of Community Education and Training Programmes after 2006, p.22

¹¹ Communication from the Commission on the New Generation of Community Education and Training Programmes after 2006, p.16

- b) Under the present Socrates, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundvig programme, the long amount of time taken to approve the project makes it difficult to keep the objectives of the project relevant given ever-changing political and social developments. The European Youth Forum asks that the process used for approving projects for funding be speeded up.
- c) The Youth Forum welcomes the operating grants offered under the Jean Monet actions to European Associations active in the field of education and training and believes that increasing the number of grants offered to such organisations would help achieve the aims of the education and training programmes through capacity building of NGOs while relieving the Commission and the National Agencies of supplementary administrative tasks. The level of funding of each grant should also be increased.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Youth Forum welcomes the publication of the Commission Communication on the future Education and Training Programmes as a separate Communication from the Communication on the future of the Youth Programme. The Youth Forum urges the Commission to consider introducing a 'Junior Erasmus' programme for school pupils aged 15-17 in order to allow them to spend a minimum of three months in school in another programme country. The Youth Forum also asks that legal provisions be incorporated into the legal basis to remove all obstacles to mobility in order to ensure that the programme is open to all young people.