Active European citizenship: grants to civic participation actions, 2004-2008 action programme

2003/0116(CNS) - 17/12/2007 - Follow-up document

PURPOSE: to report on the “Active European Citizenship” programme, 2004-2006.

CONTENT: an evaluation of the “Active European Citizenship” programme, which covered the period 2004-2006, found that there is a need for Community action in the field of promoting European citizenship and that the 2004-2006 programme was able to respond positively to this need. Bringing all actions together under one programme has also proved to be efficient and effective. Overall, the stated objectives of the programme have been consistently implemented through the various actions and the programme had been successful at targeting clearly defined groups. At the same time, however, the evaluation finds that the budget is not large enough to meet the programmes stated objectives. Thus, whilst the programme’s remit was broad it resources, by comparison, were not. This could risk a gulf emerging between the programmes stated objectives and its capacity to deliver.

Overall findings: Generally speaking, the report’s findings indicate that the programme was stronger on horizontal actions – those seeking to strengthen links between EU citizens, civil society organisations and municipalities than the more “vertical” actions – i.e. those bringing citizens closer to the EU. The latter, therefore, remains an important challenge for the new “Europe for Citizens” programme. (See COD/2005/0041).

According to the evaluation report, the programme’s activities have resulted in tangible results (such as publications), methodological learning, experiences and knowledge, policy lessons and greater European cooperation and awareness-raising about citizenship issues and other cultures. The programme has also succeeded in terms of capacity building.

Europe for citizens: In future, and within the context of the new Europe for Citizens programme, the Commission intends to implement four major thematic actions, namely:

1. **Strengthening citizens’ involvement:** the evaluation found that it was important to involve citizens more directly when preparing the aims, objectives and actions of the new programme. As such, the direct involvement of citizens in implementing the actions is a key feature of “Action 1” in the new programme. New types of activities, such as citizens’ panels have been adopted. Based on the result of the pilot projects, the new measures should be mainstreamed into the new programme as of 2008. In addition, the new programme includes high-visibility events to which local authorities, civil society and European citizens will be invited, where they can voice their views and opinions.
2. **Strengthening coherence and encouraging partnership:** the challenge of strengthening the internal coherence of the programme was recognised by the European Commission. The new programme reflects this challenge and as a result, the new programme seeks to offer greater coherence between the various actions.
3. **Improving national links:** it is important to promote and encourage links with national programmes, particularly in the field of active citizenship. This could be achieved through improving contacts with the national authorities who are responsible for civic participation. Such linking, the Commission notes, will have a positive impact on the sense of national ownership in the field of European citizenship. The “Programme Committee”, established under the new citizenship programme, offers the Commission a good opportunity to develop a dialogue with the Member

States. Many Member States are in the process of establishing coordination and support structures for the “Europe of Citizens” programme.

4. **Enhancing programme management:** the report identifies three areas where the programme’s management could be improved: i) finance and administration; ii) monitoring and evaluation; and iii) added value, dissemination and partner search. The Commission finds these recommendations useful and, as such, has already made a number of arrangements to improve the programme’s overall management.

Conclusions: to conclude, the report confirms the important role that the “Active European Citizenship” programme has played in promoting civic partnership and shared values. The programme has offered Europeans the chance to participate in the debate, to express their opinions and to feed into the European political process. It has connected people and local communities in different countries. As a result of this analysis, the Community will continue to support and promote active European citizenship by setting aside the necessary resources to achieve these objectives.

The evaluation identified certain weaknesses in the programme and highlighted areas in need of further development. On a final point, the Commission will continue to develop and strengthen dialogue between the EU institutions and all those interested in promoting EU citizenships.