Legal professions : action programme Robert SCHUMAN, project to improve awareness of Community law

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This Commission Staff Working Paper assesses the impact of the Robert Schuman project on the legal professions in the Member States. The project itself has been in force from 1999-2001, with the objective of encouraging and supporting initiatives designed to raise the awareness of Community law among the legal profession is the Member States. The initiatives supported relate to three specific measures, namely training, information initiatives and accompanying initiatives. Initiatives could be of a one or two year duration with a maximum grant available of EUR 30 000 for one-year initiatives and EUR 60 000 for a two-year initiative. Each applicant was obliged to commit themselves to continue the initiative for an equivalent period of time without Community support. Some projects are thus still on-going. In terms of the overall level of applications the trend has been towards fewer and fewer applications each year. A further notable feature is that 56% of the applications come from two Member States (Spain and Italy) representing around 26% of the total population of the EU. The types of institutes supported were bar associations universities and the judiciary. Those receiving by far the largest support were the bar association. The Report concludes that the number of projects supported (180 initiatives to the tune of EUR 3.5 million) must have had an impact on the awareness of Community law among the legal professions in the EU. The Project can therefore be deemed to have met its objectives, namely to provide a time-limited boost for the training of the legal professions in Community law. Nevertheless, in view of the steady downward trend in applications, the Report concludes that further Community intervention in this area is no longer justified. This fits in with the overall Community policy of moving away from the funding of micro-projects. More focused support for training actions should continue to be available in the framework of different co-operation programmes in the field of Justice and Home Affairs.