European Year of Languages 2001

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PURPOSE : to establish a European Year of Languages 2001 in order to raise awareness among the EU population of the advantages of understanding and speaking other languages, and of the various possibilities which exist for learning to do so. CONTENT : the need for Community action in the areas of education and vocational training generally is recognised in Articles 149 and 150 of the EC Treaty, which form the legal basis for the proposed European Year of Languages 2001. Article 149 specifies as an area for Community action "developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States". Both Articles provide for cooperation with the competent international organisations. Article 149 specifies in this respect "in particular the Council of Europe", which has already adopted a decision designating 2001 the European Year of Languages. The key message of the European year of Languages will be that language learning can and should be enjoyable and that it carries with it great benefits, both personal and economic. The main specific objectives of the European Year of Languages are : - to raise awareness of the richess of linguistic diversity within the European Union; - to bring to the notice of the widest possible public the advantages of competencies in a range of languages , as a key element in personal development, in intercultural understanding, in making full use of the rights conferred by European citizenship and in enhancing the economic potential of individuals, enterprises and society as a whole; - to encourage the lifelong learning of languages and related skills by all persons legally residing in the Member States, whatever their age, background or previous educational experiences and achievements; - to collect and disseminate information about the teaching and learning and/or facilitate communication between users of different languages. Furthermore, the European Year of Languages aims to reach everybody living in Europe. An important multiplier effect is achievable through certian Community-wide actions which can achieve significant media coverage as well as through smaller-scale actions targeting particular groups, countries or regions. As regards the budget, EUR 8 million is felt to be the minimum necessary for the European Year to attain the critical mass necessary to reach a significant proportion of the European public. It is important to note that this amount is in addition to the EUR 4 million already earmarked under the Commission's preliminary draft budget to cover preparatory activities in 2000. Moreover, it is proposed that there should be an advisory committee to assist the Commission with the implementation of the Decision. The proposed Decision requires each Member State to set up a coordinating body to assist in the management of the Year. Among the responsibilities of such bodies will be to advise on the suitability of projects from the country concerned. The Commission, assisted by thecommittee, will then make the final decision on the attribution of funding.