



Budgetary Support Service

CITIZENSHIP & EDUCATION POLICIES – VALUE FOR MONEY?

BUDGETARY AFFAIRS

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Executive Summary

This study examines to what extent the main programmes and actions in the fields of education and citizenship delivered ‘value for money’ to the European taxpayer in the period 2000-05 (and in part also 2006). More specifically, it analyses their performance using the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and utility. Furthermore, we have sought to provide guidance for the development of the next generation of programmes in both areas (‘Europe for Citizens’ and ‘Lifelong Learning’) for the period 2007-13.

Given that the final evaluations of the Socrates II, Leonardo da Vinci II and Active Citizenship programmes are still ongoing and unlikely to be completed before the summer of 2007, this study will have to rely to a significant extent on the currently available mid-term or interim evaluations, which cover only some of the activities financed under individual budget lines until 2004. In addition, we will draw on the results of public consultations, *ex-ante* evaluations of future programmes in the two fields and findings from interviews with officials and stakeholders carried out for this study.

As a first step we will summarise the main achievements of the two programmes and make recommendations for both areas of Community activity. In a second step we will put forward separate recommendations for future programmes and activities in the area of education and citizenship.

1. Efficiency was generally high given the high motivation of beneficiaries and the volunteer character of much of their work. Despite their modest size, mobility grants to students play a key role, alongside other non-pecuniary incentives, in encouraging students to go abroad, learn foreign languages, acquire new skills and learn to understand other cultures.

A problem in both programmes has been the high level of personnel costs per project. The most frequently cited source of excessive bureaucratic effort, particularly among beneficiaries, has been the strict application of the 2002 Financial Regulations without due consideration to the principle of proportionality. This problem is all the greater given that actions in the fields usually involve a high number of projects and small amounts of support. The study supports greater effort being made to reduce waste of resources at the level of administrators and recipients by using lump-sum payments more frequently, simplifying contractual relations and making sure that administrative staff members have the right skills and training. Moreover, concentrating resources on the instruments with the greatest impact could help reduce the costs arising from the management of too many projects and actions that are too small.

2. The effectiveness of the programmes was generally moderate to high, with substantial differences between sub-programmes as well as between different objectives within the same programme. Activities were particularly successful in the area of town-twinning, Erasmus, Comenius and Grundtvig. There is strong evidence to show that progress is being made towards a common European education and research area, but the impact on encouraging active citizenship has been much more limited.

At the same time, it was difficult to evaluate the programmes and actions in relation to their specific objectives given that some of these objectives were insufficiently defined or excessively ambitious. Particular areas of weakness concern the ability of associations to reach ordinary citizens under the active participation programme, the impact on promoting the acquisition of foreign language skills and the impact on vocational training systems in member states through Leonardo. These weaknesses are partly a result of the risk inherent in relying on quality ‘bottom-up’ initiatives, which could be substantially improved through better communication with potential applicants. We also identified problems at the level of the intervention logic, i.e. the chosen type of action was occasionally not the most appropriate to solve the identified problems and reach the overall objectives. In particular, specific programme objectives, types of interventions and budget allocation should be re-focused towards supporting adult/mature learners, removing non-pecuniary obstacles to the movement of teachers and students and towards encouraging the exchange of best practices and teaching materials among national authorities.

3. The assessment of relevance and utility found that the programmes and actions reflected the main overall objectives of the Community, but there were important exceptions to this finding.

We have found that the relevance and utility of the new programmes could be improved substantially if more consideration were given to innovation, multiplier effects and cost-effectiveness rather than continuity of financing. However, such a process of reappraisal would have to take place in the wider context of the Community spending in other related areas, particularly the Single Market, Press and Communication and Research. Stepping up coordination across directorates general and budget headings is important to realise synergies and avoid duplication of work. Moreover, given the crucial role of member states in both areas, more resources should be concentrated on stimulating learning and transfer of best practices at the EU (Council & programme committee) level and at the national level.

We have found evidence of exemplary consultation exercises prior to the launch of the new programmes and note substantial progress towards addressing some of the problems identified in this study and prior interim evaluations. The interviews indicated that the Commission has been responsive to criticisms, and stakeholders' comments were often taken on board.

Recommendations in the area of Lifelong Learning

We note a mismatch between the allocation of resources to the sub-programmes and the integrated programme's aspirations in the area of Lifelong Learning as expressed in the programme's title and in five of its specific objectives. The 3% minimum budget allocation to Grundtvig is not sufficient to make a tangible contribution to raising participation rates of older learners and contribute to the Lisbon and Barcelona goals. To promote innovation in the core area of Lifelong Learning, we recommend increasing the share of the budget allocated to support adult learners in higher and further education.

A second area where the stated programme objectives and sub-programme actions seem to diverge involves education. Given the limited resources available for the Citizens for Europe programme, the study backs the idea that the Comenius programme should explicitly aim to develop understanding among young people and educational staff of the diversity of European cultures and values, and provide them with skills and competences for active European citizenship. Given the importance of this objective and the ambitious target for pupil involvement, the budget allocation for Comenius seems insufficient.

Especially after the reduction of the budget allocation, the quality of implementation will depend on cooperation with national and regional authorities. Given the Community's limited competences, it will be crucial to maximise the contribution of cross-cutting activities to promote the transfer and adaptation of existing best practices and genuine learning among policy-makers. The contribution to open co-ordination processes should be spelled out more clearly.

The study supports current efforts to further decentralise the programmes to national agencies and simplify the administration of the programmes. This is likely to increase the performance of the programme in several ways as long as steps are taken to ensure effective monitoring and auditing of these agencies. The quality of agency staff will be crucial in efforts to reduce bureaucracy and waste. We support the full implementation of current plans to reduce the number of national agencies involved in the implementation of the actions to one per country and to revise the contracting arrangements to increase flexibility and reduce bureaucracy.

Recommendations in the area of Active Citizenship

The study welcomes the efforts made to provide coherence and continuity to the activities financed between 2004 and 2006 under the 'Active Citizenship' heading. The introduction of the first two sub-actions, i.e. Active Citizens and Active Civil Society, is in line with the programme's overall objectives while ensuring continuity in terms of past actions. The third sub-action seems to relate more to efforts in the area of communication and information.

The distinction between overall, specific and operational objectives is more coherent and convincing than in the past and indicators are provided to measure performance. In the case of the overall objectives, these indicators are, however, excessively broad and at times simply inappropriate. Given that the programme seeks to influence a number of intangibles, more effort needs to be made in the area of indicators, especially based on more sophisticated polls and surveys, to ensure that progress towards the programme's overall objectives can be measured reliably.

From the perspective of relevance and utility, it is hard to see how the new programme can make a significant contribution to its overall objectives on its own, given the insufficient funding and the focus of its actions. The promotion of active citizenship cannot be functionally separated from issues of awareness of citizens' rights, skills and competences, and electoral opportunities to participate. Many of the instruments to better inform citizens about how to become involved in the political process and exercise their rights are currently administered by other DGs (Press; Single Market; Research; Justice, Freedom and Security). Hence, we strongly encourage better coordination of the Community's activities and programmes in the field of citizenship by creating, for instance, a task force to realise synergies and avoid duplication of work, particularly the goal of raising awareness of citizens' rights with regard to freedom of movement.

This study welcomes the fact that the support for associations of European interest is to be phased out and continued thereafter only on the basis of successful applications for multi-annual funding. This is a necessary response to the finding of the interim evaluation as well as some of the interviews conducted for this study that indicated that the Community has not always received value for money from some of these associations in terms of innovation regarding the type, scope and focus of their activities. The programmes also created a degree of dependence on the funding that limited the autonomy of some of the organisations and their ability to articulate and implement innovative strategies.

Simplifying the process is also of key importance in terms of speeding up payments, as delays can seriously undermine the operation and even existence of typically small non-governmental organisations and networks. Moreover, more effort should be made to hire and train staff at DG Education and Culture so that necessary expertise is available in the area of communication and public relations (which many of the activities entail) and in the area of accounting. Having the necessary staff support is also crucial in terms of being able to provide quality feedback to potential and unsuccessful applicants. The quality of the proposals is crucial to the success of the programme.

Member state actors, in particular policy-makers and officials, can play a key role in the area of Active Citizenship. Leveraging the available resources to make an impact beyond the individual measure and to stimulate learning across various levels will be crucial to ascertain its effects beyond the usual groups of elites to the level of ordinary citizens. The programme's administration does not currently provide the right kind of forum for interaction with the appropriate national representatives. Efforts should thus be made to involve more national representatives from education, interior ministries and public information agencies in the programme committee and to improve coordination with other Council formations. The European Parliament could also make a valuable contribution to building linkages with other areas of citizenship practice.

Note de synthèse

L'étude suivante analyse dans quelle mesure les actions et programmes principaux dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la citoyenneté ont offert au contribuable européen de la 'value for money' entre 2000 et 2005 (et partiellement en 2006). Plus précisément, nous analysons leur performance en recourant à des critères de pertinence, d'efficacité et d'utilité, tel que définis ci-dessous. Par ailleurs, nous avons essayé de fournir des orientations pour le développement de prochains programmes dans les deux domaines ('L'Europe pour les citoyens » et « Formation continue ») pour la période de 2007-2013.

Etant donné que les évaluations des programmes Socrates II, Leonardo da Vinci II et Citoyenneté Active ('Active Citizenship') sont toujours en cours et n'auront probablement pas abouti avant la fin de l'été 2007, l'étude présente se basera essentiellement sur les évaluations intermédiaires ou de moyen terme, qui couvrent seulement certaines des activités financées avec des lignes de budget allant jusqu'en 2004. De plus, nous baserons notre analyse sur les résultats de consultations publiques, des évaluations *ex-ante* de projets futurs dans les deux domaines et des conclusions d'interviews menés dans le cadre de cette étude avec des officiels et des intéressés.

Dans la suivante, nous résumerons les performances des deux programmes et nous formulerons des recommandations relatives à ces deux domaines de l'activité communautaire. Dans un deuxième temps, nous suggérons des recommandations portant sur l'évolution des programmes et des activités dans les domaines de l'éducation et de la citoyenneté.

1. L'efficacité était généralement élevée compte tenu de la forte motivation des bénéficiaires et du caractère volontaire de leur travail. Les bourses de mobilité destinées aux étudiants jouent malgré leurs tailles modestes un rôle clef. Conjointement avec d'autres incitations non pécuniaires, elles encouragent les étudiants à aller à l'étranger, à apprendre des langues étrangères, à acquérir des nouvelles compétences et à apprendre à comprendre d'autres cultures.

Un aspect problématique commun aux deux programmes était le haut niveau des coûts de personnel par projet. L'origine du surcroît d'efforts bureaucratiques la plus fréquemment mentionnée, particulièrement par les bénéficiaires, est une application stricte des régulations financières de 2002 sans la considération nécessaire du principe de proportionnalité. Ceci est problématique étant donné que les actions dans ces domaines impliquent généralement un nombre élevé de projets et peu de support. Cette étude plaide pour une intensification des efforts de réduction du gaspillage de ressources au niveau des administrateurs et des bénéficiaires en utilisant plus fréquemment des paiements forfaitaires, en simplifiant les relations contractuelles et en s'assurant de la compétence et de la formation du personnel administratif. Par ailleurs, la concentration des ressources en faveur des instruments avec l'impact le plus fort pourrait contribuer à réduire les coûts émanant de la gestion de nombreux projets et d'actions de trop petites tailles.

2. L'effectivité des programmes oscillait généralement entre modérée et élevée, avec des différences substantielles entre les sous-programmes ainsi qu'entre les différents objectifs au sein du même programme. Les activités particulièrement couronnées de succès étaient dans le domaine des jumelages, Erasmus, Comenius et Grundtvig. Des éléments démontrent que des progrès sont se concrétise, notamment l'émergence d'une éducation européenne commune et d'un domaine de recherche européen commun. Cependant l'impact de la promotion d'une citoyenneté active a été beaucoup plus limité.

En même temps, il a été difficile d'évaluer les programmes et les actions en relation avec leurs objectifs spécifiques, vu que certains de ces objectifs n'ont pas été définis suffisamment

clairement et sont souvent trop ambitieux. Les domaines dans lesquels les performances ont été particulièrement faibles concernent l'aptitude des associations à atteindre les citoyens ordinaires dans le programme de participation active, l'impact de la promotion de l'acquisition de langues étrangères et l'impact sur les systèmes d'éducation professionnels dans les états membres par le biais de Leonardo. Ces faiblesses résultent partiellement du risque inhérent lorsque l'on se fie à des initiatives 'bottom-up', qui pourraient être substantiellement améliorée grâce à une meilleure communication avec les candidats potentiels. Nous avons aussi identifié des problèmes au niveau de la logique d'intervention ; le type d'action choisi n'était parfois pas le plus approprié pour résoudre les problèmes identifiés et pour atteindre les objectifs globaux. En particulier, certains objectifs de programme spécifique, des méthodes d'interventions et l'allocation du budget devraient être re-modélisé de sorte à soutenir les étudiants adultes, à abolir les obstacles non pécuniaires à la circulation des professeurs et des étudiants, et afin d'encourager l'échange de meilleures pratiques et de supports pédagogiques entre les autorités nationales.

3. L'évaluation de la pertinence et de l'utilité conclut que les programmes et les actions reflétaient en général les principaux objectifs de la Communauté, mais qu'il y avait de nombreuses exceptions à cette conclusion.

Nous avons conclu que la pertinence et l'utilité des nouveaux programmes pourraient être améliorée substantiellement si plus de considération serait accordée à l'innovation, aux effets multiplicateurs ainsi qu'à l'efficacité, plutôt qu'à la continuité du financement. Cependant, un tel processus de reconsidération devrait avoir lieu dans le contexte plus large des dépenses des Communautés dans des domaines voisins, tout particulièrement dans ceux du marché unique, de la presse et communication et de la recherche. L'intensification de la coordination entre les DGs et les titres des budgets serait cruciale pour réaliser des synergies et éviter des recouvrements. De plus, étant donné le rôle crucial des états membres dans les deux domaines, plus de ressources devraient se concentrer sur la stimulation de l'apprentissage et du transfert de meilleures pratiques au niveau de l'UE (du conseil et du programme des comités), tout comme au niveau national.

Nous avons constaté des exercices de consultation exemplaire avant le lancement des nouveaux programmes et remarqué des progrès substantiels qui abordent certains problèmes identifiés dans cette étude et dans des évaluations intermédiaires. Les interviews ont permis d'aboutir à la conclusion que la Commission a été réactive eut égard des critiques, les commentaires des intéressés ayant souvent été pris en compte.

Recommandations dans le domaine de l'apprentissage continu:

Nous constatons une discordance entre l'allocation de ressources vers des sous-programmes et les aspirations des programmes intégrés dans le domaine de l'apprentissage continu, comme spécifié dans le titre du programme ainsi que dans cinq de ses objectifs spécifiques. La limitation du budget alloué à Grundtvig de trois pourcents n'est pas suffisante pour contribuer significativement à l'augmentation des taux de participation des étudiants plus âgés ainsi qu'aux buts de Lisbonne et de Barcelone. Afin de promouvoir l'innovation dans le domaine clef de l'apprentissage continu, nous avons recommandé d'accroître la part du budget allouée au soutien des étudiants adultes dans l'éducation supérieure et continue.

Un deuxième domaine où les objectifs fixés au sein du programme et les actions des sous-programmes semblent diverger est dans le domaine de l'éducation des citoyens. Etant donné les ressources limitées disponibles pour le programme 'Citoyens pour l'Europe', l'étude souligne que le programme Comenius vise explicitement à développer la compréhension au

sein des jeunes gens et de l'équipe pédagogique de la diversité des cultures et des valeurs européennes, et de les doter du savoir et des compétences nécessaire pour une citoyenneté européenne active. Etant donné l'importance de cet objectif et de la cible ambitieuse pour la participation des étudiants, le budget alloué au programme Comenius semble insuffisant.

La qualité de l'implémentation dépendra de la collaboration avec les autorités nationales et régionales. Etant donné les compétences limitées de la Communauté, il sera crucial de maximiser la contribution des activités transversales pour promouvoir le transfert et l'adaptation des meilleures pratiques existantes et d'apprentissage approfondi parmi les «policy-makers». La contribution à un processus de coordination ouvert devrait être formulée plus clairement.

L'étude encourage les efforts actuels en faveur d'une décentralisation des programmes vers des agences nationales et d'une simplification de la gestion des programmes. Tant que les mesures prises assurent une supervision et une révision efficace de ces agences, il est probable que la performance du programme augmente de plusieurs manières. La qualité du personnel au sein de ces agences contribuera significativement aux efforts de réduction de la bureaucratie et du gaspillage. On encourage l'implémentation complète des projets actuels de réduction du nombre d'agences nationales impliquées dans l'implémentation des actions à une seule agence par pays, ainsi que la révision des arrangements contractuels pour accroître la flexibilité et réduire la bureaucratie.

Les Recommandations concernant la citoyenneté active

L'étude encourage les efforts entrepris pour assurer la cohérence et la continuité des activités financées entre 2004 et 2006 sous la rubrique 'Citoyenneté active ». L'introduction des deux premières sous-actions, c'est-à-dire 'Les Citoyens actifs', 'La Société civile active' sont en accord avec les objectifs généraux du programme et simultanément, elles assurent la continuité des actions passées. La troisième action semble être plus orientée vers des efforts dans le domaine de la communication et de l'information.

La distinction entre les objectifs globaux, spécifiques et opérationnels est plus cohérente et persuasive qu'auparavant et les indicateurs nécessaires pour mesurer de la performance sont fournis. En ce qui concerne les objectifs globaux, ces indicateurs sont cependant extrêmement vagues et quelque fois tout simplement inappropriés. Etant donné que le programme cherche à influencer un certain nombre d'intangibles, plus d'efforts doivent être dédiés à la sélection d'indicateurs appropriés. En particulier, ils devraient se baser davantage sur des enquêtes et des sondages sophistiqués afin d'obtenir une mesure fiable des progrès vers les objectifs globaux du programme.

Du point de vue de la pertinence et de l'utilité, il est difficile de discerner comment le nouveau programme pourrait contribuer significativement aux objectifs globaux, étant donné l'insuffisance du financement et la mise au point des actions contenues dans le programme. La promotion de la citoyenneté active ne peut être séparée fonctionnellement des affaires touchant à la conscience des droits, des qualifications et des compétences du citoyen, et des opportunités de participation électorale. Beaucoup d'instruments utilisés pour mieux informer les citoyens sur les possibilités d'implication dans le processus politique et sur l'exercice de leurs droits sont actuellement administrés par d'autres DGs (Presse, Marché unique, Recherche, Justice et affaires intérieures). En conséquence, nous encourageons fortement une meilleure coordination des activités de la Communauté et des programmes dans le domaine de la citoyenneté en créant, par exemple, une 'task-force'. Cette dernière aurait pour but de

réaliser des synergies, d'éviter des redondances, et en particulier, d'accroître la conscience du droit à la liberté de mouvement des citoyens.

Cette étude soutient que l'aide accordée aux associations d'intérêt européen doit prendre fin. Par la suite, cette aide devra être poursuivie sur la base de candidatures pour des subventions multi annuelles. Cela constitue la réponse nécessaire à l'évaluation intermédiaire ainsi que quelques-uns des entretiens effectués dans le cadre cette étude. L'analyse de ces éléments indiquait que la Communauté n'a pas toujours pas reçu du « value for money » de quelques-unes de ces associations en termes d'innovation eut égard au genre, à l'étendue et au focus de leurs activités. Ils ont par ailleurs développé une certaine dépendance financière qui a limité l'autonomie de quelques-unes de ces organisations tout comme leur pouvoir d'articuler et d'implémenter des stratégies innovantes.

Du point de vue de l'accélération des paiements, la simplification du processus joue un rôle primordial, car les délais peuvent sérieusement compromettre les opérations et même l'existence des petites organisations et réseaux non gouvernementaux. Par ailleurs, plus d'efforts devraient être dédiés à l'embauche et l'entraînement du personnel à la DG Education et Culture, de sorte à ce que l'expertise nécessaire soit disponible dans le domaine de la communication et des relations publiques (savoir-faire nécessaire pour la majorité des activités) et dans le domaine de la comptabilité. De plus, il est crucial d'avoir le soutien nécessaire du personnel pour fournir un retour de qualité aux candidats potentiels et à ceux qui échouent. La qualité des propositions est cruciale pour le succès du programme.

Ceux qui agissent pour les états membres, en particulier, les « policy-makers » et les officiels, peuvent jouer un rôle primordial dans le domaine de la citoyenneté active. L'application des ressources disponibles de manière efficace de sorte à avoir un impact durable et à stimuler l'apprentissage à différents niveaux, sera cruciale pour assurer un impact allant au-delà des groupes élitaires habitués, et notamment vers les citoyens ordinaires. L'administration actuelle du programme n'offre pas de forum approprié pour stimuler l'interaction avec les représentants nationaux appropriés. Des efforts devraient être fait afin d'inclure plus de représentants nationaux de l'éducation, du ministère de l'intérieur et les agences publiques d'information dans le comité du programme et pour améliorer la coordination avec d'autres formations du Conseil. Le Parlement Européen pourrait en plus faire une contribution utile en faveur de l'établissement de relations avec d'autres domaines relatant de la pratique de la citoyenneté.

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of the study

This study, commissioned by the Budgetary Committee of the European Parliament, pursues two main aims in line with its specifications:

The first is to evaluate *ex-post* whether the programmes and activities financed by the Community Budget in the area of education and citizenship offered ‘good value for money’. The period covered is 2000-2005. In accordance with the specifications, the study will focus on those activities financed under Title 15 of the Community Budget, notably in the field of education, vocational training, culture and language dialogue, and support granted to associations.

The second aim of the study is to provide the European Parliament with an *ex-ante* assessment of the next generation of programmes and activities in these two areas (under the heading of Lifelong Learning and Europe for Citizens), providing guidance for short and medium terms developments and improvements.

Given the limitations of space, a minimum degree of prioritisation and selection was necessary, particularly in the field of education, to reach a sufficient depth of analysis. The study will provide an overall *ex-post* assessment of the activities in each of the two areas (Education & Citizens) and then proceed to analyse in greater depth the performance of the Erasmus II and Leonardo II actions (for Education) and town-twinning and support for associations of European interest (for Active Citizenship). The criteria to be used are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and utility as set out in the specifications document.¹

We will then look at the proposals for new programmes and analyse whether and to what extent they are likely to improve the performance of the programmes in areas where weaknesses have been identified. We will also look at whether the proposals for new programmes take advantage of all the opportunities for strengthening areas where a strong performance has been identified even further.

1.2 Methodology

The study will use a range of different data sources as a basis for its analysis. Given that the final evaluations of the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci (incorporated into Socrates) and Active Citizenship programmes are still ongoing and unlikely to be completed before the summer of 2007, the present study will have to rely to a significant extent on the currently available mid-term or interim evaluations, which cover only some of the activities financed under individual budget lines until 2004. In addition, we will draw on the results of public consultations and *ex-ante* evaluations of the future programmes in the two fields. The evaluation studies were carried out by external evaluators.

Moreover, a couple of interviews were conducted face-to-face as well as over the phone with officials within DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) and with representatives of beneficiary organisations. The Commission provided the authors with aggregate data about some of the outputs of the programmes in the period 2000-2005/06 given that more detailed data from the interim evaluation studies included at the most the years 2000-2003. Assessment of the criteria beyond 2003 is therefore more difficult and requires an element of qualitative assessment on the basis of the performance data and the interviews. The authors would like to express their gratitude to all those within the EU institutions and NGOs who agreed to be interviewed for this study at short notice.

¹ Defined as follows: **Relevance**: To what extent were the objectives of a public intervention appropriate regarding the funds available, the needs perceived and the problems the intervention is meant to solve? **Effectiveness**: What effects (impacts) have been obtained by the intervention and in particular have these effects contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the intervention? **Efficiency** (cost effectiveness): How economically have the various inputs been converted into outputs and results? Were the expected effects obtained at a reasonable cost? **Utility**: Do the impacts achieved by an intervention correspond to the needs identified and the problems solved?

Thirdly, the authors will rely on their own professional experience to make judgements, drawing on literature regarding European citizenship and education policies to underpin their judgements where appropriate. This approach is necessary in a policy area that has an unusually high number of intangibles at the level of general and sometimes even specific public policy objectives. For instance, the goals to “stimulate or enhance a feeling of belonging, solidarity, civic awareness, and participation in the EU” are difficult to measure reliably, but so are outcomes of efforts to achieve a ‘European learning area’ or to turn adults into self-directed ‘life-long learners’ in a way that makes a contribution to the Lisbon and Barcelona goals.

1.3 Overview of developments and challenges

The following section aims to give a short overview of the development of the main programmes and activities in the two areas and to highlight the challenges in translating Community support into results in line with the stated objectives and problems identified.

The role of the EU in the field of education is limited to supplementing and complementing activities of member states, who are the competent authorities for the organisation and objectives of the relevant education systems. At Maastricht, Article 3 was amended to include the goal that the Community should make “a contribution” to quality education and training. The Maastricht Treaty also added the new Articles 149 (education and learning) and 150 (vocational training) and listed the goals and activities of the EU in these areas in much greater detail, but explicitly ruled out “any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states”. Since Amsterdam, co-decision has been applied to vocational training as well, allowing for qualified majority voting in the Council. The Socrates and Leonardo programmes date back to 1995, when an attempt was made to consolidate pre-existing specific programmes (especially Lingua, Erasmus and Petra) developed since the mid-1980s into a coherent new framework.

The stated goals of the second phase of the Socrates life-cycle (2000-2006) were not only to “contribute to the development of quality education” as stated in the Treaty, but also “to promote lifelong learning” in line with the Lisbon agenda of 2000. It was generally acknowledged that improving ‘human resources’ through education and training was essential for the European Union to reach its goals in making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world (Education & Training 2010). The European Council in Barcelona (15-16 March 2002) set the objective of making European Union education and training systems a “world quality reference”. A particular concern has been the higher education sector, where the EU’s total investment amounts to about 1.1% of GDP, which is below the levels of Australia (1.5%), Canada (2.5%), the US (2.7%) and Korea (2.7%). About 25% of young people aged 18-24 were enrolled in higher education in the EU25 in 2002, a much lower share than in the USA (39%). In addition, policy-makers and experts agreed that the notion of education could no longer be limited to school and traditional university education for 18-25 years olds, but needed to encompass teaching and training of mature learners (24-64) as well to enable them to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Studies of educational achievement at all levels showed wide disparities among member states and the need to improve existing systems. In particular, the EU was seen as lagging behind its major competitors in the participation rates of mature students in Lifelong Learning (currently about 11% according to the Eurostat Labour Force survey). To reach the Lisbon benchmarks in the field of education would require four million more adults participating in Lifelong Learning by 2010.

To this end, Socrates aims to strengthen the European dimension in education, foster co-operation and mobility, enhance language skills and encourage exchanges about common policy interests in the area of education, particularly but not only among national authorities. It currently consists of five main actions:

- a) Comenius, which aims to enhance the quality of higher education and reinforce its European dimension

- b) Erasmus, which aims to improve the quality of higher education and support the achievement of a European Higher Education Area.
- c) Grundtvig, which pursues the goal of improving the quality of non-vocational adult education and strengthen its European dimension
- d) Lingua, which is tasked with improving the quality of language teaching and learning and to facilitate access to lifelong language learning opportunities
- e) Minerva, to promote Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme was also created in 1995. It aims to promote European co-operation in the area of professional development and vocational training by supporting transnational mobility and innovative pilot projects. In contrast to the first phase (1995-1999) of Leonardo, the second phase of the programme had clearer objectives and fewer measures. From 2007 onwards, Leonardo will be incorporated into a new integrated Lifelong Learning programme alongside the other subprogrammes which made up Socrates, following recommendations made by the interim evaluation to overcome the dysfunctional fragmentation between vocational and other forms of learning.

The concept of European citizenship entered the Treaties explicitly only at Maastricht in 1992 in the form of Articles 17-22. It is exclusively tied to the possession of national citizenship and establishes a number of rights for citizens, most notably in the area of voting and standing for office in European and municipal elections and rights to move, work and reside freely in another member state. In contrast to the area of education, unanimity applies in the Council of Ministers for voting on citizenship actions, reflecting the political sensitivity surrounding the issue and the lack of an explicit article referring to activities of the EU in this field. In recent years, however, the European Court of Justice has used its case law to lift some of the initial restrictions of the non-discrimination principle. It applies now not only to those engaging in some kind of economic activity, but also to students and other recipients of social benefits as long as there is no excessive burden on or abuse of national welfare systems. Indeed, the right to free movement of citizens has thus been turned into a fundamental freedom (Kokott, 2005: 1). Moreover, citizenship rights are not limited to the aforementioned Treaty articles but are scattered across the whole *acquis communautaire*, including for instance also the right to access to documents in Article 255 (Warleigh, 2006). Furthermore, beyond the question of legal rights, citizens have a number of opportunities to participate in European Union politics, which are not always well known. Nentwich lists 15 opportunity structures ranging from writing letters to MEPs and the Commission to supporting interest groups and participating in public protests (Nentwich, 1998).

Given these relatively recent developments it is perhaps not a surprise that there had not been an actual programme in the area of citizenship until 2004. Instead there had been a number of activities supported by individual budget lines without an explicit legal basis and administered by different entities of the European Commission, most notably the General-Secretariat (budget lines A-30xx) as well as other actions under Title 18 (freedom, security and justice), Title 3 (employment and social affairs) and most notably Title 15 (education and culture). Selected budget lines relating to citizens, in particular activities such as town-twinning partnerships and operating grants to European associations of common European interest, were integrated from 2004-06 into the 'Civic participation' programme on the basis of Articles 151 (culture) and 308 (functional necessity to attain overarching Community objectives). The rationale was to provide these activities with a sound legal basis in the form of a new programme with clear overriding objectives and thereby ensure continuity of financing after the adoption of the 2002 Financial Regulation. The size of the individual (pre-2004) and combined (post-2004) budget lines is miniscule as compared to measures in the field of education (€72 m for the period 2004-06 and €1.3 bn for education for the same period, not counting vocational training through Leonardo II).

An evaluation of one of the budget lines (A-3024) regarding support for debate and reflection projects organised by associations and federations of European interests was carried out in 2004 and a final

report was made available to the authors of this study. The Commission also launched an extensive consultation exercise (online and face-to-face meetings) among stakeholders and beneficiaries regarding the next programme for the period 2007-13 (Commission 2005b). The feedback gained from this exercise was used to inform the new programme in the area of citizenship currently called 'Europe for Citizens' (changed from the original 'Citizens for Europe' proposal).

Given the 2005 rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in the referenda in France and the Netherlands, continuously declining participation rates in European Parliament elections, low levels of knowledge about the EU institutions and opportunities to influence decision-making, and generally stagnant levels of support for European integration, the challenge to 'bridge the gap' between the European Union and citizens is an enormous one.

2. *Ex-post* evaluation of programmes in the Area of Education and Citizenship between 2000-06

Each of the two sections starts with an overview of the objectives of the various programmes – overall as well as specific if available. It will then outline the budget committed to each of the actions and any quantifiable results obtained.

After that, we will analyse the performance of the various programmes in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and utility, drawing on the sources of data outlined in the methodology section.

2.1 *Selected actions in the area of education*

This section will focus on analysis of the Socrates and Leonardo programmes, which take up the largest share of the budget in this area. Moreover, the Erasmus programme will be analysed in some depth as the largest programme within Socrates. Some references will be made to the other sub-programmes, in particular, Comenius, but an in-depth analysis of this programme has been limited due to a lack of space.

2.1.2 Socrates II & Leonardo II: Objectives, Budgetary Allocations and Outputs

The Global Objectives of the Socrates Programme according to 253/2000/EC (the Council/EP Decision), were:

- a) To strengthen the European dimension in education at all levels and facilitate wide transnational access to educational resources in Europe while promoting equal opportunities.
- b) Promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of languages of the EU, in particular less used languages, in order to lead to greater understanding and solidarity.
- c) To promote cooperation and mobility in the field of education by encouraging exchanges between education institutions, promoting open and distance learning, encouraging improvements in the recognition of diplomas and periods of study and developing the exchange of information, and to help remove obstacles in this regard.
- d) To encourage innovation in the development of educational practices and materials [...] and to explore matters of common policy interest in the field of education.

The only indicators of success, explicitly mentioned in the Council Decision, were the aims for a participation of a rate of around 10% of schools in the Comenius action and of around 10% of students in the mobility activities under the Erasmus action (Council Decision, point 6)

There were no specific objectives for the programme, but only further objectives specified in the Annex of the Council Decision concerning each of the sub-actions.

The overall budget allocation from EU member states for the period 2000-06 was €2.095 billion, broken down as follows:

Table 1. Budget allocation under Socrates and selected sub-programmes, 2000-06

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 ^a	2006 ^a	Total
Total (€mil.) ^b	282.6	295.8	306.0	316.3	366.4	397.2	440.7	2 404.9
EU member states	238.5	245.8	254.0	263.0	335.7 ^c	361.2	396.8 ^d	2 095
Share of Erasmus (€mil.)	122 (51%)	124.7 (51%)	128.5 (51%)	131.2 (51%)	170.8 ^a (51%)	184.1 ^a (51%)	201.9 ^a (51%)	1 063.2 (51%)
Share of Comenius (€mil.)	67.5 (28%)	68.8 (28%)	68.1 (27%)	69.8 (27%)	90.6 (27%)	97.5 (27%)	106.9 (27%)	569.2 (27%)

^a Forecasts.

^b Includes European Free Trade Area countries & associated countries, namely Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey.

^c Increase in budget after 2004 enlargement.

^d €35 m proposed by the European Parliament to be agreed by the Council.

The objectives of Erasmus were to:

- a) enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of higher education.
- b) encourage transnational co-operation between universities,
- c) boost European mobility in the higher education sector and
- d) improve transparency and academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the Community.

Table 2. Mobility grants under the Erasmus programme, 2000-06

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
No. of students	111,092	115,432	123,957	135,586	146,500	158,500	165,000	956,067
No. of teachers	14,356	15,872	16,932	18,462	20,000	21,600	23,500	130,722

The general and specific objectives of Comenius were to:

- a) enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by:
 - encouraging transnational cooperation between schools,
 - contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector and
 - promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness.

Table 3. Outputs of the Comenius Programme, 2000-06

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
No. of individual grants	9,329	9,197	10,469	10,247	11,494	12,423	13,000	76,159
No. of partnership grants	10,216	10,231	1,097	10,178	10,754	12,156	13,500	77,132
No. of cooperative grants & networks	70	109	45 ^a	50	52	52	52	430

^a A shift from annual to multi-annual grants explains the drop in numbers.

Leonardo da Vinci II

According to Council Decision 1999/382/EC (Council 1999), the overall objectives of the Leonardo II Programme were to develop “the quality, innovation and European dimension in vocational training systems and practices, through transnational cooperation”. The specific objectives of Leonardo II as contained in the Decision were to:

- a) improve the skills and competences of people, especially young people, in initial vocational training at all levels [...]
- b) improve the quality of, and access to, continuing vocational training and the life-long acquisition of skills and competences with a view to increasing and developing adaptability[...]
- c) promote and reinforce the contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation, with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship, also in view of new employment possibilities [...] in implementing these objectives particular attention shall be paid to people at a disadvantage in the labour market.

Table 4. Budgetary allocation and output of Leonardo Programme, 2000-06

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Mobility (€mil.)	69.1	71.8	76.9	83.6	107.9	127.8	155.6 ^a	692.7 ^a
No. of mobility beneficiaries	36 600	37 500	41 500	45 700	58 380	67 000	84 500 ^a	371 180 ^a
Innovation projects (€mil.)	80.9	82.3	89.7	91.7	109.2	86.3	87.1	672.2
No. of supported projects	235	255	279	278	345	279	300 ^a	2020 ^a

^a Forecasts.

2.1.3 Relevance

This study reaffirms the finding of the interim evaluation report (Commission 2004b) of the actions in the field of Socrates that the Community’s policy objectives were reflected in the programme’s objectives. The programme also took specific needs on the ground into account and offered substantial flexibility. At the same time, the national reports suggest that future programme actions should be more responsive to European education policy priorities.

However, the flexibility arising from the rather general programme objectives meant that the programme was not as relevant as it could have been. The evaluation criticised the “excessively hermetic nature” of the actions and the programme as compared to other Community programmes,

rendering *ex-post* evaluation and continuous performance monitoring very difficult. The main reason was that the initial Decision of the European Parliament and the Council of 2000 failed to outline a sufficiently hierarchical structure of objectives and their related indicators. The legal text did not elaborate on the logic of the intervention by explaining the link between general, specific and operational objectives, nor were there clear quantitative indicators for the objectives or justifications of the resources needed. For instance, there was a lack of clarity for both administrators and users about terms such as ‘quality’ and ‘European dimension’.

Given the modest size of funds available for the six year period (about €300 m per year) we also find that the general programme objectives as well as those of sub-actions were overly ambitious. This is not only apparent in the language used in the statement of objectives, but also in the two indicators of success mentioned for Erasmus and Comenius action in the Decision (10% of schools and 10% of students), which have both been missed by a long way (currently 3% and 4% respectively), even if the relative performance can still be considered impressive. A particular mismatch between funds available and the objectives of the intervention is the area of multilingualism and in particular the acquisition of lesser used languages for the purpose of furthering understanding and solidarity.

The evaluation reports also rightly criticised the structural fragmentation between Socrates and Leonardo, i.e. between education and vocational training, as limiting factor of the overall relevance of the programme.

Some of these shortcomings were addressed by the programme committee and the guide to applicants, but the shortcomings in the legal text, and in particular the details contained in the Annex of the Decision, mean that the overall relevance of the Socrates programme could be stronger.

2.1.4 Effectiveness

While it has been difficult to assess the effectiveness of the programme given the lack of clarity and quantification of the specific objectives, there is substantial evidence that the Socrates programme has reached most of its specific objectives satisfactorily. In many respects Socrates is one of the most visible and effective actions supported by the European Union, particularly in the area of mobility activities. According to the Commission working documents, during the period 2000 to 2006 (including forecasted figures for 2005-06) the number of individual beneficiaries from mobility grants was 76,000 for teachers and other education staff (under Comenius) and 956,000 students and 130,000 teachers (under Erasmus). The impact of these exchanges goes beyond the immediate beneficiaries to include a number of indirect effects on their environment both within the host countries as well as their home country. The programmes undoubtedly provided European added value by raising awareness of cultural diversity and improving understanding of and tolerance for differences. There is also a likely impact on improving employability and professional skills.

The most major area of impact is undoubtedly that of higher education, which is targeted not only through Erasmus but also actions such as Jean Monnet. The impact of the Erasmus programmes goes beyond support for individuals to the institutional level. Some 2,375 universities have signed up to the Erasmus University Charter (EUC), which sets out the principles underlying all Erasmus activities to be respected by the universities. This also has a positive impact on the measures taken to improve the transparency and full academic recognition of studies and qualifications across the Union.

While there is thus substantial evidence of the effectiveness of EU measures in the area of higher education in terms of the sub-action’s specific objectives, an impact assessment of the Comenius programmes is somewhat less positive. The interim evaluations noted that the mobility of teachers and educators is not “as high as it could be”.

On a general level, the most major obstacle to mobility across different sub-programmes, apart from administrative problems, was regarded as the lack of appropriate language skills. Evaluators also noted that Socrates has not been as effective as it could have been with regard to the visibility and dissemination of results. Moreover, synergies with existing Community programmes have not been exploited as fully as possible.

In the case of Leonardo, there have been a total of 371,180 vocational placements in the period from 2000 to 2006. Going beyond this aggregate data to assess the effectiveness of Leonardo has been particularly difficult given the lack of clarity in terms of objectives noted earlier. Nevertheless, interim evaluators still considered Leonardo to be “quite effective” and as having improved with regard to the previous period of 1995-1999. This concerns the objective of “strengthening the competencies and skills of people, especially young people” in particular. Beneficiaries were generally satisfied with their learning experience.

With regard to the fundamental objective of “promoting and reinforcing the contribution of vocational training systems to the process of innovation”, the interim evaluation suggested only partial effectiveness. It is estimated that 2,020 innovation projects will have received Community funding by 2006, but interim evaluators (until 2002) highlighted room for improvement in terms of the quality of the project proposals.

Interim evaluators were also critical of the “lack of sufficient valorisation activities” for ongoing innovative pilot projects, i.e. the efforts aimed at fully exploiting and optimising project results and findings so that a larger number of users are aware of and able to use these results. This weakness contributed to the assessment that Leonardo has been only partially effective in reaching the objective of “improving the quality of, and access to continuing vocational training and the life-long acquisition of qualifications and skills”. The interim evaluation identified a lack of clarity in the documents as to who is being targeted and how. Moreover, there were too many measures, which were too short-term and too small to make a larger scale impact, especially at the level of organisations. Measures have been taken to address these shortcomings in pilot projects from 2005 onwards.

Finally, interim evaluators found that Leonardo was only partially effective in terms of the objective of “strengthening the European dimension of vocational training systems and practices”. In particular, it was argued that much greater openness and transparency of respective national systems was needed, in particular regarding the recognition of qualifications and education. The sheer number of beneficiaries, promoters and partners *per se* would not be sufficient to achieve the desired effect.

2.1.5 Efficiency

This study confirms the view that an expenditure programme is a good policy instrument in an area where there are tight legal restrictions on legislative or regulatory action through the Community. Support for the trans-national mobility of individuals is thus to be welcomed as an instrument. But one should not lose sight of the success and future potential of open co-ordination processes to bring about more significant and lasting changes in national education systems and their content.

Given the modest resources available, the results achieved are impressive, particularly in the area of mobility actions under Socrates. Since 2003, the yearly growth rate for student grants was about 8% in spite of an increase in the budget of only 3%. The cost-effectiveness of the Erasmus programme is shown by the fact that small amounts of support (currently €150 per month) can be a significant incentive to mobility if coupled with other non-pecuniary measures such as the recognition of a period of study. Erasmus mobility grants are currently given to one third of all EU students studying abroad. At the same time it is difficult to estimate how many of the Erasmus students would have gone abroad with or without such financial support. It will be crucial to see whether the planned increase in the monthly allowance under the new programme will have a major impact on students’ interest in the programme. There is evidence to suggest that Erasmus students are more interested in receiving recognition for academic performance through European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit rather than in receiving financial assistance. This suggests that measures in the latter area could be more cost-effective than mobility grants.

The interim evaluation of the Socrates programme (Commission, 2004b) as a whole revealed that the distribution of beneficiaries among the participating countries was good, ensuring a European dimension. A large number of small and medium-sized activities were financed, providing evidence of a good coverage across the whole education sector.

At the same time, the interim evaluation argued that efficiency gains could be made in terms of management and paperwork. While the report praised the move towards increased decentralisation, more pragmatism and simplification, it also mentioned that staffing costs for managing and monitoring programmes were too high. The information required for applications is also quite detailed, potentially deterring relevant target groups. Delays at all stages of the application process also create uncertainty and waste. The report finally comments on the lack of an effective software-based management tool.

The cost-effectiveness of the Leonardo Programme has been substantially improved according to the interim evaluators (Ernst & Young, 2004), who looked at the ratio between administration costs and effectiveness. The identified operating costs were €6 m, which amounts to 12% of the programme budget. While there has been a lack of data on the achievements of individual projects, the interim evaluators argued that optimal efficiency has not yet been reached. In particular, the interim report criticised the absence of analytical management tools for the monitoring of overall costs, analytical costs, time spent by type of action etc. They also noted “deficiencies in terms of the tools adapted to information sharing”, which they see as hampering the optimal use of resources and the accomplishment of the allotted tasks. A comparison of the unit costs of the Leonardo trainee placement (€3,644 under the new programme) reveals that they are double the costs of an Erasmus student mobility (€1,755) and 50% more than the cost (€2,316) of an upper secondary school pupil following courses in another language in a school abroad for up to one year (European Parliament, 2005: 32).

2.1.6 Utility

The criterion of utility asks whether the impacts achieved by an intervention correspond to the needs identified and the problems solved. This assessment varies across the different sub-actions of the Socrates programme and between Socrates and Leonardo. In the area of higher education there is some evidence that Community support and actions (including the Bologna and Copenhagen processes) have played a role in increasing student mobility and the attractiveness of tertiary education. According to data from the European Commission, Europe is gradually catching up in terms of the number of students in higher education, which increased by 16% between 1997 and 2002, an average of 3.1% per year (European Commission, Press Memo 05/133).

Moreover, EU countries together account for a 47% share of the 1.9 million foreign students worldwide, which is a large percentage. In the year 2002, about 5.5% of students in the EU25 were from foreign countries and 37% of these students came from EU countries. This means that about 330,000 EU students are currently studying in another EU country, which is about 11% of all EU students and thus much higher than current figures for worker intra-EU mobility of nearly 2%. Moreover, given that three million students graduate each year from European universities, the number of mobility grants amounts to about 4% of the relevant student population but account for about a third of all EU students studying in another EU country (European Commission, Press Memo 05/133). A further increase can be expected as a result of the Bologna process. Generally, measures aimed at increasing awareness among students of the study opportunities combined with measures to remove obstacles in the area of qualifications offer a very high utility.

Given that Leonardo did not score very highly in the interim evaluation (Ernst & Young, 2004) on three of its specific objectives, the overall utility of the programme for promoting access to and quality of Lifelong Learning opportunities and systems is only moderate on the basis of the currently available data. Given the quite limited resources available to this action, a number of measures have been suggested to boost cost-effectiveness and avoid duplication of effort. For instance, recommendations have been made by the interim evaluator Ernst & Young to focus efforts on the sectors most relevant to the Lisbon strategy, provide methodological support in the area of recognition of qualifications and transparency, co-operate more closely with the relevant national ministries and maximise synergies with other sub-programmes such as Erasmus, Comenius and Grundtvig.

2.2 Selected actions in the area of citizenship

2.2.1 Specific objectives, budgetary allocations and outputs

The Community Action Programme to promote Active European Citizenship was established by Council Decision No 2004/100/EC for the period 2004 to 2006. Its overall aim is to “reinforce open dialogue with civil society on the principles of transparency and democratic control and intensify links between citizens of different countries”.

This overall objective has been supplemented by five specific objectives, namely:

- a) to promote and disseminate the values and objectives of the European Union;
- b) to bring citizens closer to the European Union and its institutions and to encourage them to engage more frequently with its institutions;
- c) to involve citizens closely in reflection and discussion on the construction of the European Union;
- d) to intensify links and exchanges between citizens from the countries participating in the programme, notably by way of town-twinning arrangements;
- e) to stimulate initiatives by the bodies engaged in the promotion of active and participatory citizenship.

The programme pursues its objectives through two types of grants. Operating grants are meant to support the permanent running of selected organisations on the basis of their work programme’s contribution. Co-funding grants are designed to co-finance specific actions in this area, usually on the basis of projects proposed by beneficiaries. Supported activities include, inter alia, multinational co-operation, meetings and debates among citizens and dissemination of information about Community actions.

The total budget for the programme for the period from 2004 to 2006 amounted to nearly €80m, which is higher than the originally budgeted €72m. This is a result of the European Parliament allocating more funds to town-twinning in subsequent years. The annual budgets were:

2004 - €31.4m

2005 - €24m

2006 - €25.4m

The overall budget was split into a 20% share for projects in the field of Active European Citizenship and 40% per cent to twinning projects. The majority of the remaining 40% was spent on operating grants for organisations. The Inception Report (Ecotec, 2006) provides further information on the share of Community support for the various activities. For organisations funded under Part 1 of the Decision, Community support could reach up to 90% of their costs with at least 10% of the bodies’ budgets co-financed from non-Community sources. For organisations funded under Part 2, Community support could reach 80%. For the award of grants under Part 3, the Council Decision stated that fixed rates might be applied for organisations’ costs and travel expenses. In practice a 60/40% rule applied to NGO, association and trades union projects as well as conferences, seminars and information campaigns in town-twinning only. There was no percentage limit for citizens’ meetings in town-twinning as these were funded according to flat rates and therefore Community support could be between 0 and 100% depending on actual expenditure.

2.2.2 Relevance

A fundamental question to be addressed under the relevance criterion is whether the objectives of the Active Participation programme were appropriate to the funds available, the needs perceived and the problems the programme was meant to solve. Given that regulatory action in the area of citizenship

cannot currently be carried out by the European Commission and considering the very limited size of the available budget for the actions dealt with in this study, we believe that significant progress towards the stated objectives is extremely difficult. A contribution to closing the gap between citizens and EU institutions would require not only a budget of a different magnitude, but also a different approach than to support associations of European interest. This is not to say that these organisations cannot and do not play a very important role in stimulating debate and conveying information about European governance and integration, but it seems that these functions are usually part of an information and communication programme. Such organisations are less suited to bringing citizens closer to EU institutions or involving ordinary citizens closely in the appraisal of the future of the European construction. Indeed, the interim evaluation of the respective budget line A3024 for the period 2000-2003 (Évalue, 2004) found that its relevance, sustainability and efficiency with regard to mobilising citizens or bringing them closer to the EU in debates were weak.

The programme should therefore not be seen as a simple expenditure programme in isolation from other activities but primarily in terms of influencing national and transnational actors, which play a key role in shaping structured opportunities for citizens' participation. Given the substantial shortcomings in European citizens' knowledge and awareness of their rights and opportunities as a consequence of their EU citizenship, most of the effort should be focused on measures in the field of education, information and communication.

A separate criticism emerging from the evaluations of the two budget lines for Town-Twinning and Support for Associations (incorporated after 2003 into the Active Participation programme) has been that the objectives were not sufficiently structured in hierarchical terms and that they were overly ambitious given the funds available. This made it very difficult for evaluators to identify the intervention logic behind the programmes and assess whether objectives had been achieved. It also made continuous monitoring of performance difficult and generally posed a problem for stakeholders to understand what was expected from them. This was particularly true for assessing support for associations and federations of European interest.

At the same time, the interim evaluation suggested that the financial support was especially suited to support far smaller associations active in the area of European integration. Given that many of their activities rely on volunteers even small amounts of Community support can in principle make a substantial impact at least with regard to some of the objectives (a & e). Town-twinning activities are generally well suited to increasing linkages between citizens (d), especially if care is taken that the participants in exchanges are indeed ordinary citizens and not local elites.

2.2.3 Effectiveness

Given the problems in the formulation of 'SMART objectives' in this area, i.e. objectives that are sufficiently Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound, any ex-post evaluation of actions in this area will find it difficult to ascertain with some confidence whether the desired impact has been achieved or not. Nevertheless, the interim studies and consultation exercises, however, suggested that measures were quite successful in mobilising associations of European interest, who play a key role in communicating the key values and objectives of the European integration process. While the effectiveness with regard to mobilising ordinary citizens has been weak, associations have played an important role in stimulating public debate about European issues.

With regard to objective d) of the programme, town-twinning activities were generally considered to be very successful in encouraging exchanges between ordinary citizens. Participants are very satisfied with their experiences of exchanges and meetings. There is also some preliminary evidence that the twinning activities have served as a launch-pad for follow-up initiatives, networks and activities in line with the programme's objectives. The increase in this programme's budget by the European Parliament reflects this widespread perception of effectiveness even if the number of citizens involved is limited due to the modest size of the budgets. Moreover, the quality of citizens' projects has risen substantially over time, according to the interviews, indicating that they may at times serve as a pilot for and stimulus to learning and leveraging effects at the national and transnational level. However, a

comprehensive analysis of performance in this area is still lacking and stands in the way of a more detailed statement regarding the effectiveness of these measures.

2.2.4 Efficiency

The overall cost-effectiveness of the actions is very high in terms of the mobilisation of associations and beneficiaries. It was frequently noted that the European taxpayers get a very good deal from this support given that many of the activities are carried out by volunteers or involve staff who are paid far below the normal commercial rates in the private sector for activities such as event organisation, communication and campaigning. Moreover, European level associations often have a number of national subsidiaries, which in turn make sure that mobilisation extends to the national, regional and sometimes even local level. This assessment applies to almost the same extent to activities in the area of Town-Twinning. At the same time, some doubts were raised by the interim evaluation (Evalu, 2004: 14) regarding the costs of reaching and mobilising ordinary citizens. In order to increase the impact of mobilising ordinary citizens in debates about European integration, more continuity of financing for specific projects was considered desirable.

Civil society organisations also pointed out the significance of multi-annual projects which allow for more careful design and greater impact. However, they also say that short-term actions are beneficial for involving organisations that have not yet become involved in grass roots activities.

The cost-effectiveness of Community support in this area could be even higher if the excessive paperwork required could be reduced and personnel costs reduced both at the level of administrators as well as beneficiaries. The most frequently cited source of excessive bureaucratic effort has been the strict application of the New Financial Regulations without due consideration of the principle of proportionality. The actions in these fields usually involved a high number of projects and small amounts of support. Beneficiaries complained about the excessive level of detail they had to provide in order to access relatively small amounts of Community support. Some of these requests were not only too time-consuming, but were also hard to provide given the nature of many of the activities and the minimum degree of flexibility needed to plan, adapt and implement events in this areas. A significant share of the personnel costs connected to the paperwork could be saved if the requirements arising from the Financial Regulations could be either waived, circumvented or adjusted. Some beneficiaries interviewed also commented that some of the problems were also connected to problems of insufficient staffing among Commission administrators in terms of both numbers and relevant qualifications in the area of communication and accounting.

2.2.5 Utility

In this policy area it is very difficult to provide a quantifiable assessment of the impact of these programmes beyond the number of persons involved in town-twinning and debates. Second order effects from such citizens' meetings and debates are hard to assess and may well be significant given multiplier effects. With a view to the numbers of the beneficiaries involved, however, the impact falls far short of the ambitious goals that both actions pursue. In particular, evaluations cast some doubts on whether ordinary citizens have been reached to a degree relevant to the overall objectives of the actions. This applies less to the twinning-programmes, which were considered better at reaching out to ordinary citizens. This finding is, not surprising given the limited resources made available for both programmes.

Due to space and time constraints the study could not evaluate other Community funded activities with a relationship to citizenship. Raising awareness about citizens' rights and duties in the European Union is a major undertaking, which has so far not been achieved on a sufficient scale if Eurobarometer findings and turn-out at European Parliament elections are anything to go by.

At the same time, there is some evidence that civil society actors and NGOs have become more active campaigners at the European level (Warleigh 2006). It is doubtful, however, whether this growing activity is in any way related to Community intervention. Moreover, there is a question mark about

whether this increase in NGO activity will in any meaningful way increase citizens' involvement in the European construction and thereby increase citizens' trust in the EU institutions. Warleigh notes (2006) that NGOs often have poorly developed consultation and internal governance provisions, which provide supporters with few opportunities to influence the organisations' policy agendas. Special interest NGOs are also not very active in educating and informing supporters about the EU, partly because supporters have simply no strong interest in being informed (Warleigh, 2006).

In that sense, creating civic awareness and participation may well be a precondition for a functioning civil society and for democracy enhancing interest-group representation. There is little evidence that the actions financed have been able to make significant inroads towards solving the needs identified and the problems to be solved.

3. Analysis of & Recommendations for Post-2006 Activities

3.1 Lifelong Learning

3.1.1 Proposed Programme Structure, Budget & Objectives

From 2007 to 2013 onwards, EU education activities will be drawn together under the heading of a single 'Integrated Action Programme in Lifelong Learning' to be supported by €6.97 billion according to the amended proposal after the agreement of May 2006 on the budgetary framework (Commission, 2006a). This is just little more than half the figure of €13.62 billion originally proposed (Commission, 2004a). The overall objective is to contribute through Lifelong Learning to the Lisbon and Barcelona goals of moving towards an "advanced knowledge society", by fostering "interchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so they become a world quality reference" (ibid 14). Moreover, the integrated programme lists nine specific objectives. In addition, each of the six sub-programmes contains two further specific objectives, amounting to a total of 21 specific objectives for the integrated programme (ibid., 14-17). Within the specific programmes, operational objectives have been set, some of which being similar as expression of fact that programmes aim to achieve similar objectives across different life-stages. In terms of the objectives, a particularly novel element in comparison to Socrates II are the references to promoting "active" and "European citizenship", "social cohesion", "tolerance and respect for other peoples and cultures". Leonardo has been integrated into the programme alongside the Socrates sub-programmes, while programmes for youth and culture remain separate.

The aims of the Lifelong Learning programme are quantified for each of the four main sectoral sub-programmes:

- a) Erasmus aims to provide EU study abroad opportunities for a total of three million university students by 2011 under the present programme and its predecessors. This means support for 1.4 million additional students between 2007-11, which would require a 50% increase in the current annual number of mobility grant beneficiaries. (minimum 40% of overall budget, planned €3.1 bn)
- b) Leonardo da Vinci seeks to increase training placements in enterprises and training centres in another EU country to an annual 78,000 in 2013 (originally proposed 150,000), which would amount to a modest increase to the annual average of about 50,000 recipients in the period 2000-2006. (minimum 25%, envisaged €1.7 bn)
- c) Comenius's original aim was to involve at least 5% of EU school pupils in joint education activities (currently 3%). This aim will suffer from the budget cut of 38% to €1bn (minimum 13% allocation).
- d) Grundtvig's original aim was to help 25,000 adult education students benefit from studying abroad in 2013. This aim will also suffer from the budget cut of 39% to €358 m (minimum 4% of overall allocation)

In addition there will be a new cross-cutting programme (to be funded with €30 m), comprising actions in the area of policy development, language learning, new technologies (ICT) and dissemination and exploitation of results. And finally, the Jean Monnet programme (€70 m) will be continued, providing support through the Action Jean Monnet, support for European education and training institutions and support for European associations.

Management will be largely de-centralised to national agencies (to a greater extent than is the case at the moment), amounting to 82% of the programme budget, while the remaining 18% will be implemented centrally through the Commission or the recently created Executive Agency. Moreover, the majority of the budget will continue to be devoted to support mobility, namely 80% of Erasmus and Comenius, 60% of Leonardo, and 55% of Grundtvig under the latest proposal (European Commission, 2006).

3.1.2 Lessons learnt & orientations for future development

The following section aims to evaluate the new generation of programmes in the light of the overarching ‘value for money’ criterion and makes further recommendations for the future development of the programme and action in this area. It is not surprising that, while continuity is the dominant feature of the new programme in comparison to Socrates II and Leonardo II, there have been a number of welcome changes in response to findings from the interim evaluations, consultations and other sources (see also European Commission, 2004c).

The first important feature is the proposal to increase resources for the various actions, in particular Erasmus (by factor 3), but also Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci (by factor 2). The originally proposed increase was much higher, but was cut down after the reduction of the overall budget following the agreement on the new financial perspectives. Taking inflation into account the proposed budget means that the achievement of the original ambitious objectives, particularly in relation to the quantitative targets in the area of mobility for pupils, students and adult learners, had to be substantially revised downwards. This is all the more regrettable given that spending on education often has a multiplier effect and it is to be welcomed given that the EU is lagging behind other countries in terms of its share of GDP spending on education. In addition, the allocation of funds across the programmes indicates that concerns over continuity have mainly taken precedence over innovation. The substantial rise in the overall budget for the Erasmus programme is in line with its visibility and popularity. But from the perspective of cost-effectiveness, the question should be asked as to whether Community support could be focused more on removing non-pecuniary obstacles to student movement, such as the recognition of academic effort in another country, more transparent and simplified admissions procedures, as well as plugging gaps in information about living, studying and working in another country. These factors are generally thought to play more of a role in boosting student mobility than the mobility grants at their current level. We are not aware of attempts to ascertain how many students would have gone abroad even without such grants, but with assurances about recognition of their academic effort etc.

Moreover there appears to be a mismatch between the allocation of resources to the sub-programmes and the integrated programme’s aspirations in the area of Lifelong Learning as expressed in the programme’s title and in five of its specific objectives. In so far as Lifelong Learning is associated primarily with encouraging mature learners (25-64 years) to continuously update their knowledge and skills, it is difficult to understand why the overwhelming bulk of support is focused on 18-24 year old university students. We believe that the Erasmus objectives should include a clearer reference to the goal of encouraging adult learners into higher education. This is because the three percent budget minimum allocation to Grundtvig is not sufficiently large to make a tangible contribution to raising the participation rates of older learners and contribute to the Lisbon and Barcelona goals. Indeed, Grundtvig’s specific objectives are quite limited in aspiration. Much will depend on the impact of the cross-cutting programme – itself funded with just about 6% of the budget – as to whether the expected results will be achieved. To promote innovation in the core area of Lifelong Learning, we thus

recommend an increase in the share of the budget directed to adult learners and a decrease in the allocation used to support the mobility of university students.

A second area where the stated programme objectives and the sub-programme actions seem to diverge is in the area of citizen education. Given the limited resources available for the 'Citizens for Europe' programme, it is very welcome that the Comenius programme explicitly aims to develop an understanding among young people and educational staff of the diversity of European cultures and values, and provide them with skills and competences for Active European Citizenship. Given the importance of this objective and the ambitious target for pupil involvement, the budget allocation for Comenius seems insufficient. Moreover, one would have expected that the promotion of active citizenship was also featured more prominently within the other actions, given that adults may also lack the necessary skills and competences. Actions targeted at older learners could be also considered more important in terms of tackling a lack of involvement in European Union politics and intolerance. Given the importance of education, mobility and information in achieving the objectives of various programmes, more effort should be made to identify and exploit synergies and complementarities across education, the 'Europe for Citizens' Programme and programmes in the area of communication.

A particularly positive aspect of the new programme is the better explanation of the intervention logic, a clearer hierarchy and differentiation of overall, specific and operational objectives and more coherence across these objectives. In particular, it is to be welcomed that very detailed and unrealistic goals mentioned in the previous programme, such as support for lesser used languages, have been eliminated from the new programme. We also welcome the efforts to specify quantitative targets for each of the actions and to identify a range of indicators that could be used to evaluate progress and performance. At the same time, given the failure of the previous Socrates programme to reach the desired quantitative goals (see previous section), one should be cautious and realistic with regard to specifying goals that are expressed in terms of percentages of overall populations. In particular, there could be a greater appreciation of the many exogenous factors that strongly influence such outcomes beyond the immediate scope of Community action. In particular, the quality of implementation will depend on work done alongside national and regional authorities. Given the Community's limited competences, it will be crucial to promote the transfer and adaptation of existing best practices and genuine learning among policy-makers to maximise the contribution of the transversal activities. The contribution to open co-ordination processes should be spelled out more clearly.

Moreover, the rapid increases in funding for Leonardo may be over-ambitious and not cost-effective, as highlighted in a European Parliament report on the proposed decision. The capacity of universities to absorb Community funding is much higher than that of private companies, which will find it hard to accommodate the tripling of the number of trainees. Moreover, Leonardo placements are double the cost of mobility under Erasmus and 50% more than the cost (€2,316) of an upper secondary school pupil following courses in another language in a school abroad for up to one year (European Parliament, 2005: 32).

A major concern emerging from the interim evaluations, consultations and the interviews carried out for this study across virtually all the programmes has been the cumbersome and cost-intensive management process. This is in large part due to a rigid application of the rules contained in the New Financial Regulations. They are often not appropriate to the kind of projects and actions supported by the programmes, particularly but not only in the area of citizenship. Efforts to further simplify and reduce administrative costs should be taken, for instance through the use of flat rates, and the principle of proportionality must be more vigorously applied to limit the negative repercussions of applying the Financial Regulations to the letter.

This study welcomes the effort to simplify the administration of the programmes and to further decentralise it to national agencies. This is likely to increase the performance of the programme in several ways as long as steps are taken to ensure effective monitoring and auditing of these agencies. The quality of agency staff will be crucial in efforts to reduce bureaucracy and waste. We support the full implementation of current plans to reduce the number of national agencies involved in the implementation of the actions to one per country and to revise the contracting arrangements to increase

flexibility and reduce bureaucracy. At the moment, national agencies are contracted for the implementation of each of the sub-programmes separately, which provides no room for flexibility to shift funds between actions in the short term in response to demand and represents a considerable administrative burden.

3.2 Citizenship

3.2.1 Proposed Programme Structure, Budget & Objectives

The Commission's proposal for a 'Citizens for Europe' programme (later renamed in some of the documents as 'Europe for Citizens') is to run from 2007 to 2013. The budget allocation is just €190 million or €27 m per year (Council 2006), cut down from the originally proposed €235 m (European Commission, 2005a). The programme aims to contribute to three overall objectives, namely:

- a) giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, united in and enriched through its cultural diversities;
- b) forging a European identity, based on recognised common values, history and culture,
- c) enhancing mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and celebrating cultural diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

There are four specific objectives proposed for the programme, namely to:

- a) bring together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future;
- b) foster action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship through co-operation between civil society organisations at European level;
- c) make the idea of Europe more tangible for its citizens by promoting and celebrating Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past;
- d) encourage the balanced integration of citizens and civil society organisations from all member states, contributing to intercultural dialogue and bringing to the fore both Europe's diversity and unity, with particular attention to the activities with member states that have recently joined the European Union (EU).

The programme consists of three actions:

- Action 1: 'Active Citizens' aims to involve citizens directly, either through activities linked to town-twinning or through other kinds of citizens' projects.
- Action 2: 'Active Civil Society' aims to target European-wide civil society organisations, providing them with either structural support on the basis of their work programme or by supporting transnational projects initiated by these organisations.
- Action 3: 'Together for Europe' aims to support high visibility events, studies and information tools, addressing the widest possible audiences across frontiers and making Europe more tangible for its citizens.

3.2.2 Lessons Learnt & Orientations for Future Development

This section analyses the 'Europe for Citizens' programme in the light of the overarching 'value for money' criterion and makes further recommendations for the future development of the programme and action in this area.

We welcome the efforts undertaken to provide coherence and continuity (through a new legal basis) to the activities financed from 2004 to 2006 under the 'Active Citizenship' heading. The introduction of

the first two sub-actions, i.e. Active Citizens and Active Civil Society, is in line with the programme's overall objectives while ensuring continuity of past actions. The third action seems to relate more to efforts in the area of communication and information.

The distinction between overall, specific and operational objectives is more coherent and convincing than in the past and indicators are provided to measure performance. In the case of the overall objectives, these indicators are, however, excessively broad and at times simply inappropriate. For instance, the new programme does not set out what kind of change in behaviour could be measured to ascertain whether citizens have used opportunities to participate in the construction of Europe. Furthermore, measuring a growth in mutual understanding by changes in attitudes alone (instead of growth in knowledge about other cultures) is dubious. Given that the programme seeks to influence a number of intangibles, all the more effort needs to be made in the area of indicators, especially based on more sophisticated polls and surveys, to ensure that progress towards the programme(s) overall objectives can be measured reliably.

Despite such numerous improvements, it is hard to see how the new programme can make a significant contribution to its overall objectives given its insufficient funding and the focus of the actions contained with the programme. The promotion of active citizenship cannot be functionally separated from issues of awareness of citizens' rights, skills and competences, and electoral opportunities to participate. Indeed, the concept of active citizenship is not fully enough developed in the current proposal and does not provide a sufficiently coherent framework for the activities carried out under the programme heading. The goals of better informing citizens about the European institutions and opportunities for participation in decision-making, providing them with key competences and skills, communicating with them about European issues, and making them aware of their rights under the Treaty and the Charter on Fundamental rights are currently administered by other DGs (Press; Single Market; Research; Justice, Freedom and Security) and contained within other programmes. Only civic education is partly and in our view insufficiently addressed through the integrated Lifelong Learning Programme, as noted above. The justifications regarding coherence across and possible synergy with other Community activities in the area of citizenship are not always convincing and some gaps remain. In particular, there is no reference in the respective section (5.2.3) of the proposed Decision to the activities of DG Single Market with the Citizens Signpost Service regarding their rights in the EU and the Single Market. Given the importance that citizens' mobility could have for a number of objectives and recent ECJ case law in this area (Kokott, 2005), such activities should be better integrated into the programmes' various activities. Hence, we strongly encourage a better co-ordination of the Community's activities and programmes in the field of citizenship to realise synergies and avoid duplication of work, particularly the goal of raising awareness of citizens' freedom of movement rights.

This study welcomes the fact that the financial support for associations of European interest is to be phased out and continued thereafter only on the basis of successful applications for multi-annual funding. This is a necessary response to the finding of the interim evaluation (as well as some of the interviews conducted for this study) that indicated that the Community has not always received value for money from some of these associations in terms of innovation regarding the type, scope and focus of their activities. They also created a degree of dependence on the funding that limited the autonomy of some of the organisations and their ability to articulate and implement innovative strategies.

A major concern expressed in the public consultation and the interviews was the cumbersome management procedures and the resulting waste of resources. One of the problems identified was the Financial Regulations, which are not appropriate for a programme with a lot of projects/recipients but where small amounts of money are involved. Rigorously applying the principle of proportionality is essential to free up time and resources among the civil society organisations and other actors for the main activities deliver the desired results. Efforts have already been made in this area, either by moving away from contracts to simple Commission Decisions, allowing for more flexibility at the level of implementation and working more with lump sums. Simplifying the process is also of key importance in terms of speeding up payments as delays can seriously undermine the running and even

existence of typically small non-governmental organisations and networks. Moreover, more efforts should be made to hire and train staff at DG EAC so that necessary expertise is available in the area of communication and public relations (which many of the activities entail) and in the area of accounting. Having the necessary staff support is also crucial in terms of being able to provide quality feedback to potential and unsuccessful applicants. Given that much of the impact of the programme hinges on the quality of the proposals and multiplier effects, appropriate support for and communication with the beneficiaries and users is crucial to the success of the programme.

Finally, a number of interviewees highlighted the key role that member state actors, in particular policy-makers and officials, can play in the area of active citizenship. Leveraging the available resources to make an impact beyond the individual measure and to stimulate learning across various levels will be crucial to achieve results beyond the usual groups of elites and at the level of ordinary citizens. Unfortunately, the programme's administration does not currently provide the right kind of forum for interaction with the appropriate national representatives. Indeed, a number of interviewees felt that being administered by DG EAC was not the most natural situation given that the substantive focus of much of their work involved issues from the area of justice and home affairs and that of communication. They also raised questions over whether the right kind of member state officials are sitting on the programming committee in order to maximise learning and adaptation at the national level. Efforts should thus be taken to involve more national representatives from education, interior ministries and public information agencies in the programme committee and to improve co-ordination with other Council formations. The European Parliament could also make a valuable contribution to building linkages to other areas of citizenship practice.

4. Conclusion

This study examined whether the main programmes and action in the field of Education and Citizenship delivered to the European taxpayer 'value for money' in the period from 2000 to 2006. More specifically it analysed their performance using the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and utility. Furthermore, we have tried to provide guidance for the development of the next generation of programmes in both areas ('Europe for Citizens' and 'Lifelong Learning') for the period from 2007 to 2013. The activities in these two areas are different in terms of their objectives, particularly in their emphasis on contributing to the Lisbon and Barcelona goals, but also with regard to the size of their budgetary allocation. Yet, they are similar in their emphasis on mobility, their large number of small projects, their decentralised management of much of the activities, and the fact that they are both addressing, albeit to a different extent, the cross-cutting and increasingly crucial issue of citizenship.

Given that the final evaluations of the programmes in both areas are ongoing, this study had to draw on the results of interim evaluations, public consultations and data gathered in the process of interviewing stakeholders. Generally, we found that the programmes in both areas delivered 'value for money' but that performance varied across different programmes. In addition, when looking more closely at the criteria of relevance and utility and comparing them with the resources available, more efforts could be focused on becoming more innovative in the type and focus of interventions, rather than providing continuity to existing actions.

The findings presented here can thus only be preliminary in nature. At the same time, we found strong evidence of extensive efforts to evaluate the performance of past programmes, consult stakeholders about their preferences for the future and incorporate some of the lessons learned into the next generation of programmes.

The reader is invited to consult the Executive Summary for a more detailed overview of the main findings of the study.

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