Basic information

2002/2125(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Programmes Socrates and Youth for Europe. Special report 2/2002 Court of Auditors **Subject** 4.40.01 European area for education, training and lifelong learning 4.40.10 Youth	

Key players

European Parliament	**Committee responsible**	**Rapporteur**	**Appointed**
	CONT Budgetary Control	LANGENHAGEN Brigitte (PPE-DE)	16/04/2002
	Committee for opinion	**Rapporteur for opinion**	**Appointed**
	CULT Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport	PACK Doris (PPE-DE)	03/06/2002

Council of the European Union	**Council configuration**	**Meetings**	**Date**
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2456	2002-10-14

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
07/03/2002	Non-legislative basic document published	RCC0002/2002	Summary
10/06/2002	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
14/10/2002	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
04/11/2002	Vote in committee		
04/11/2002	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0386/2002	
16/12/2002	Debate in Parliament		
17/12/2002	Decision by Parliament	T5-0608/2002	Summary
17/12/2002	End of procedure in Parliament		
05/02/2004	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2002/2125(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/5/16307

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0386/2002	04/11/2002	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0608/2002 OJ C 031 05.02.2004, p. 0030-0102 E	17/12/2002	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	N5-0032/2002 OJ C 253 22.10.2002, p. 0001	14/10/2002	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Non-legislative basic document	RCC0002/2002 OJ C 136 07.06.2002, p. 0001-0037	07/03/2002	Summary

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

2002/2125(COS) - 07/03/2002 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present the European Court of Auditors Special Report 2/2002 on the Socrates and Youth for Europe Community action programmes.
CONTENT : the purpose of the Court's audit was to assess the financial management of the Socrates and Youth for Europe programmes both by the Commission and Member States for the period 1995 - 1999, with an emphasis on decision making procedures, monitoring and evaluation. The Court found significant weaknesses in the conception and running of the management systems and the implementation of actions and projects. The Socrates and Youth for Europe programmes represent part of the Internal Policies of the European Union and involved payments for the period 1995 - 1999 of euro 998 million and euro 141 million respectively. Their purpose is to encourage co-operation and exchanges within the educational sector and in respect of disadvantaged young people within European Union, EFTA and applicant countries. The programmes have been renewed for a second period 2000-2006 with an increased budgetary allocation. The Court found that the conception of both programmes was overly complex, containing a large number of vaguely defined objectives leading to different interpretations and practical difficulties in co-operation between the beneficiary states. An absence of clear objectives and criteria hindered the effective evaluation of the results of the programmes by the Commission. There was no appropriate framework to ensure synergy with other Community programmes. The Commission managed around 30% of both programmes itself through a technical ssistance office (TAO). The remaining 70 % were managed by Member and other beneficiary states using national agencies (NAs). In its examination of the TAO, the Court found problems in the principle and form of the delegation of responsibilities by the Commission, possible conflicts of interests, risks to the Communities' assets and a high cost of management. The NAs suffered from the absence of an adequate legal

framework setting out the precise division of responsibilities between themselves and the Commission. The Court also found that many NAs were not sufficiently resourced. The start of both programmes was delayed due to the late adoption of the necessary legal frameworks, a lack of adequate structures and the absence of an appropriate information policy. The complicated management systems and inadequate management of agreements caused further delays to the extent that prefinancing could not be realised and deadlines for closing actions set in the financial agreements were not met. Implementation was further hampered by unsuitable IT network systems. The Court's audit found shortcomings in the management of both the TAO and within the majority of the NAs examined. There were inadequacies in all aspects of the process from the selection of projects to the monitoring of their implementation. In particular the Court identified a lack of resources devoted to control and evaluation by the managing bodies. Irregularities were found in some of the individual projects audited, some of which raised suspicions of fraud and accordingly communicated by the Court to OLAF. The Court found delays and problems in the controlling and monitoring of the implementation and impact of the programmes bythe Commission and weaknesses in the evaluation process and reports. For example it was difficult for the Court to establish whether the objectives of the programmes had been fulfilled effectively due a lack of analytical data. The late completion of the evaluation reports meant that they could not have an impact on the implementation of the first period, or on programming the second period. In its Special Report the Court makes a number of recommendations for improving the management of these programmes. These include to replace the TAO with a Community agency, clearly defining the relationship between the Commission and national authorities, setting clear and measurable objectives, establishing effective implementing rules, improving control and monitoring at all levels and providing effective and timely evaluations.

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-α-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.

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

2002/2125(COS) - 14/10/2002

The Council welcomes the special report 2/2002 by the Court of Auditors on the Socrates and Youth for Europe Community action programmes. More specifically, the Council has taken note of the following: - the programmes have contributed to the strengthening of cooperation between various actors involved in the education field in the European Union and in the other participant countries and have made multicultural exchange activities possible for young people, - criticism of the design of the programmes, in particular the complexity of the Socrates programme, and the lack of synergy between the programme actions as well as with other Community programmes, - as far as centralised activities are concerned, various deficiencies in the functioning of the Technical Assistance Offices (TAOs) were identified especially in terms of accounting procedures, - as far as decentralised actions were concerned, there was an urgent need to clarify the legal status of national agencies and to address the question of the lack of means at their disposal, - delays and inadequate management in regard to the implementation of the programmes, - delays and deficiencies in the evaluation process. With respect to the report of the Court of Auditors and the Commission's replies, the Council acknowledges that in drawing up the current Socrates (2000-2006) and Youth (2000-2006) Community action programmes many improvements have been introduced, in relation to their coherence, legibility, accessibility and administrative procedures. The current Youth programme has rationalised many disparate actions and the current Socrates programme, while still remaining relatively complex in structure, has remedied many of the shortcomings of the previous programme as regards administration and implementation. Having regard to the TAOs, the Council notes the reforms under way whereby the Commission proposes to replace the TAOs with executive agencies under its direct control in accordance with a framework regulation. Having regard to the National Agencies, the Council notes the improvements that have been introduced in the current programmes whereby obligations and responsibilities have been clearly defined for both the Commission and national authorities (i.e. contractual relations within a strict legal framework) and that further improvements are envisaged in the future. The Council stresses the importance of Community action in the fields of education and youth as a

cornerstone in the promotion of a European area of knowledge both through developing a European dimension in education and training (having particular regard to the future objectives for education and training systems in Europe for 2010), and a European area of cooperation in youth policy based on non-formal and informal learning. Lastly, the Council consequently looks forward to the preparation of the new generation of Community actions in the fields of education, training and youth which will draw on the lessons of the past, which will be structurally clear and coherent, avoid unnecessary complexity and provide ease of access to the targetpublics. These actions should make a major contribution, together with other initiatives, and in particular the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and Training systems in Europe, to the creation of a European area of knowledge and the attainment of the strategic objective set out in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council for the European Union to become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy.