Programmes Socrates and Youth for Europe. Special report 2/2002 Court of Auditors

2002/2125(COS) - 17/12/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the report by Brigitte LANGENHAGEN (EPP-ED, Germany) on the Court of Auditors Report. Parliament welcomed the fact that about 90% of the available funding was utilised but noted that that was a purely quantitative yardstick. It wanted to find out from the Commission what qualitative results the evaluation produced. Parliament noted that defects in the implementation of the first phase of the Socrates programme - such as the late issue of contracts between the Commission and the national agencies, unwarranted delays in the payment of grants, and shortcomings in information management systems - have continued to hinder the implementation of the second phase of the programme. Defects in the implementation of the Youth for Europe programme - such as the inability of the Commission to supply consistent figures on implementation, unwarranted delays in payment of grants, inadequate cooperation by the Commission with Member States and their national agencies, the unsatisfactory level of participation by disadvantaged young people, disproportionately high administrative costs, and lengthy procedures for the approval of project proposals - have continued to hinder the implementation since 2000 of the Youth programme. Parliament cited with concern the critical comments in the special Report regarding design weakness and delays and shortcomings in implementation. The Commission must act on the Court of Auditors' recommendations: - to replace the technical assistance offices (TAOs) by Community public-law agencies; - to clearly define the contractual relationship between the Commission and the national agencies; - to ensure computerised accounting of commitment proposals and payment orders; - to ascertain that the national agencies are provided with sufficient human, material and financial resources to perform effectively the tasks assigned to them; - to define, together with the national agencies, the practical administrative arrangements (criteria, models, manuals etc.) relating to all aspects of the national agencies' management; - to lay down rules for efficient checking of the final financial accounts for projects; - to submit meaningful interim and final reports; and - to improve monitoring and evaluating actions and programmes. Finally, Parliament stated that monitoring and evaluation are basic and recurrent tasks of public administrations and that their systematic externalisation was incomprehensible and undesirable. Where the European Institutions felt that evaluations carried out by national and Community administrations needed to be supplemented by an external evaluation, the evaluation body must be selected on the basis of its skills and of its independence vis--vis the programme or the actions being evaluated. The Commission must phase out any 'framework' contract concluded with external bodies for the evaluation of the current programmes and refrain from hiring any external body on a repeated basis for the purpose of evaluation.