



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 14.03.1997
COM(97) 99 final

97/0103 (COD)

SOCRATES :

**THE COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAMME IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION**

**REPORT ON THE RESULTS ACHIEVED
IN 1995 AND 1996**

**Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament
and of the Council**

amending the Decision 819/95/EC establishing the Community action programme *Socrates*

(presented by the Commission)

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCRATES PROGRAMME

HIGHER EDUCATION (Erasmus)

- Action 1 Grants to universities for European Dimension activities
- Institutional Contracts (organisation of student mobility; teaching staff mobility, European Credit Transfer System; curriculum development; intensive language courses; European modules; intensive programmes; preparatory visits)
 - Projects developed by Thematic Networks
- Action 2 Student Mobility Grants

SCHOOL EDUCATION (Comenius)

- Action 1 School Partnerships for European Education Projects, including teacher exchanges and placements and study visits for headteachers
- Action 2 Transnational projects relating to the education of the children of migrant workers, occupational travellers, Travellers and Gypsies / Intercultural Education
- Action 3 In-service training courses for teachers and educational staff
- 3.1 grants for developing and organising courses
 - 3.2 grants for participants

PROMOTION OF LANGUAGE-LEARNING (Lingua)

- Action A European Cooperation Programmes for Language Teacher Training
- Action B In-service courses for language teachers
- Action C Assistantships for future language teachers
- Action D Development of instruments for language teaching/learning and assessment
- Action E Joint educational projects for language learning

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

- European partnerships / partnership projects
- Observation projects

ADULT EDUCATION

- Promoting awareness of other European countries and the European Community
- Enhancement of adult education through European cooperation

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND POLICY

- Analysis of questions of common educational policy interest
- The Information Network on Education in Europe (Eurydice)
- Visits scheme for educational decision-makers (Arion)
- Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (Naric)

COMPLEMENTARY MEASURES

- European activities of associations in the field of education
- awareness-raising activities to promote European cooperation in education
- information activities of SOCRATES National Agencies
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The response to the SOCRATES programme among the educational community of the 15 Member States and the 3 EFTA-EEA countries, has been remarkable. The support provided in 1995 and 1996 has already begun to generate a significantly *increased volume of European cooperation*, notably in fields such as school education, adult education and open and distance learning which had little previous tradition of structured collaboration at transnational level. Institutions are starting to adopt a more *strategic approach to European cooperation*, giving such collaboration a more prominent place than hitherto in their plans for future development.

SOCRATES SUPPORT IN 1995 AND 1996

Mobility and Exchanges

- mobility grants to enable up to *316,000 higher education students* to carry out an integrated and recognised period of study in another participating country
- integrated teaching assignments abroad for some *26,000 professors and lecturers*
- some *80,000 young persons participating in joint educational projects and exchanges* designed to motivate them to communicate in other European languages
- over *16,000* participants in European in-service training courses for *language teachers*

Cooperation networks

- *2,673 inter-university cooperation programmes*, involving over *1,800 higher education institutions*
- *28 major Thematic Networks* designed to develop the European dimension in a wide range of disciplines and areas of special interest in higher education, involving over *70 institutions each* as well as a total of *85 European associations* in the academic community
- *1,620 multilateral school partnerships, involving some 5,000 schools*
- Around *3,500 Joint educational projects* designed to stimulate young people's motivation to learn other European languages
- over *600 transnational projects, involving some 2,700 institutions*, designed to enhance cooperation in the field of *Open and distance learning, Adult education, Intercultural education, language-learning* and the *initial and in-service training of teachers*

Considerable progress has already been made towards achieving the key objectives for SOCRATES laid down in the Decision establishing the programme. In 1995 and 1996, the programme has in particular:

- made a substantial contribution to the *mobility of teaching staff and students* of various kinds, as regards both the volume of exchanges and the quality of their organisational framework;
- stimulated *broad and intensified cooperation between educational institutions* in different participating countries, notably through the creation of multilateral networks. Many of these are already demonstrating their potential for developing into durable structures for collaboration which will have beneficial effects long after the completion of the particular project for which SOCRATES support was provided;

- given a new impetus to the academic *recognition of study periods* carried out and qualifications obtained abroad;
- continued to make progress in *promoting the teaching and learning of the less widely used and less taught languages* of the Union;
- provided a focal point for a *broader use of open and distance learning* and new technologies in various educational sectors, and helped to ensure that in the development of multimedia approaches pedagogical considerations are taken more fully into account;
- led to the production of a large and *varied range of teaching materials, curricula, training schemes and other educational products*;
- provided new opportunities for widespread *exchange of knowledge and experience*, thereby spreading expertise and fostering the process of *innovation* throughout the participating countries;
- been instrumental in ensuring that European cooperation benefits all Member States, including the *countries which are economically disadvantaged and/or located at the periphery of the Community*;
- *helped to generate considerable levels of complementary funding* from a variety of other sources, thereby increasing the overall investment in educational mobility and cooperation in Europe;
- prepared the ground for the *extension of the programme to the wider Europe*, in accordance with the terms of the Decision.

Notwithstanding the considerable obstacles to be overcome in launching a programme of this size and scope, the results achieved indicate that in a variety of ways the programme is beginning to fulfil the mandate laid down in the Maastricht Treaty that the Community shall contribute to the development of "*quality education*" through a spectrum of cooperative activities across the field of education. Thanks to the concerted efforts at European and national level and within the educational institutions themselves, SOCRATES is helping to make the "*European dimension in education*" a meaningful concept for hundreds of thousands of teachers and learners of all ages.

The possibility of participation in SOCRATES has also been enthusiastically greeted by the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus⁽¹⁾, confirming the attraction of the programme which previously been demonstrated by the EC Member States and subsequently by the EFTA-EEA countries.

However, already in these early stages of the programme, most Actions are heavily over-subscribed, and increasingly acute budgetary difficulties are being encountered.

The present document seeks to analyse the main aspects of the implementation and development of SOCRATES during the first two years following its adoption.

(1) The decision establishing SOCRATES also makes mention of the possibility of extending its actions to include Malta. Negotiations have been conducted with a view to enabling Malta to participate in the programme in the context of its pre-accession to the Community. However, the government of Malta having recently taken the decision to freeze its application to join the Community, the Commission has been mandated by the Council to take preliminary technical contacts with a view to clarifying the future relations between the Community and Malta. The final position to be adopted by Malta and the Community not being known at the present time, the present text makes no reference - positive or negative - to a possible opening of the programme to Malta at a later date.

PART A: RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE SOCRATES PROGRAMME AS A WHOLE

I. INTRODUCTION

The Community action programme in the field of education, entitled SOCRATES⁽²⁾, spans the period 1995-1999 and is applicable to the 15 Member States of the European Community as well as to Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in the framework of the European Economic Area agreement. It is currently being extended to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus⁽³⁾ in accordance with the terms of the Decision.

The overall aim of SOCRATES is to boost cooperation, increase mobility and enhance the European dimension in all sectors of education. It thereby contributes to the development of high quality human resources, attuned to the needs of an increasingly interdependent and integrated Europe. This is a key factor in stimulating competitiveness and employment, achieving greater economic growth and maintaining social stability throughout the Community⁽⁴⁾. Just as importantly, SOCRATES contributes to the personal fulfilment of the individuals participating, and develops a sense of identity with the European Community among citizens of all ages.

The programme addresses a vast target population. In today's European Community there are some 117 million young people under 25 years of age - a third of the total population. Some 60 million pupils are enrolled in the Community's 307,000 schools, 36 million at secondary and 24 million at primary level, as well as a further 10 million infants in pre-primary education. They are taught by over 4 million teachers. Some 11 million students are studying at over 5,000 higher education institutions; millions of adult learners are attending full- or part-time classes in order to update and extend their knowledge and competence. All of these, as well as all personnel involved in the management and administration of education and in related tasks such as guidance and counselling, are potential SOCRATES participants.⁽⁵⁾

SOCRATES is the first comprehensive programme at European Community level promoting cooperation across the entire educational field. It embraces previous EC initiatives, such as the Erasmus and Lingua schemes, extends their scope and scale of operation, and integrates them with a new range of activities in educational sectors not systematically addressed by Community programmes hitherto. SOCRATES also forms part of a broader strategy to promote the concept of lifelong learning. It interacts closely with other European initiatives, notably the Leonardo da Vinci programme for vocational training, Youth for Europe III, social policy programmes, and components of the Fourth Framework Programme for Research and

(2) Decision No 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme 'Socrates', *Official Journal* No. L 87/10 of 20 April 1995.

(3) See footnote (1) above.

(4) This has been emphasised in the *Commission's Action for Employment in Europe. A Confidence Pact*, document CSE (96) 1 final, Brussels, 5 June 1996, as well as in the Commission's *White Paper on education and training: Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 1996; its recent *Green Paper on Innovation*, adopted on 20 December 1995 (COM (95) 688) and its earlier White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 1994.

(5) The figures in this paragraph are based on the *Key data on education in the European Union*, compiled for the Commission by the EURYDICE network, 1995 edition, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 1996.

Technological Development.

To have a significant impact, SOCRATES requires not only a carefully selected range of measures for each educational sector addressed, but also a financial framework fully consistent with the objectives of the programme. After a protracted conciliation procedure between the European Parliament and the Council, the figure finally agreed was 850 MioECU for the period 1995-9. This fell far short of the Commission's original proposal of 1005.6 MioECU, even though it has to cover the needs of the enlarged European Community of 15 Member States as well as additional programme elements, notably adult education, introduced during the negotiations. The European Parliament assented to the compromise figure only on condition that a review be envisaged in due course.

Accordingly, at the end of the conciliation procedure, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed that:

"Two years after the launching of the programme, the European Parliament and the Council will (assess) the results achieved by the programme. To that end, the Commission will submit to them a report accompanied by any proposals which it considers appropriate, including any concerning the funding set by the legislator within the meaning of the Joint Declaration of 6 March 1995.⁽⁶⁾ The European Parliament and the Council will act on those proposals at the earliest opportunity."⁽⁷⁾

On that basis, the Commission has produced this report analysing the first two years of SOCRATES (1995 and 1996). It demonstrates that the programme has been eagerly welcomed by the educational community across the Community and has made a promising start towards achieving the objectives laid down in the Decision establishing the programme. In so doing, it is responding effectively to the mandate laid down in Article 126 of the EC Treaty⁽⁸⁾ that the Community "shall contribute to the development of quality education" through cooperation across national boundaries.

Already, however, the volume of funds requested from the programme outstrips the resources available several times over, and for a number of reasons the full impact of demand has yet to be felt. The Commission has concluded from the analysis of the first two years that the financial framework is no longer adequate to fulfil the programme's objectives. The present Report is therefore accompanied, as envisaged in the above-mentioned Joint Statement, by Commission proposals for a modification of the financial framework.

II. MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMME

The measures taken to implement the programme have centred around six lines of action:

1. Dissemination of information

A wide range of information activities have been conducted to draw the attention of target groups to the opportunities which SOCRATES provides. A general *Vademecum*, Action-specific *Guidelines for Applicants* and a series of *Information Notes* were prepared in all 11 official EU languages and widely distributed, both in paper form and via the EUROPA Internet server. A formal Announcement / Call for

(6) Declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 6 March 1995 (95/C 293/03), *Official Journal* No. C 293/4 of 8 November 1995.

(7) Joint Statement by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concerning Decision 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme 'Socrates', *Official Journal* No. L132/18 of 16 June 1995.

(8) *Official Journal* No. C 224 of 31 August 1992.

Proposals was published in the *Official Journal*.⁽⁹⁾

To take account of the specific information needs of each participating country, *national SOCRATES information campaigns* were conducted, consisting of national-level launch conferences, regional and sectoral conferences and seminars, information documents and publicity actions. The campaigns were supported through SOCRATES grants, as provided for in the Decision. The new funding elements within SOCRATES were emphasised. Particularly intensive campaigns were devoted to the "Institutional Contract" within Erasmus (*cf. infra*) and to cooperation in the schools sector (Comenius).

2. Establishment of the management and administrative infrastructure

In implementing SOCRATES, the Commission is assisted by the *SOCRATES Committee*, consisting of two members designated by each Member State and chaired by the Commission. Issues dealt with by the Committee and its two *sub-committees*, in the fields of higher education and school education respectively, have included: the priorities and criteria for support under the various Actions of the programme; budgetary allocation for the different Actions, and the formula for apportioning funds to each country under the decentralised Actions; selection of projects under the Actions managed centrally; policy issues such as equal opportunities and the needs of disabled persons. The good working relations between the Commission and the national authorities, have facilitated the implementation of the programme; they remain a key factor in determining its longer-term success.

The European Parliament has been kept fully informed of the matters dealt with by the Committee and the Sub-committees, in accordance with the "Modus Vivendi" agreed between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 20 December 1994⁽¹⁰⁾.

National Agencies play a vital role in implementing SOCRATES. Their responsibilities include selecting projects and distributing grants under the decentralised Actions, monitoring and financial management, disseminating information, providing guidance and assistance in identifying suitable partners, and ensuring operational complementarity with schemes operating at national level. In some participating countries, a single National Agency has been designated for all of SOCRATES⁽¹¹⁾. In others, different organisations have been designated for different Actions; the Commission has encouraged the countries concerned to adopt effective coordination arrangements. The National Agencies have been convened for two plenary sessions and more frequently on an Action-specific basis. Such meetings are vital in the interest of effective and coherent programme management. The great majority of National Agencies have performed outstandingly well in the launching phase of SOCRATES, showing exemplary commitment to meeting the challenges laid down by the programme. Some difficulties have also been encountered, as indicated below.

In the operational administration of the programme, the Commission is supported by the *SOCRATES and Youth Technical Assistance Office*, located in Brussels. The organisation providing this assistance was selected in early 1995 on the basis of open public tender.

Given the large number of organisations involved in administering SOCRATES, a key priority has been the development of electronic exchange of information between National Agencies, the Commission and the Technical Assistance Office. This network will be operational in early 1997.

(9) *Official Journal* No. C 200 of 4 August 1995.

(10) Modus Vivendi of 20 December 1994 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concerning the implementing measures for acts adopted in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 189b of the EC Treaty, *Official Journal* No. C 293/1 of 8 November 1995.

(11) New organisations have in some instances been established with this specific mandate, either for SOCRATES alone or in conjunction with the exercise of national agency functions related to other Community programmes, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Youth for Europe III and the Community Initiatives within the Structural Funds.

3. Selection of projects for support

The selection of projects and activities for support has been the central focus of attention during the launch phase of SOCRATES. As the Decision establishing the programme was not published until late April 1995, Article 5(2) was invoked to agree "Transitional Measures" for the initial period. Thanks to the flexible and cooperative approach adopted by all parties, these measures ensured a generally smooth implementation. The support awarded under the different parts of the programme is analysed in greater detail below.

4. Ensuring complementarity with other Community programmes and policies

Though SOCRATES is the main Community instrument for cooperation in the field of education, many other areas of Community policy have an important educational dimension, or are closely related to education.⁽¹²⁾ Article 6(1) of the Decision establishing SOCRATES consequently provides that "the Commission, in partnership with the Member States, shall ensure overall consistency between this programme and other Community actions". These provisions have been implemented by establishing appropriately close working relations with the services responsible, including in some cases mutual involvement in the selection of projects, and by taking the necessary steps to ensure that SOCRATES itself plays its full part in furthering the objectives of other EC policies.

Among the most important of these, as indicated in the SOCRATES Decision and as emphasised in particular by the European Parliament during its adoption, are the promotion of equal opportunities and the integration of disabled persons, consistent with the policy of "mainstreaming", i.e. incorporating these principles in the implementation of all Community policies, programmes and actions⁽¹³⁾. For equal opportunities, this approach is implemented by means of awareness-raising measures⁽¹⁴⁾, supporting projects dealing with equal opportunities⁽¹⁵⁾, and ensuring that in the selection of projects and individuals by the Commission and by the National Agencies, the principle of equal opportunities is rigorously adhered to. The needs of disabled persons are addressed in several ways, notably by close cooperation with organisations which promote educational opportunities for the disabled and by thematic seminars to encourage more institutions to develop projects in this area⁽¹⁶⁾; by encouraging beneficiary institutions to provide effective services for the reception, guidance, pedagogical assistance and technical support of disabled persons⁽¹⁷⁾; by prioritising projects which address the educational needs of disabled persons, for example under Comenius Actions 1 and 3⁽¹⁸⁾ and Lingua Actions A to D; and by providing additional

(12) Such policy areas include: vocational training, youth, external relations, development aid, employment, the information society, the internal market, research and technological development, energy, regional development, social policies such as the integration of disabled persons and promotion of equal opportunities for women and men, environment, health, culture, information, consumer protection, statistics.

(13) Cf. *Communication from the Commission: Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities*, 21 February 1996, COM(96)67 final; *Communication from the Commission on equality of opportunities for people with disabilities*, 30 July 1996, COM (96) 406 final; Fourth Community action programme on equality of opportunities for women and men (1996-2000), *Official Journal* No. L 335/37 of 31 December 1995.

(14) For example, the contact seminar held in Stockholm in December 1995 to enable secondary schools to develop projects focusing on equal opportunities issues.

(15) This is, for example, one of the priority areas for support within Comenius school partnerships.

(16) For example, a thematic seminar is planned in Belgium in February 1997 addressing institutions catering for the educational needs of persons with mild forms of mental handicap.

(17) E.g. the 2-volume publication entitled *Studying Abroad* prepared by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in collaboration with HELIOS Thematic Group 13 and the European Forum for Student Guidance (FEDORA) with the support of the European Commission (Vol. 1: Checklist of needs for students with disabilities; Vol. 2: European guide for students with disabilities), [Leuven, 1995-6].

(18) Institutions in France, Greece, the Netherlands and the UK are, for example, linking up under Comenius Action 3 to produce a package of instructional modules for mainstream classroom teachers responsible for

financial support for disabled participants, in so far as the resources available to the programme allow.⁽¹⁹⁾

5. Establishing mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme

The monitoring of SOCRATES, and the formal interim and final evaluation, will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of Article 8 of the Decision. They will also take into account the guidelines on evaluation adopted by the Commission under its policy on "Sound and effective management (SEM 2000)"⁽²⁰⁾. The arrangements are the subject of in-depth consultation with the SOCRATES Committee. Preparatory steps have been undertaken, notably to ensure that the data necessary for monitoring and basic evaluation purposes is collected and retrieved. This will require considerable commitment from the National Agencies and close cooperation between these and the Commission. The present report is further evidence of the importance which the Commission attaches to thorough periodic reporting on the programme's progress.

6. Preparing the extension of SOCRATES to other countries

Article 7(3) of the Decision provides for the extension of SOCRATES to the associated⁽²¹⁾ γγ countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Cyprus and Malta⁽²²⁾. Negotiations with the countries concerned have been conducted as a matter of high priority during the launching phase of the SOCRATES programme. At present, it appears probable that some or all of these will be eligible to participate from 1997 onwards. The extension of the programme will have major implications, not least of a budgetary nature.⁽²³⁾

Practical steps have been taken to ensure that as soon as the relevant agreements become effective, the Central and Eastern European countries concerned will be able to participate fully in the different Actions of the programme. To facilitate these preparations, allocations totalling 4.05 MioECU were made available from the PHARE budget in 1995 and 1996. Particular attention has been given to: establishing National Agencies and training their personnel; production of documentation on the programme; creating comparable data systems, and providing access to communications networks; training seminars for national experts in assessing projects; study visit grants for educational decision-makers.

III. RESULTS OF THE PROGRAMME IN 1995 AND 1996

1. Demand for support within the programme

The SOCRATES programme has been eagerly received by the education community in Europe. Already in this early stage of development, the budget available is significantly outstripped by the demand for

integrating pupils with special educational needs.

- (19) For example, the needs of higher education students with particularly severe disabilities are taken into account within the 5% of Chapter I (Erasmus) Action 2 funds available to the Commission for ensuring balanced participation. The Commission has indicated that it will be willing to consider the feasibility of adopting a similar approach for Chapters II and III from 1997 onwards.
- (20) Document SEC (95) 1301/4 of 22 July 1995.
- (21) "Associated" status is conferred upon Central and Eastern European countries which have signed a "Europe Agreement". Such agreements are designed to assist the country concerned in its preparations for possible future membership of the Community. All 10 countries concerned will be eligible to participate in SOCRATES, as soon as the terms and conditions have been agreed and ratified.
- (22) See footnote (1) above.
- (23) These are set out in the Explanatory Memorandum and Financial Statement accompanying the Commission's proposals for an increase in the financial framework for the programme.

support: in 1995, the first year of implementation, the total request⁽²⁴⁾ of over 500 MioECU was around three times higher than the budget available.

1996 has seen a further sharp rise in the number of grant requests compared with 1995 under most Actions. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the newest Actions, which are clearly taking hold quickly. For example, the number of schools wishing to participate in Comenius school partnerships has risen five-fold, and within the Lingua Assistantships scheme the demand for grants and requests to receive assistants has been running at between 5 and 10 times its 1995 level in certain countries. Among the "centralised" Actions, i.e. those in which the selection decisions are taken directly by the Commission, applications for support of new projects in the fields of in-service teacher training (Comenius Action 3), Adult education and Open and distance learning, have risen by between 78% and 112% compared with the previous year.

The budgetary situation is already posing severe problems. As Chart 2 in the Statistical Annex shows, the amount requested outstripped the budget available in 1995 and 1996 many times over under several Actions, including in areas new to Community funding under SOCRATES. Whereas in some Community programmes, this situation may be more tolerable, it is a cause for concern in the case of SOCRATES given the programme's vocation to reach as broad a cross-section as possible in each sector of education and thereby promote a strong sense of identification with the Community among Europe's citizens.

But if demand has already been high in 1995 and 1996, it is not until 1997 and beyond that its full force will be felt. This is notably because from that time on:

- funding will be needed each year not only for new initiatives but also for a renewal of support in Years 2 and 3 of pluriannual projects first supported in earlier years: under most Actions over 80% of the projects first supported in 1995 requested further funding in 1996;
- the impact of the information campaigns conducted in 1995 and 1996, and of the preparatory visit grants awarded, will work itself through into project proposals, especially under the more innovative Actions within the programme, such as multilateral school partnerships;
- the involvement of the new Member States and EFTA-EEA countries is likely to grow further as they become more accustomed to participation;
- certain Actions will become fully available for the first time, such as: the Erasmus "Institutional Contract", for which applications for the academic year 1997/8 show a 25% increase in the total amount requested (250 MioECU) compared with the final (1996/7) year of funding via Inter-university cooperation programmes; grants for teachers to participate in in-service training courses within Comenius (Chapter II, Action 3.2);
- the effects of certain other policy contexts will make themselves felt in terms of increased demand for support within SOCRATES. These include notably the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning⁽²⁵⁾ and the 1997 European Year against Racism⁽²⁶⁾.

(24) It is assumed for the purpose of calculating total demand within SOCRATES that students under Erasmus Action 2 request on average half the maximum grant allowable adjusted for the number of months spent abroad.

(25) Decision No. 2493/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 1995 establishing the 'European year of lifelong learning', *Official Journal* No. L 256/45 of 26 October 1995.

(26) Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 23 July 1996 concerning the European Year against Racism (1997), *Official Journal* No. C 237/1 of 15 August 1996.

2. Grants awarded in 1995 and 1996

In the first two years of SOCRATES, grants totalling 364.5 MioECU have been awarded under the terms of the programme.⁽²⁷⁾ As the box below shows, support has been provided to a very large number of projects and individual participants, in all sectors of education. More detailed figures are provided in the Statistical Annex.

SOCRATES SUPPORT IN 1995 AND 1996

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As regards the overall allocation of funds between the different parts of the programme, it has already been possible in this initial period to adhere to the principle laid down in the Decision that during the entire quinquennium to 1999, at least 55%, 10% and 25% must be spent on Chapters I, II and III respectively. Chart 1 in the Statistical Annex refers. This is a further indication that the new funding areas in Chapters II and III of the programme have already been well received.

In order not to disappoint too many good quality applicants in the initial years of the programme, the Commission's approach in 1995 and 1996 has generally been to provide at least a certain amount of support to as many good projects as possible, despite the limited budget available, while nonetheless awarding a critical mass of support to each project. However, the analysis of the first two years demonstrates that under certain key parts of the programme, the unit grant is already slipping down to an untenably low level and may in some cases no longer be adequate for ensuring that projects achieve the

(27) For 1995, this figure includes in addition to the Community budget contributions from the EFTA-EEA countries and Switzerland (1995 was the last year covered by the bilateral agreement providing for that country's participation in the Erasmus part of the programme), as well as funds recycled from previous years. For 1996, it includes contributions from EFTA-EEA countries.

desired results ⁽²⁸⁾. The situation is particularly acute as regards:

- Erasmus, where funds available in 1996 averaged ECU 1,000 per institution for each of its inter-university cooperation programmes (ICP). Furthermore, if all the students within approved Erasmus exchange programmes were to be awarded a grant to help finance their study period abroad, the grant per student including travel and all other cost elements, would be just 750 ECU for a full year's study (or just 75 ECU per month) - some 15% of the ECU 5,000 maximum allowed under the Decision. Although there are non-pecuniary advantages of being an Erasmus student (full academic recognition of studies abroad, non-payment of fees at host university etc.), the conclusion to be drawn from the analysis of the first two years of Erasmus support within SOCRATES is that the low level of grant both to students and to universities, is a genuine and growing cause for concern. If allowed to continue after the introduction of the Institutional Contracts system in 1997/8⁽²⁹⁾, this situation could seriously impede the success of this crucial part of the SOCRATES programme;
- Comenius, within which: the maximum grant for each school participating in a school partnership project is normally only ECU 2,000 per annum (ECU 3,000 in the case of schools coordinating such partnerships). This figure is extremely low, and pressure on education budgets at national level is making it difficult for schools to obtain significant complementary funds from other sources. In several countries, the SOCRATES grant is seen as an insufficient incentive to encourage more schools to participate, particularly in the absence of support for mobility of participating pupils.

The situation now emerging militates in favour of persons and institutions who have greater economic means at their disposal. Experience in 1995 and 1996 has also shown that the inadequacy of resources may tend to dissuade several National Agencies from disseminating information on the programme even more widely, with unfortunate consequences for institutions and individuals who have not previously participated in European cooperation and are not yet fully aware of the opportunities which SOCRATES provides. Such factors adversely affect the programme's capacity to uphold the principle of equal opportunities set out in the Decision.

3. Outcomes of the support provided

The results achieved by each part of the programme in 1995 and 1996 are set out in Part B of this report. In overall terms, it may be said that already in this comparatively short space of time, the programme has given rise to a significantly *increased volume and improved quality of European cooperation*, notably in fields such as school education, adult education and open and distance learning which had little previous tradition of structured collaboration at transnational level. It is furthermore encouraging institutions to adopt a more *strategic approach to European cooperation*, and to give it a more prominent place than hitherto in their plans for future development. SOCRATES has in particular:

- made a substantial contribution to the *mobility of students, young people and teaching staff*, as regards both the volume of exchanges and the quality of their organisational framework,⁽³⁰⁾
- stimulated *broad and intensified cooperation between educational institutions* in different participating countries, notably through the creation of multilateral networks. Many of these are already demonstrating their potential for developing into durable structures for collaboration which will have beneficial effects long after the completion of the particular project for which SOCRATES support was provided. A total of over 16,000 institutions in all sectors of education have actively

(28) Cases have even been reported of project coordinators declining the offer of a grant, since the amount proposed was felt to be inadequate for sustaining the viability of the projects in question.

(29) See the Erasmus section in Part B of the present document.

(30) The main obstacles to transnational mobility have been identified in the Commission's Green Paper: *Education - Training - Research: The obstacles to transnational mobility*, COM (96)462 final of 2 October 1996.

participated in SOCRATES in the first two years of the programme:⁽³¹⁾

- contributed to *enhancing the European dimension* in various educational sectors, notably by measures relating to *the initial training and further professional development of teaching staff*;
- given a new impetus to the academic *recognition of study periods* carried out and qualifications obtained abroad: the European Credit Transfer System is being extended to well over 1,000 higher education institutions; projects addressing the recognition of qualifications in adult education and those obtained through open and distance learning are also being supported;
- continued to make progress in *promoting the teaching and learning of less widely used and less taught languages* of the Union, particularly in the Lingua part of the programme but also within Erasmus;
- provided a focal point for a *broader use of open and distance learning* and new technologies in various educational sectors, and helped to ensure that in the development of multimedia approaches pedagogical considerations are taken more fully into account;
- led to the production of a large and *varied range of teaching materials, curricula, training schemes and other educational products*;
- provided new opportunities for widespread *exchange of knowledge and experience*, thereby spreading expertise and fostering the process of *innovation* throughout the participating countries;
- been instrumental in ensuring that European cooperation benefits all Member States, *including the countries which are economically disadvantaged and/or located at the periphery of the Community*.

In all these ways, the SOCRATES programme is making clear and demonstrable progress towards the objective, set out in Article 126 of the EC Treaty⁽³²⁾, of contributing to *quality education* throughout the Community. Just as importantly, it is helping to make the "*European dimension in education*" a meaningful concept for hundreds of thousands of teachers and learners of all ages. Considerable progress has been made in preparing the ground for the extension of these benefits of the programme to the wider Europe, in accordance with the terms of the Decision.

The support provided has also clearly helped to *generate considerable levels of complementary funding* from a variety of other sources⁽³³⁾.

4. Obstacles encountered

Experience from the first two years of the programme has served to identify a number of *obstacles* to the programme's further development. This is particularly the case with secondary and, above all, primary schools, since few such institutions have a tradition of international cooperation or a network of international contacts on which to draw. The requirement that all projects must be multilateral from the outset, therefore gives rise to considerable difficulties. Other difficulties encountered by schools are that:

(31) The real extent of participation in networks is far wider than is immediately apparent, given that a project 'partner' is often a Europe-wide organisation with many member institutions. The Statistical Annex provides an overview of participation of each country in transnational projects within SOCRATES.

(32) *Official Journal* N° C224 of 31 August 1992.

(33) As the Statistical Annex shows, SOCRATES grants in 1996 cover under 40% of the total project cost under almost all the programme's centralised Actions; in the case of higher education, this percentage is far lower still, amounting at most to 15% of total project cost.

- they tend to be much more tightly controlled by national, regional or local government authorities, as regards the administrative regulations governing the institutions, the conditions of work of teachers and the content of the curriculum;
- in particular in the primary sector, they do not always have a legal status as an organisation in their own right, which has sometimes made it difficult for them to find an appropriate contractual and financial framework for their involvement in projects;
- the competent authorities have in many cases proven unwilling to reduce the statutory work-load of teachers responsible for projects and/or to give them satisfactory recognition for this work;
- both schools and in-service teacher training institutions have found it difficult to find complementary funding particularly at a time of severe budgetary constraints at the national, regional and local level.

For Adult education, the lack of a history of transnational collaboration, the disparate nature of provision in the participating countries, the size of the target population and the novelty of the cooperation opportunities provided within SOCRATES, have also been a challenge. But, as information begins to percolate through to the institutions in the field, the added value of multilateral cooperation at European level is quickly finding expression in a wide range of valuable projects.

In the higher education sector, the main problem to be tackled during the implementation phase has been that of achieving a smooth transfer from the funding structure used during the preceding Erasmus programme, namely the award of grants to multilateral "Inter-university cooperation programmes", to an approach based on "Institutional Contracts" covering the bulk of each university's European cooperation activities, without endangering the commitment of the academics involved in these activities at the level of the departments and faculties of each university.

Within the Lingua part of the programme, the pilot year of the scheme for language assistantships has also highlighted a number of obstacles, relating to various sectors of education. These include administrative barriers to the free movement of the participants, who are in many cases neither workers nor students, as regards such matters as work permits, insurance and taxation; national regulations restricting the mobility of teacher-trainees; financial problems resulting from differences in the costs of living between the assistant's home and host country; and various practical problems such as accommodation.

A further difficulty has been the adverse circumstances under which National Agencies have sometimes had to operate. At the outset, this was partly due to the difficulties of establishing the Agencies and of launching the various Actions against extremely tight deadlines as a result of the delay in adopting the programme. A further problem derives from the level of resources made available to Agencies by the competent national authorities in certain participating countries. The clear signs from the experience of the first two years are that if this were to persist, such under-resourcing could have a number of serious consequences: it could dissuade Agencies from disseminating information on the programme as widely as possible, thereby restricting the realisation of the programme's full potential, reduce the assistance which Agencies can provide in identifying partners and advising applicants. It could furthermore limit their capacity to deliver full and timely management information to the Commission, and their readiness to participate in what are wrongly perceived as important but less urgent activities such as monitoring and evaluation.

As Part B of this Report shows, considerable progress has already been made towards resolving a number of the obstacles identified above. Though others will be rather more intractable, the experience from the first two years augurs well for the willingness of the key 'actors' involved to adopt a constructive approach and seek innovative solutions as difficulties arise.

A cause for more structural concern, however are the budgetary difficulties which the programme is already facing and which will become much more evident still in 1997 and thereafter, as the momentum of the programme grows and the full level of demand makes itself felt. They will be further exacerbated by the extension of the programme to include the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus. On the basis of the present analysis of the first two years of SOCRATES, and the detailed

projections which this analysis facilitates with regard to the coming years, financial constraints constitute the greatest impediment to the further development of the programme and its capacity to fulfil the objectives set out in the Decision.

IV. CHALLENGES FOR SOCRATES IN THE PERIOD AHEAD

The initial phase covered by this report has served to highlight a considerable array of *challenges* in the period ahead. These include notably:

- ***Dissemination of outputs and experience*** resulting from SOCRATES activities. Already, many steps are being taken in this regard, for example the inclusion of effective dissemination arrangements as a key selection criterion for projects; inter-project meetings and thematic seminars; cooperating with European associations as a vector for dissemination; production of *Manuals of good practice* relating to various types of projects; fostering ongoing contacts between former individual participants. The next step is to develop a more integrated approach to these dissemination activities, both at Community level and in cooperation with National Agencies, and to supplement them with new ones such as the publication of catalogues of products resulting from projects and the increasing use of electronic means for disseminating project outcomes, notably data bases available via the Internet.
- ***Achieving greater interactivity between the SOCRATES Actions.*** In adopting SOCRATES, the intention was not to create a framework programme within which quasi-autonomous programmes would pursue separate aims. Rather, SOCRATES was conceived as an integrated programme characterised by creative interaction between the sub-programmes relating to each sector or aspect of education. Now that each Action has been launched, increased attention will need to be paid both at Community and national level to creating greater synergy between the different Actions.
- ***Consolidating of the network of National Agencies.*** A key challenge for the next phase is to ensure that all Agencies are provided with the means to perform effectively the role which the Decision assigns them. Increasing attention should also be given to ensuring effective coordination at national level between the Agencies working on different Actions of SOCRATES, and between of the SOCRATES Agencies and those performing similar functions in the context of other European programmes. Promoting operational complementarity between the grants available within SOCRATES and those on offer from sources within the participating countries, should be a further priority.
- ***Implementing the monitoring and evaluation arrangements*** for the programme. The strategy, methodology and operational arrangements for the interim and final evaluation of the programme are currently under discussion with the SOCRATES Committee.
- The smooth ***integration within the programme of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus.*** In facing this challenge, all organisations involved in the delivery of SOCRATES will be called upon not only to cope with a general increase in work-load but also to handle new types of needs and problems. Additional knowledge will be required, notably as regards staff members' insights into the educational systems of the newly participating countries.
- ***Informing the educational community*** of the opportunities which SOCRATES provides. This work must continue particularly as regards new Actions such as school partnerships and Adult education, and for countries which have only recently had access to Community programmes.
- Finally, there is the growing challenge of ***continuing the overall forward momentum*** of the programme in the face of the growing ***budgetary constraints.*** In many sectors, this includes in particular achieving the difficult balance between continued support for existing projects, which have proven to be effective and successful, and support for new networks, projects and mobility activities.

In addition to these challenges affecting SOCRATES as a whole, each Action within the programme has its own specific agenda of priority issues to be tackled. These are indicated in the box on page 13 below.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The present Report shows that SOCRATES has begun to make a significant contribution to preparing the young people of today for life and work in the Europe of tomorrow; it has demonstrated its potential for enhancing - through European cooperation - the quality, creativity and sense of innovation in education; it is helping to develop a keener appreciation of the opportunities opened in the educational field by the information society; perhaps above all, it is making a powerful contribution to making the European Community an accessible, living reality for hundreds of thousands of European citizens of all ages, from pre-primary school through to adult and higher education.

However, the analysis has also shown that the programme will not be able to sustain, consolidate and build on these promising early results without additional funds. This Report is therefore accompanied, as envisaged by the above-mentioned Joint Statement of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, by proposals for an enhancement of the financial framework. The budgetary considerations are set out in detail in the Explanatory Memorandum and the related Financial Statement. Essentially, they consist of three elements, based on the findings of the present Report:

- firstly, it should be recalled that the overarching objectives of SOCRATES are to contribute to high quality education in Europe and to bring Europe closer to the citizen. For this reason, it is vital that under each of the programme's Actions a critical mass of good quality projects and activities be supported. Given that the target groups addressed by the programme are extremely large, a high number of grants must be awarded;

- secondly, it is not possible to keep up the programme's momentum towards achieving this critical mass by further reducing the average amount of support to each beneficiary. For example, the support given to each school within a Comenius school partnership (ECU 2,000) is barely enough to facilitate even a minimal amount of contacts between the teachers involved; the level of grants awarded to students under Erasmus is only 15% of the maximum allowed by the Decision. Furthermore, severe constraints on public spending in the educational sector, as well as the difficulties faced by private enterprise, are making it increasingly difficult for educational establishments to obtain high levels of complementary funding from national sources;

- thirdly, as demonstrated by the present Report, the demand for support under the programme greatly outstrips the available financial resources and for structural reasons will continue to rise. In the case of a programme such as SOCRATES, of which a key objective is to bring Europe closer to a large number of citizens, the option of having an even higher level of selectivity than at present, also among good quality projects, is undesirable. This would create frustration among a wide section of the citizens, at the very moment when it is crucial for the Community to demonstrate that it is responding to their real concerns.

CHALLENGES FOR THE *SOCRATES* ACTIONS IN THE PERIOD AHEAD

Higher education (Erasmus)

- ▶ providing a European dimension for all students, not merely those who spend a period of study abroad
 - ▶ implementing the Institutional Contract, to make European cooperation a strategic feature of institutional planning while preserving the commitment of individual academics at departmental level
 - ▶ fostering the Thematic Networks as a vehicle for innovation and quality enhancement
 - ▶ sustaining the motivation of students to study abroad, and maintaining equality of opportunity to participate in mobility, despite the low level of financial support provided
-
- ▶ sustaining the quantitative expansion of multilateral school partnerships, and in particular involving the primary and pre-primary school sectors to a greater extent than hitherto (Action 1)
 - ▶ reinforcing the support provided for the education of disadvantaged groups in inner cities (Action 2)
 - ▶ ensuring that in-service training undertaken within Comenius Action 3 is full recognised by the competent authorities in the participating countries, on a par with national in-service activities
 - ▶ promoting greater interaction between the three Actions, notably as regards feeding back the results from in-service activities under (Action 3) into the development of school partnerships (Action 1)

Language-learning (Lingua)

- ▶ further intensifying efforts to promote linguistic diversity, and in particular the teaching and learning of the less widely used and less spoken EU languages
- ▶ achieving more structured feedback from research on language-learning into the Lingua activities, and from these into national education systems;
- ▶ promoting greater involvement of the initial training sector within European Cooperation Programmes
- ▶ encouraging more intensive interlinkages between the Lingua Actions, and between these and other parts of SOCRATES such as school education

Open and distance learning (ODL)

- ▶ adapting to the changes in ODL resulting from the advent of the new technologies, and ensuring that approaches using ODL become more education- and less technology-driven
- ▶ doing more to help enhance the quality of ODL tools and products
- ▶ strengthening this Action's contribution in the area of accreditation and recognition of qualifications obtained via ODL
- ▶ achieving greater involvement of the school sector in the activities supported

Adult education

- ▶ continuing the dissemination of information on this Action in general, given the heterogeneity and the diversity of the adult education sector
- ▶ targeting key areas and key groups, within the perspective of lifelong learning and social exclusion
- ▶ promoting the assessment of prior experiential learning
- ▶ fostering greater cooperation between different types of adult education organisations, and helping to build bridges between non-formal and formal adult education

Exchange of information and experience on education systems and policy

- ▶ launching of the operational activities under Chapter III, Action 3.1 of SOCRATES, and above all the first pilot projects on quality assurance in school education;
- ▶ consolidating the work of the Eurydice network in the production of reliable comparative studies and key indicators for educational cooperation at Community level;
- ▶ implementation of the new allocation formula for Arion study visits, and further enhancing the quality of the study visits on the basis of feedback from participants and other evaluations;
- ▶ smooth integration of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus within Eurydice, Arion and the Naric network.

PART B: RESULTS ACHIEVED BY EACH PART OF THE PROGRAMME

■ HIGHER EDUCATION (ERASMUS)

The higher education Chapter of SOCRATES carries forward in revised and extended form the previous Erasmus programme (1987-1994). Its purpose is to promote quality in higher education through European cooperation. Its best known aspect is *Action 2*, which provides *student mobility grants* to help cover the cost of spending a recognised study period abroad. However, with the incorporation of Erasmus within SOCRATES, increased emphasis is placed on enhancing through *Action 1* the *European dimension of universities' work*, enabling students to benefit from European cooperation even if they do not directly participate in exchanges.

The impact of Erasmus on both the quantity and quality of European cooperation has been independently evaluated since its establishment.⁽³⁴⁾ In terms of numbers, Erasmus has transformed the situation which existed prior to its adoption, and has contributed more than any other single factor to the increased importance which universities now attach to European cooperation compared with a decade ago. Its qualitative impacts are also clearly discernible, as revealed by the thematic conferences conducted during 1995 and 1996. For the *universities*, the range of benefits include raised teaching standards through the pooling of expertise and experience, improved teaching of foreign languages, more effective dissemination of information, improved academic recognition, and better internal administration procedures, notably as regards the management of international cooperation at institutional, faculty and departmental levels.⁽³⁵⁾ New or intensified research collaboration has also resulted from the many contacts between academic staff. The great majority of Erasmus students report enriched academic experience through frequent contact with the teaching staff of the host institution. Studies of former participants reveal that the Erasmus experience assists graduates in obtaining employment and leads to their being given work assignments requiring international knowledge and experience.⁽³⁶⁾

The above-mentioned benefits have been continued and further expanded in the first two years of SOCRATES, spanning the academic years 1995/6 and 1996/7:

- ◆ In order to give the universities time to adjust to the Institutional Contract arrangements, the former funding structure based on Inter-university Cooperation Programmes (ICP) was continued, on the recommendation of the SOCRATES Committee, during this two-year transitional period.⁽³⁷⁾ In 1995, the highest ever total of 2,673 *Inter-university Cooperation Programmes* (ICPs) were supported, involving an average of 8 institutions each. The funds requested in 1995 and 1996, totalling some 400 MioECU, outstripped available resources by a factor of 9:1. In 1996, 2,530 ICPs were given a further instalment of support. While *student mobility* remained a central concern of the vast majority of ICPs, other types of cooperation also figured prominently. Thus demand for *curriculum*

(34) Notably by the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work at the Universität-Gesamthochschule Kassel, which produced a series of quantitative and thematic evaluations throughout the lifetime of the Erasmus programme, and in an evaluation by the consultants Price Waterhouse concluded in 1993.

(35) Cf. *Review of the Erasmus Programme: Final Synthesis Report*, Price Waterhouse, 1993.

(36) Cf. Friedhelm Maiworm, Wolfgang Steube and Ulrich Teichler, *Learning in Europe: the Erasmus Experience*, London 1991; *ibid.: Experiences of Erasmus Students 1990/1*, Kassel 1993 (= Erasmus Monographs No. 14 and 17 respectively).

(37) A last full ICP selection was carried out in 1995, but as no new ICPs or new activities were subsequently funded, and the funding for certain ICPs was discontinued, this has resulted in an apparent stagnation in growth in 1996/97. This development has thus been 'artificially' created, and does not reflect any basic downturn in demand, as the first year's applications for support of "Institutional Contracts" (cf. *infra*) has shown.

development support was once again high, and there was a further increase in demand for *Intensive Programmes*. These provide a valuable opportunity for students and teachers from several countries to come together and exchange experience, knowledge and ideas in a concentrated course, and many led to the development of joint teaching material and the emergence of common research projects involving staff and students. Demand for support of *teaching staff mobility* has also risen in importance. Its intrinsic value in enhancing the quality of higher education curricula and teaching methodologies, as well as its importance as a means of providing the students who cannot benefit directly from mobility with a European dimension to their studies, have clearly become more widely recognised.⁽³⁸⁾

- ◆ Under SOCRATES, joint curriculum development gains a much greater role in line with the objective of advancing and reinforcing the European dimension for a larger number of students. The three *new curriculum development measures* ("Masters"-type courses, European modules, integrated language courses) are being piloted on a very limited basis in 1996/97, prior to their full implementation from 1997/98 within the Institutional Contracts. 41 pilot projects are being supported, in subjects identified in consultation between the Commission and academic and professional organisations as being of key importance for human resource development in Europe.⁽³⁹⁾
- ◆ The *European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)* is undergoing a remarkable phase of expansion. Introduced on a pilot basis from 1989/90 to 1994/95, ECTS has been widely welcomed as an effective framework for providing mobile students with course credits that are fully transferable between European universities. An in-depth evaluation underlined its capacity for facilitating and raising the quality of student exchanges.⁽⁴⁰⁾ During 1995/96 ECTS was extended to include almost 1,000 departments or faculties in some 230 institutions, and when ECTS becomes available to all institutions in Europe with the start of the Institutional Contract arrangements in 1997/98, it will be greatly expanded once more.
- ◆ 1996 has seen the introduction of the new *Thematic Network Projects*, which provide support for developing the European dimension an academic discipline or other area of common interest (e.g. a transdisciplinary area of study or an aspect of higher education management or administration). Projects involve cooperation between a large number of university faculties in all or most participating countries, along with academic, professional and other associations. They are intended to have a lasting and widespread impact across Europe in the fields concerned. Almost 500 expressions of interest and over 100 full project proposals were submitted, but due to budget limitations only 28 could be selected for Community support.⁽⁴¹⁾ The response by European universities to the opportunities offered by Thematic Network Projects shows that they meet a keenly felt need, and the evidence of this first year is that many Networks will be in a position to contribute significantly to the improvement of quality and sustained innovation in their respective areas.

(38) However, most teaching assignments abroad have been of short duration, thereby frequently limiting their impact. From 1997, an additional new type of teaching staff mobility, Erasmus Teaching Fellowships, is being introduced. These will involve longer teaching periods of 2-6 months abroad, and are designed to have a lasting impact on teaching methodology.

(39) The subject areas for the 1996/7 pilot projects are: cultural management, health services management, management of small and medium-sized enterprises, new labour market policies, the function of the engineer-manager, new materials and industrial technology, new technologies in the service sector, design in civil engineering, urban development, environmental protection and development, changes in social and economic geography, educational policy, international health education, European legal databases, intellectual property, women's legal status.

(40) *Evaluation of the Pilot Phase of the European Community Course Credit Transfer System*, Coopers & Lybrand, 1993.

(41) The Thematic Networks cover fields as diverse as quality management, biotechnology, social work, sport, medical didactics, arts education, electrical engineering, archaeology, tourism, human resource development for humanitarian aid, textile technology, veterinary science, unified justice, protection of citizens in Europe, aquaculture, economics, translation and interpreting, physics, chemistry and teacher education.

- ◆ Around three-quarters of the Erasmus budget is devoted to funding *student mobility grants*. In 1995 and 1996, mobility was approved for up to 316,000 students, with an average 7 months' study period abroad. Demand has grown consistently more quickly than the budget available, and though several participating countries have made efforts to provide complementary funding, the financial conditions for mobility have greatly deteriorated over time. The average grant per approved student is now only some 15% of the maximum amount allowed by the Decision - a situation which is giving rise to increasingly widespread concern⁽⁴²⁾. The Commission's efforts to ensure that peripheral countries, those with less widely spoken languages, and those with less favoured economic circumstances, are fully involved - both as senders and receivers - in student mobility, are now clearly bearing fruit.⁽⁴³⁾ A further pilot initiative was established in 1996 whereby students from different Member States may follow intensive linguistic preparation in Portuguese, Greek, Finnish, Danish and Italian, these being the languages of those countries which have encountered greatest difficulties in attracting Erasmus students.

Since the incorporation of Erasmus within SOCRATES, considerable emphasis is placed on strengthening the European cooperation strategies of higher education institutions themselves. From the academic year 1997/98 onwards, most direct Community support to universities will therefore be provided through "*Institutional Contracts*". This term denotes an agreement between the European Commission and each university setting out the university's planned European cooperation activities and the support provided by the Community to assist in their development and implementation. Each university seeking such a contract must provide a European Policy Statement describing its strategy for international cooperation as the context for its specific proposals.

The Commission has now received the universities' first applications for Institutional Contracts relating to the academic year 1997/98. Far from leading to a diminution of interest, as some had predicted, the implementation of the new arrangements has given rise to a very considerable further upsurge in volume and some significant changes in the nature of demand for European cooperation activities.

A total of 1,582 Institutional Contract proposals have been received, from almost all major higher education institutions in the 18 participating countries and almost all institutions involved so far in Erasmus ICPs. The universities' proposals contain a budget request amounting to some 250 MioECU, 25% more than in the last year of normal ICP funding. Salient features of the proposals are as follows:

- ▶ Some 95% of the submissions include *student mobility*. The number of students for whom grants have been requested has risen by a further 20% since 1995 to over 180,000, continuing the regular increase in demand for student mobility evident from the very start of Erasmus. Some two-thirds of all the universities applying for Institutional Contracts have also requested support to introduce ECTS - a fourfold increase compared with the number of institutions currently implementing the system.
- ▶ The increase in demand for *teaching staff mobility* is stronger still. No fewer than 85% of applications include teacher mobility, involving over 31,000 staff assignments abroad compared with only 14,000 in 1995/6.
- ▶ The number of *Intensive programmes* proposed has almost doubled, from 605 in 1995/96 to 1,138 in 1997/98. This may be in part due to the new definition of Intensive Programmes under SOCRATES, giving the opportunity of European activity to disciplines which have traditionally encountered difficulties in taking part in student mobility.

(42) This is also evident from recent media coverage of the transition of Erasmus to SOCRATES, notably in Germany. See for example the recent articles "Hoffnungslos unterdotiert" in the *Deutsche Universitäts-Zeitung* of 3 May 1996 and "Weniger Geld für den Studentenaustausch", *Handelsblatt*, 29 May 1996.

(43) Between 1988/9 and 1995/6, the number of approved Erasmus students from Germany, France and the UK grew by a factor of 7 to around 78,000; the number from all other participating countries rose by a factor of 14 over the same period (from under 6,000 to over 82,000).

- ▶ The total of almost 1,200 *curriculum development* projects proposed for 1997/98 is well over double the 1995/96 figure of 514. They comprise 287 initial/intermediate level curricula projects, 355 proposals for the development of advanced level ("Masters-type") courses, 453 European Modules and 100 proposals for Language courses integrated with other subjects.

The Institutional Contract proposals therefore demonstrate not only continuing commitment to student mobility as a cornerstone of Erasmus within SOCRATES, but also a particularly high demand for support of activities designed to bring a European dimension into the study programmes of the wider student population.

The transition from the Erasmus programme to the new arrangements within SOCRATES, has revealed exciting potential for future development. But this part of the programme is encountering increasingly serious problems resulting from the gap between the demand for support and the funds available. Availability of funds will materially affect the capacity of Erasmus to continue making its vital contribution to the development of high quality human resources and the enhancement of mutual understanding in Europe.

■ SCHOOL EDUCATION (COMENIUS)

Comenius constitutes the first comprehensive instrument for the promotion at Community level of European cooperation involving all types of schools: pre-primary, primary and secondary.

The challenge involved in making a success of this part of the programme, is very considerable indeed. This is firstly due to the sheer size of the target population. As mentioned above, there are well over 300,000 schools, 4 million teachers and some 70 million pupils in the countries currently participating in SOCRATES. Disseminating information to all those potentially interested is therefore a major undertaking. Nor does the school sector have the same tradition of international cooperation to build upon as was the case with the higher education sector; added to which, schools tend to have far less autonomy in the management of their affairs than their higher education counterparts.

A phased approach has therefore been adopted to the implementation of Comenius. The funds allocated to this Chapter in 1995 were comparatively modest, whereas in 1996 they have been substantially increased as the demand for support begins to make itself felt.⁽⁴⁴⁾ After just two years of support, a new 'culture of cooperation' is quickly beginning to emerge:

- ◆ In the case of the *European Education Projects* developed by *multilateral school partnerships* under *Action I*, whereas in the preceding pilot action only 40 partnerships had been supported, over 11 times this figure (462) were immediately launched in 1995 when Comenius support became available, and this has again almost quadrupled to around 1,600 partnerships in 1996. Some 5,000 schools are now participating. These figures will increase considerably in coming years, as the full effects of the information measures and of the 4,300 preparatory visits carried out during 1995 and 1996 materialise.

Multilateral school partnerships are already beginning to confirm the promise of the preceding pilot action, providing an effective context for a wide range of collaborative initiatives between schools, and for the generation or intensification of the European dimension in the classroom. They are also revealing their potential as a source of innovative practice and professional development of teachers, through intensive transnational contacts between colleagues and through the elaboration of new European teaching materials; they are reported as having a positive effect on participating pupils' motivation to learn. By working with their counterparts on a common project arising from the the

(44) In accordance with the requirement contained in the Decision, at least 10% of the programme's overall five-year budget must be devoted to this Chapter. However, both the Commission and the SOCRATES Committee have expressed the intention of achieving a higher percentage than this if possible.

mainstream curriculum, pupils are given closer insights into life and learning in other European countries. Using new information and communications technology to maintain contacts with partner schools abroad familiarises pupils with this crucial aspect of modern society.

Projects in 1995 and 1996 have been undertaken in a wide range of thematic areas, such as: environment; cultural heritage; school-industry links; regional, local and European identities; equality of opportunities. Many involve an interdisciplinary approach links with the extra-school community.

In addition to the projects as such, 1,700 teacher exchanges have been supported, and grants have been awarded to enable over 600 teachers to carry out transnational placements in industry, commerce and other organisations outside the education sector, thereby helping to develop a clearer link with enterprise and to prepare pupils more effectively for the world of work. Over 2,300 study visits have enabled headteachers to be briefed on the partners involved in their schools' projects, while facilitating a critical comparison of management and leadership approaches between schools in different countries.

- ◆ The potential of *Action 2* of Comenius (*Intercultural education*) as an instrument for promoting social cohesion in today's increasingly multicultural society is apparent from the range of more than 200 projects supported in 1995 and 1996. These have been devoted in particular to:
 - the introduction of migrants' languages as foreign languages for other pupils;
 - the raising of awareness of the impact of the formal vocabulary used in classrooms (the teaching language) on the levels of achievement of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds;
 - the use of new technologies, and in particular open and distance learning, for Gypsies and Travellers;
 - the introduction of intercultural approaches in mainstream education for an understanding of different cultures, religions and languages;
 - the creation of prerequisites for the exercise of active European citizenship, based on mutual respect and human rights for all, irrespective of culture, race or creed;
 - the regeneration of inner-city schools and projects focusing on the specific needs of schools in difficult districts in large metropolitan areas through the development of integrated approaches and cooperation between educational institutions, city authorities, pupils, parents, and local associations.

The Action has already achieved a good balance between its various target groups, approximately 40% of the projects being devoted to improving education for the children of migrant workers, 30% addressing the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and persons with itinerant occupations, and the remaining 30% being concerned with intercultural issues relating to school education in general.

The European networks supported are already proving to be an effective means for exchanging ideas and examples of good practice, and as a vector for general communication on intercultural issues. Many have already yielded concrete outputs such as and teaching material for migrant children, Gypsies, Travellers and itinerants, teaching modules for intercultural education, and data banks to facilitate transnational cooperation. These include a data base containing some 5,000 references to organisations and institutions active in this field, and a data bank for all pedagogical material for intercultural education in Europe.

- ◆ *Action 3 (in-service training)* of Comenius, targets the teacher as the key person who will help change the learning experience of young people in schools. 128 completely new projects have so far been funded, involving around 500 institutions engaged in the in-service training of teachers in the 18 participating countries. Demand more than doubled between 1995 and 1996. Participation figures for 1996 were markedly on the increase for all countries, and the geographical distribution of coordinators and participating institutions was more even. The 1996 projects also demonstrated a broader range of themes, greater diversity in the types of institution involved and to a better spread of educational sectors.

Already, the grants awarded for the development of training activities are beginning to bear fruit. Though only 47 such grants were awarded in 1995, their productivity has been such that no fewer than 81 European courses are already becoming available in the school year 1996/7. The courses, a detailed description of which is contained in the Comenius Action 3 catalogue, will provide in-service training opportunities for between 2,200 and 2,500 teachers in the period to August 1997, thereby placing an unexpectedly early strain on the resources available under Action 3.2 (grants to enable individual teachers to participate in in-service courses). The involvement of several in-service institutions from a number of different countries in preparing and organising the courses, and the subsequent participation in the courses of teachers from several countries, constitute a demonstrable added value compared with in-service activities developed and delivered in the national context alone.

Notwithstanding the many difficulties inherent in launching such scheme, the three Comenius Actions are taking root in the educational community, and both the quantity and quality of activities augur well for the future impact of this new and ambitious part of SOCRATES.

■ PROMOTION OF LANGUAGE-LEARNING (LINGUA)

Promoting improved command of languages, and particularly those least widely used and taught,⁽⁴⁵⁾ is one of the principal objectives of the SOCRATES Programme. It is a key not only to improving human resources in a European context, but also to enhancing mutual understanding and a sense of European citizenship across the Community. The activities supported within SOCRATES continue those initiated under the Lingua programme (1990-94). New activities have also been added, and further perspectives are opened by the opportunities for interaction with other parts of SOCRATES. All the 11 official languages of the European Union are covered, together with Irish, Letzebuergesch, Icelandic and Norwegian.

Lingua aims to improve the quality and quantity of language-teaching and learning, by creating an environment in which languages can be effectively learned, by promoting language-teacher training and the development of language-related materials, and by increasing citizens' motivation to learn and communicate in languages other than their own through enlarged opportunities for transnational contacts.

- ◆ Over 300 institutions have been involved in the 54 *European Cooperation Programmes for language teacher-training (ECPs)* supported under *Action A of Lingua*. Almost all target languages of Lingua are represented. Projects supported so far within SOCRATES are characterised by a growing diversity of topics and educational sectors. Increased attention is being paid to key areas for innovation such as the early teaching of foreign languages, the use of multimedia and other new technologies, and the role of open and distance learning in language-teacher training.

As previous appraisals have shown, ECPs have a significant impact on the quality of the language-teacher training provided by the participating institutions and beyond. Via the ongoing activities of these institutions, the modules, materials and curricula developed within ECPs are an important vehicle for innovation, contributing not only to improving teachers' and trainers' linguistic competence and their confidence in the use of the target language, but also to extending their understanding of the cultural environment of the language and refining their technical and methodological expertise. The networks of institutions developed within the Programmes are an important dissemination resource whose potential should be systematically exploited in the future. The inclusion of initial teacher training within the sector covered by this Action has not yet been fully realised by the educational community. As awareness of this innovation spreads, a significant increase in demand is expected.

(45) More recently, this need has been highlighted again in Objective 4 of the Commission's White Paper on Education and Training, *Towards a learning Society (cf. supra)*, which pinpoints the need to make proficiency in at least two EU foreign languages at school a priority.

- ◆ In 1995 and 1996, over 16,000 language teachers have received a grant within the Lingua scheme of *grants to enable individual language teachers to attend in-service training activities in another participating country (Action B)*. It can therefore be estimated that its benefits have reached over a million pupils during this period. The scheme has been given broader scope within SOCRATES, through the inclusion of teachers seeking to teach other subjects through the medium of a foreign language.

The support provided within this Action has several types of impact: it boosts the transnational mobility of language teaching staff; improves the quality of language tuition; strengthens the cultural and European dimension in classroom teaching; contributes to enhancing the professional motivation of teachers; and creates a growing pool of persons with a potential for initiating other forms of cooperation within SOCRATES, both within Lingua and in the area of school cooperation (Comenius).

- ◆ The school year 1995/6 was a pilot year for *Lingua Assistantships (Action C)*, with the placement of some 200 future teachers of languages in schools throughout the EC Member States and EFTA-EEA countries. In 1996/97, 550 Lingua assistantships are being supported. There are already indications that demand will heavily outweigh the limited supply. In 1996, some countries are reporting a ten-fold increase in applications for an Assistantship grant compared with 1995, and others have witnessed a five-fold increase in the number of schools wishing to host an Assistant. Several countries are having to limit the length of assistantships in order to allow more persons to benefit.

The new Action is having a significant impact in terms of extending the provision of language assistantships in Europe. Before its inception, only 3 of the 18 countries participating in SOCRATES had assistantship schemes of any size, namely the countries with the largest population and the widely spoken languages of the EU. Furthermore, Lingua Assistantships have a number of 'added value' features compared with most of those funded nationally, in that they target only future language teachers, emphasise teaching methodology as well as the mere enhancement of linguistic competence, and prioritise the less widely spoken EU languages.

The pilot year has revealed this Action's potential to help improve the quality and diversity of language teaching, notably by perfecting future teachers' knowledge of the language they will teach and its culture; helping new language teachers to add another language to their teaching repertoire; giving new teachers and established professionals a chance to learn from each other, improving the range of European languages taught by schools; and encouraging more pupils - and even teachers and parents - to take up a new European language. Other benefits include the role of using the assistants in forging links with foreign partner establishments or local enterprises, creating new teaching materials, and bringing European languages and cultures into non-language lessons.

- ◆ During the first two years of SOCRATES, 84 *cooperative projects concerned with the development of tools for language teaching and learning* (curricula, materials, evaluation and assessment instruments etc.) have been aided under *Lingua Action D*. The first two years of SOCRATES have confirmed the importance of this Action for stimulating innovation, particularly for producing materials. Products under design within the 1995 and 1996 projects relate notably to:
 - the use of information technology and telematics, including notably the exploitation of CD-ROM and the Internet as supports to language teaching and learning;
 - the cultural dimension of language-learning;
 - the early learning of foreign languages;
 - assessment of language skills and competence;
 - tools designed to provide educationally disadvantaged young people with a better opportunity to take part in and benefit from mobility programmes.

Many of the products whose development is supported would never have existed without Lingua support, in particular those relating to the teaching and learning of the less widely used and less taught languages.⁽⁴⁶⁾ However, this is another Action of the programme in which demand far outstrips the resources available. Only 20% of the applications for new projects were accepted in 1995, and a number of project proposers have withdrawn their projects because the contribution which the Commission was able to offer was insufficient for the projects concerned to appear viable.

- ◆ In the school years 1995/6 and 1996/7, SOCRATES support is being provided for some 3,500 *Joint Educational Projects (JEPs)* under *Action E of Lingua*, culminating in two-week exchanges for over 80,000 young people across the participating countries. JEPs have a long track record of success in making a real contribution to the motivation and linguistic competence of young people, particularly those who have fewer opportunities to learn languages: around 56% of participants are following a technical/vocational course. The priority for the least widely used or taught languages is also gradually making itself felt.

By taking part in such projects, pupils come to realise that there is a valid reason for learning languages, which they need in order to communicate with their partners before and during the exchange in which each JEP culminates. Participants gain practical experience of the lives and studies of their counterparts in other European countries, and thereby an increased understanding of European diversity and commonality. A wide variety of topics have been covered by the projects supported so far within SOCRATES, each of which - in addition to the exchanges - also results in a range of practical and tangible products such as exhibitions, magazines, technical vocabulary lists, bilingual multimedia programmes and so on.

Experience with the first two years of Lingua within the SOCRATES programme suggests that greater interactivity between the Actions of Lingua is starting to be achieved. For example, greater priority in the award of grants under Action B is being given to teachers participating in in-service activities developed within Action A; courses developed within Action A and Assistantships under Action C can assist teachers in the development of Joint Educational Projects under Action E. Furthermore, the Lingua Actions are exploring possibilities for closer interaction with other parts of SOCRATES. For example, the design of materials and curricula with the specific aim of promoting mobility is now a priority area for support, and various cooperation opportunities with Comenius are emerging.

■ OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

The development of open and distance learning, including the use of new information, communications and multimedia technology in education, is a key factor enabling citizens to take advantage of an open area for educational cooperation in Europe, and has a vital role to play in the strategy to upgrade the level and accessibility of education at all levels and throughout life.

The ODL Action within SOCRATES is the expression of an increasing awareness of the importance of promoting more intensive European cooperation in this field. This has previously found expression in the Commission's 1991 *Memorandum*⁽⁴⁷⁾, the 1992 Conclusions of the Council⁽⁴⁸⁾ and the 12 ensuing national reports. More recent developments have included the creation of the Commission's Task Force on educational software and multimedia⁽⁴⁹⁾, which has led to the publication of a joint call for proposals

(46) The substantial contribution which this Action continues to make to the diversification of language provision, is further demonstrated by the fact that in 1995 a total of 61 projects relating to Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Greek, Irish, Norwegian, Portuguese and Swedish were supported, whereas only 11 related to English.

(47) *Open and distance learning in the European Community*, COM (91) 388 final, 12 November 1991.

(48) Conclusions of the Council (British Presidency), *Official Journal* No. J 92/C 336 of 27 November 1992.

(49) *Educational software and multimedia*, Final Report, July 1996, SEC(96)1426 final.

spanning several Community programmes⁽⁵⁰⁾, the May 1996 Council Resolution in this field,⁽⁵¹⁾ and the strategic action plan for "Learning in the information society" launched by the Commission following the European Council in Florence in June 1996⁽⁵²⁾. The project on language learning which forms part of the G7 actions relating to the learning society, should also be mentioned in this context.

The Action is oriented towards two aspects: the provision of educational services at a distance, and the use of multimedia products and services in all existing or potentially emerging educational contexts. Two types of projects are supported:

- **European partnership projects**, the purpose of which is to achieve greater synergy, exchange of experience and sharing of resources and expertise at European level in the production of specific outputs or the provision of specific open and distance learning services in Europe;
- **Observation projects**, each of which is intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the state of development of a particular aspect of open and distance learning, including the use of new educational technologies, across a broad cross-section of the countries participating in SOCRATES.

The Action is clearly responding to needs which are not being met by through other Community programmes. In the two selection rounds for new projects so far, 241 applications were submitted, of which 74 were accepted. The sharp increase between 1995 and 1996 suggests that the full extent of demand has not yet become apparent. Budgetary constraints seem certain to become a real obstacle to the development of this Action as from 1997, due to the need for renewed funding of the multi-annual projects first supported in 1995 and 1996 as well as a probable continuing increase in demand for the support of new projects.

By its mere existence the Open and Distance Learning Action within SOCRATES has already generated a significant increase in the volume of European cooperation in the ODL domain. In particular, it has begun to facilitate cooperation between different types of 'actors' who had little prior tradition of partnership in this domain: users, providers, software developers and disseminators, education system managers and so on. The networks thus far supported involve a broad range of organisations, including: associations and other non-governmental organisations, distance education institutions, conventional universities (and to some extent schools and adult education organisations) concerned with the use of new technology in teaching and the introduction of distance learning schemes; publishers of pedagogical materials, especially in the field of multimedia. In this way, the Action is also contributing to a generally increased visibility of ODL across the participating countries.

A wide range of key topics are covered by the 1995 and 1996 projects. They reveal a growing awareness of the need to explore the implications - for both teacher/trainers and education managers - of the introduction of innovative approaches based on ODL. They also reveal that whilst the role and contribution of information and communications technology are widely seen as a central element of this process, there is a vital need to place renewed emphasis on the pedagogical aspects such as course design and the role of teachers/tutors. Organisational issues relating to the collaborative development/adaptation of curricula and educational materials, the introduction of information and communications technologies in different educational contexts, or the development of specific services or support environments for students or adult learners, also figure prominently among the projects' concerns.

(50) *Official Journal* No. C 381/24 of 17 December 1996.

(51) Council Resolution of 6 May 1996 relating to educational multimedia software in the fields of education and training (96/C 195/03), *Official Journal* No. C 195/8 of 6 July 1996.

(52) *Learning in the Information Society. Action plan for a European education initiative (1996-1998)*. Communication by the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 2 October 1996, COM (96) 471 final.

■ ADULT EDUCATION

The Adult Education Action is an important area of innovation within SOCRATES. It seeks to complement the training and skills-related measures within Leonardo da Vinci by enhancing the European dimension in all areas of adult education - general, cultural and social. It is to be seen in the context of the increasingly apparent need for a vigorous policy of lifelong learning at European level and within each of the participating countries. To this end, European projects are supported which:

- envisage the development of adult education courses or the production of learning materials which may lead to a better understanding of political, economic, social, cultural and historical aspects of the countries participating in SOCRATES and of the European Community as such. In this context, projects on European civic education and, more broadly, on active citizenship are also supported;
- foster transnational cooperation, networking, exchange of experience and information between adult education organisations, thereby contributing to the quality of adult education in Europe.

In the past, structured transnational cooperation in the Adult education sector has been embryonic. The 68 European projects already supported during the first two years of SOCRATES therefore constitute a major expansion of such cooperation. Particularly gratifying is the fact that each project involves an average of almost 5 partners (over 300 in all), demonstrating the high degree of multilaterality which this Action has achieved in a short space of time. Demand for support doubled between 1995 and 1996.

The type and volume of supply of adult education vary greatly from country to country, and the potential of the Adult Education Action within SOCRATES as an instrument for productive sharing of exchange of experience and expertise is already becoming apparent. The projects supported thus far cover a wide range of topics and activities. Those which focus on the promotion of knowledge and awareness about Europe and active citizenship are typically engaged in the development of materials and/or modules which will be made available in printed and/or electronic form in due course. Topics covered include the arts, media literacy, health education, and the fight against racism, xenophobia and social exclusion. The projects which emphasise the enhancement of adult education through European co-operation focus on the development of new teaching methods, new structures or programmes for adult education, the development of information networks and data banks and the preparation and dissemination of publications (guides, manuals, periodicals). Many of the projects are concerned with the improvement of educational opportunities for senior citizens, socially excluded or marginalised groups, disabled or illiterate persons, and the unemployed. Some are being developed in cooperation with trade union groups.

Some of the major issues facing adult education in Europe today are tackled in the projects supported. These include methodological questions, self-learning strategies, assessment of prior experiential learning, quality management of adult education, issues of access and motivation, core skills of disadvantaged groups, the training of adult educators and tutors, accreditation systems suitable for use in formal and non-formal adult education, and ways of building bridges between these systems.

The projects are actively involving a broad spectrum of adult education providers, from all parts of the adult education 'system', whether formal or non-formal, public or private, professional or voluntary, at national, regional or local level. Particularly encouraging has been the fact that the majority of organisations applying are national or local adult education organisations or non-governmental organisations, suggesting that the Action is also beginning to make itself felt at the grass-roots level.

■ EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND POLICY

Based on the mandate contained in Article 126 of the EC Treaty, one of the key objectives of SOCRATES is to enhance the quality of education by encouraging exchange of information and experience between the participating countries. To this end, four types of activity are supported:

Analysis of questions of common educational policy interest

In order to promote well-founded and in-depth discussion among educational decision-makers, SOCRATES promotes studies and analyses, exchanges of experts and study visits, dissemination activities, colloquia, workshops and - from 1997 onwards - pilot projects on key policy issues. These are identified in close cooperation with the Education Committee of the Council. Project proposals are assessed against the triple criteria of policy relevance, scientific quality and the demonstration of a clear European dimension, defined in this case as the added value of addressing a topic in a comparative perspective and/or European context as distinct from doing so in a merely national, regional or local framework.⁽⁵³⁾ Preference is given to supporting a limited number of comprehensive analyses rather than a larger number of studies with less broad and/or in-depth coverage.

The analyses which began in 1995 and 1996 fully meet these requirements. They relate to topics of central concern to educational policy-makers in all European countries, namely aspects of the role of education in addressing the problem of young people leaving the educational system without adequate preparation for active life, and quality assurance in school education. The potential of this Action to pool the expertise of organisations active in the field of policy studies on education, and stimulate structured dialogue between research and policy-making is quickly emerging. Projects' progress is carefully monitored to guarantee that their focus remains relevant in policy terms. The capacity to assimilate project results into the policy discussion is of prime importance.

The Information Network on Education in Europe (Eurydice)

The purpose of the Eurydice network, consisting of national units coordinated by the European Unit in Brussels, is to provide the authorities in the participating countries and at European level with reliable comparative data and analysis on the development of education systems and policy. The network collaborates with Eurostat, CEDEFOP, the Council of Europe, OECD and other bodies.

The two years which have elapsed since the incorporation of the Eurydice network within SOCRATES, have been a particularly productive period. Outputs include notably:

- nine authoritative overviews on specific topics of interest such as the situation of pre-school, primary education and secondary education, the role of parents and consultative bodies in education, teacher education, reforms in compulsory schooling, and the role of the headteacher;
- the second edition of the comprehensive compendium on the education and initial vocational training systems of the EC Member States, produced in close collaboration with the European Centre for Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)⁽⁵⁴⁾;
- the second, significantly enhanced edition of *Key Data on Education in the European Union*⁽⁵⁵⁾. Produced in close collaboration with Eurostat and now issued annually, this document illustrates the increasingly important role which Eurydice plays in underpinning the decision-making process and providing authoritative data on a wider basis. The second edition contains an in-depth dossier on the teaching profession in Europe.

(53) In this way, the Action complements the more research-driven projects funded within the education and training sub-programme of the programme for Targeted socio-economic research within the Fourth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. Close cooperation is maintained with the important measures contained in the Leonardo da Vinci programme for the analysis of vocational training systems and policy issues.

(54) *Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the European Union*, second edition, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications 1995.

(55) *Key data on education in the European Union*, 1995 edition, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities 1996.

1995-6 has also seen important further development of the network's EURYBASE data base. This contains a wealth of data on the education systems in the participating countries, including descriptions of important legislation, key bibliographical references, an inventory of institutions and a glossary of terminology.

Considerable efforts have been devoted over the past two years to extending Eurydice's activities to the EFTA-EEA countries and, progressively, those to which SOCRATES is now being opened; to ensuring that publications are produced in more Community languages; and to making the network's outputs such as the studies and the EURYBASE data base available not only to educational policy-makers but also to the wider public, notably via the Commission's EUROPA server on the Internet.

Study visits for educational decision-makers (Arion)

During 1995/6 and 1996/7 some 2,600 grants have been awarded for Arion study visits, the purpose of which is to facilitate exchange of information and experience in areas of common interest, especially in the fields of primary or general, technical and vocational secondary education. Each one-week visit is attended by a group of persons from several different countries. An annually published catalogue facilitates an informed choice of the visit best suited to each participant's needs.

The qualitative results of Arion have continued during the first two years of SOCRATES. Feedback from thousands of reports, and from contact meetings with local organisers, National Agencies and participants, have demonstrated that the scheme provides educational experts and policy-makers with a unique opportunity to discuss their concerns with colleagues on a multilateral basis and re-think and modify their professional work in a European context. Lasting contacts and networks are created between persons in key educational functions in the participating countries. In many cases, participation in Arion gives rise to further co-operation and projects under other SOCRATES Actions and other EC programmes.

The priority topics for Arion visits are determined by the national authorities and agreed at Community level. In the first two years of SOCRATES they have centred on education systems and their values, the 'players' in the educational process, the curriculum, and aspects of the school and its environment. Flexibility is exercised, to adapt to changing needs: thus study visits on quality assurance in education were introduced as a result of the deliberations of the Education Council in October 1995.

In 1996/7 the budgetary distribution formula used in previous years was adapted to take account of the terms of the SOCRATES Decision. This has led to significant changes in the allocation to each country, and the implications of the new formula are currently under review. The scheme is currently being extended to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Increasing attention is devoted to disseminating the results of visits. Reports on visits are being given wider circulation, and thematic seminars are being organised with a view to updating the comparative insights obtained and further consolidating the networks of persons concerned.

Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (Naric)

Each participating country has designated a national centre whose task is to contribute to student, teacher and researcher mobility by providing information and advice on academic recognition matters. Most Narics also serve as information counters in the framework of implementing the "General Directive" for the professional recognition of higher education qualifications.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The Commission networks the centres in order to secure close cooperation and optimum exchange of information. Twice yearly meetings are organised, one of which is a joint session with the "ENIC" network of the Council of Europe and the

(56) Council Directive of 21 December 1988 on a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years' duration (89/48/EEC), *Official Journal* No. L 19/16 of 24 January 1989.

UNESCO Centre for Higher Education CEPES. Support is also provided for study visits between the Narics and the implementation of joint projects, particularly studies and summary reports. Members of the network have prepared training modules on the assessment of diplomas and certificates issued abroad, thereby facilitating wider dissemination of the knowledge and expertise acquired.

Special attention has been given in 1995 and 1996 to assisting the Associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the network, for example by enabling them to attend network meetings, providing them with training sessions, facilitating dissemination of key documentation, and providing access to electronic communication networks. The Narics in the countries currently participating in SOCRATES are playing an active role in many aspects of this process.

■ COMPLEMENTARY MEASURES

Within Chapter III of SOCRATES, support is available for Complementary Measures, comprising in particular activities of associations working in the education field, information activities by National Agencies, monitoring and evaluation, and awareness-raising activities of many kinds. A total of 160 grants were awarded in 1995, of which 23 were in the higher education sector, 70 in the area of school and general education, and 13 in the area of language-learning, the rest being awarded for information activities related to the launching of the programme. The activities covered related notably to the organisation of conferences, seminars and workshops, publishing newsletters and other publications, and the dissemination of project results, pedagogical materials and innovative methodologies. Support was also provided, for the "Europe at School" competition, organised in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Of particular importance in this context is the support provided for activities of European associations, the pace of emergence which has quickened in recent years⁽⁵⁷⁾. Several of the associations have played a vital role in pioneering educational cooperation at European level⁽⁵⁸⁾, and they are a key partner in ensuring the success of SOCRATES. They constitute an important channel for disseminating information, sharing experience and expertise, facilitating transnational contacts and initiating networks of institutions, assisting in the design and preparation of projects, and providing training for teaching staff and education managers in a truly European context.⁽⁵⁹⁾ SOCRATES has therefore actively promoted the associations' work - 53 of the grants awarded under the Complementary Measures were awarded to European organisations of this kind - and has cooperated closely with them in the pursuit of the programme's objectives.

Article 5(1) of the Decision explicitly provides for consultation with the associations, as well as with the social partners. To this end, a major conference was held in November 1995 to which all the relevant associations were invited. This has been followed up with a number of more targeted discussions with certain of the associations concerned, and by a general consultation meeting with representatives of 16 associations and social partner organisations in January 1997.

(57) The Commission estimates that the number of associations operating at European level in the various sectors of education has more than doubled over the past three years.

(58) Such associations vary widely. They include for example associations of professors and teaching staff in a particular discipline, student associations and associations of university rectors or non-university institutions, associations of headteachers and persons involved in guidance and counselling, associations specialising in language-learning or devoted to educational issues in other fields such as the environment, health or the new technologies, associations addressing the needs of a particular category of educational users such as disabled persons, and associations concerned with a specific educational sector such as primary education, adult education or teacher-training. Of particular importance are also the groupings formed within the organisations representing the social partners at European level.

(59) The importance of several of the major associations as a means of contact with the educational community and achieving a genuine multiplier effect, is evident from the sheer dimensions of some of those involved. For example, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) embraces between 3 and 4 million teachers within its member unions Europe-wide, and the largest federation of parent associations at European level, the European Parents Association, covers some 50 separate bodies with potential outreach into over 135,000 schools.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

Table 1: Number of applications received within the Centralised Actions ⁽¹⁾ in 1995 and 1996

	1995			1996					1995 + 1996		
	New Projects ⁽²⁾	Renewals	Total	New Projects	Renewals	% of eligible projects requesting renewal ⁽⁶⁾	Total	% change from 1995	New Projects	Renewals	Total
Erasmus (Inter-univ. Coop. Programmes)	2870	-	2870	-	2530 ⁽³⁾	[88 %] ⁽³⁾	2530 ⁽³⁾	⁽³⁾	2870 ⁽³⁾	2530 ⁽³⁾	5400
Erasmus (Thematic networks)	-	-	-	109 ⁽⁴⁾	-	-	109	-	109	-	109
Comenius (Intercultural educ.)	221	-	221	68	96	60 % ⁽⁵⁾	164	-26 % ⁽⁵⁾	289	96	385
Comenius (In-service training)	66	-	66	101	39	83 %	140	+ 112 %	167	39	206
Lingua (Europ. Coop. Programmes)	56	-	56	22	22	51 % ⁽⁵⁾	44	-21 % ⁽⁵⁾	78	22	100
Lingua (Language instruments)	162	-	162	93	32	63 % ⁽⁵⁾	125	-23 % ⁽⁵⁾	255	32	287
Open and Distance Learning	97	-	97	144	29	88 %	173	+ 78 %	241	29	270
Adult Education	58	-	58	89	26	84 %	115	+ 98 %	147	26	173
Studies on education policy	37	-	37	64	4	100 %	68	+ 84 %	97	4	105

(1) Actions in which the decision on the projects to be selected is taken directly by the Commission.

(2) In 1995, all projects are defined as "new", since this was the first year of the programme, irrespective of whether they had received support under a previous Community programme or action.

(3) Comparison with 1995 is not significant for this Action, since no additional ICPs were allowed in 1996 and many ICPs reached the end of their funding period in 1995.

(4) Full applications. These were submitted after preselection among 486 expressions of interest.

(5) Comparison with 1995 is not significant for these Actions, since a high proportion of projects supported in 1995 were ones which had reached the end of their funding period that year. In addition, with regard to Comenius (Intercultural education), the criteria for support were changed considerably in 1996 as a result of the SOCRATES Decision

(6) There is also one decentralised Action (i.e. where selection is carried out by National Agencies) in which renewal of funding is a systematic feature, namely Comenius Action 1 (European Education Projects within school partnerships). 13 of the 18 participating countries report renewal rates of over 90 %, and for 8 of these the rate was 100 %; the other countries report renewal rates of 84 %, 77%, 75 %, 69 % and 67 %.

Table 2: Number of grants awarded in 1995 and 1996 (Centralised Actions ⁽¹⁾)

	1995		1996						1995 + 1996					
	New Projects ⁽²⁾ (= Total 1995)	Acceptance rate	New Projects	Acceptance rate	Renewal grants	Acceptance rate	Total grants	Acceptance rate	New Projects	Acceptance rate	Renewal grants	Acceptance rate	Total grants	Acceptance rate
Erasmus (Inter-univ. Coop. Programmes)	2673	93%	-	-	2504 ⁽³⁾	99%	2504	99%	2673	93%	2504	99%	5177 ⁽⁵⁾	96%
Erasmus (Thematic networks)	-	-	28	26 % ⁽⁴⁾	-	-	28	26 % ⁽⁴⁾	28	26 % ⁽⁴⁾	-	-	28	26 % ⁽⁴⁾
Comenius (Intercultural educ.)	160	72%	42	62%	70	73%	112	68%	202	70%	70	73%	272	71%
Comenius (In-service training)	47	71%	81	80%	34	87%	115	82%	128	77%	34	87%	162	79%
Lingua (Europ. Coop. Programmes)	43	77%	11	50%	20	91%	31	70%	54	69%	20	91%	74	74%
Lingua (Language instruments)	51	32%	33	35%	24	75%	57	46%	84	33%	24	75%	108	38%
Open and Distance Learning	33	34%	41	28%	29	100%	70	41%	74	31%	29	100%	103	38%
Adult Education	31	53%	37	42%	20	77%	57	50%	68	46%	20	77%	88	51%
Studies on education policy	4	11%	9	14%	4	100%	13	19%	13	13%	4	100%	17	16%

(1) Actions in which the decision on the projects to be selected is taken directly by the Commission.

(2) In 1995, all projects are defined as "new", since this was the first year of the programme, irrespective of whether they had received support under a previous Community programme or action.

(3) Comparison with 1995 is not significant for this Action, since no additional ICPs were allowed in 1996 and many ICPs reached the end of their funding period in 1995.

(4) 6 %, if measured against the initial expressions of interest.

(5) Within these ICPs, it is estimated that a total of 26,641 staff members have received support for teaching assignments abroad. 646 Intensive programmes were also supported (acceptance rate 70 %) as well as 383 curriculum development projects (acceptance rate 52 %).

**Table 3: Participation of each country in projects supported under the Centralised Actions ⁽¹⁾ in 1995 and 1996
(number of partners ⁽²⁾ including numbers of coordinators)**

Country Actions	BE	DK	DE	GR	ES	FR	IE	IT	LU	NL	AT	PT	FI	SV	UK	IS	LI	NO	EUR	Total	
	Erasmus (Inter-univ. Coop. Programmes) ⁽³⁾	1060	559	2869	763	2374	3128	643	1998	15	1162	436	835	664	606	3347	38	1	368	3	20869
Erasmus (Thematic networks)	107	67	166	81	135	173	60	178	9	99	59	79	86	91	301	9		32	85	1817	
Comenius (Intercultural educ.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Comenius (In-service training)	31	28	46	19	60	67	32	55	5	31	17	34	26	25	105	4	1	8	0	594	
Lingua (Europ. Coop. Programmes)	13	10	36	11	33	44	8	35	3	11	6	17	12	9	53	0	0	3	0	304	
Lingua (Language instruments)	26	15	29	42	27	30	13	39	3	27	1	18	8	7	58	2	0	5	2	352	
Open and Distance Learning	30	17	35	30	40	46	20	54	1	23	6	28	18	23	72	2	0	24	0	469	
Adult Education	26	22	34	16	38	32	19	33	2	31	9	8	17	21	56	1	1	6	2	374	

(1) Actions in which the decision on the projects to be selected is taken directly by the Commission. This table does not include the Studies on educational policy as in this case the number of partners is not considered relevant.

(2) The number of "partners" is not necessarily identical with the number of "participating institutions", since an institution may be participating in more than one project.

(3) 1995 only (no new projects were accepted in 1996).

Table 4: Financial aspects of the applications for support under the Centralised Actions ⁽¹⁾ in 1995 and 1996 (in MioECU)

	1995			1996									1995 + 1996								
	All projects			New projects			Renewals			Total 1996			New projects			Renewals			Total		
	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	Request from SOCRATES as % of cost	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	%	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	%	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	%	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	%	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	%	Total cost	Amount requested from SOCRATES	%
Erasmus (Inter-univ. Coop. Programmes)	n/a	200.0	n/a	-	-	-	n/a	200.0 ⁽²⁾	n/a	n/a	200.0 ⁽²⁾	n/a	n/a	200.0	n/a	n/a	200.0	n/a	n/a	400.0	n/a
Erasmus (Thematic networks)	-	-	-	32.1	15.3	48%	-	-	-	32.1	15.3	48%	32.1	15.3	48%	-	-	-	32.1	15.3	48%
Comenius (Intercultural educ.)	17.3	9.1	53%	7.8	3.8	49%	10.0	4.9	49%	17.8	8.7	49%	25.1	12.9	51%	10.0	4.9	49%	35.1	17.8	51%
Comenius (In-service training)	5.3	2.5	47%	6.4	2.6	41%	2.4	1.0	42%	8.8	3.6	41%	11.7	5.1	44%	2.4	1.0	42%	14.1	6.1	43%
Lingua (Europ. Coop. Programmes)	11.4	4.9	43%	4.1	1.7	41%	6.2	2.7	44%	10.3	4.4	43%	15.5	6.6	43%	6.2	2.7	44%	21.7	9.3	43%
Lingua (Language Instruments)	38.6	18.5	48%	17.0	8.8	52%	11.9	4.0	34%	28.9	12.8	44%	55.6	27.3	49%	11.9	4.0	34%	67.5	31.3	46%
Open and Distance Learning	27.4	16.1	59%	36.5	22.3	61%	8.6	4.5	52%	45.1	26.8	59%	63.9	38.4	60%	8.6	4.5	52%	72.5	42.9	59%
Adult Education	9.9	6.5	66%	16.4	10.4	63%	5.7	3.8	67%	22.1	14.2	64%	26.3	16.9	64%	5.7	3.8	67%	32.0	20.7	65%
Studies on education policy	4.9	2.8	57%	8.4	5.0	60%	0.8	0.6	75%	9.2	5.6	61%	13.6	7.8	57%	0.8	0.6	75%	14.4	8.4	58%

(1) Actions in which the decision on the projects to be selected is taken directly by the Commission.

(2) Increase in demand was structurally excluded by the nature of the transitional measures for this Action. The figure has increased to around 250 MioECU for 1997.

Table 5 : Financial aspects of projects supported under the Centralised Actions ⁽¹⁾ in 1995 and 1996 ⁽²⁾

	1995				1996											
	All projects				New projects				Renewals				All projects			
	Total budget of accepted projects (MioECU)	Amount awarded by SOCRATES (MioECU)	SOCRATES grants as a % of total project budgets	Average grant awarded (ECU)	Total budget of accepted projects	Amount awarded by SOCRATES (MioECU)	SOCRATES grants as a % of total project budgets	Average grant awarded (ECU)	Total budget of accepted projects	Amount awarded by SOCRATES (MioECU)	SOCRATES grants as a % of total project budgets	Average grant awarded (ECU)	Total budget of accepted projects	Amount awarded by SOCRATES (MioECU)	SOCRATES grants as a % of total project budgets	Average grant awarded (ECU)
Erasmus (Thematic networks)	-	-	-	-	15.2	2.3	15%	82,100	-	-	-	-	15.2	2.3	15%	82,100
Comenius (Intercultural educ.)	13.2	5.4	41%	33,500	4.6	1.6	35%	39,000 ⁽³⁾	8.3	3.2	39%	46,100	12.9	4.8	37%	42,900 ⁽³⁾
Comenius (In-service training)	4.4	1.1	25%	23,400	5.0	1.9	38%	23,500	2.0	0.8	40%	24,500	7.0	2.7	39%	23,500
Lingua (Europ. Coop. Programmes)	9.9	3.0	30%	69,100	2.2	0.8	41%	77,000 ⁽⁴⁾	5.6	2.1	38%	102,800	7.7	2.9	38%	93,500 ⁽⁴⁾
Lingua (Language instruments)	13.3	4.2	32%	82,200	5.9	3.1	53%	97,000	6.7	2.3	34%	94,100	12.6	5.4	43%	84,700
Open and Distance Learning	9.8	4.1	42%	123,800	10.4	4.2	40%	102,200	8.6	3.0	35%	104,800	19.2	7.2	38%	102,900
Adult Education	4.6	2.9	63%	94,800	6.7	3.0	45%	80,600	5.0	2.1	42%	106,100	11.7	5.1	44%	89,500
Studies on education policy	4.9	0.5	10%	125,000	1.3	0.7	52%	75,600	0.8	0.6	73%	142,500	2.1	1.3	62%	103,700

(1) Actions in which the decision on the projects to be selected is taken directly by the Commission. Including contributions from, and grants to projects involving, EFTA-EEA countries.

(2) The figures for 1996 are provisional, as the final data for 1996 were not available at the time of completing the present document.

(3) The average grant rose in 1996 due to the new requirements concerning the profile of projects (at least 2 institutions from each of at least 3 participating countries).

(4) The average grant rose in 1996 due to the process of concentration within projects (fewer projects, more institutions within each project) actively encouraged by the Commission.

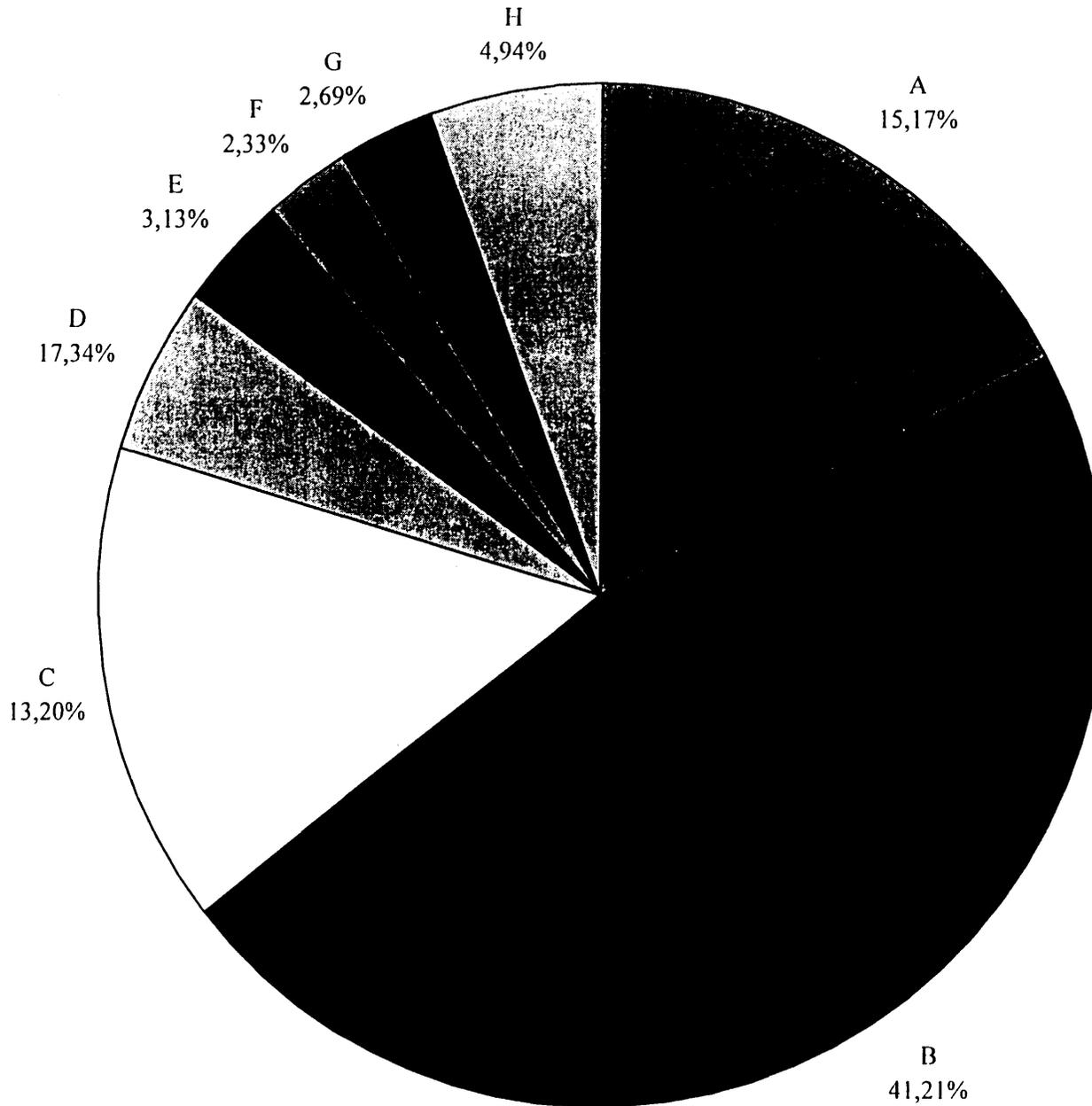
Table 6 : Amount requested and grants awarded under each of the SOCRATES Actions
(total for 1995 and 1996) (in ECU) ⁽¹⁾

	Amount requested	% of total	Grants awarded	% of total
I. HIGHER EDUCATION (Erasmus)	977.1	78.6 %	207.3	56.9%
Action 1: European Dimension of universities	415.3		55.5	
Action 2: Student mobility	561.8 ⁽²⁾		151.8	
II. SCHOOL EDUCATION (Comenius)	57.0	4.6%	48.3	13.2%
Action 1: School partnerships/European Projects	30.9		30.9	
Action 2: Intercultural education	17.4		11.5	
Action 3: In-service training of teachers	8.7		5.9	
III. Horizontal measures	208.4	16.8%	108.9	29.9%
Action 1: Promotion of language-learning (Lingua)	99.5		62.5	
Action 2: Open and distance learning	42.9		11.8	
Action 3: Exchange of information and experience	66.0		34.6	
Total SOCRATES	1,242.5	100%	364.5	100%

(1) Provisional figures, as the final data for 1996 were not available at the time of completing the present document.

(2) For the purpose of calculating the amount requested for student grants, it is assumed that students request only 50 % of the maximum grant allowable under the Decision, modulated downwards by the number of months to be spent abroad compared with a full academic year, rather than the maximum grant as such.

Chart 1: Overall utilisation of funds in 1995 and 1996



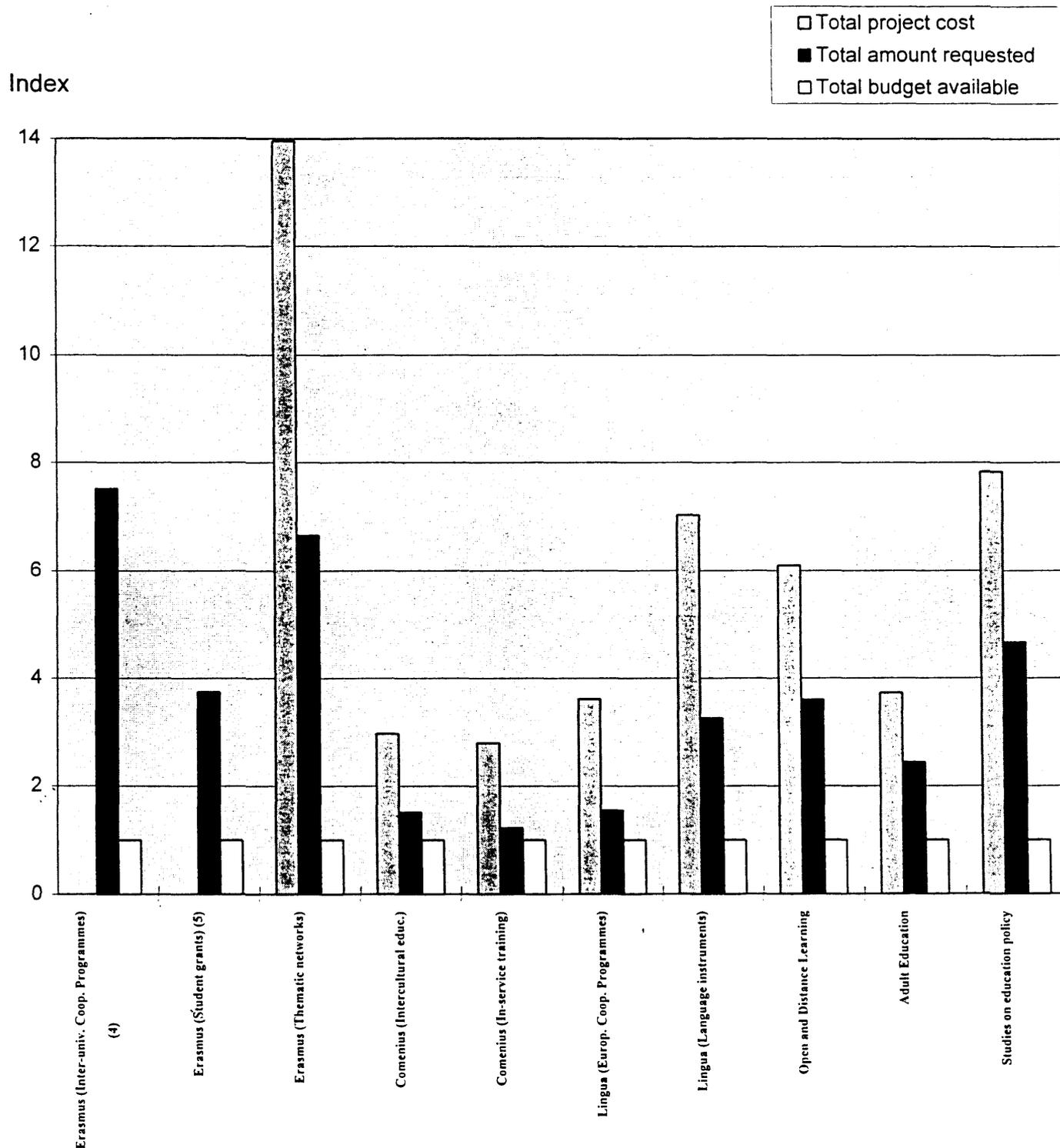
Categories to be used

- A - Erasmus (universities)
- B - Erasmus (student grants)
- C - Comenius
- D - Lingua
- E - Open and distance learning
- F - Adult Education
- G - Exchange of information on education systems and policy
- H - Complementary measures (including information activities of National Agencies)

Total allocation

- Chapter I: 56.9 %
- Chapter II: 13.2 %
- Chapter III: 29.9 %

Chart 2: SOCRATES budget, relative to (a) total project costs and (b) amounts requested under the Centralised Actions ⁽¹⁾ and Erasmus student grants (total for 1995 ⁽²⁾ and 1996 ⁽³⁾) (expressed as an index, whereby SOCRATES budget = 1)



(1) Actions in which the decision on the projects to be selected is taken directly by the Commission.

(2) In 1995 also including contributions from EFTA-EEA countries and Switzerland, as well as funds recycled from previous years.

(3) Including contributions from EFTA-EEA countries.

(4) Budget = All Action 1 expenditure except Thematic networks. Total project cost is not available for ICPs.

(5) For the purpose of calculating the amount requested for student grants, it is assumed that students request only 50% of the maximum grant allowable under the Decision, modulated downwards by the number of months to be spent abroad compared with a full academic year, rather than the maximum grant as such.

**Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament
and of the Council**

amending the Decision 819/95/EC establishing the Community action programme *Socrates*

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

I. INTRODUCTION

The Community action programme in the field of education, entitled SOCRATES¹, spans the period 1995-1999 and is applicable to the 15 Member States as well as to the partner countries in the European Economic Area. Its overall aim is to promote quality by increasing mobility, boosting cooperation and strengthening the European dimension in all sectors of education. Its contribution to the further development of the European Community is threefold:

- SOCRATES is a cornerstone of the policy to bring the European Community closer to all its citizens. Some 70 million young people in the Community are taught by over 4 million teachers. Some 11 million students are studying at over 5,000 higher education institutions and millions of adult learners are attending full- or part-time classes. The potential of SOCRATES for encouraging a positive sense of identification with the process of building Europe is second to none.
- SOCRATES has a vital role to play in developing high-quality human resources, a key factor in stimulating employment, promoting competitiveness and achieving greater economic growth.
- SOCRATES is centre-stage in the process of enlarging the Community to embrace the wider Europe through the pre-accession extension of strategically important programmes to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus².

This contribution is achieved at extremely low cost. Taking into account the increase in the financial framework envisaged in the Commission's present proposals, SOCRATES will account for some 0.2% of the Community budget in 1998.

SOCRATES has built on previous Community programmes, such as the highly successful Erasmus and Lingua schemes, and extended them to the whole field of education. It contains carefully targeted measures for each educational sector, agreement on which was reached without undue difficulty during the negotiations on its establishment. Both the European Parliament and the Council repeatedly stressed the importance which they attached to the programme's adoption.

To have a significant impact, it requires a financial framework fully consistent with the objectives set out in the Decision. The financial framework was the subject of a conciliation procedure between the European Parliament and the Council. The figure adopted, namely 850 MioECU for the period 1995-99, fell far short of the Commission's original proposal of 1,005.6 MioECU, even though it has to cover the needs of the enlarged European Community of 15 Member States, compared with the

¹ Decision No 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme 'SOCRATES', *Official Journal* N° L 87/10 of 20 April 1995.

² The decision establishing SOCRATES also makes mention of the possibility of extending its actions to include Malta. Negotiations have been conducted with a view to enabling Malta to participate in the programme in the context of its pre-accession to the Community. However, the government of Malta having recently taken the decision to freeze its application to join the Community, the Commission has been mandated by the Council to take preliminary technical contacts with a view to clarifying the future relations between the Community and Malta. The final position to be adopted by Malta and the Community not being known at the present time, the present text makes no reference - positive or negative - to a possible opening of the programme to Malta at a later date.

12 countries on which the Commission's proposal was based, as well as additional programme elements introduced during the negotiations. The European Parliament assented to this compromise only on condition that a mid-term review be undertaken. Accordingly, at the end of the conciliation procedure, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed that:

"Two years after the launching of the programme, the European Parliament and the Council will (assess) the results achieved by the programme. To that end, the Commission will submit to them a report accompanied by any proposals which it considers appropriate, including any concerning the funding set by the legislator within the meaning of the Joint Declaration of 6 March 1995³ The European Parliament and the Council will act on those proposals at the earliest opportunity."⁴

On the basis of the mandate contained in the Joint Statement, the Commission has produced a report analysing the first two years of SOCRATES (1995 and 1996)⁵, accompanied by the present proposal for a Decision to modify the financial framework of the programme.

II. RESULTS ACHIEVED BY SOCRATES IN 1995 AND 1996

The SOCRATES programme has been eagerly welcomed by educational circles across the Community. It has given rise to a significantly increased volume and improved quality of European cooperation, notably in fields such as school education, adult education and open and distance learning which had little previous tradition of structured collaboration at transnational level. It has in particular:

- made a substantial contribution to the mobility of students, young people and teaching staff, as regards both the volume of exchanges and the quality of their organisational framework. In higher education, grants have been awarded to enable up to 316,000 higher education students and 26,000 teaching staff to study or teach within a structured programme in another Member State;⁶
- stimulated broad and intensified cooperation between educational institutions in different participating countries, notably through the creation of some 2,600 inter-university cooperation programmes and over 600 transnational projects in other educational sectors. Over 16,000 institutions have taken part in the programme so far;
- given a new impetus to the academic recognition of study periods carried out and qualifications obtained abroad. In the field of higher education, the successful European Credit Transfer System is in the process of extension to well over 1,000 institutions;
- contributed to enhancing the European dimension of education, notably as regards the initial training and further professional development of teachers;

3 Declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 6 March 1995 (95/C 293/03), *Official Journal* No. C 293/4 of 8 November 1995.

4 Joint Statement by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concerning Decision 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme 'SOCRATES', *Official Journal* No. L132/18 of 16 June 1995.

5 Document COM (97) [...] final.

6 The principal obstacles impeding transnational mobility within the European Community have recently been identified in the Commission's Green Paper: *Education - Training - Research: The obstacles to transnational mobility*, COM (96)462 final of 2 October 1996.

- continued to make progress in promoting the teaching and learning of the less widely used and less taught languages of the Union;
- provided a focal point for a broader and more pedagogically as distinct from technologically driven use of open and distance learning and multimedia approaches in various educational sectors, and led to the production of a large and varied range of teaching materials, curricula, training schemes and other educational products;
- provided new opportunities for widespread exchange of knowledge and experience, thereby spreading expertise and fostering the process of innovation throughout the participating countries;
- been instrumental in ensuring that European cooperation benefits all Member States, by providing economically disadvantaged and/or peripheral countries with greater opportunities for cooperation than would have otherwise been available;
- helped to generate considerable complementary funding from a variety of other sources, thereby substantially increasing overall European investment in mobility and cooperation.

In all these ways, the SOCRATES programme is making clear and demonstrable progress towards the objective, set out in Article 126 of the EC Treaty⁷, of contributing to quality education throughout the Community. Just as importantly, it is helping to make the "European dimension in education" a meaningful concept for hundreds of thousands of teachers and learners of all ages. Considerable progress has been made in preparing the ground for the extension of these benefits of the programme to the wider Europe, in accordance with the terms of the Decision.

III. THE NEED TO INCREASE THE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCRATES

For the period beyond 1997, the resources allocated for SOCRATES will no longer be adequate for attaining the objectives set out in the Decision. This is the clear conclusion to emerge from the analysis of the first two years of the programme, and the resulting detailed projections for the coming years. The Commission therefore proposes an increase of 50 MioECU (or 5.9%) in the overall financial framework for the programme, to be implemented during the final two years (1998 and 1999) of the programme's first quinquennium. No other modifications to the Decision are considered necessary in the light of experience to date. The reasons which have led the Commission to propose the increase are set out below.

1. The need to reach a critical mass of the target population

The overarching objectives of SOCRATES are to contribute to high quality education in Europe and to bring Europe closer to the citizen. For this reason, it is vital that under each of the programme's Actions a critical mass of good quality projects and activities be supported. Given that the target groups addressed by the programme are extremely large, a high number of grants must be awarded. As indicated in point 3 below, it is not possible to keep up the programme's momentum towards achieving this critical mass by further reducing the average amount of support to each beneficiary. The option of having an even higher

⁷ *Official Journal C 224 of 31 August 1992.*

level of selectivity than at present, also among good quality projects, is undesirable. This would create frustration among a wide section of the citizens, at the very moment when it is crucial for the Community to demonstrate that it is responding to their real concerns.

2. The high existing level of demand for participation

In 1995, the very first year of implementation, the total financial request of well over 500 MioECU was around three times higher than the budget available. 1996 has witnessed a further sharp rise in the number of grant requests compared with 1995. For example, the number of schools wishing to participate in school partnerships has gone up by a factor of 5, and applications have doubled in other new programme areas such as adult education and open and distance learning. In certain parts of the programme, the amount requested by applicants is already running at around 9 times the annual budget available. In all, the amount requested has risen to over 700 MioECU in 1996, compared with the 173 MioECU available.

3. Problems resulting from the inadequate budgetary resources

The imbalance between demand and supply is a source of real concern for a programme like SOCRATES which has the potential to bring the advantages of European cooperation to a very wide population. The problems resulting from the increasingly inadequate financial framework for the programme are notably as follows:

- Due to financial constraints, the level of grants awarded under certain key parts of the programme is already falling to an untenably low level.

The *Erasmus* scheme has been one of the major successes of Community funding. Now incorporated within SOCRATES, it remains a key element for attaining the programme's objectives. But the further development of Erasmus is jeopardised by the budgetary situation affecting SOCRATES as a whole. This applies both to student mobility grants and to support for developing a European Dimension for students who do not directly participate in mobility:

Student mobility grants are probably the best-known pillar of Erasmus, but their effectiveness is under threat. The maximum grant is ECU 5,000 per student, but if all the eligible students within approved Erasmus exchange programmes were to receive a grant, the amount per student for a full academic year would be only some 750 ECU - just 15% of the maximum allowed and inadequate except for those with considerable additional financial means.

From now on, each university will have a single "*Institutional Contract*" with the Commission for the bulk of its European Dimension activities. This will have an important impact in encouraging institutions to adopt a strategic stance towards European cooperation and will ensure the long-term return on SOCRATES investment. The response of universities has been extremely encouraging. Almost 1,600 institutions throughout the Community have applied for a contract in the academic year 1997/8. The total grant request amounts to 250 MioECU. On the basis of the present figures, each university would receive an amount of only ECU 10,000-50,000 for the entire spectrum of its European dimension activities. This would risk endangering the whole new strategic approach to inter-university cooperation in the Community.

The situation is similar in the case of *Comenius*, the scheme for cooperation in the schools sector which is one of the key innovations within SOCRATES and brings a European dimension in education to a much wider population.

The backbone of the scheme is formed by the *multilateral school partnerships* linking schools in different Member States. This new opportunity has been eagerly awaited by Europe's schools, but in the first two years the maximum grant for each school participating has normally been only ECU 2,000 per annum (ECU 3,000 in the case of the schools coordinating partnerships). This figure is extremely low, and pressure on education budgets at national level across the Community is making it particularly difficult for schools to obtain significant complementary funds from other sources.

- Achieving a maximum return on the investment of Community funds requires three elements: some continuity of funding in order to create durable cooperation networks; maintaining the regular injection of "new blood" participants; and the dissemination of results to non-participant institutions and individuals. Underfunding would jeopardise this approach.
- The inadequacy of resources to meet existing demand is already beginning to dissuade National Agencies from disseminating information on the programme widely. This will lead to the exclusion of some types of institutions, disadvantaged regions and categories of individuals who have not previously participated in European cooperation. Together with the low level of grants being awarded under certain parts of the programme, this will adversely affect the programme's capacity to uphold the principle of equal opportunities set out in the Decision - an aspect to which the European Parliament attached particular importance during the negotiations on the programme's adoption.

4. Increasing budgetary problems during the remainder of the 5-year period

Though demand has already been high in 1995 and 1996, it is not until 1997, and more acutely from 1998 on, that its full force will be felt. This is because:

- there will be a need to provide funding not only for new initiatives but also for a renewal of support in Years 2 and 3 of the pluriannual projects which are encouraged under most parts of SOCRATES;
- the number of applications for support of new projects will rise significantly, as the full impact of the information campaigns conducted in 1995 and 1996, works itself through into project proposals. The participation of the three new EC Member States in certain Actions is also likely to show further significant growth;
- certain Actions within the programme will become fully available for the first time, notably:
 - *Institutional Contracts* within Erasmus. As indicated above, the 1997 demand figures under this action are already known. They constitute a request for some 250 MioECU (+ 25% compared with 1996);
 - grants to enable teachers to participate in *in-service training courses* (Comenius). These are an essential means of ensuring that the innovation potential of projects to enhance the European dimension of teaching actually find their way into the classroom;
- the effects of certain other policy contexts, such as notably the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning⁸ and the 1997 European Year against Racism⁹, will make themselves felt in terms of increased demand for support within SOCRATES.

The budgetary increase proposed by the Commission is therefore justified in relation to the programme in its present form and with its present geographical coverage. It does not even make provision for the

8 Decision No. 2493/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 1995 establishing the 'European year of lifelong learning', *Official Journal* No. L 256/45 of 26 October 1995.

9 Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 23 July 1996 concerning the European Year against Racism (1997), *Official Journal* No C 237/1 of 15 August 1996.

budgetary impact resulting from the extension of SOCRATES to the ten associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus, which will also have to be absorbed during the coming period¹⁰.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

SOCRATES can look back on considerable achievements during the first two years since its adoption. However, the experience from this period has shown that the programme will not be able to sustain, consolidate and build on these promising early results without a significant increase in the overall financial framework for the programme, to be implemented in the last two years of the programme's first quinquennium (1998 and 1999). In a more favourable overall budgetary situation, the Commission would have had no hesitation in submitting a proposal for a much more substantial increase than the one envisaged. This would be fully justified in terms of the cost-benefit relationship of the activity concerned and the demonstrated need for additional resources.

The amount of 900 Mio ECU now proposed, an increase of around 6%, is considered the minimum necessary in order to enable SOCRATES to realise its potential as a means of moving towards a genuinely open space for educational cooperation in the Community, and to avoid widespread disenchantment among a broad and influential section of European citizens at a crucial moment for the Community's further development.

10 The operational costs (grants) directly related to the participation of persons and institutions from the new participating countries will be met from the contribution to be made by each of the countries concerned either using funds drawn entirely from the national budget of that country or partly using national funds and partly using the country's PHARE allocation (up to 10% of which may be used for this purpose). However, cooperation with the new countries will also involve substantial costs for the institutions in the countries currently participating in SOCRATES.

**Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament
and of the Council**

amending the Decision 819/95/EC¹ establishing the Community action programme *Socrates*

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Articles 126 and 127 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,²

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee,³

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of Regions,⁴

Acting in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 189b of the Treaty,⁵

Whereas Decision No 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishes the Community action programme SOCRATES,

Whereas Article 7 of this Decision provides for a financial framework for the implementation of the programme during the period 1.1.1995 - 31.12.1999,

¹ *Official Journal* L 87/10 of 20 April 1995.

²

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⁵

Whereas the Joint Statement by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concerning the above-mentioned Decision of 14 March 1995 provides that two years after the launching of the programme, the European Parliament and the Council will (assess) the results achieved by the programme, and that to this end the Commission will submit to them a report accompanied by any proposals which it considers appropriate, including any concerning the funding set by the legislator within the meaning of the Joint Declaration of 6 March 1995⁶, and that the European Parliament and the Council will act on those proposals at the earliest opportunity,⁷

Whereas the report submitted by the Commission⁸ pursuant to the above-mentioned Joint Statement has set out the outstanding results achieved by the programme during the first two years following its adoption,

Whereas the programme has been particularly well received in the educational community, and there is a need to maintain its forward momentum towards achieving its objectives,

Whereas the demand for support is already many times higher than the available resources and is continuing to rise,

Whereas there is a need to ensure that a critical mass of funding is maintained, thereby ensuring that the quality of the collaborative activities to be supported is not endangered,

Whereas there is a need to provide continuity of support for projects during their developmental phase, while nonetheless reserving sufficient funds to support new projects and activities, thereby safeguarding the programme's potential for contributing to innovation,

Whereas there is therefore a need to adjust the financial framework for the programme in order to maintain the programme's capacity to fulfil the objectives set out in the Decision establishing the programme,

⁶ Declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 6 March 1995 on the incorporation of financial provisions into legislative acts (95/C 293/03), *Official Journal* No C 293/4 of 8 November 1995.

⁷ *Official Journal* N° L 132/18 of 16 June 1995.

⁸ COM(97) [...]

HAVE DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Article 7(1) of Decision 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 shall be replaced by the following:

"The financial framework for implementation of this programme for the period referred to in Article 1 shall be ECU 900 million."

Article 2

This Decision shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

1. TITLE OF OPERATION

Modification of the Community action programme "SOCRATES", established by Decision No 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995¹

2. BUDGET HEADING INVOLVED

B3-1001

3. LEGAL BASIS

Articles 126 and 127 of the EC Treaty

4. DESCRIPTION OF OPERATION

4.1 General objective

The programme's main aim is to help to improve the quality of education by encouraging cooperation between Member States.

The activities envisaged under the programme are intended to gradually build up an open European area of education by strengthening the capacity of education to adapt and keep abreast of political, social, economic and technological change so that young and adult learners can receive an education enabling them to live and work in the new framework of the European Community.

More specifically, the specific objectives of the programme are:

- to develop the European dimension in education at all levels so as to strengthen the spirit of European citizenship, drawing on the cultural heritage of each Member State;
- to promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the EU, and in particular those which are least widely used and least taught, leading to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the EU, and to promote the intercultural dimension of education;
- to promote wide-ranging and intensive cooperation between institutions in the Member States at all levels of education, enhancing their intellectual and teaching potential;
- to encourage the mobility of teachers, so as to promote a European dimension in studies and to contribute to the qualitative improvement of their skills;
- to encourage mobility for students, enabling them to complete part of their studies in another Member State, so as to contribute to the consolidation of the European dimension in education;

¹ Official Journal No L 87/10 of 20 April 1995.

- to encourage contacts among pupils in the Community and to promote the European dimension in their education;
- to encourage the academic recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications, with the aim of facilitating the development of an open European area for cooperation in education;
- to encourage open and distance education in the context of the activities of this programme;
- to foster exchanges of information and experience so that the diversity and specificity of the educational systems in the Member States become a source of enrichment and of mutual stimulation.

4.2 Period covered and arrangements for renewal or extension

Five-year action programme (1995-99). Renewal will depend on the results of the programme's interim evaluation.

5. CLASSIFICATION OF EXPENDITURE OR REVENUE

5.1 Non-compulsory expenditure

5.2 Differentiated appropriations

5.3 Type of revenue involved: none.

6. TYPE OF EXPENDITURE OR REVENUE

Generally speaking, the basic principle will be that of a subsidy for the co-financing with other sources from the public or private sector (institutional partnerships involved: universities and schools, associations operating at the European or national level, NGOs, adult education establishments, local authorities, private ventures, the business sector, etc.). The percentage represented by the Community contribution can be higher and may go up to 75% in particular in the following cases:

- project in a new area of activity at European level, where the volume of European cooperation has so far been particularly limited and where there is an especially strong Community interest in stimulating this cooperation;
- project involving a type of organisation whose status or nature is such that it would have a manifest difficulty in obtaining complementary funding equal to that of the Community contribution (for example charitable organisations and/or ones involving a considerable element of non-remunerated or voluntary work on the part of its members) or involving one or more organisations which has/have not yet participated widely in European cooperation;
- project in which there is a particular Community interest in adding a transnational dimension to the work of organisations hitherto working predominantly in a purely national framework;
- project involving Member States where the area of activity concerned is less developed;

- project where there is a strong Community interest in ensuring that its products or results are widely disseminated.

100% funding is envisaged only for studies and analyses conducted by third parties and in other exceptional cases subject to detailed justification.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 Method of calculating total cost of operation (definition of unit costs)

7.1.1 General context

The conciliation procedure ended with a figure for the SOCRATES programme of ECU 850 million for the period 1995-99, a figure well below the Commission proposal of ECU 1 005.6 million, despite the fact that the amount has to cover the requirements of a European Community which has expanded to 15 Member States from the 12 of the time of the initial Commission proposal, along with new elements which have been added to the programme during the negotiations, e.g. adult education.

The original Commission budget forecasts have been substantially confirmed as realistic. In the first year of implementation, 1995, the total financial request for over ECU 500 million was already around three times higher than the available budget. 1996 saw a further increase in demand over 1995. For instance, the number of schools wishing to take part in the school partnerships under Comenius grew five-fold in one year, and the amount requested by applicants was several times greater than the budget available in 1995 and 1996 for several chapters of the programme, including the new areas of Community funding. The result is a situation which is increasingly alarming, given that the mission of SOCRATES is to reach the widest group possible in each sector of education and generate thus a feeling of identity with Europe among the citizens.

The overall impact of demand has not even fully filtered through as yet, for a number of reasons. As from 1997, and particularly 1998, demand will again increase particularly because of the following factors:

- the full impact of the multi-annual nature of the projects will be felt: the annual budget will have to cover not only "new" projects, but also the second and third years of three-year projects envisaged under various chapters of the programme;
- for requests for support for new projects, the full impact of the information campaigns and preparatory visits conducted in 1995, 1996 and 1997 will be felt;
- the participation of the new Member States is also likely to rise considerably;
- certain new actions will become fully effective; these include:
 - the "institutional contract" under Chapter I (Higher education - Erasmus), Action 1, for which the demand for 1997 shows a 25% increase over the previous financial arrangement and reaches for this action alone the figure of ECU 250 million;

- grants for teachers to take part in in-service training under Chapter II (School education - Comenius), Action 3.2;
- the impact of certain other Community measures will be fully felt, particularly the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) and the European Year against Racism (1997).

The Commission proposes that the total programme budget be increased by ECU 50 million (5.9% of the current provision). This amount is considered to be the minimum compatible with consistency with the programme's objectives. The Commission would have no hesitation in putting forward a higher figure if the budgetary picture were conducive, taking it up at least to the amount envisaged in the initial proposal. This increase, be it said, is justified in relation to the progress of the programme with its current geographical scope. It does not even take account of the substantial budgetary impact of extending SOCRATES to the ten associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and to Cyprus², which also has to be absorbed during the period in question³.

7.1.2 *Method of calculation*

Bearing in mind the arrangements set out in the annex to the Decision, the method for calculating the overall cost of the operation is based partly on the unit cost deemed to be appropriate to the different types of activity supported, depending on their specific features, and partly on their frequency (annual rhythm of selection) and the number of projects/people making up the critical mass for each of these actions. Account has also to be taken of the need to secure renewal of the support for an adequate period, generally not exceeding three years, and a sufficient number of new projects to guarantee the innovatory impact of the programme.

The experience derived from the first two years of the programme has been painstakingly considered when calculating the unit cost and the estimated number of recipients. This relates to key factors such as:

- the rate of assistance;
- the minimum amount needed to make the subsidy useful;
- the percentage of projects in multi-annual actions which require the aid granted to be renewed;

² The decision establishing SOCRATES also makes mention of the possibility of extending its actions to include Malta. Negotiations have been conducted with a view to enabling Malta to participate in the programme in the context of its pre-accession to the Community. However, the government of Malta having recently taken the decision to freeze its application to join the Community, the Commission has been mandated by the Council to take preliminary technical contacts with a view to clarifying the future relations between the Community and Malta. The final position to be adopted by Malta and the Community not being known at the present time, the present text makes no reference - positive or negative - to a possible opening of the programme to Malta at a later date.

³ Operational expenditure arising directly from the participation of people or institutions from the new countries taking part will be covered by the contributions from each country concerned either using funds drawn entirely from the national budget of that country or partly using national funds and partly using the country's PHARE allocation (up to 10% of which may be used for this purpose). However, cooperation with the new countries will also involve substantial costs for the institutions of the 18 countries currently taking part in SOCRATES, and if these are not covered by additional resources, it will not be possible to maintain Community achievements in terms of volume of cooperation between the Member States.

- the number of projects/people making up the minimum critical mass needed by each of the actions.

The approximate number of beneficiaries and the average amounts it is envisaged to grant under the different actions in 1998 are as follows:

Chapter I (Erasmus)

- Action 1 (institutional contracts): within a bracket generally ranging from 10 000 to 50 000 ecus, each institution will receive an average 17 000 ecus for all activities having a European dimension. Approximately 1 586 institutions will receive support;
- Action 1 (thematic networks): each network will receive an average 70 000 ecus. This will make it possible to renew funding for the 30 projects selected in 1996 and 1997 while maintaining the feasibility of funding five new networks;
- Action 2 (student mobility grants): assuming a very slight 1% increase in demand – which is considerably below the growth rates of the previous years – the maximum number of students likely to receive a grant is roughly 182 000⁴. If all these students who have been approved for mobility under Erasmus receive a grant in respect of their stay in another country, each student will receive an average 400 ecus for an average duration of seven months (57 ecus per month).

Chapter II (Comenius)

- Action 1 (school partnerships/European education projects): each school taking part will receive an average 2 000 Ecus per year, with an additional 1 000 ecus for coordinating schools to offset the additional work generated by this function. The total amount envisaged will enable support to be given to 8 500 schools, thus maintaining the advance towards the quantitative objective set by the Commission of associating 10 000 schools in this action in the very near future;
- A budget of ECU 5 million will be provided for, in addition to the ECU 19.7 million earmarked for the partnership projects, in order to arrive at an estimated total of 10 000 teachers and head teachers taking part in exchanges and visits;
- Action 2 (intercultural education): each project will receive an average 40 000 ecus. A total of 124 projects is envisaged, 46 being new and 78 for which the aid will be renewed;
- Action 3 (3.1: continuing training projects): each project will receive an average 20 000 ecus. Support will be provided for a total of 128 projects, 28 of which are new and 100 renewals;
- Action 3 (3.2: grants): every teacher taking part will receive an average grant of 1 000 ecus. The total number of participants receiving a grant will be around 1 900.

Chapter III (Horizontal actions)

- Action 1 (point 2a: European cooperation programmes): each programme will receive an average 75 000 ecus. Support will be provided to a total of 36 programmes, 14 of which are new and 22 renewals;
- Action 1 (point 2b: continuing training): each teacher taking part will receive an average grant of 1 000 ecus, with a total of approximately 6 900 participants;

⁴ Now that Erasmus is part of SOCRATES, a distinction is drawn between Erasmus students who receive or do not receive a (part) mobility grant, this grant being paid to students most in need.

- Action 1 (point 2c: language assistantships): each of the 500 assistants will receive an average grant of 5 300 ecus for one full school year;
- Action 1 (point 2d: instruments and tests): each project will receive an average of 85 000 ecus, support being provided for a total of 35 projects, 10 of which new and 25 being renewals;
- Action 1 (point 2e: joint education projects for young people): each project will receive an average of 6 000 ecus. Support will be provided for an approximate total of 1 770 projects, with some 33 000 young people and 3 300 teachers being involved in the exchanges;
- Action 2: each project will receive an average of 77 000 ecus. Support will be provided for a total of 85 projects, 20 new projects and 65 renewals;
- Action 3: this very wide-ranging action will, for instance, allow for:
 - the provision of support for approximately 20 transnational activities varying in scope (comparative analyses, study visits, exchanges of experts, conferences, seminars, pilot projects) relating to common education policy issues;
 - grants of an average 1 000 ecus to allow around 1 150 education policy makers to conduct study visits under Arion;
 - Community support for the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC), each centre receiving an average 13 300 ecus;
 - support averaging 72 000 ecus in the adult education sector. Support will be provided for a total of 75 projects, 30 new projects and 45 renewals;
 - the granting of some 300 subsidies averaging approximately 10 000 ecus to associations, etc., active in the education sector at European level;
 - grants to support the information activities of the national agencies;
 - the funding of the evaluation and follow-up of the programme.

For the preparatory visits requiring support under various chapters of the programme, the average amount granted will be between 500 and 1 000 ecus per person for a one-week visit, inclusive of all travel and subsistence expenditure, the exact sum depending *inter alia* on the duration of the visit and the length of the journey.

7.1.3 Impact of the anticipated increase

The anticipated increase in the budget will be used strategically rather than in a linear manner. In a situation characterised by a substantially rising demand and a declining budget, it will be used in particular to:

- prevent the average amount in certain chapters of the programme from falling below the minimum threshold needed to preserve the effectiveness of the subsidy and even the credibility of the programme in certain cases;
- ensure that at least a minimum level of resources remains available to be granted to new projects, thus safeguarding the innovatory impact of the programme;
- create the conditions whereby a certain growth in the number of projects or recipients of grants becomes feasible. This is an essential condition for the maintenance of the quantitative impact of the programme in relation to target group size which is rising markedly in several education sectors throughout the countries of the Community;
- forestall a situation in which the budgetary constraints result in the cancellation of the resources needed to disseminate the results of the projects receiving support, thus detracting from the cost-effectiveness of Community-supported investment.

As regards the unit costs which underpin the financial proposal, the calculation principle has had to take account of a situation which already arose in 1996 and which is making itself felt even more in 1997. The analysis of the first two years shows that the unit support for certain key parts of the programme is already falling to an extremely low level and could in certain cases no longer be enough to ensure that the projects achieve the desired results. A situation which would favour the persons and institutions having the most economic resources, thus jeopardising the programme's capacity to maintain the principle of equal opportunities set out in the Decision, must be avoided. Furthermore, the experience accumulated in 1995 and 1996 showed that if resources are insufficient to cater for even high quality demand for certain types of transnational projects and individual mobility activities, this could be a disincentive to the national agencies to disseminate information more widely on the programme. The result of this would be particularly unfortunate for disadvantaged institutions, regions and categories of persons which have not yet taken part in European cooperation and are not yet fully aware of the potential SOCRATES offers.

These concerns are particularly relevant to the following points:

- Chapter 1 (Higher education/Erasmus): within a bracket ranging from 10 000 and 50 000 ecus, each institution will in 1997 receive an average of only 16 000 ecus to cover European dimension activities in general under its institutional contract. What is more, if all the students of the exchange programmes approved by Erasmus were to receive a grant to go to another country, the per capita grant, inclusive of travel and other cost factors, would come to a mere 550 ecus for a full year of studies (i.e. a meagre 55 ecus monthly) – some 11% of the 5 000 ecus maximum authorised under the terms of the Decision. While being an Erasmus student also entails advantages which cannot be expressed in purely monetary terms, the overall impression is that this situation could seriously jeopardise the success of this essential part of SOCRATES. The increase anticipated for 1998 will at least make it possible to stabilise the level of the grant at almost 60 ecus per student per month and that of support universities at around 17 000 ecus per establishment even though the numbers are steadily rising all the time;
- the school partnerships under Chapter II (Comenius). These partnerships, developed in each case around a European project, form the very basis of school cooperation which is the major challenge and one of the most significant innovations of SOCRATES. Every school taking part in a partnership project generally receives financial support of only 2 000 ecus yearly (3 000 ecus for schools coordinating these partnerships). This is an extremely low figure and national education authorities are so cash-strapped that it is difficult for schools to obtain substantial additional funds from other sources. It is essential to at least stabilise these amounts which would henceforth have to be considered as averages rather than as maximum amounts, while maintaining the increase in the number of schools taking part so as to achieve an initial critical mass of schools;
- the average unit amount granted under several actions of the programme for support for transnational cooperation projects will markedly fall in 1997. This is particularly true of intercultural education; Lingua transnational projects; open and distance learning; and adult education. The budgetary increase anticipated by the Commission proposal will make it possible to avoid, at least during the remaining period of the present five-year period under SOCRATES, a continuing decline in these amounts.

7.2 Itemised breakdown of cost (million Ecus)

	1995 +	1997	1998	1999	TOTAL	%
	1996					
I. Higher education (Erasmus)	197.5	96.1	102.2	107.0	502.8	55.9
Action 1: European dimension	51.9	27.3	29.4	30.8		
Action 2: Student mobility	145.6	68.8	72.8	76.2		
II. School education (Comenius)	46.8	28.6	34.2	35.8	145.4	16.1
Action 1: School partnerships/ European projects	30.0	19.7	24.7	26.1		
Action 2: Intercultural education	11.0	4.7	5.0	5.1		
Action 3: Continuing training	5.8	4.2	4.5	4.6		
3.1: Projects	4.8	2.9	2.6	2.6		
3.2: Grants for participants	1.0	1.3	1.9	2.0		
III. Horizontal measures	104.6	46.8	49.1	51.3	251.8	28.0
Action 1: Promotion of foreign language learning (Lingua)	60.0	24.9	25.9	27.1		
Action 2: Open and distance learning	11.4	6.3	6.6	6.9		
Action 3: Exchange of information and experience	33.2	15.6	16.6	17.3		
TOTAL SOCRATES	348.9	171.5	185.5	194.1	900.0	100%

7.3 Schedule of commitment/payment appropriations

Budget for the overall duration of the programme (preferential point of reference): 900 million ecus.

Article 7 of the Decision establishing the programme indicated 850 million ecus as the amount provided for (as the preferential point of reference). The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed that two years after the start of the programme, the European Parliament and the Council would assess the results achieved. The Commission will accordingly be submitting a report accompanied by any proposals it deems appropriate, including any concerning the funding set by the legislator within the meaning of the Joint Statement of 6 March 1995. The European Parliament and the Council will act on those proposals at the earliest opportunity.⁵

⁵ Official Journal No L132/18 of 16 June 1995.

In accordance with the aforementioned Joint Statement, the Commission has drawn up the report envisaged.⁶ This financial statement accompanies the Commission proposals to increase the programme budget from 850 to 900 million ecus.

Implementation period: 1995-1999 (in million ECU)

	CE 95	CE 96	CE 97	CE 98	CE 99	Total
CE	175.9	173.0	171.5	185.5	194.1	900.0
CP						
1995	124.4					124.4
1996	51.5	143.1				194.6
1997		29.9	147.2			177.1
1998			24.3	159.0		183.3
1999				26.5	166.3	192.8
ult.					27.8	27.8
Total	175.9	173.0	171.5	185.5	194.1	900.0

Operational expenditure on studies, expert meetings etc. included in Part B

Breakdown	In MioECU		
	1998	1999	Total
- Studies	0,500	0,500	1,000
- Experts' meetings	0,250	0,250	0,500
- Conferences and congresses	0,250	0,250	0,500
- Information and publications	3,000	3,000	6,000
TOTAL	4,000	4,000	8,000

⁶ COM (97) [...]

8. FRAUD PREVENTION MEASURES

All contracts, agreements and legal commitments between the Commission and recipients of payments provide for first degree and second degree in situ checks (i.e. with the direct recipient of the Community grant or with the second degree beneficiary in the case of an activity managed under decentralised arrangements) by the Commission and the Court of Auditors. Recipients of aid for specific actions are under the obligation to provide a report and financial statement which are analysed from the point of view of content and eligibility of expenditure in accordance with the objective of Community funding and bearing in mind the contractual obligations and the principles of sound and efficient management.

In the agreements between the Commission and the entities designated to manage the decentralised activities minimum agreements will be included which these entities must include in the agreements with the final recipients in order to ensure the highest possible level of protection of the interests of both the final beneficiaries and the Community.

9. ELEMENTS OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

9.1 Specific and quantified objectives; target population

9.1.1 The SOCRATES programme in general

The aim of the SOCRATES programme is to improve the quality of education by stepping up cooperation and increasing mobility at European level. In the pursuit of this objective, the programme will also seek to establish the conditions for better synergy between the different education sectors by involving education players in a cogent manner but at the same time in accordance with patterns appropriate to their role and their requirements (mobility, cooperation on curricula, etc.) and providing support for establishing cooperation links between different sectors.

As for the cost effectiveness of the activities, the results of the first two years as recorded in the report for this period in accordance with the Joint Statement of the institutions mentioned above, reveal several significant structural aspects which include:

- The support given to transnational projects under several chapters of the programme have produced several hundred multilateral networks, most of which have already illustrated their potential for becoming durable cooperation structures. The benefits of the establishment of these networks will therefore be felt over a period extending far beyond the duration of funding through the SOCRATES programme as such.
- The support has enabled all Member States to participate fully in the different types of cooperation, including those whose remoteness and/or economic circumstances had previously been a major obstacle to European cooperation.
- Community aid has proved an effective instrument in enabling project leaders to locate additional funds from other sources. The SOCRATES aid in higher education on average represents only 10% of the total cost of the different mobility activities and 15% of that of new thematic networks.

- Moreover, the programme has led to a rationalisation of management structures, more decentralisation and thus better proximity in relation to the targets of the action.

However, the analysis of the first two years has also shown increasing shortcomings in the funding of certain chapters, particularly as regards the minimum amount which should be granted in order to preserve the impact of Community support. The Commission proposal which this financial statement accompanies has been drafted in order to provide an albeit minimum solution to this situation (see point 7.1 above).

Considering the increase proposed by the Commission, the total programme budget in 1998 represents approximately 0.2% of the total Community budget.

9.1.2 Specific programme actions

As regard the specific quantifiable objectives, the approximate number of projects it is intended to support is given in 7.1 above.

Chapter I – Higher education – Erasmus

Specific objectives

Action 1: Promotion of the European dimension in universities

A. Institutional contracts

The most innovatory idea in Chapter I is the institutional contract concluded for the first time for the 1997-98 academic year with universities and the result of which has been a rationalisation in cooperation activities, economies of scale in fields of common interest (languages, management, accommodation, etc.) and a much broader involvement of teaching staff and university authorities in cooperation activities.

The first round of applications relating to the institutional contract clearly shows not only continuing commitment for student mobility, a cornerstone of Erasmus up to now, but also a particularly high level of demand for activities intended to introduce the European dimension in the syllabuses for students in general. This concerns in particular:

- *teacher mobility*: the cost-effectiveness of this activity is twofold. While its intrinsic value is in terms of improvement of the quality of higher education courses and teaching methods, it is also an important way of bringing a European dimension to studies for students who cannot take direct advantage of mobility;
- *the joint development of curricula*: this support element is an excellent way of increasing the potential for innovation and quality of teaching and at the same time bringing a European dimension into studies. These activities can involve developing specific European content courses (on Community law, for instance) intended for all students. Alongside types of curricula cooperation already supported under the former Erasmus programme, the Erasmus chapter under the SOCRATES programme provides for three new measures to develop syllabuses: courses of the 'master' type catering for human resource requirements of certain sectors suffering from shortage of such resources up to now; European modules; integrated courses including specific training accompanied by language tuition;

- *intensive programmes*: these provide an invaluable opportunity for students and teachers from several countries to come together and exchange their experience, knowledge and ideas in a concentrated course. Many lead to the development of common teaching material and the emergence of joint research projects involving teachers and students.

The value of these measures is increasingly widely recognised by the universities and demand has more than doubled for 1997 in relation to the previous year.

Organising student mobility nevertheless remains a crucial element within the institutional contracts. The Community gives two types of financial support:

- aid intended to facilitate contacts between universities in order to optimise the quality of the organisational framework within which mobility takes place. This relates to factors such as academic recognition, reception of students, language tuition, consideration of special needs of disabled students undertaking mobility, etc. Under the institutional contract, each university is expected to make appropriate arrangements for managing the transnational flows of students, designating central departments to be responsible but also persons entrusted with the tasks within faculties and departments. The best possible cost-effectiveness of Community support can thus be achieved. Applications from universities for the 1997/98 academic year show that the establishments have been prompted by the institutional contract to set up appropriate structures in this context;
- the *European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)*, introduced as an experiment during the 1989/90 to 1994/95 period, provides an effective framework for giving mobile students course credits which can be transferred across the different European universities. An evaluation of the pilot phase has stressed its capacity to facilitate and increase the quality of student exchanges. The system has substantially increased the transparency of courses, a key factor in academic recognition but also in academic cooperation in general. In 1995/96, the pilot phase was extended to include almost 1 000 departments or faculties from some 230 establishments, and once the ECTS is accessible to all institutions in Europe when the provisions of the institutional contract are launched it is clear that its implementation will be still further extended. Approximately two-thirds of all universities requesting institutional contracts have asked for aid to introduce the ECTS in at least one department or one faculty. This means a four-fold increase in relation to the number of institutions currently implementing the system.

B. Thematic Networks

The *thematic networks* are the second major innovation under the chapter given over to higher education in SOCRATES. The experience gleaned from the implementation of the inter-university cooperation programmes (ICP) has provided the Community with the basis for supporting projects involving universities linked within the framework of thematic networks to promote cooperation and facilitate contacts between faculties, and to generate food for thought on the future of training in a particular discipline. Themes relating to the management of universities are also covered. These networks thus provide excellent forums for achieving curricular synergy, carrying out prospective analyses of requirements, and will thus provide impetus and direction for the efforts of universities to provide quality education which takes account of the socio-economic trends in progress. The networks thus make for increased efficiency and for savings in the level of investment which each

institution makes in order to adapt and improve the teaching it provides. Community support has been very warmly welcomed by the university world. Nearly 500 expressions of interest in creating networks have been submitted. The 28 networks selected have brought together 70 universities on average; some 85 associations and academic societies are also involved. Community aid represents only 15% of the total cost of the projects envisaged by the networks selected, but has proved the catalyst for intensive pooling of academic resources throughout the Community. The situation thus reflects a high level of cost-effectiveness.

Action 2: Encouragement for student mobility and funding of mobility grants

Under SOCRATES the Community is pursuing the development of the grants system set up under Erasmus and which has up to now led to mobility for over half a million students. The specific needs of students who are disadvantaged from the economic point of view or of disabled students are taken into account. The Community, in doing this, will pursue and strengthen one of the most remarkable aspects of its action, i.e. its capacity to direct flows of students to countries which because of their languages in particular would not otherwise have benefited from the presence within the universities of young people from other Member States. Moreover, the cost borne by the Community to achieve this readjustment of flows and to encourage mobility in general is really very modest. It covers but a minute fraction of the overall cost of mobility, but has nevertheless been the instigator of co-funding from public and sometimes private bodies, reflecting realisation by the Member States of the need for and value of mobility in higher education.

The impact of Erasmus in both the quantity and quality of European cooperation have been carefully and independently evaluated since its establishment. For the universities, the range of benefits include higher teaching standards through the pooling of expertise and experience, improved foreign language teaching, more effective dissemination of information, improved academic recognition, and better internal administration procedures, notably as regards the management of international cooperation at institutional, faculty and departmental levels. New or intensified cooperation in the field of research has also been shown to result from many of the close contacts between academic staff which Erasmus promotes. The vast majority of students involved in Erasmus report enriched academic experience at the host institution of higher education through frequent contact with the teaching staff of the host institution. Studies of the former participants have revealed that the Erasmus experience assists graduates in obtaining employment and leads to their being given access to work assignments requiring international knowledge and experience.

Target population

Erasmus targets all the 5 600 higher education establishments, the 600 000 university teachers and 11 million students of the Member States. The Erasmus chapter is open to all areas of studies and all types of higher education establishment. Special attention is paid to non-university establishments which do not have the same infrastructures as universities, and to certain subject areas which require specific encouragement, e.g. languages or teacher training.

Budget

The budget for Action 1 (ECU 29.4 million in 1998) represents 29% of the total budget under Chapter I. It is mostly allocated to the activities mentioned in A) above, which form the basis for developing cooperation activities.

During recent years, the financial contribution from the Community to the universities for these activities has greatly declined, bringing about very favourable cost-effectiveness ratios. The budget envisaged is aimed particularly at maintaining limited support for all higher education institutions offering high-quality activities with a European dimension. Despite being an extremely low percentage of the total cost, this assistance has been shown to be of prime importance in enabling establishments to assemble funds from other public and private sources.

Activities aimed at introducing the European dimension into studies for all students will have priority. More emphasis must be given to the strategic importance of these measures in order that non-mobile students - who represent the vast majority of the student body - acquire an intellectual and social "qualification" of a European nature, giving them the possibility of developing within the new framework of the Community, profiting from it and bringing to their own Member State an openness and competence in tune with current social and economic requirements. The proven impact of these activities makes it possible to anticipate an extremely favourable cost-effectiveness ratio.

1998 will be the first year of full operation of the thematic networks, since the networks supported for the first time in 1996 and 1997 will still be subsidised in that year alongside the new networks. Their share of the total budget under Chapter I is approximately 2.4%.

Action 2 accounts for the lion's share of the budget allocated to Chapter I (71%); it represents 39% of the total budget of the programme. The added value of Community action in the field of student mobility is recognised by the national bodies, universities, young people and their families. If one considers the large number of students benefiting from it, the role this physical mobility has played as the driving force behind cooperation and the importance of Erasmus as a tool demonstrating and incorporating the closeness of the Community to its citizens at the time of the Intergovernmental Conference, cost-effectiveness again seems extremely positive. For these reasons, student mobility continues to be a priority in the SOCRATES programme.

Chapter II - School education - Comenius

Chapter II is a genuine novelty in Community action in the field of education. It is the first tool for promoting European cooperation at Community level which involves all types of establishment: pre-school, primary and secondary. The challenge of making this part of the programme a success is quite considerable. This is explained in part by the size of the target population: the countries currently taking part in SOCRATES account for approximately 307 000 schools, 4 million teachers and approximately 70 million pupils in school and pre-school education. Disseminating information to all those potentially interested is therefore a large-scale undertaking. Furthermore, the school sector cannot rely on the same tradition of international cooperation as the higher education sector; to this may be added the fact that schools tend to have much less autonomy in running their affairs than higher education institutions.

Action 1: Partnerships between schools

Bringing together a number of establishments from at least three Member States, the partnerships comprise a framework for cooperation which is particularly effective and has high educational value, as they are based on educational projects (European Education Projects) adopted by the school as a whole. They result in educational activity and social and personal attainments among pupils and teachers of long-lasting effect. This has not only been shown in the pilot project which preceded the launch of this measure under SOCRATES but also confirmed by the experience of the first two years of SOCRATES itself.

The intrinsic educational value of the European Education Projects framing the partnerships, and the priority given to projects demonstrating effective systems for disseminating the experience obtained, encourage a multiplier effect and positive feedback for the socio-economic environment of the establishment and for other schools in the areas concerned.

Through the partnerships, this measure should reach at least 10 000 schools between now and the end of the first five-year period of the SOCRATES programme, tens of thousands of teachers and hundreds of thousands of pupils, at modest average unit cost per establishment (ECU 2 000 for a participating school and ECU 3 000 for a coordinating school). Care must be taken, however, as mentioned above, to ensure that this unit amount does not fall below this threshold, considered to be the minimum for retaining an incentive effect for schools. Activities eligible for Community assistance are aimed primarily at permitting cooperation without recourse to physical mobility, except in the case of teacher exchanges and training courses and study visits carried out by headmasters. One may therefore anticipate a high and long-lasting impact at minimum cost; according to a survey carried out among headmasters, it appears that almost all say they are potentially ready to participate in partnerships.

Even at this early stage of implementation, it is clear that multilateral school partnerships confirm the promise of the preceding pilot project. The experience of the first two years of SOCRATES has shown that they offer an effective framework for developing a wide range of activities and initiatives for cooperation between schools and for the generation or intensification of the European dimension in classrooms. They also reveal their potential as a source of innovative practice and of professional development for teachers as a result of intense transnational contacts between colleagues and of the development of new teaching materials; in addition, they are said to have a positive effect on the general motivation to learn of participating pupils; working with their counterparts on a joint project resulting from the mainstream curriculum, pupils gain a much clearer idea of life and learning in other Member States. The use of new information and communication technologies to maintain contacts with partner schools abroad familiarises pupils with this crucial aspect of modern society.

In addition to the projects themselves, grants for teacher exchanges and training courses in industry and commerce, and in other organisations outside the teaching sector, help to develop a clearer link with local business and to prepare pupils more effectively for the world of work. Study visits not only enable headmasters to be fully informed about the partners involved in their schools' projects, but also enable a critical comparison of management and administrative approaches between schools in different countries; this has an important potential effect on improving the quality of education in general.

Action 2: Education for children of migrant workers. Gypsies, travellers and persons with itinerant professions and intercultural education

The importance of this action as an instrument for promoting social cohesion in today's society, which is increasingly multicultural, is becoming ever clearer. This will apply in particular to the years 1998 and 1999, as a growing number of initiatives arising from the European Year Against Racism (1997) will need to be integrated into this action.

The children of migrant workers, Gypsies and travellers now attend a very large number of schools and require access to an education which really promotes equality of opportunity.

Moreover, the political and social context calls for vigorous action in support of an intercultural education for all, and the specific activities referred to in Action 2 constitute a laboratory and a valuable source of innovation for all young people.

The relevance of the subjects dealt with is evident from 1995 and 1996, namely:

- introduction of the languages of migrants as foreign languages for all pupils;
- increased awareness of the impact of the formal vocabulary used in the classroom (the language of instruction) on the results of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- the use of new technologies and, in particular, of open and distance learning for gypsies and travellers;
- the introduction of intercultural approaches in general education for understanding different cultures, religions and languages;
- creation of the conditions for exercising active European citizenship, based on mutual respect and human rights for all regardless of culture, race or creed;
- regeneration of schools and projects in underprivileged areas, concentrating on the specific needs of schools in problem districts in large metropolitan areas through the development of integrated approaches and cooperation between schools, urban authorities, pupils, parents and local associations.

The major problems of educational and social integration for young immigrants (9% of young Europeans of school age), especially in problematic urban areas, the resurgence of xenophobic and violent attitudes and the influx of groups of travellers and gypsies from the East (a million young people of school age) mean that the problem is highly relevant. Greater efficiency of the measures is ensured by exchanges of experience and improved training for the teachers concerned. Extending these measures to cover the entire educational structure will bring significant economies of scale and improve established systems, as well as a knock-on effect in terms of promoting educational achievements for other groups in danger of exclusion. The Community's contribution is based on transferable activities with high educational potential and on their dissemination. To this end, the rules governing participation now lay down that in each country (a minimum of three) taking part in a project, at least two establishments are to be involved, and particular priority is given to projects providing evidence of well-defined structures for dissemination.

This action has now reached a balance between its various target groups, with approximately 40% of projects devoted to improving the supply of education to the children of migrant workers, 30% meeting the needs of Gypsies, travellers and those with an itinerant profession, and the remaining 30% concerned with intercultural matters relating to school education in general.

The action is highly cost-effective, particularly in the light of the stricter requirements relating to the number of schools taking part. The European networks supported are proving to be an effective means for exchanging ideas and examples of good practice, as well as a vector for

communication on intercultural problems in general. Furthermore, a high percentage of the projects supported yield concrete results which have a significant impact far beyond the establishments taking part directly in the networks. This applies, for example, to manuals and teaching material for the children of migrants, Gypsies, travellers and itinerant professionals, learning modules for intercultural education and to the creation of data banks to facilitate cooperation between institutions in different countries. The latter, in particular, include a database containing approximately 5000 references to organisations and institutions active in this field and a data bank for all educational material on intercultural teaching in Europe. Another element which will reinforce cost-effectiveness is the integration within projects of methods of open and distance education, as these provide greater opportunities for reaching itinerant groups and ensure that they have access to education of the highest quality.

Action 3: Updating the skills of educational staff

By its very nature, this action has a high potential multiplier effect. On the one hand, it is aimed primarily at those responsible for updating the skills of teaching staff; on the other, it is aimed at all education professionals making a decisive contribution to the quality of education. In so doing, it helps take education as a whole into account, integrating psychological and educational guidance and assistance and thereby providing increased efficiency for a modest input.

The procedures for this action are aimed above all at adding the European dimension to the updating of skills, transferring positive experiences and creating teaching material, which should result in significant economies of scale by broadening the range of tools available for the continuing training of staff. One important aspect of this action is continuing training for teachers dealing with disadvantaged people and improved approaches to avoiding failure at school, an important element from the point of view of strategic investment of Community support, since it should help avoid the much more significant costs - both human and financial - of failure at school in the education systems of the Member States.

The participation of a number of continuing training institutions in various countries in the preparation and organisation of courses, and the subsequent involvement in courses of teachers from a number of countries, represent a demonstrable added value compared with in relation to continuing training developed and supplied within a purely national context.

The procedures (joint projects and development of teaching material) are such as to encourage the transfer of the more promising elements of each system implemented by the Member States while respecting their diversity.

In terms of cost-effectiveness, the projects supported under this action are highly productive: each project leads to the design of a continuing training course to be carried out within a specific period, namely the school year following that in which the support is provided. Output is of the order of 1.5 courses per project during this period, but in reality this figure is significantly higher still, given that a substantial proportion of courses will be organised on a number of occasions. A second element for efficiency relates to the link established between courses produced through this action and the award of grants for those taking part in such courses. At the same time, the fact that the grants awarded to participants under strand 3.2 of the action are reserved exclusively for participation in courses designed under strand 3.1 is an important factor in quality assurance and, therefore in ensuring optimum use of the resources available for grants. The 47 instances of support for projects in 1995 gave rise to 81 European courses providing continuing training opportunities for between 2200 and 2500 teachers. The scale of the action is to increase significantly in the coming years.

It should also be noted that particular importance is attached to recognition by the competent authorities in the participating countries of the continuing training given in this context. In this way, the activities supported tend to become better integrated into the fabric of the education systems, thus giving greater assurance that Community investment produces effects in the longer term. More generally, this action forms part of those within the SOCRATES programme which are aimed at providing multiplier effects, with teachers and other staff in the education sector comprising particularly appropriate target groups in this regard.

Target population

Comenius is aimed at schools at all levels (+/- 307 000 in the Community), pupils, including the children of migrants and Gypsies (approximately 70 million pupils in secondary, primary and pre-school education) and teaching staff (>4 million in the Community).

The approach used by the measures in this section of the programme is to multiply the number of indirect beneficiaries, since direct beneficiaries can only be a very low percentage of such a large target group. For this reason, the intended measures are concentrated on four elements:

- the creation of partnerships and networks;
- dissemination of the results;
- continuing training for teachers and educational personnel in general, as a multiplier effect;
- the production of courses and teaching material with long-term applicability.

Given the size of the target audience, individual mobility is not the main aim in itself. However, some degree of mobility is necessary in order to support the creation, maintenance and later development of the networks, to test the viability of modules, courses and teaching materials and to compare the approaches adopted in the various participating countries.

Since the target group of continuing training institutions is smaller in comparison to the number of schools, the aim is, over time, to touch all of these institutions, directly or indirectly, through the activities supported.

Budget

The allocation of the appropriations deemed necessary for these three actions takes into account the approach set out above, providing for the following elements:

- 72% of the Comenius budget will be allocated to Action 1, which has the broadest target group. However, given the limited budget, it is likely that only a small percentage (3%) of those schools wishing in principle to participate in a partnership will be able to benefit from what will be very limited assistance. A more significant increase would be required in order to extend the action to a proper threshold in quantitative terms, i.e. 10% of schools throughout the Community;
- the budget for Action 2 represents 15% of the Comenius budget. This is considered to be the minimum possible, given the increasing importance of the social problems addressed by this action;
- the budget for Action 3 is divided into two sections: section 3.1 relates to the development of projects leading to the organisation of continuing training courses; section 3.2 relates to the award of grants for those taking part in the courses that have developed. The budget, which amounts to 13% of the total for Comenius, will be divided on a 58:42 basis between these two elements.

Chapter III – Horizontal measures

This chapter draws together the horizontal actions applied at all levels of education and supplementing those set out in the first two chapters.

Action 1: Promotion of language skills (Lingua)

Specific objectives

This action offers a package of coherent activities to promote knowledge of Community languages in the field of education (see second objective, section 4.1 above). It takes and extends measures from the Lingua programme (1990-1994) aimed at the world of education. More specifically, the action seeks to:

- promote transnational cooperation to improve the quality of initial and continuing teacher training through the development of joint training projects for language teachers;
- encourage mobility among teachers and future teachers of languages in order to give them direct contact with the language and lifestyles of another Member State of the Community;
- promote cooperation in the development of innovative teaching material and methods, particularly for the less widely used and less taught official languages of the EU;
- motivate young people to learn and communicate in another language, particularly in the technical and professional sector where the learning of languages is less widespread.

With regard to the cost-effectiveness of the various strands of the action, the following particular points should be noted:

- *in the European cooperation programmes for the training of language teachers (ECP)* supported under item 2(a) of the action, almost all the target languages in Lingua are represented. The projects supported so far under SOCRATES are characterised by an increasing diversity in the subjects and sectors tackled. Greater attention is given to key areas for innovation, such as early teaching of foreign languages, the use of multimedia and other new technologies and the role of open and distance learning with regard to the training of language teachers. As previous assessments have shown, the ECPs have a significant impact on the quality of training for language teachers provided by the participating institutions and beyond. Through the activities underway in these institutions, the modules, material and study programmes developed are an important vector for innovation, helping not only to improve the language ability of teachers and training staff and their confidence in using the target language, but also in broadening their understanding of the cultural environment of the language and refining their technical and methodological skills. The networks of institutions developed under the programmes are an important resource for dissemination, the future potential of which is to be exploited systematically;
- the *grants enabling language teachers to take part in continuing training activities in another Member State* (item 2(b) of the action) have a wider scope under SOCRATES with the inclusion of teachers wishing to teach other subjects in a foreign language. The support provided under this measure has an impact in several areas: it extends transnational mobility for language teachers, improves the quality of language teaching, reinforces the cultural and European dimension in classrooms, helps reinforce general professional motivation for teachers and creates a growing reservoir of people who are potentially capable of undertaking other forms of cooperation under SOCRATES, both within Lingua and in the field of school cooperation under Comenius. It is therefore a low-unit-cost measure bringing about an

- important series of effects, which will be made more effective in future by closer links with the ECPs referred to above;
- the first phase of the pilot action for *assistantships* (item 2 (c) of the action has highlighted a number of elements directly relevant to the cost-effectiveness of the measure: this is a highly significant instrument in terms of extending the concept and the supply of qualified language assistance in Europe. Assistant posts under Lingua display innovative characteristics in that they are aimed only at future language teachers, emphasise teaching methodologies rather than simply improving language skills and give priority to the less widely spoken languages in the European Union. The action helps to improve the quality and diversity of language teaching, particularly by improving future teachers' knowledge of the language they will teach and of its culture, helping new language teachers to add another language to their repertoire, increasing the range of European languages taught by schools and encouraging more pupils – and also teachers and parents – to learn a new European language. It should also be noted that, prior to launching this action, only three of the participating countries had a significant assistantship programme, involving the most widely-spoken languages;
- the *cooperation projects for the development of tools for language teaching and learning* (study programmes, material, evaluation and assessment tools, etc.) supported under item 2(d) of Lingua has proved to be a vector in stimulating innovation, particularly in the production of teaching materials. The products designed in this context relate in particular to the use of information and communication technology, especially the use of CD-ROMs and the Internet as aids in teaching and learning; the cultural dimension of language learning; early learning of foreign languages; assessment of language skills; the design of tools, offering young people disadvantaged from the educational point of view a better chance of taking part in and deriving benefit from mobility programmes;
- the *joint educational projects (JEP)* supported under item 2(e) of the action make a real contribution to motivating and improving the language skills of young people, particularly those who, in general, do not have the opportunity of learning languages; approximately 56% of participants are enrolled in technical/vocational education. The priority given to the less widely-used and less taught languages is gradually making its presence felt. The projects cover a wide range of subjects; each leads to specific, practical products such as exhibitions, magazines, technical vocabulary lists, bilingual multimedia programmes, etc.

Target population

The target population is divided into four sections:

- People of all ages wishing to learn one or more languages and/or assess their language skills;
- Teachers and future teachers of foreign languages in the Community; these may be estimated at over 300 000;
- Initial and continuing teacher training institutions and bodies involved in the development of teaching materials;
- Young people in the school sector, particularly the technical and vocational aspects.

Budget

The budget necessary for implementing these actions should be considered in the light of the following points:

- The integration of the initial training sector for language teachers alongside that of continuing training as an eligible target group under Action 1, item 2(a), requires additional funding.
- According to experience acquired, it appears essential to increase the number of language teachers eligible for assistance to carry out a period of linguistic immersion under Action 1, item 2(b) in relation to 1997. The effect of these training periods both on the way the teacher carries out his/her duties and on the establishment where he/she teaches calls for reinforcement of this measure to assist mobility.
- Evaluation of the “Lingua assistant” pilot project having been very positive, it is necessary to ensure funding for a minimum number of grants under Action 1, item 2(c).
- The increased demand resulting from the accession of the new Member States is gradually making itself felt, particularly as a result of the priority given to the less widely-spoken languages.
- With a view to maintaining equality of opportunity for those target groups disadvantaged from the point of view of learning languages, particularly the technical and vocational sectors of education, it will be worthwhile ensuring that the support given to the joint projects supported under Action 1, item 2(e) is not further diminished.

Bearing in mind these aspects, and experience acquired in the first two years of the programme, the available resources will be allocated in the approximate ratio 11%/27%/10%/12% and 40% across the five measures comprising the action.

Action 2: Promotion of open and distance learning

Specific objectives

Open and distance learning is a favoured method for diversifying the supply of education for all and, in particular, those unable to benefit from teaching requiring an actual presence, with the addition of a European dimension.

It is a key factor in enabling European citizens to profit from the educational resources available throughout the Community, and has a vital role to play in the strategy aimed at improving the level and accessibility of education at all levels and at all stages of life.

Through the use of open and distance learning methods as a tool to support and disseminate measures under Erasmus, Comenius and Lingua, this action is aimed at promoting and developing open and distance learning in its own right, by establishing transnational partnerships between the bodies involved in distance education or in the use of new information and communication technologies.

As confirmed by the Task Force report on “Educational software and multimedia”, Community action, by facilitating the development of human networks in this field, improves the exchange of information and experience between users, producers and providers involved in open and distance learning. This action stimulates exchanges relating to the methods used and the development of high-quality common materials at European level. It will, in time, enable economies of scale in the production of teaching materials.

The experience of the first two years has shown clearly that the action is giving rise to a significant increase in the amount of European cooperation in the field of open and distance learning. In particular, it has begun to facilitate cooperation between a wide range of "players" with little prior tradition of partnerships in this field: users, suppliers, developers and distributors of software, education system administrators, etc. The networks so far supported involve a wide range of organisations, including associations and other non-governmental organisations, open and distance learning establishments, traditional universities (and, to a certain extent, schools and adult education organisations) interested in the use of new technologies in teaching and the introduction of distance learning systems, and publishers of teaching materials, particularly in the multimedia field. The action is therefore also improving the overall visibility of open and distance learning in the participating countries.

In addition, the action increases awareness of the need to explore the implications - both for the teacher/trainer and for the directors of education - of introducing new approaches based on distance education. However, even if the role and contribution of information and communication technology are a key element in this process, increasing emphasis is placed on teaching aspects such as course design and the role of teachers/tutors. Organisational questions relating to the development/adaptation on a cooperative basis of study programmes and school materials, the introduction of information and communication technologies in various educational contexts or the development of specific support services or environments for students or adult learners also figure in the project objectives. In this way, the action contributes to improving the quality of this type of education by bringing together the resources and expertise of all the Member States.

The experience of 1995 and 1996 has shown that the action responds to needs which have not been taken into account by other Community initiatives. Nevertheless, it will continue to be implemented in close cooperation with the other initiatives concerned: the most specific and operational expression of this cooperation was the joint call for proposals involving a number of Community programmes, published in December 1996.

Target population

The action is aimed potentially at all citizens wishing to improve their education, and especially those unable to benefit from face-to-face teaching. This is an important contribution to the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy, a joint priority for all the Member States of the Community.

Budget

This is a new action in Community support for education which is growing rapidly. The important thing is to allocate the minimum amount necessary to obtain a critical mass ensuring the effectiveness of the Community action. Demand will continue to increase, particularly as a result of the visibility of the Community assistance created by the joint call for proposals linking the multimedia-related programmes (SOCRATES, Leonardo da Vinci, Telematics, Esprit, etc.) referred to above.

Budgetary constraints are obviously set to become a real obstacle to the development of this Action from 1997, due on the one hand to the need to renew funding for multiannual projects supported in 1995 and pursued in 1996 and, on the other, to the probable continuing increase in demand for assistance for new projects. The planned budget will enable some reinforcing of the average grant, which is very low in 1997, while retaining a significant mass of projects.

Action 3: Promoting the exchange of information and experience

Specific objectives

Action 3 covers the exchange of information and experience, covering questions of common interest relating to education policy, the Eurydice information education network, the programme of visits for decision-makers in the field of education (Arion), the Naric network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres and other measures covering adult education and complementary measures.

These activities have their own specific characteristics, linked both to their role in the information chain and to their target audience.

- The exchange and creation of information through analyses and exchanges of experts and in the form of pilot quality assurance projects in the education sector are intended primarily for those responsible for decision-making in the field of education. They encourage greater consideration of trends and educational questions within the Community. They also aim to provide reliable and precise references for decision-makers.
- The study visits are both a measure for information and awareness-raising on certain subjects of common interest to the Member States and a means of facilitating cooperation in the field of education. They are aimed at specialists, targeted according to different subjects and having a true potential multiplier effect in their Member State.
- Measures to promote adult education are aimed at raising awareness of other Member States and of the European Community and improving the quality of adult education by creating cooperation networks.
- Complementary measures will make it possible to raise the awareness of and inform a wide audience, i.e. all educational operators, in particular through information activities by the national agencies; they will also cover programme evaluation.

All these elements demonstrate a favourable degree of cost-effectiveness. These are measures which make available to decision-makers the means to integrate the experiences of all other Member States into their education systems, thus permitting them – with a low percentage of the SOCRATES budget – to take the appropriate measures with the maximum probability of success and of sound investment:

- *the analyses, exchanges of experts, pilot “quality” projects and dissemination activities* pursued under *Action 3.1* relate to key policy aspects identified in close cooperation with the Council’s Education Committee. The proposals are evaluated in the light of the triple criterion of political relevance, scientific quality and a demonstration of a clear European dimension, defined in this instance as the added value provided by dealing with a question in a comparative and/or European context rather than a purely national, regional or local one. Preference is given to supporting a limited number of full analyses rather than a larger number of studies covering a smaller area and/or in less depth. The potential for this measure to bring together the skills of organisations active in the field of education analyses and forecasts, and to stimulate a structured dialogue between research and policy development, rapidly emerges. Particular importance is given to following-up projects and to processing their results in such a way as to render them usable by political decision-makers;
- *the Eurydice network (Action 3.2)*, consisting of national units coordinated by a European Unit, plays a key role in providing reliable comparative data to the authorities in participating countries and at European level on the development of education systems and policies. The

network's productivity is extremely high in relation to its cost, as is shown by the results of the first two years of support under SOCRATES. In particular, funding will enable comparative summaries to be drawn up on specific subjects of interest, compendia on aspects of education systems, a major publication containing *Key data on education in the European Union* and the continued development and updating of the EURYBASE database. Particular attention will be given to providing publications and other network projects in more Community languages; they will be made accessible by electronic means to a much wider audience, in particular through the Internet. These measures will increase the cost-effectiveness of the network even more;

- the qualitative results of *Arion study visits (Action 3.3)* have long been documented. The feedback from thousands of reports and from many contact meetings with local organisers, national agencies and participants has shown that the visits provide experts and decision-makers in education with the unique opportunity to discuss their concerns with their colleagues on a multilateral basis and, in so doing, reconsider and alter their working methods in a more European context. Long-lasting contacts and networks are established between people occupying key posts in education in the participating countries. In many cases, participating in Arion gives rise to new cooperation and new projects as part of other measures under SOCRATES and other Community programmes. Considerable and increasing attention is devoted to ensuring dissemination of the results of the visits. Reports on visits enjoy increasingly wide dissemination, and thematic seminars are organised with a view to updating the comparative summaries obtained and to consolidating further the networks linking those concerned;
- the usefulness of the *network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)*, which constitutes *Action 3.4*, is obvious; each Member State has appointed a national centre with the task of contributing to the mobility of students, teachers and researchers by providing information and advice on problems concerning the recognition of diplomas. The contribution from SOCRATES provides for the networking of the Centres, thus obtaining extremely important benefits at European level with minimum funding. The majority of Naric centres also serve as information points as part of the implementation of the "General Directive" on the professional recognition of higher education qualifications. The Commission will continue to oversee the network in order to ensure close cooperation and an optimum exchange of information. Meetings will be organised twice annually, one being a joint session with "ENIC" network of the the Council of Europe and UNESCO's CEPES centre for higher education. Assistance will also be given for study visits between NARIC centres and the implementation of joint projects, particularly summary reports. Training modules on the evaluation of diplomas and certificates issued abroad, developed by network members, will provide for wider dissemination of knowledge and skills acquired. The work of making databases available by electronic means will continue. All these measures are designed with the aim of generating maximum "fallout" in relation to the support provided;
- *Action 3.5A, involving Adult education*, is an important field for innovation in the SOCRATES programme. Its aim is to strengthen the European dimension in all sectors of adult education – general, cultural and social. Adult education is a key element in the context of the increasingly apparent need for a vigorous policy of lifelong learning. To this end, the action supports a broad exchange of experience and information at European level, especially through projects aimed at developing adult education courses or producing teaching materials providing a better understanding of the political, economic, social, cultural and historical aspects of the Member States and the Community. In this context, projects on the subject of European civic education and, on a wider scale, on active citizenship are also supported. The action is also intended to stimulate the development of transnational cooperation, networking and the exchange of experiences and information between adult education organisations, thus

helping to improve the quality of adult education in Europe. The type and volume of adult education supplied vary considerably from one country to another, and the importance and potential of the "Adult education" action under SOCRATES as an instrument for the productive exchange of experience and skills are therefore all the more evident.

The projects supported cover a wide range of aims and activities. Those which focus on the promotion of knowledge and awareness about Europe and active citizenship are typically engaged in the development of materials and/or modules which will be made available in printed and/or electronic form in due course. Topics covered include the arts, media literacy, health education, and the fight against racism, xenophobia and social exclusion. The projects which emphasise the enhancement of adult education through European cooperation focus on the development of new teaching methods, new structures or programmes for adult education, the development of information networks and databanks and the preparation and dissemination of publications (guides, manuals, periodicals). Many of the projects are concerned with the improvement of educational opportunities for senior citizens, socially excluded or marginalised groups, disabled or illiterate persons, and the unemployed. Some are being developed in cooperation with trade union groups.

Some of the major issues facing adult education in Europe today are tackled in the projects supported. These include methodological questions, self-learning strategies, assessment of prior experiential learning, management of quality in adult education, issues of access and motivation, core skills of disadvantaged groups, the training of adult educators and tutors, accreditation systems suitable for use in formal and non-formal adult education, and ways of building links between these systems.

The projects are actively involving a broad spectrum of adult education providers, from all parts of the adult education 'system', whether formal or non-formal, public or private, professional or voluntary, at national, regional or local level. Particularly encouraging has been the fact that the majority of organisations applying are national or local adult education organisations or NGOs, suggesting that the Action is also beginning to make itself felt at grass-roots level.

Given the importance of this field and the considerable impact obtained with the help of Community support, the cost-benefit ratio of these measures, which account for only 3% of the SOCRATES budget, is particularly positive;

- as regards the *complementary measures*, which make up *Action 3.5.B* of SOCRATES, support is available in particular for activities by associations working in the education field, the information activities of national agencies, programme monitoring and evaluation, and awareness-raising activities of many kinds, including for the "Europe in the School" competition organised in cooperation with the Council of Europe. Of particular importance in this context is the support provided for the activities of European associations, many of which have played a vital role in pioneering educational cooperation at European level. The European associations are a key partner in ensuring the success of SOCRATES. They constitute an important channel for disseminating information, sharing experience and expertise, disseminating information with a bearing on the design and preparation of projects, and providing training for teaching staff and headteachers in a truly European context. This holds equally true for the National Agencies' information activity measures - such activities being crucial in the drive to ensure that the educational community is fully informed about the opportunities under SOCRATES - as well as for the other awareness-raising activities. As for the cost of monitoring and evaluating the programme, these are fully in keeping with the order of magnitude set down by the Commission under its Sound and Efficient Management approach, SEM 2000.

Target population

This strand of the programme is focused mainly on people working in education, decision-makers and specialists in particular, all educational bodies, national agencies and associations working in the educational field. These elements play various roles but are of great importance for the quality of education in Member States, dissemination of information, etc., because they all act as multipliers at national or local level. Adult learners are also targeted.

Budget

These measures account for 9 % of the programme's overall budget for 1998. The lion's share of this 9% will go on adult education (33% of the budget sub-total for this measure) and is on the increase in view of this sector's growing importance for Member States against the current socio-economic backcloth.

9.2 Grounds for the action

The purpose of this Community action in the educational field is to foster quality education through cooperation. At a time when our societies require their citizens to possess increasingly sophisticated knowledge, know-how and abilities (and when their development basically depends on their capacity to call on human resources capable of evolving within an enlarged framework, in the European Community in particular), the Community action must endeavour to contribute to the solutions which Member States' put in place to meet this challenge.

The Community also wished to provide a new boost to its action in the educational field by incorporating a specific article to this end in the EC Treaty. In November 1995 the Commission adopted the White Paper on Education and Training, which reinforces the community's role in the educational field and mentions several measures needed to face the challenge of the learning society.

For over ten years now the Member States, Council and Parliament have consistently shown interest and support for the development of such Community action by adopting action programmes in this field and actively participating in their implementation, and the potential beneficiaries have shown growing interest in these programmes.

The activities under the SOCRATES programme underpin and complement the measures taken by Member States and allow them to use the input and results of cooperation in education to improve the quality and effectiveness of their systems and structures.

The measures are founded on cooperation programmes between establishments, on partnerships and on networks which have proven their worth in lending a European dimension to education. Their aims have to do with areas in which the Community-level input, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, engenders greater effectiveness and makes a special contribution in terms of knowledge of EU languages, transnational mobility, fostering exchange of information and experience, development of innovative approaches and materials, etc.

The complementary nature of the Community action in regard to that of Member States is all the more effective given that the budget involved, which is extremely modest by comparison with the funds invested by member countries, helps to prime the pump for measures in sectors related to transnational activity and educational innovation where budgetary restrictions are making themselves increasingly felt at a time of severe constraint.

In some sectors - open and distance learning, for example - being able to disseminate educational materials created with Community aid will very likely open the way to higher-quality production better targeted on the various groups.

Through such actions SOCRATES is making a specific contribution to the quality of education, in keeping with the mandate enshrined in Article 126 of the Treaty. The activities planned aim to make it easier for all citizens to access an open European area for education, where comparison of methods and references will make for greater pedagogical diversity fostering successful access to education for all. Furthermore, by promoting widespread dissemination of the educational systems' best points, the programme helps develop each of them and will foster the transfer of results likely to generate economies at national level.

As regards higher education, the Community action is based on institutional contracts to encourage mobility, especially that of students; the impact of such contracts on universities and the growing interest shown in them by national and local authorities - willing to inject large amounts of co-funding - not only highlights their role as a driving force in developing the university system but also Member States' need to be able to call on young graduates with first-hand experience of another EC country. In addition, the measures proposed in the higher education field also entail a more integrated approach aimed at involving all academic bodies in transnational cooperation. This approach will produce economies of scale, extending the benefits of an education with a European dimension to all students, and will contribute to transparency and recognition of qualifications, a crucial element in turning freedom of movement for individuals into reality.

In the school education field, we must meet the needs for transnational cooperation. The investment this entails is so vast that the Community action, through its ability to spread and foster innovation while engendering economies through better utilisation of resources (in particular as regards teaching aids and methods) will make an appreciable contribution to the various systems.

The activities undertaken relate to specific actions firmly based on the needs of schools and giving rise to transferable products, so that the measures in question will very likely make a major contribution despite the modest funds available.

Finally, it should be stressed that Community action in the field of education lends a high profile to Community measures, thus making all citizens more aware of the endeavours to build Europe - given that education affects all citizens, is often at the very heart of debate within society, is of great public interest and affects the future of individuals, families and Member States. By focusing on children, young people, adult learners and those teaching them, the Community actions in the field of education help to focus people's minds on what Europe is about, to forge enlightened attitudes to Europe and to promote a sense of belonging and of adherence to the fundamental values driving the creation of the European Community.

9.3 Monitoring and evaluation

An internal working group was set up at the beginning of 1996 to monitor and evaluate the programme under the direction of a new Unit in charge of cooperation in education and ongoing evaluation of the SOCRATES programme. The group drew up an initial report on how the programme had operated during its first two years, as well as methodological documents concerning greater in-depth evaluation.

9.3.1 Monitoring

The programme has been continuously monitored since its launch in 1995, with use being made of information gathered directly by the Commission from projects under centrally managed strands and of information on decentralised schemes forwarded to it by the national agencies. Such feedback made it possible, in particular, to draw up an initial report on programme implementation summing up the situation two years after SOCRATES was instituted and forming the basis for the proposed changes.

9.3.2 Performance indicators

By way of example, the programme could be monitored and measured against some of the following performance indicators:

9.3.2.1 Output indicators

Quantitative

Chapter I - Higher education

Action 1: European dimension of universities

- number of faculties, students, teachers involved;
- breakdown of flows of students/teachers to/from Member States, plus the various disciplines involved;
- number of curricula, their geographic spread and distribution by discipline, especially in leading-edge fields of study;
- number of intense programmes organised jointly with other establishments, especially in leading-edge fields of study;
- number, nature and geographic distribution of faculties/departments, academic associations and other bodies belonging to (or associated with) thematic networks.

Action 2: Student mobility

- number of grants, broken down by Member State and region, participating establishment, sex, discipline, etc.;
- number of students unable to participate in mobility for want of resources;
- average amount of grant.

Chapter II - School education

Action 1: School partnerships/European education projects

- number of schools participating in school partnerships (by country, region, school sector, etc.);
- number of teachers having taken part in exchanges/placements (by country, region, school sector, etc.);
- number of headteachers having been on study visits abroad (by country, region, school sector, etc.);

Action 2 Intercultural education

- number of schools taking on board intercultural education elements;
- number and nature of bodies participating in intercultural projects (by country, establishment type, characteristics of regions/localities involved, etc.)

Action 3: Continuing training for educational staff

- number of bodies participating in transnational projects involving continuing training for educational staff (by country, region, educational sector, etc.);
- number of educational staff members undergoing continuing training courses generated by transnational projects (by country, region, school sector, professional status as a multiplier, etc.).

Chapter III -Horizontal measures

Action 1: Promotion of language skills

- range of languages involved in the various measures within the action, especially as an indicator of the action's impact on learning of the least widely used languages;
- the number of bodies participating in European cooperation programmes covering initial and continuing training for language teachers (by country, region, language taught, educational sector, initial/continuing training, etc.);
- number and range of courses, trainers and (future) teachers reached by the European cooperation programmes;
- number of teachers taking part in continuing training placements (by country, region, school sector, type of teacher, language taught, professional status as a multiplier, etc.);
- number of assistants, duration of assistantships, types of host establishment;
- number and nature of joint education projects, number and types of establishment participating therein;
- number of young people participating in joint education projects (by country, region, establishment type, etc.)

Action 2: Open and distance learning

- number of bodies involved in or associated with partnerships (by country, establishment type, educational sector involved, etc.);
- number, nature, quality and import of results/products generated by partnerships and observation projects;
- number of persons benefiting from courses via/for open and distance learning thanks to SOCRATES projects (pupils, teachers, administrative personnel, etc.).

Action 3: Exchange of information and experience

- number of Arion study visit beneficiaries;
- number and nature of bodies participating in adult education projects (by country, establishment type, characteristics of regions/localities involved, etc.);
- number of education associations supported (by country, educational sector, etc.).

Qualitative

Chapter I - Higher education

Action 1: European dimension of universities

- degree of satisfaction on the part of students, teachers, university rectors/vivrcancellors, administrators;
- actual degree to which European cooperation is firmly anchored in the establishment (involvement of senior staff; level of responsibility for European affairs within the administration; monitoring of implementation of establishment's policy statement on European cooperation; details of how responsibility for European cooperation is spread among the establishment's decision-making bodies);
- distribution and quality of socio-economic/cultural courses on other Member States;
- distribution and quality of modules on European integration;
- distribution and quality of comparative courses, depending on discipline studied;
- quality and linguistic distribution of integrated language courses offered to students and teachers;
- number, nature, quality and import of projects undertaken within thematic networks.

Action 2: Student mobility

- students' level of satisfaction with grants;
- level of satisfaction with use of the term "Erasmus student" for students taking part in approved mobility arrangements but not having an Erasmus grant.

Chapter II - School education

Action 1: School partnerships/European education projects

- quality of school activities connected with injection of a European dimension into studies;
- nature and quality of other results/products from European education projects;
- nature and pertinence of mobility aspect by comparison with partnerships' aims and needs.

Action 2: Intercultural education

- participation by bodies active in the intercultural fields concerned, and nature of partnerships between schools, local authorities and the bodies referred to;
- pertinence of products resulting from intercultural projects.

Action 3: Continuing training for educational staff

- pertinence and thematic/geographical spread of continuing training courses generated by transnational projects and of the related teaching material.

Chapter III - Horizontal actions

Action 1: Promotion of language skills

- pertinence, distribution by target language and topic of initial and continuing training courses and other products generated by European cooperation programmes;
- innovative impact of Lingua assistantships;
- distribution and pertinence of products for language learning and for evaluating language skills.

Action 2: Open and distance learning

- diversification of approaches based on open and distance learning;
- development of approaches based on open and distance learning in other activities supported under the SOCRATES programme (Erasmus, Comenius, Lingua, Adult Education, etc.).

Action 3: Exchange of information and experience

- quality and pertinence of transnational activities supported under Action 3.1 (comparative analyses, study visits, exchanges of experts, conferences, seminars, pilot projects);
- pertinence, extent and validity of comparative data and analyses supplied and exchanged via the Eurydice network;
- quality and pertinence of results from adult education projects;
- pertinence and extent of national agencies' information activities;
- pertinence and quality of activities undertaken by associations thanks to support under SOCRATES.

Indicators relating to all chapters

- quality of method adopted to take into account the needs of disabled students and teachers taking part in SOCRATES activities;
- extent to and manner in which the principle of equal opportunities between women and men is taken into account with regard to participation in SOCRATES activities;
- degree of satisfaction regarding the approaches adopted and administrative arrangements for the implementation of the actions at European and national level, including cooperation between the National Agencies;
- degree of satisfaction with the amounts granted;
- nature and degree of interaction between the programme's various actions;
- how the SOCRATES measures stand out by comparison with similar measures at national level (where applicable);
- degree of effectiveness of methods used to spread the results of the projects and other activities.

9.3.2.2 Indicators of impact

Chapter I - Higher education

Action 1: European dimension of universities

- impact of the institutional contract or the work done by the thematic networks in the way of helping to improve the quality of tuition;
- availability of services offered by establishments (guidance, accommodation, help with administrative matters, language preparation of students in all languages, monitoring and reintegration, academic recognition procedures, etc.);
- funds complementing Community funds;
- measures taken to continue activities once Community funding ends.

Action 2: Student mobility

- size of funds complementing Community funds and sources of such funding;
- degree and nature of the impact on students academically and as regards their entry into the world of work.

Chapter II - School education

Action 1: School partnerships/European education projects

- scope and nature of changes made in schools when injecting a European dimension into the curriculum, in working methods, pupil-teacher ratios, pedagogical approaches, interdisciplinary cooperation, etc.;
- reinforcement of links between the school and its local environment (other schools nearby, businesses, etc.).

Action 2: Intercultural education

- arrangements made for including intercultural elements in school curricula as well as in initial and continuing training for teachers and other categories of school staff;
- legislative or administrative provisions fostering intercultural education and adopted in connection with the action.

Action 3: Continuing training for educational staff

- nature and degree of skill enhancement of educational staff having participated in continuing training courses;
- recognition of the continuing training course devised under the action (integration of courses into nationally available training courses, recognition of individual participants' qualifications, etc.)

Action 1: Promotion of language skills

- changes in curricula and methodologies for updating language teachers' skills as a result of transnational cooperation;
- nature and degree of skill enhancement of teaching staff having participated in continuing training courses;
- degree of skill enhancement and boost to motivation to learn a language engendered by joint education projects;
- impact of Lingua action on innovation and diversification of language learning, in particular as regards the least widely used languages.

Action 2: Open and distance learning

- diversification in use of approaches based on open and distance learning (establishment types, disciplines and students involved);
- account taken of pedagogical needs and of user-friendliness when designing educational software products in Europe;
- endeavours undertaken to achieve recognition of qualifications obtained through open and distance learning at national and European level;
- scope and intensity of use of open and distance learning services in Europe.

Action 3: Exchange of information and experience

- improvement in participating countries' educational structures as a result of the exchange of information and experience promoted under strands 1 to 3 of Action 3;
- improvement in arrangements for recognising academic achievements stemming from cooperation between national centres as supported by strand 4 of Action 3;
- diversification of adult education courses on offer due to exchange of information and experience at European level;
- degree of effectiveness of information and awareness-heightening measures in terms of numbers and diversification of interest shown by the educational community towards European cooperation.

9.3.3 Evaluation

An initial report was drawn up towards the end of 1996 in accordance with the Joint Statement by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission as mentioned earlier. It contains an initial analysis of the first two years of programme operation and is designed to accompany the Proposal for a Decision amending the Decision setting up the programme. The results highlighted in the report are outlined briefly below.

Furthermore, in accordance with Article 8 of the Decision establishing up the programme, the Commission was called on to ensure, in partnership with the Member States, regular monitoring and evaluation of the programme with the objective, if necessary, of readjusting the programme in the light of needs arising during its implementation. It was required to submit an interim report on the launch phase before 30 September 1998 and a final report on implementation of the programme before 30 September 2000. In order to initiate this monitoring and evaluation procedure, the Commission informed the SOCRATES Committee, at its meeting of 18 and 19 November 1996 and in accordance

with Article 4(3) of the Decision. of the methodological approach it intended to adopt. The evaluation arrangements were dealt with in greater detail at the Committee's meeting of 28 and 29 January 1997.

Appraisal of results

Analysis of the programme's first two years showed that a wide range of tangible results had been achieved thanks to the support provided. This analysis is set out in the Report submitted by the Commission to accompany its proposal for a Decision amending the Decision which established the programme. In a nutshell, it noted that, even in the comparatively short space of time since SOCRATES had been launched, the programme had *boosted mobility* and given rise to a significantly *increased volume and improved quality of European cooperation*, notably in fields such as school education, adult education and open and distance learning which had little previous tradition of structured collaboration at transnational level. SOCRATES was also encouraging institutions to adopt a more *strategic approach to European cooperation*, and to give it a far more prominent place than hitherto in their institutional development plans. More particularly SOCRATES had:

- made a substantial contribution to the *mobility of students, young people and teaching staff*, as regards both the volume and the quality of the organisational framework for exchanges;
- stimulated *broad and intensified cooperation between educational institutions* in different participating countries;
- greatly contributed to strengthening *the European dimension* in various educational sectors, notably through measures concerning teachers' initial and continuing training;
- given a new impetus to the *academic recognition of study periods* carried out and qualifications obtained abroad. In the field of higher education, the successful European Credit Transfer System was in the process of extension to well over 1,000 institutions, and the programme was also giving priority support to projects addressing the issue of the recognition of qualifications in the adult education sector and those obtained through the vehicle of open and distance learning;
- continued to make progress in *promoting the teaching and learning of the least widely used and spoken languages* of the Union, particularly in the Lingua part of the programme but also within Erasmus;
- provided a focal point for a *broader use of open and distance learning* and of new technologies in various educational sectors, thus ensuring that educational needs were better catered for when devising educational software and multimedia approaches;
- led to the production of a *large and varied range of teaching materials, curricula, training schemes and other educational products*;
- provided new opportunities for increasing *exchanges of knowledge and experience*, thereby spreading expertise and fostering the process of *innovation* throughout the participating countries;
- ensured that the benefits were *shared by all Member States*, including those which would have found it particularly difficult to participate in European cooperation on account of their geographic or economic situation;

- prepared the ground for opening up the programme's advantages to the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as Cyprus.

The report added that despite the relatively modest sums invested, their impact as a catalyst had been highlighted by the complementary funding made available by the Member States, regions and various educational establishments, thanks to which an extensive public had already been reached.

In quantitative terms the Community aid had made it possible to support a considerable number of activities, viz.:

Mobility and exchanges

- mobility grants to enable up to 316 000 higher education students to engage in an integrated and recognised period of study in another Member State
- integrated teaching assignments abroad for some 26 000 teaching staff
- over 80 000 young persons participating in joint education projects and exchanges designed to motivate them to communicate in other languages of the EU
- over 16 000 participants in European in-service training courses for language teachers.

Cooperation networks

- 2 673 inter-university cooperation programmes, involving over 1 800 higher education institutions Community-wide
- 28 major thematic networks designed to develop the European dimension in a wide range of disciplines and areas of special interest in higher education, involving over 70 institutions each as well as a total of 85 European associations in the academic community
- 1 620 multilateral school partnerships, involving some 5 000 schools EC-wide
- around 3 500 joint education projects designed to stimulate young people's motivation to learn EU languages, involving over 7 000 institutions
- 600 transnational projects, involving some 2 700 institutions, designed to enhance cooperation in the field of open and distance learning, adult education, intercultural education, language-learning and initial and in-service training of teachers.

The analysis also highlighted the cost-benefit side of the results from the various measures. These were dealt with in section 9.1 above.

With regard to the overall allocation of funds between the different parts of the programme, it has already been possible in the initial period to adhere to the principle laid down in the Decision, i.e. that at least 55%, 10% and 25% must be spent on Chapters I, II and III respectively. This is a clear indication that the new areas of funding contained in the various chapters of the programme have been well received by their respective target groups.

ISSN 0254-1475

COM(97) 99 final

DOCUMENTS

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16 15 01

Catalogue number : CB-CO-97-091-EN-C

ISBN 92-78-16682-0

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

L-2985 Luxembourg