Programmes Socrates and Youth for Europe. Special report 2/2002 Court of Auditors

2002/2125(COS) - 14/10/2002

The Council welcomes the special report 2/2002 by the Court of Auditors on the Socrates and Youth for Europe Community action programmes. More specifically, the Council has taken note of the following: - the programmes have contributed to the strengthening of cooperation between various actors involved in the education field in the European Union and in the other participant countries and have made multicultural exchange activities possible for young people, - criticism of the design of the programmes, in particular the complexity of the Socrates programme, and the lack of synergy between the programme actions as well as with other Community programmes, - as far as centralised activities are concerned, various deficiencies in the functioning of the Technical Assistance Offices (TAOs) were identified especially in terms of accounting procedures, - as far as decentralised actions were concerned, there was an urgent need to clarify the legal status of national agencies and to address the question of the lack of means at their disposal, - delays and inadequate management in regard to the implementation of the programmes, - delays and deficiencies in the evaluation process. With respect to the report of the Court of Auditors and the Commission's replies, the Council acknowledges that in drawing up the current Socrates (2000-2006) and Youth (2000-2006) Community action programmes many improvements have been introduced, in relation to their coherence, legibility, accessibility and administrative procedures. The current Youth programme has rationalised many disparate actions and the current Socrates programme, while still remaining relatively complex in structure, has remedied many of the shortcomings of the previous programme as regards administration and implementation. Having regard to the TAOs, the Council notes the reforms under way whereby the Commission proposes to replace the TAOs with executive agencies under its direct control in accordance with a framework regulation. Having regard to the National Agencies, the Council notes the improvements that have been introduced in the current programmes whereby obligations and responsibilities have been clearly defined for both the Commission and national authorities (i.e. contractual relations within a strict legal framework) and that further improvements are envisaged in the future. The Council stresses the importance of Community action in the fields of education and youth as a cornerstone in the promotion of a European area of knowledge both through developing a European dimension in education and training (having particular regard to the future objectives for education and training systems in Europe for 2010), and a European area of cooperation in youth policy based on non-formal and informal learning. Lastly, the Council consequently looks forward to the preparation of the new generation of Community actions in the fields of education, training and youth which will draw on the lessons of the past, which will be structurally clear and coherent, avoid unnecessary complexity and provide ease of access to the targetpublics. These actions should make a major contribution, together with other initiatives, and in particular the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and Training systems in Europe, to the creation of a European area of knowledge and the attainment of the strategic objective set out in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy.