European voluntary service for young people: Community action programme 1998-2002

1996/0318(COD) - 20/07/1998 - Final act

OBJECTIVE: to establish a Community Action Programme 'European voluntary service for young people' for the period from 1 January 1998 to 31 December 1999. COMMUNITY MEASURE: Decision 1686/98 /EC of the European Parliament and the Council establishing the community action programme 'European voluntary service for young people'. SUBSTANCE: The programme, which has been allocated ECU 47.5 million for the period 1998- 1999, is based on closer cooperation between the Member States. It aims to offer young people aged 18 to 25 (in principle) an attested informal educational experience at transnational level, involving both the acquisition of skills and abilities and the demonstration of responsible citizenship. The programme concerns voluntary service activities within the Community and in third countries for young people legally resident in a Member State. Within the general framework of the Community's youth policy, it is designed to encourage mobility and solidarity among young people and to promote, through their participation in transnational activities of benefit to the Community, an active contribution on their part to the ideals of democracy, tolerance and solidarity in the context of European integration. Specifically, the programme aims to: - support long-term or short-term transnational activities of benefit to the Community within the Community and in third countries, - support activities intended to foster partnerships based on European voluntary service and innovative network activities, - support projects intended to further the follow-up of young volunteers, to build on the experience required and to promote their active integration into society, - develop and support appropriate preparation, particularly linguistic and intercultural, and the integration of young volunteers, mentors and project leaders, - support the quality of all the programme's activities and the development of their European dimension by supporting Member States' efforts to improve services and measures related to European voluntary service (actions to provide more information on the programme, studies, evaluation etc.). An annex provides more details on the four sections which make up voluntary service (i.e. intracommunity transnational projects; transnational projects with third countries; follow-up, spirit of initiative and creativity of young people; complementary measures to underpin the programme). The Member States and the Commission are to facilitate access to the programme in particular for young people who experience difficulties in being included in Community programmes for cultural, physical, social or geographical regions. They are to take the necessary steps to develop structures to implement voluntary service and to ensure that volunteers are well informed on the rights and obligations resulting from their participation in the programme. Complementarity with comparable national activities is always to be sought. In addition, each Member State is to endeavour to adopt such measures as are necessary to limit legal and administrative obstacles to the access of young people to the programme (in a unilateral declaration annexed to this decision, the Commission emphasises that it attaches great importance to eliminating all the legal and administrative obstacles hampering volunteers' transnational mobility and that it will take the appropriate initiatives to fulfil this objective). The programme is open to participation by associated Eastern European countries, Cyprus, Malta and the EFTA countries on the basis of procedures and agreements (particularly financial) to be agreed. It is to be consistent and complementary with other relevant Community and Member States' programmes (in particular 'Youth for Europe III') and with programmes implemented by the Council of Europe. The Commission is responsible for managing the programme. It is to be assisted by a committee made up of representatives of the Member States who will take decisions in various ways depending on the topic (the Commission will report annually to Parliament on measures taken to implement the programme). The Commission is also to monitor and continuously evaluate the programme. At the appropriate time it is to submit a report to Parliament and the Council on implementation of the programme, with relevant proposals on the future of the Community's youth-related measures looking forward to the year 2000. ENTRY INTO FORCE: 31.07.1998.