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

2004/0153(COD) - 15/11/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish a programme in the field of lifelong learning: 2007-2013.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

BACKGROUND: within the framework of the new financial perspectives, 2007 -2013a series of new financial programmes in the field of education, life-long learning, youth and culture have been adopted. They are:

- Citizens for Europe;
- Culture 2007;
- MEDIA 2007 ;
- Lifelong learning.

The intention of the lifelong learning programme is to help the EU realise its stated objective of becoming an advanced knowledge society and to thereby create more and better jobs. In addition, the new lifelong learning programme supports the 1999 Bologna Declaration, seeking the creation of a “European Area of Higher Education” by 2010 as well as the 2002 Barcelona Declaration which seeks to make the EU’s education and training systems a world quality reference.

CONTENT: with a total budget of **EUR 6.97 billion**, the programme integrates and amalgamates all previous Community programmes dealing with education and learning under one framework. To recall, since 1999 a number of financial programmes have implemented the EU’s policy to promote lifelong learning. These programmes have been regulated through individual and separate Decisions, entitled:

- Leonardo da Vinci;
- Socrates;
- eLearning;
- Europass; and
- the Erasmus Mondus programme.

In the interest of clarity, flexibility and simplicity this Decision integrates all of the previous programmes under this one programme entitled “Lifelong Learning”. Although most of the previous programmes have now been integrated into this single lifelong learning programme, the individual programmes are still retained within the new framework.

Significant advantages are expected as a result of this initiative including: greater synergy between the different fields of action; greater capacity to support developments in lifelong learning; and a more coherent, streamlined and efficient mode of administration. Further, the single programme is expected to deliver improved co-operation between the various levels of educational and training establishments.

The Decision can be summarised as follows:

General objective:

The general objective of the lifelong learning programme is to contribute, *through lifelong learning*, towards the development of the Community as an advance knowledge based society with more and better jobs. At the heart of its drive to invest in lifelong learning is the recognised need to take account of environmental sustainable development and the need to foster greater social cohesion. In particular, the new programme will encourage exchange programmes, greater co-operation and greater mobility programmes between the various educational and training institutions within the Community. In short, through the establishment of an integrated lifelong learning programme, the EU is setting itself the highest standards so that the Community’s education system may become a *world quality reference*.

Specific objectives:

Alongside the more general objective of the lifelong learning programme a number of specific objectives are also listed. They are:

- to promote the quality of lifelong learning; innovation and a European dimension to education;
- to improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of lifelong learning;
- to strengthen lifelong learning’s ability to improve social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and personal fulfilment;
- to promote creativity, competitiveness, employability and an entrepreneurial spirit;
- to encourage the participation of those with disabilities and the disadvantaged in lifelong learning programmes;
- to promote language learning and linguistic diversity;
- to support innovative ICT-based content, services and pedagogies;
- to promote quality assurance in all Community educating and training sectors;
- to encourage the best use of results; innovative products and processes; and
- to encourage the exchange of good practices.

The Sub-programmes:

The lifelong learning programme will be channelled through: four sectoral programmes, one transversal programme and the Jean Monnet programme. They are referred to as the "sub-programmes".

The four sectoral sub-programmes*:*

1. **COMENIUS:** Pre-school and schools:

   The Comenius programme will be allocated 13% of the budget of which 80% must be spent on mobility and Comenius partnerships with schools. It addresses the teaching and learning needs of all those in pre-school and school education up to the end of upper secondary education. It will also address the institutions and organisations providing education at this level.

2. **ERASMUS:** Higher education:

   The Erasmus programme will be allocated 40% of the budget of which 80% must be spent on mobility programmes. An average of EUR 200 per month will be allocated to students studying abroad under the Erasmus programme. It address the teaching and learning needs of all those in higher educationand vocational education and training at tertiary level including doctoral studies. It will also address the institutions and establishments providing higher education training.

3. **LEONARDO DA VINCE**:Vocational education:

   The Leonardo da Vinci programme will be allocated 25% of the budget of which 60% must be spent on mobility and partnership programmes. It will address the teaching and learning needs of all those in vocational education and training (other than at tertiary level). It also addresses the institutions and organisation facilitating such education and training.

4. **GRUDNVIG**: Adult education:

   The Grundvig programme will be allocated 4% of the budget of which not less than 55% must support mobility and partnership programmes. It will address the teaching and learning needs of those in all forms of adult education. It has, partly, been established in recognition of the Community's ageing population. It also addresses the institutions and organisations providing or facilitating adult education.

The transversal programme:

The transversal programme consists of four key activities namely:

- policy co-operation in lifelong learning;
- the promotion of language learning;
- the development of innovative ICT-based content, services pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning;
- the dissemination and exploitation of results.

The Jean Monnet programme:

This programme supports institutions and activities in the field of European integration such as:

- supporting Jean Monnet actions (This part of the sub-programme will receive not less than 16% of the allocated budget.)

- supporting operating grants to specific institutions (This part of the sub-programme will receive not less than 65% of the allocated budget.)

- Supporting operating grants to support other European institutions and associations in the fields of education and training. (This part of the sub-programme will receive not less than 19% of the allocated budget.)

The Jean Monnet programme is open to students and researchers in the field of European integration; higher education institutions - within and outside of - the Community; teachers; associations; public and private bodies and research centres. The type of actions funded by the programme include the Jean Monnet Chairs; support for young researchers and information and research activities relating to the Community which seek to promote discussion and reflection on the process of European integration. More specifically, the Jean Monnet programme will continue funding the following establishments: The College of Europe in Bruges and Natolin; The European University Institute in Florence; The European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht; the Academy of European Law in Trier; and the International Centre for European Training in Nice.

Actions:

The list of actions supported by the lifelong learning programme are:

- the mobility of individuals in lifelong learning;

- bilateral and multilateral partnerships;

- multilateral projects;

- unilateral and national projects;

- multilateral projects and networks;

- studying policies in the field of lifelong learning;

- the establishment and regular improvement of reference material;

- support for the transparency and recognition of qualifications; and

- support for quality assurance.

These actions may be implemented either through calls for proposals, call for tenders or directly by the Commission.

Access to the lifelong learning programme:

The programme will be open to:

- pupils, students, trainees and adult learners;

- teachers, trainers and other staff involved in any aspect of lifelong learning;

- institutions or organisations providing learning opportunities;

- persons and bodies responsible for systems and policies concerning any aspect of lifelong learning at local, regional and national level.

- enterprises, social partners – including trade organisations and chambers of commerce and industry;

- bodies providing guidance and counselling in any aspect of lifelong learning;

- associations working the in the field of lifelong learning, including student, trainer, pupil, teacher, parent and adult learner associations;

- research centres; and

- NGO's.

Simplification:

In a 2002 Resolution on the Socrates programme, the European Parliament drew attention to the disproportionately onerous administrative procedures for grant applications under the second phase of the programme. Bearing this in mind the new lifelong learning programme introduces radical simplification methods vis-à-vis the application procedure. New simplification measures include, for example:

- accounting requirements proportional to the size of the grant;

- measures that prevent irregularities and fraud; and

- new steps to recover lost funds or funds that have been incorrectly paid.

Implementation:

The Decision states that the Commission will be responsible for the effective and efficient implementation of the lifelong learning programme. As far as the Member States are concerned they are expected to establish "national agencies", which will be responsible for the co-ordinated management and implementation of the programme.

Participation of third countries:

The programme will be open to the EFTA countries; the candidate countries benefiting from a pre-accession strategy; the countries of the Western Balkans and the Swiss Confederation. In addition, international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the OECD and UNESCO may co-operate with the Commission on the lifelong learning programme.

Monitoring and evaluation:

The Commission will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the programme. As such, the Commission will arrange regular independent external evaluations as well as being responsible for publishing statistics relating to the programme. By 30 June 2010 and 30 June 2015, the Member States are obliged to submit data on the programme to the Commission, which will form the basis of interim evaluations reports to be forwarded to both the Council and the European Parliament by the Commission.

Transitional Provisions:

Actions under the previous regime, which have been entered into before the 31 December 2006, will be administered in conformity with the provisions of the earlier Decisions.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 14 December 2006.

APPLY FROM: 1 January 2007.