Community action programme 'Socrates'

1994/0001(COD) - 12/02/2001

This report concerns the implementation of the SOCRATES programme during the period 1995 to 1999, which corresponds to the first phase of the programme. It takes into account all analyses available, particularly the conclusions of the interim evaluation and of four external evaluations completed in November 2000. This document has undergone thorough consultation within the SOCRATES Committee and the support group set up by it. The analysis and information gathering carried out must also inform the debate at the broadcast level in order to contribute inter alia to the success of the new phase of the SOCRATES programme by drawing on the experienced amassed between 1995 and 1999. The report comprises an examination of the results achieved by the programme in relation to the objectives set by Decision 819/95/EC. This analysis is followed by a summary of the main developments in the programme, considering at the same time the transition of the programme from its initial phase to the second phase and the political environment in which SOCRATES evolved. It is intended to be a synthetic report and priority is given to qualititative analysis. With regard to the implementation of the programme from 1995 to 1999, the external evaluation points to three types of criticisms from those who took part in the initial phase of SOCRATES. The main criticism is of the implementation procedures, the dissemination of results and the policy for following up and evaluating the programme in general. Many procedures have been deemed excessively cumbersome and complex in relation to the financing involved, which are sometimes small. Furthermore, payments are often excessively long. The external evaluation also finds that access to information has been judged satisfactory by the participants, with the exception of disabled persons. The content of infomation provided nonetheless remains excessively complex and dissemination of the programme results has been disappointing. The SOCRATES programme remains popular but questions remain as to its visibility. The Commission intends to take due account of this critcism in order to shape for the future a policy which is better targeted as regards communication, in partnership with the participating countries. In addition, the Commission acknowledges that the policy on monitoring and evaluation implemented in the first phase of the programme was inadequate. The results achieved through the various actions of the programme have to be appreciate in light of the SOCRATES objectives during its intial phase. These results are presented in the order of the ten programme objectives set out in 1995 which according to the Commission have a excessively vague definition which makes it difficult to have an overview of the results achieved. for the sake of clarity, this report accordingly focuses first on the objectives primarily linked to the resolve to develop European citizenship, then to those targeting more specifically the improvement of the quality of education systems. Lastly, the report hopes to contribute to the success of the second phase of the SOCRATES programme (2000-2006) by highlighting the experience of the first phase. The experience shows that SOCRATES is very successful in that it hascontributed to asserting the European dimension throughout education in general. Nevertheless, improvements are needed so as to make the programme management more user-friendly. The gap between the programme's objectives, the ambition of which is enthusiastically shared by the education community, and sometimes inadequate resources for implementation both at European level and at national levels, must be narrowed. Moreover, the success of the second phase largely depends on the human and financial resources allocated to its implementation at national and European level.