

Youth: Community action programme 2000-2004

1998/0197(COD) - 08/03/2004 - Follow-up document

Requirements in Decision 1031/2000/EC, establishing the Youth Programme 2000-2003, oblige the Commission to prepare an evaluation report on the implementation of the programme's objectives. It has been brought forward by a year to allow the Commission to take on board some of its conclusions when preparing future draft proposals in the field of youth. The Youth community action programmes itself was established in 2000 and is based on three generations of "Youth for Europe" initiatives begun in 1988. Each generation of programmes has kept pace with the process of European integration and has assimilated new policies along with the changing times. Essentially, the EU's Youth initiative seeks to support a number of voluntary actions and informal educational activities. Its total budget amounts to EUR 520 million. The Commission has relied on a number of comprehensive sources when preparing the Report. They include: impact studies presented by the Member States (to be found in Annex I of the Report), reports from non-Member State countries participating in the programme; the evaluation of national agency provisions in 2002 and the conclusions of a seminar on "evaluation of procedures" for the Youth programme held in 2003. The evaluation itself focused on the following issues: - The internal and external relevance of the programme. - The impact of the programme on its immediate beneficiaries. - The impact on systems (national administrations, legislation and policies). - Operational mechanisms. - Performance in respect of each action. The Report goes on to list, in some detail, fifty-two recommendations. In general, the programme evaluation is positive. Nevertheless, some weaknesses are identified. The Recommendations themselves include, inter alia: - Adjusting the access age for participants. - Making young people with fewer opportunities the main target group for the programme. - Setting up regional and local information relay contact points. - Simplifying the application process. - Offering easier access through flexible grant-awarding mechanisms. - Greater youth worker involvement in the decision-making process. - Creating a "Youth programme" certificate. - Improving the quality of projects approved. - Developing clearer definitions of the target and voluntary groups. - Increasing the volunteers' activity in EVS. - Simplifying joint action procedures. - Focusing on quality and capacity building in youth work. - Supporting innovative activities. - Increasing funds for co-operation with third countries - Increasing the number of Resource Centres. - Increasing the visibility of the actions. - Creating regional sub-programmes particularly in the Balkans and CIS. - Widening the geographic reach of the programme. - Increasing the grant for third country participant's travel costs by up to 100% To conclude, the Report notes that the Youth programme is both welcomed and appreciated by those participating in its actions. Its objectives have been realised and its implementation appreciated. Bearing in mind the changes in youth trends the programme may need readjusting and it is for this reason that a number of Recommendations have been put forward. The Commission undertakes to implement them, either in whole or in part, during the second part of the current programme (2004-2006). Other sets of Recommendations will be implemented within the framework of the new Youth programme from 2007.