

Life long learning: integrated action programme comprising Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig programmes and the Jean Monnet programme

2004/0153(COD) - 24/07/2006 - Council position

The Council's common position remains broadly consistent with the Commission's original proposal, although a significant number of EP amendments were incorporated into the text and a number of technical adjustments - chiefly concerning implementation procedures - were made following the downward revision of the overall financial envelope for the Programme. The revised allocation of EUR 6.2 billion (at 2004 prices - i.e. EUR 6.97 billion at current prices) was agreed by the three institutions in the context of the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Financial Framework for 2007-2013.

New elements contained in the common position as compared to the Commission proposal

Despite a smaller overall financial allocation than anticipated, the overall objectives of the Programme remain intact and the principle of quantified targets for each of the sub-programmes has been maintained. There is also scope within the Programme to expand the number and type of projects covered in the event of any future increase in funding.

The Council has also:

- sought to strike the right balance between projects under the various sub-programmes, slightly **increasing the emphasis placed on adult education** in response to current employment and demographic trends. As a result, the minimum allocation for the Grundtvig Programme rises to **4%**;
- endeavoured both to simplify administrative procedures for project applicants and to ensure that a larger proportion of projects are selected and managed by the national agencies themselves, by extending the decentralised approach from Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects to Comenius, Erasmus and Grundtvig;
- re-introduced a management committee procedure for individual selection decisions on projects and networks with a total Community contribution exceeding EUR 1 million, and for the 'Policy Development' key activity of the Transversal programme.
- restructured and simplified many parts of the original proposal, one example being the amalgamation of the implementation articles for each of the sub-programmes into a single article (9). A number of drafting improvements have also been made for greater clarity;
- given detailed consideration to the definitions contained in Article 2, has incorporated specific references to the need for quality, high performance and innovation and has endeavoured to ensure effective monitoring and the availability of comparable data as a means of underpinning lifelong learning policy development in general;
- in keeping with the EP's opinion, sought to increase mobility, in particular for vocational trainees, to promote inter-regional cooperation through crossborder mobility and partnerships and to enhance the exchange of best practices;

- acceded to the EP's request to include two more designated bodies - the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education in Middelfart (Denmark), and the International Centre for European Training in Nice (France).

European Parliament amendments

Although the Council was able to accept a considerable number of the European Parliament's amendments in full or in part, a certain number failed to be incorporated. They are as follows:

- § in the light of the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Financial Framework, the Council rejected the amendment which concerns the overall budget as well those containing quantitative targets which had to be revised. The Council was also unable to accept the Parliament's proposal on the indicative budget breakdown for the four main subprogrammes, as set out in Annex B.11, its final position remained close to that of the EP;
- § a number of amendments were rejected on the grounds that their content was covered by recitals or other provisions of the legislative text, while references to disparities between the various EU education systems or to the convergence of those systems were rejected on the grounds of subsidiarity. The amendment on the interaction between enterprises, higher education establishments and scientists was seen as referring more to a means of achieving an objective rather than an objective in itself, while another amendment was considered inappropriate in view of the Decision's legal basis;
- § the amendment on the learning of second or additional foreign languages was rejected on the grounds that it was too far-reaching for some Member States, while the amendment concerning the accreditation of prior experience was considered to be inappropriate for the Grundtvig programme.

Finally, since the Council could only agree to the inclusion of two of the four additional designated bodies requested by the EP.