Higher education: general system for the recognition of diplomas (Direct. 89/48/EEC). Report

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OBJECTIVE: Pursuant to Article 13 of Directive 89/48/EEC on a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas the Commission has submitted a general report on the state of application of that system and conclusions concerning the changes which should be made to the system in order to improve the rules applicable in that area. SUBSTANCE: According to the conclusions of the report, which reviews the application of each article of Directive 89/48/EEC and describes the various difficulties which, since it was adopted, have arisen in a number of key professional sectors (the health professions, engineers, teachers, lawyers, accountants, civil servants), the introduction of the system for the recognition of qualifications has led to a new approach to recognition for professional purposes which did not emerge under the sectoral directives. Since the directive was adopted, approximately 11 000 people have been involved in this kind of recognition and the statistics show that most of the applicants achieve recognition of their qualifications (only 5% of applications were turned down and there were very few appeals). However, problems remain in the sphere of academic recognition since certain Member States (in particular Belgium, Greece and Germany) still deny access to a profession in another Member State (e.g. teaching). In particular the directive has changed the situation of potential migrants since it gives them new rights and new facilities. The report notes on this subject that migrants are often aware of their right to recognition but are ill-informed as to the mechanics of the general system. In particular, migrants are either unaware of their rights of appeal or are reluctant to exercise them. At the same time the directive has given added impetus to cooperation between national professional organizations at European level and there have been a number of initiatives aimed at bringing about a convergence of education and training (particularly as regards the engineering profession, in respect of which joint training 'platforms' have been established in order to facilitate recognition. The report also notes that the changes initiated by the directive take time and that it is not yet possible to reach any final conclusion regarding the general system. For this reason the Commission does not intend at present to propose any fundamental changes to its directive. The review of Directive 92/51/EEC, which is scheduled to take place in 1999, will offer an opportunity for a review of the system as a whole. However, the amendments it puts forward will be restricted to the directive before that date. In the forthcoming proposal for a consolidation directive (COD96031) the Commission will also consider: - the possibility of incorporating into Directive 89/48 /EEC the obligation to take into consideration, when examining the migrant's application for recognition, post-diploma experience; - the possibility of introducing into Directive 89/48/EEC the concept of 'regulated education and training', which will require a migrant coming from a Member State which does not regulate the profession in question to demonstrate two years' professional experience; - ways in which the role of the coordinators' group could be developed in order to ensure that the directive is interpreted and implemented in a more uniform fashion. In addition the Commission will continue its efforts to ensure that the basic principle of the directive (recognition per se of the migrant's qualification) is respected and that the right to impose the compensation mechanisms contained in Article 4 is not misused. It will also ensure that migrants are fully aware of their rights under the directive.