

Youth: Community action programme 2000-2004

1998/0197(COD) - 28/10/1998

The Committee has adopted an important report establishing a Community framework for measures for young people (whether or not they are students) for the period 2000-2004. Both the Socrates programme and the various youth programmes have been great successes, involving more than half a million young people. It was therefore important to ensure their future by giving them more resources. The Committee sought to do this by adopting a large number of amendments to the Commission's initial proposals. The creation of a single Youth programme will enable a number of currently disparate measures to be unified, thereby leading to greater coherence and transparency. The committee also unanimously adopted the report (codecision, 1st reading) by Philippe DE COENE (PES, B). For the same reasons as for Socrates II, the committee wants increased funding (ECU 800m instead of the ECU 600m proposed by the Commission). It also believes there should be a better balance between the various measures: it says the Commission gives too much weight to the European Voluntary Service to the detriment of other measures (Youth for Europe, Opportunity for Youth, joint actions and support measures). The committee also wants to improve access to the programme by stipulating that part of the funding (one third) is to be used to assist disadvantaged young people, that better information must be provided, that the age range for participation in the programme should be 14 to 27 (except for the EVS, where the minimum is 18), while taking account of special situations in the participant countries, and lastly that young people must not forfeit their rights to social protection. As regards the EVS, it should be made clear that this is not to take the place of paid jobs or reduce the number of such jobs. Referring to the last World Cup, the rapporteur said it was quite extraordinary that an organisation with a turnover of billions such as the World Cup Organising Committee should be contracted by the Commission to take charge of an EVS project.