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22 June 2000

**\*\*\*I**

## **REPORT**

on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council recommendation on  
European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education  
(COM(1999) 709 – C5-0053/2000 – 2000/0022(COD))

Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

Rapporteur: Marieke Sanders-ten Holte

### ***Symbols for procedures***

- \* Consultation procedure  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*I Cooperation procedure (first reading)  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*II Cooperation procedure (second reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position  
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend  
the common position*
- \*\*\* Assent procedure  
*majority of Parliament's component Members except in cases  
covered by Articles 105, 107, 161 and 300 of the EC Treaty and  
Article 7 of the EU Treaty*
- \*\*\*I Codecision procedure (first reading)  
*majority of the votes cast*
- \*\*\*II Codecision procedure (second reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the common position  
majority of Parliament's component Members, to reject or amend  
the common position*
- \*\*\*III Codecision procedure (third reading)  
*majority of the votes cast, to approve the joint text*

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the Commission)

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## PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 24 January 2000 the Commission submitted to Parliament, pursuant to Article 251(2), Article 149(4) and Article 150(4) of the EC Treaty, the proposal for a European Parliament and Council recommendation on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (COM(1999) 709 - 2000/0022 (COD)).

At the sitting of 2 February 2000 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred this proposal to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport as the committee responsible and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for its opinion (C5-0053/2000).

At the sitting of 18 February 2000 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, which had been asked for its opinion, would be involved in drawing up the report, in accordance with the Hughes Procedure (2000/0022(COD)).

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport appointed Marieke Sanders-ten Holte rapporteur at its meeting of 22 February 2000.

It considered the Commission proposal and draft report at its meetings of 24 May 2000 and 21 and 22 June 2000.

At the latter meeting it adopted the draft legislative resolution unopposed with one abstention.

The following were present for the vote: Giuseppe Gargani, chairman; Vasco Graca Moura and Ulpu Iivari, vice-chairmen; Marieke Sanders-ten Holte, rapporteur; Alexandros Alavanos, Ole Andreasen, Pedro Aparicio Sánchez, Robert Evans (for Giorgio Ruffolo), Janelly Fourtou (for Maria Martens), Cristina Gutiérrez Cortines (for Mónica Ridruejo), Ruth Hieronymi, Lucio Manisco, Ioannis Marinos (for Vittorio Sgarbi), Mario Walter Mauro, Pietro-Paolo Mennea, Jens Dyhr Okking, Barbara O'Toole, Doris Pack, Roy James Perry, Martine Roure, Dana Rosemary Scallon (for Christopher Heaton-Harris), Kathleen Van Brempt, Luckas Vander Taelen, Gianni Vattimo (for Valter Veltroni), Christine de Veyrac, Eurig Wyn, Teresa Zabell Lucas and Sabine Zissener.

The opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is attached; the Committee on Budgets decided on 23 February 2000 not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 22 June 2000.

The deadline for tabling amendments will be indicated in the draft agenda for the relevant part-session.

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

### Proposal for a European Parliament and Council recommendation on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (COM(1999) 709 – C5-0053/2000 – 2000/0022(COD))

The proposal is amended as follows:

Text proposed by the Commission <sup>1</sup>

Amendments by Parliament

(Amendment 1)  
Recital - 1

***(-1) There is a need to promote a European dimension in education as it is an essential objective in building a people's Europe,***

*Justification:*

*To revive one of the objectives of the EC Treaty.*

(Amendment 2)  
Recital 1

(1) High quality education is ***an*** objective for all Member States.

(1) High quality education is ***one of the principal objectives of primary and secondary education, including vocational training,*** for all Member States ***in the context of the learning society.***

*Justification:*

*The importance of high-quality education in the context of today's society must be emphasised.*

(Amendment 3)

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C

Recital 1a (new)

***(1a) the quality of education must be assured at all levels and in all areas of education, regardless of any differences in educational objectives, methods and demand;***

*Justification:*

*High-quality education must be available at all levels of education (primary, secondary and higher).*

(Amendment 4)

Recital 2

(2) The resources devoted to education have increased in all industrialised countries during the last decades. Education is seen *as* the solution to problems of employment and social cohesion. Lifelong learning is ***the key to*** controlling one's future on a professional and personal level. ***High*** quality education is essential in the light of labour market policies, and the free movement of workers within the European Union.

(2) The resources devoted to education have increased in all industrialised countries during the last decades. Education is seen ***not only as a personal enrichment but also as a contribution towards social cohesion, social inclusion and*** the solution to problems of employment. Lifelong learning is ***an important means of*** controlling one's future on a professional and personal level. Quality education is essential in the light of labour market policies, and the free movement of workers within the European Union ***and the recognition of diplomas and teaching qualifications.***

*Justification:*

*The capacity of education to solve social problems such as unemployment and social policy must not be overrated.*

(Amendment 5)  
Recital 2a (new)

***(2a) educational establishments must always ensure that their syllabuses take account of developments in society and the employment market;***

*Justification:*

*Now more than ever, educational establishments must adjust rapidly to the accelerated rate of change in contemporary society.*

(Amendment 6)  
Recital 2e (new)

***(2e) educational establishments should meet the new educational and social requirements of society in the new millennium and keep pace with the developments arising from them. They should, therefore, endeavour to improve the quality demanded of the services they provide by developing new initiatives geared to ensure the quality of teaching and encouraging both the movement of persons between countries and the transfer of knowledge;***

*Justification:*

*See preceding amendment.*

(Amendment 7)  
Recital 3a (new)

..

***(3a) the promotion of mobility enshrined as an objective of the Community in EC Treaty Articles 149 and 150 can only be encouraged by high-quality education;***

*Justification:*

*The implementation of the objectives set out in the Treaty must be promoted.*

(Amendment 8)  
Recital 3b (new)

..

***(3b) consensus has emerged in favour of the introduction of effective, acceptable methods of evaluating quality, based on European cooperation and transnational exchanges of experience;***

*Justification:*

*The existence of a body of opinion in favour of qualitative evaluation of the development of education can only encourage its development.*

(Amendment 9)  
Recital 3c (new)

***(3c) systems designed to ensure quality must remain flexible and be adaptable to the new situation created by changes in the structure and objectives of educational establishments, taking into account the cultural dimension of education.***

*Justification:*

*This a fact acknowledged to be true by all the experts.*

(Amendment 10)  
Recital 3d (new)

..

***(3d) systems to ensure quality vary from one Member State and one educational establishment to another, given the diversity in the sizes, structures, financial circumstances, institutional character and educational approach of different establishments;***

*Justification:*

*Diversity in education is also an asset for the Union.*

(Amendment 11)  
Recital 3e (new)

***(3e) Quality evaluation and school self-evaluation in particular are tools well suited to the aim of combating the number of young people who drop out of the school system early and social exclusion in general.***

*Justification:*

*Appropriate responses must be given in areas where difficulties and failure at school are a particular problem.*

(Amendment 12)  
Recital 4

(4) In order to achieve the objective of high quality education, a whole range of means are available. Quality evaluation is ***a method of monitoring and creating learning and improving schools, which are capable of transmitting knowledge and equipping students in the Community with the appropriate skills, qualifications and attitudes which are essential to meet future challenges.***

(4) In order to achieve the objective of high quality education, a whole range of means are available. Quality evaluation is ***one of them and is a valuable contribution to securing and developing the quality of education within schools including, where appropriate, vocational education.***

*Justification:*

*Wording is more appropriate.*

(Amendment 13)

Recital 4a (new)

***(4a) The networking at European level of institutions involved in quality evaluation in school education is of fundamental importance. Existing networks such as the European network of policy makers for the evaluation of education systems set up by the Member States of the European Union in 1995 can provide invaluable aid to the implementation of this recommendation.***

*Justification:*

*The important role that networks can play in the field of quality evaluation of education should not be forgotten.*

(Amendment 14)

Recital 8

(8) The Commission conducted a pilot project during the academic year 1997/1998 in 1010 upper and lower secondary schools in the countries participating in the Socrates programme. ***An Advisory Working Party that brought together Member States' appointed experts on education evaluation assisted the Commission in the implementation of the project.***

(8) The Commission conducted a pilot project during the academic year 1997/1998 in 101 upper and lower secondary schools in the countries participating in the Socrates programme, ***which raised awareness of quality issues and helped to improve the quality of education in those schools during the project period.***<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *At the final conference of the pilot project in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998, the participants adopted a declaration on the results of the Pilot Project*

*Justification:*

*Wording more appropriate.*

(Amendment 15)

Recital 9

***(9) The participants in the project, including representatives of the 101 schools, decision-makers from national administrations, researchers, and school stakeholders adopted a declaration during a final conference in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998. That declaration states that « The Pilot Project has raised the awareness of quality issues in our schools and in almost all our schools, the project has helped to improve the quality of education during the project period »<sup>7</sup>.***

*Deleted*

7 At the final Conference of the pilot project in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998, the participants adopted a declaration.

*Justification:*

*These are interesting details rather than explanatory matter suitable for inclusion in a recital.*

(Amendment 16)  
Recital 10

***(10) All 18 countries (EU Member States and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) taking part in the pilot project have written national reports exploring the impact of and their experiences during the pilot project. Those National Reports are predominantly positive and stress the importance of learning from one another internationally through the exchange of experiences and of good practices.***

*Deleted*

*Justification:*

*See previous justification.*

(Amendment 17)  
Recital 12a (new)

***(12a) the Council Presidency declared in its conclusions at the Extraordinary European Council held in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000 that European education and training systems must adapt both to the needs of the information***

***society and to the need to raise levels of employment and improve its quality;***

*Justification:*

*The importance of the quality of education systems in the Union justifies the Council's devoting several paragraphs to it in its conclusions.*

(Amendment 18)  
Recital 12b (new)

***(12b) the prospect of enlargement of the Union means that the associated States should be included in the drafting of procedures to evaluate the quality of education, bearing in mind their particular problems;***

*Justification:*

*The need to take account of the applicant countries in this area.*

(Amendment 19)  
Recital 13

(13) It is necessary to take account of the principle of subsidiarity and Member States' exclusive responsibilities for the organisation and structure of their education systems, ***as well as the autonomy and independence of their educational institutions,***

(13) It is necessary to take account of the principle of subsidiarity and Member States' exclusive responsibilities for the organisation and structure of their education systems, ***so that the particular cultural character and educational traditions of each State can survive and flourish,***

*Justification:*

*Need to take account of the subsidiarity principle in this area.*

(Amendment 20)  
Section I

**I. RECOMMEND:**  
THAT MEMBER STATES SUPPORT  
THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY IN  
SCHOOL EDUCATION, BY:..

**I. RECOMMEND:**  
THAT MEMBER STATES, ***WITHIN  
THEIR SPECIFIC ECONOMIC,  
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT,***

**WHILE TAKING DUE ACCOUNT OF  
THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION,  
SUPPORT THE IMPROVEMENT OF  
QUALITY *EVALUATION* IN SCHOOL  
EDUCATION, BY:**

*Justification:*

*See previous justification.*

(Amendment 21)  
Section I, point 1

1. Supporting and, where appropriate, establishing transparent quality systems with the following aims :

(a) to safeguard the quality of school education as a basis for lifelong learning, ***within the specific economic, social and cultural context of each Member State while taking due account of the European dimension,***

(b) to encourage school self-evaluation as a method ***to create*** learning and improving schools within a balanced framework ***between*** school self-evaluation and any external evaluations,

1. Supporting and, where appropriate, establishing transparent quality ***evaluation*** systems with the following aims :

***(-a) to achieve high-quality education and improve on it,***

***(a) to safeguard the quality of school education as a basis for lifelong learning,***

***(aa) to ensure that this initiative includes women and girls and groups that have been excluded in the past;***

(b) to encourage school self-evaluation as a method ***of creating*** learning and improving schools within a balanced framework ***of*** school self-evaluation and any external evaluations,

*Justification:*

*It is proposed that the last part of point 1 (a) should be deleted, since it has been incorporated in amendment 17.*

(Amendment 22)  
Section I, point 2(ba)(new)

***(ba) to use techniques aimed at improving quality as a means of adapting more successfully to the requirements of a world in rapid and constant change,***

*Justification:*

*See justifications for amendments 2 and 5.*

(Amendment 23)  
Section I, point 1(ca)(new)

***(ca) to develop external evaluation in order to provide methodological support for school self-evaluation and to provide an outside view of the school encouraging a process of continuous improvement,***

*Justification:*

*Refers back to points 2(a) and (b) of the proposal for a recommendation.*

(Amendment 24)  
Section I, point 2

2. Supporting and, where appropriate, ***developing systems*** of external evaluation ***with the following aims:***

***(a) to monitor and provide methodological support and encouragement for school self-evaluation,***

***(b) to provide an outside view of the school ensuring that it is in a process of continuous improvement;***

2. ***Encouraging and*** supporting, where appropriate, ***the involvement of school stakeholders, namely teachers, pupils, management, parents and experts, in the process of external and self-evaluation in schools in order to promote shared responsibility for the improvement of schools.***

***Deleted***

***Deleted***

*Justification:*

Points 2(a) and (b), which have been incorporated into amendment 23, have been replaced by a new text.

(Amendment 25)  
Section I, point 3

**3. Encouraging and supporting the involvement of all school stakeholders in the full process of evaluation in schools with the following aims:**  
**(a) to add a decisive and creative element to school self-evaluation,**  
**(b) to ensure shared responsibility for the improvement of schools;**

**Deleted**

*Justification:*

*Point 3 (Section I) has been partially incorporated into Amendment 24.*

(Amendment 26)  
Section I, point 4

4. Supporting training in the management and the use of self-evaluation with the following aims:

4. Supporting training in the management and the use of self-evaluation **instruments** with the following aims:

*Justification:*

*Improved wording.*

(Amendment 27)  
Section I, point 5(a)

(a) to identify good practices, efficient tools and benchmarks,

(a) to identify **and disseminate** good practices **and** efficient tools **such as indicators** and benchmarks **in the field of quality evaluation in school education,**

*Justification:*

*See previous justification.*

(Amendment 28)  
Section I, point 5(b)

(b) to form networks to support each other

(b) to form networks **between schools, also**

and provide outside impetus to the evaluation process;

**at a local and regional level**, to support each other and provide outside impetus to the evaluation process;

*Justification:*

*See justification of Amendment 26.*

(Amendment 29)  
Section I, point 6

6. Encouraging the cooperation between the authorities **responsible for** quality in school education and promote European networking:

6. Encouraging the cooperation between **all** the authorities **involved in evaluating** quality in school education and promoting European networking **between them**:

*Justification:*

*See previous justification.*

(Amendment 30)  
Section I, point 6a)

(a) the exchange of information and experiences, in particular on methodological developments and examples of good practice,

(a) the exchange of information and experiences, in particular on methodological developments and examples of good practice, **especially by using modern information and communication technologies, and when appropriate by organising European conferences, seminars and workshops,**

Or. EN

*Justification:*

*Exchange of information and experience can be greatly promoted by organising conferences, seminars, etc. and by using the Internet.*

(Amendment 31)  
Section I, point 6(b)

(b) the **development** of **comparable** data,

(b) the **collection** of data **and the**

indicators and benchmarks ***on national education systems to compare strength and weaknesses with a view to exchanging good practices,***

***development of tools such as indicators and benchmarks of particular relevance for quality evaluation in schools,***

*Justification:*

*Improved wording.*

(Amendment 32)  
Section I, point 6(ba) (new)

***(ba) making use of the results of national and international surveys for the development of school quality evaluation in education systems;***

*Justification:*

*The need to take account of the results of international educational quality evaluation surveys*

(Amendment 33)  
Section I, point 6(c)

***(c) the building of European expertise in the area, which could be*** made available for authorities in Member States concerned,

***(c) publication of results of school evaluation in accordance with the possibilities of each Member State and its educational establishments, and*** made available for authorities in ***the*** Member States concerned,

*Justification:*

*The results of experiments carried out in this area should be published in such a way as to guarantee optimum dissemination.*

(Amendment 34)  
Section I, point 6(d)

(d) promoting contact between experts

(d) promoting contact between experts ***in***

*internationally.*

*order to build European expertise in the area.*

*Justification:*

*It should also be possible to develop qualitative evaluation of education through contacts between experts in such a way as to build a solid body of European experience in this area.*

(Amendment 35)  
Section I, point 6(db)

***(db) making use of the results of international surveys for quality development in individual schools.***

Or. DE

*Justification:*

*Use must be made of the results of existing international surveys in order to avoid duplication.*

(Amendment 36)  
Section I, point 6 (dc) (new)

***(dc) under the Socrates II programme, assigning the Eurydice European network the task of coordinating the experienced gained in evaluating the quality of education.***

Or. FR

*Justification:*

*There is no point in setting up another network to carry out quality evaluation of education as this task can be accomplished by an existing network such as Eurydice*

(Amendment 37)  
Section II, point 1

1. to encourage, in close cooperation with the Member States, and on the basis of existing programmes, **and subject to their objectives and normal, open and transparent procedures**, the cooperation referred to in point 6 **between the authorities responsible for quality in school education**, also involving organisations and associations **of school education institutions** with **a European remit and** the necessary experience in **quality assessment and quality assurance**;

1. to encourage, in close cooperation with the Member States, and on the basis of existing **Community** programmes, the cooperation referred to in points **5 and 6**, also involving **relevant** organisations **such as National Agencies** and associations with the necessary experience in **this field**;

*Justification:*

*The National Agencies should be involved to form the link with pilot programmes set up in the context of Socrates and Leonardo.*

(Amendment 38)  
Section II, point 2

2. to establish a database for the dissemination of tools and instruments of school **self-evaluation**. The database should also contain examples of **best practice within school evaluation**. **The database should** be accessible on the Internet;

2. to establish **on the basis of the existing Community programmes an interactive** database for the dissemination of **effective** tools and instruments of school **quality evaluation**. The database should also contain examples of **good** practice **and** be accessible on the Internet;

*Justification:*

*See previous justification.*

(Amendment 39 )  
Section II, point 2a (new)

**(2a) to make use of the resources within existing Community programmes, to incorporate the experience already gained into these programmes and to develop the existing networks;**

*Justification:*

*Implementation of the objectives set out in the recommendation needs budgetary resources, which must be provided from the existing Community programmes.*

(Amendment 40)  
Section II, point 2b (new)

***(2b) to make, as a first step, an inventory of the instruments and strategies for quality evaluation in primary and secondary education already in use in the various Member States. A plan for a follow-up should be defined for the activities in close cooperation with the Member States and on a regular basis, taking into account the results of the above mentioned inventory and fully informing the European Parliament, the Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions.***

*Justification:*

*It must be possible for actions implemented within the framework of the future recommendation to be monitored.*

(Amendment 41)  
Section II, point 3

3. to present triennial reports to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ***on progress in the development of quality assurance systems in the various Member States and on cooperation activities at European level including the progress achieved with respect to the objectives referred to above.***

3. to present ***on the basis of contributions from the Member States*** triennial ***detailed*** reports to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions ***in relation to the implementation of the present recommendation.***

*Justification:*

*Improved wording.*

(Amendment 42)  
Section II, point 3a (new)

***(3a) to prepare conclusions and make suggestions on the basis of these reports.***

*Justification:*

*The aim is to follow up the results obtained.*

## DRAFT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

### European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council regulation on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (COM(1999) 709 – C5-0053/2000 – 2000/0022(COD))

**(Codecision procedure: first reading)**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(1999) 709<sup>1</sup>),
  - having regard to Article 251(2), Article 149(4) and Article 150 of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C5-0053/2000)<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 67 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A5-0185/2000),
1. Approves the Commission proposal as amended;
  2. Asks to be consulted again should the Commission intend to amend its proposal substantially or replace it with another text;
  3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C ...

<sup>2</sup> OJ C ...

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### I. INTRODUCTION

The advent of the information society has had significant repercussions at all levels. Schools have not been immune to these changes. The traditional role of the school in industrial society was to pass on knowledge and impart the information needed for everyday life. Now children arrive at school 'overinformed' as a result of the omnipresent television, which forces educational institutions and teachers to provide better and different teaching, including guidance in how to learn. Against this background the quality of education has become a fundamental challenge, from which society in the new millennium cannot escape.

Since the beginning of the 1990s the Commission has recognised the importance of the quality of education. Article 126(1) of the Treaty on European Union itself stated that one of the objectives of the Union was the development of high-quality education. The Treaty also states that, in order to achieve this objective, the Community must encourage cooperation between the Member States by supporting and supplementing their actions, while at the same time respecting fully the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the way in which their educational systems are organised.

It was decided, also, at the Summit in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000 that priority should be given to education, particularly in view of the recent developments in IT and the need for well-trained professionals in the fight against unemployment. Modern society requires an educational system that keeps track of, and adapts easily to, the rapid developments within society.

Since the quality of teaching in universities is of the greatest importance, the Council of Education Ministers decided in November 1991 to set up a Community project in the area of quality evaluation.

When the debate began, only a few Member States had set up systematic quality assessment systems, the structures of which were extremely diverse. The ministers took the view that the great variety of methods at national level could be enriched through an exchange of experience among European countries on evaluating teaching quality.

It was for this reason that the Commission was invited to draw up a comparative study of the methods used by the Member States to evaluate quality and, on this basis, to set up a number of pilot projects designed to evaluate the quality of teaching in certain subjects in a number of higher-education establishments. The aim of these projects was to develop a culture of evaluation in all the participating countries simultaneously by testing a common method and making adjustments in accordance with the national context.

The results of the pilot projects formed the basis for the proposal for a Council recommendation on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> COM(1997) 159.

The same procedure was followed, *mutatis mutandis*, for education in the non-tertiary sphere. On 6 May 1996 the education ministers meeting in the Council supported the Commission's intention of launching a pilot project in early 1997 on evaluation of the quality of education in schools. They also adopted conclusions on the subject,<sup>1</sup> on 16 December 1997, stressing the importance of improving the quality of education in schools.

The pilot project on quality evaluation in school education was carried out in 1997 and 1998 in cooperation with the relevant authorities. Over 100 schools in the Member States and in three non-Community countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) took part in the project, which aimed to raise awareness of the need for an evaluation of secondary education in Europe, to improve existing national procedures, to give quality evaluation a European dimension and to promote the exchange of information and experience.

The Union's education ministers and their counterparts in the applicant countries, meeting in Prague in June 1998, continued the debate on the quality of education and instructed the Commission to identify the indicators needed to assess the quality of education. The Commission set up an ad hoc committee, which drew up a preliminary list of indicators. The committee's report will be considered by the EU education ministers and their counterparts from the applicant countries at the meeting scheduled to take place in Bucharest in June 2000.

The European Parliament expressed its support on the subject of the quality of education in a number of resolutions, including those of 18 November 1997 and 27 May 1998 on the proposal for a Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (first and second readings respectively).<sup>2</sup> This proposal for a recommendation was adopted by the Council on 24 September 1998.<sup>3</sup>

## II. CONTENT OF THE PROPOSAL FOR A RECOMMENDATION

The proposal for a European Parliament and Council recommendation on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education,<sup>4</sup> presented by the Commission, calls on the Member States to provide support for the quality of school education by introducing transparent quality systems, promoting external assessment systems or encouraging cooperation between the authorities responsible for the quality of teaching. This cooperation could cover the following areas:

- a) the exchange of information and experiences, in particular on methodological developments and examples of good practice,
- b) the development of comparable data, indicators and benchmarks on national education systems to compare strength and weaknesses with a view to exchanging good practices,
- c) the building of European expertise in the area, which could be made available for the authorities in the Member States concerned,
- d) promoting contact between experts internationally.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 1, 3.1.1998, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 371, 8.12.1997, p. 26 and OJ C 195, 22.6.1998, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 270, 7.10.1998, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> COM(1999) 709 final.

The proposal also calls on the Commission to encourage cooperation between the authorities responsible for the quality of education in schools, on the one hand, and, on the other, organisations and associations of educational establishments with a European dimension which have the necessary experience in assessing and guaranteeing quality.

Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty, which relate to education and training, form the legal basis for the proposal for a recommendation. According to these articles, the role of the Union in these areas is to encourage cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, to support and supplement their actions, while respecting fully the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education systems, as well as their cultural and linguistic diversity.

Implementation of the recommendation will call for the creation of a database for the dissemination of instruments for assessing schools and for self-assessment. The cost of this implementation will be covered by budget item B3.1001 of the Socrates programme.

It would be advisable as a first step to make an inventory of the instruments and strategies for quality evaluation in primary and secondary education already in use in the various Member States. As a follow-up an action plan with a time schedule should be proposed in close cooperation with the Member States, taking into account the results of the above-mentioned inventory.

The Commission is invited to present a report every three years to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the progress made in setting up systems to guarantee the quality of education in the Member States and in the cooperative activities at European level, to draw conclusions on the basis of these reports and to make suggestions for further action.

### III. CRITICAL EVALUATION

First, the Commission is to be congratulated on its initiative for European cooperation in evaluating the quality of education in schools.

The threefold impact of the information society, globalisation and the speed of scientific and technological change makes the provision of high-quality education a necessity.

The White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, the White Paper on 'Teaching and Learning', which is based on the concepts of the 'learning society' and 'lifelong learning', as well as the Green Paper on 'Innovation', have already stressed that one of the key elements of competitiveness is the quality of education and training.

The quality of education is linked to the idea of productiveness, and hence to evaluation and assessment of results. Quality is measured in terms of evaluation criteria and benchmarks, which are the product of a culture and which are reflected in school syllabuses. Nevertheless, in the information society in which we now live, the quality of education and its evaluation transcend educational systems and national frontiers.

One could have wished that the Commission had defined the concept of 'quality evaluation in school education'. The criteria by which to assess quality – 'indicators' – have already been defined by the ad hoc group mentioned earlier. The Commission should have referred in its proposal to these instruments, which must be relevant, reliable and susceptible of comparison. The 16 indicators are as follows:

AREA	INDICATOR
KNOWLEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Foreign languages</li> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• ICT (information, communications and technology)</li> <li>• Civic instruction</li> </ul>
SUCCESS AND TRANSITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School failure rate</li> <li>• Completion of secondary school</li> <li>• Rate of participation in higher education</li> </ul>
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent participation</li> <li>• Assessment and orientation of education at school</li> </ul>
RESOURCES AND STRUCTURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending on education per student</li> <li>• Teacher education and training</li> <li>• Rate of participation in pre-school education</li> <li>• Student/computer ratio</li> </ul>

Use of these indicators should make it possible to convert the results of the assessments into projects directed towards the future.

The wording of recital 2 "... Education is seen as the solution to problems of employment and social cohesion. ..." <sup>1</sup> strikes us as a little excessive. Education is not a panacea, but it can help to solve some of society's problems.

In the context of qualitative evaluation of education in schools, and bearing in mind the existing Community programmes in the area of education/training, the setting up of an interactive database is very important, as it will enable new items of technical knowledge (including tools and instruments) to be disseminated to educational establishments. The fact of their being connected to the Internet, where this database could be placed, would considerably facilitate access for pupils and teachers to the information, and hence to the development of educational quality and pedagogical exchanges.

The creation of a European network dedicated to evaluating the quality of education, made up of relevant authorities designated by the Member States and of organisations and associations

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<sup>1</sup> COM(1999) 709, p. 6.

with the necessary experience in the area of assessing educational quality, is also essential.

Participation in the whole evaluation process at every level by all those involved in the educational process (teachers and learners), as well as their interest groups and trade unions, their families and the local authorities where the schools are situated, can only add to the enterprise's chances of success. In addition, involving other interested groups from outside of education may also allow those leaving school to obtain the qualifications they need to facilitate access to the world of work.

Qualitative evaluation, whether internal or external, is a fundamental tool for educational establishments. It forms a good basis for the development of strategies aiming at developing their ability to adapt to the new directions in society and changes at local, regional, national and international level.

This European cooperation must involve the organisations concerned, including national agencies and associations with the necessary experience in this area.

European cooperation in evaluating the quality of education in schools will take account of the subsidiarity principle, according to which the Union only intervenes in so far as the objectives of the measure proposed cannot be achieved satisfactorily by the Member States acting individually. The exclusive responsibilities of the Member States as regards the organisation and structure of their educational systems will therefore be entirely respected, as will the autonomy and independence of the educational establishments.

The ministerial meetings in Prague (1998) and Budapest (1999) brought together the education ministers from the Member States with their counterparts from the applicant countries to discuss subjects such as evaluation of the quality of education in schools. These countries should therefore be able to take part in the measures Europe is taking in this area, which must take account of their particular difficulties.

7 June 2000

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education (COM(1999) 709 – C5-0053/00 – 2000/0022(COD))

Draftsman: Marie-Hélène Gillig

### **PROCEDURE**

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs appointed Marie-Hélène Gillig draftsman at its meeting of 24 February 2000.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 22/23 May and 5/6 June 2000.

At the latter meeting it adopted the amendments below unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Winfried Menrad, acting chairman; Marie-Hélène Gillig, draftsman; Sylviane H. Ainardi, Jan Andersson, Elspeth Attwooll (for Massimo Cacciari), Alejandro Cercas Alonso, Luigi Cocilovo, Elisa Maria Damião, Proinsias De Rossa, Harald Ettl, Carlo Fatuzzo, Ilda Figueiredo, Hélène Flautre, Anne-Karin Glase, Roger Helmer (for Philip Rodway Bushill-Matthews), Richard Howitt (for Claude Moraes), Ian Stewart Hudghton, Stephen Hughes, Karin Jöns, Piia-Noora Kauppi (for Rodi Kratsa), Ioannis Koukiadis, Rodi Kratsa, Jean Lambert, Elizabeth Lynne, Toine Manders (for Daniel G.L.E.G. Ducarme), Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Mauro Nobilia, Juan Ojeda Sanz (for María Antonia Avilés Perea), Manuel Pérez Álvarez, Bartho Pronk, Fernando Reis, Luciana Sbarbati, Herman Schmid, Peter William Skinner (for Anne E.M. Van Lancker), Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Barbara Weiler.

## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

### 1. Introduction

Over the past five years, cooperation has got under way at European level in connection with the evaluation of school education, starting with higher education and then extending to cover the lower levels of secondary and primary education. The cooperation has taken the form of meetings between senior officials, study visits and conferences. The process was supported by the launch of a pilot project, decided on by the Council of Ministers of Education in 1997, which was carried out in 1997 and 1998. Following this period of experimentation, the next step, based on this recommendation, is to organise cooperation in quality evaluation in school education and vocational training on a more systematic basis.

The main purpose of this initiative is to set up a European network of schools applying quality evaluation practices. Evaluation indicators and criteria must be developed, and, to do this, a database will be created which will enable these tools to be disseminated.

The legal basis for the recommendation is provided by Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. These articles call on the Commission to contribute to the development of quality education and to the implementation of a vocational training policy by encouraging cooperation between Member States.

### 2. Considerations relating to the proposal for a recommendation as a whole

The European Parliament cannot but endorse an initiative which seeks to promote high-quality education in Europe and which constitutes an essential objective to be achieved by the Member States, in particular on the basis of closer cooperation in quality evaluation. However, we wish to express our regret about the wording of the provisions of the recommendation put forward by the Commission, which is too general in places and which lacks precision. This may hamper the identification, as part of the cooperation between the various schools and other educational and training institutions, of practices of general applicability.

Although the recommendation's provisions are hedged about with many provisos, pointing out the principle of subsidiarity applying to matters of education policy, it is essential to stress the Community's role in sharing this objective and its ability to support and, where appropriate, supplement, action by the Member States.

The recommendation rightly emphasises the vital need for quality education as a means of combating unemployment effectively and of promoting greater social cohesion. Quality evaluation must be carried out not only in the context of school education but also in that of vocational training and life-long learning, which provide effective avenues for entering or re-entering the labour market, especially in connection with the development of new information technologies.

The recommendation refers to the simultaneous implementation of two approaches to quality evaluation: external evaluation, which is carried out at a central administrative level, and internal or self-evaluation, which directly involves local actors. At this point, we wish to stress that these two approaches are complementary. We also reaffirm our preference for not giving precedence to external evaluation, since this may simply compare the performances of schools and set up rankings, when schools naturally differ in the way in which they work, their resources and their capacity to respond to the difficulties posed by failure at school. It is, therefore, necessary to safeguard the benefit of cooperation in high-quality education, which is based on drawing up quality indicators, without seeking to produce universally verifiable prescriptive evaluation models. The real challenge is for each school to have the capacity to increase the inherent quality of its teaching and to accept all pupils, particularly the weakest.

## AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments into its report:

Text proposed by the Commission<sup>1</sup>

Amendments by Parliament

### (Amendment 1) Recital 2

(2) The resources devoted to education have increased in all industrialised countries during the last decades.

*Education is seen as the solution to problems of employment and social cohesion.*

*Lifelong learning is the key to controlling one's future on a professional and personal level. High quality education is essential in the light of labour market policies, and the free movement of workers within the European Union.*

(2) The resources devoted to education have increased in all industrialised countries during the last decades.

**High-quality education is seen as a means of effectively combatting social marginalisation and unemployment and encouraging better social cohesion.**

**Lifelong learning constitutes an effective solution for integration or reintegration into the employment market, particularly in view of the development of new information technologies and the free movement of workers within the European Union.**

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<sup>1</sup> Not yet published in the Official Journal.

*Justification:*

*This amendment emphasises the importance of education in the fight against social exclusion. Reference is also made to the significance of technological change.*

(Amendment 2)

Recital 4

(4) In order to achieve the objective of high quality education, a whole range of means are available. Quality evaluation is a method of monitoring and creating learning and improving schools, which are capable of transmitting knowledge and equipping students in the Community with the appropriate skills, qualifications and attitudes which are essential to meet future challenges.

(4) In order to achieve the objective of high quality education, a whole range of means are available. Quality evaluation is a method of monitoring and creating learning and improving schools, which are capable of transmitting knowledge and equipping students in the Community with the appropriate skills, qualifications and attitudes which are essential to meet future challenges.

**The quality evaluation of education must seek to assess the capacity of schools to take account of the use of the new information technologies which are becoming more widespread. Cooperation on such matters may help to highlight, first, the existing inequalities between schools in terms of their capacity to equip themselves, the disparities between teachers' abilities to use the new technologies, with a view to drawing up training plans for teachers themselves, and variations in how far schools make available to teachers and pupils the new means of communication. Secondly, it may help to highlight the appropriate means of remedying this situation.**

*Justification:*

*The skills potential represented by the new communications technologies must be shared by everyone as fairly as possible, in the interests of combating the inequalities between those who have access to them and those who do not.*

(Amendment 3)  
Recital 5a (new)

***(5a) Such cooperation must take place with the consistent concern being to exchange good practices and methodological tools which are mutually comparable and thus transferable.***

*Justification:*

*The diversity and the rich variety of the educational systems of the various Member States make it impossible to lay down evaluation models to be applied systematically and uniformly. This is why cooperation must primarily concern methodological aspects. It must also be mindful of a satisfactory degree of comparability and transferability.*

(Amendment 4)  
Recital 9

(9) The participants in the project, including representatives of the 101 schools, decision-makers from national administrations, researchers, and school stakeholders adopted a declaration during a final conference in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998. That declaration states that “The Pilot Project has raised the awareness of quality issues in our schools and in almost all our schools, the project has helped to improve the quality of education during the project period”.

(9) The participants in the project, including representatives of the 101 schools, decision-makers from national administrations, researchers, and school stakeholders adopted a declaration during a final conference in Vienna on 20 and 21 November 1998. That declaration states that “The Pilot Project has raised the awareness of quality issues in our schools and in almost all our schools, the project has helped to improve the quality of education during the project period”.

**One of the prerequisites for the success of this initiative is for all those involved in the world of education, and in particular those on the ground, including the representatives of administrative authorities, head teachers’, teachers’ and parents’ associations, and pupils, to participate in the evaluation process.**

*Justification:*

*The need for broad participation in evaluation must be stressed: involvement of, in particular, those stakeholders on the ground who are directly concerned will provide the democratic guarantee of greater adaptability to the needs of the public and give a more fine-tuned response to the socio-economic realities which are specific to each situation.*

(Amendment 5)  
Title I, paragraph 1

1. Supporting and, where appropriate, establishing transparent quality systems with the following aims:

1. Supporting and, where appropriate, establishing transparent quality systems, **which do not duplicate the assessment systems of the Member States' administrations**, with the following aims:

*Justification:*

*This amendment makes it clear that the issue involved here is the development of quality systems adapted to meet individual cases.*

(Amendment 6)  
Title I, paragraph 2(a)

(a) to monitor and provide methodological support and encouragement for school self-evaluation,

(a) to monitor and provide methodological support and encouragement for school self-evaluation, **so as to provide the requisite tools to respond to weaknesses specific to each school, taking care to rule out the tendency to set up school excellence rankings,**

*Justification:*

*The object is to compare the methods, and not the performance, specific to each school and, by means of observation and comparison, to draw up a compendium of good practices which are easily transferable.*

(Amendment 7)  
Title I, paragraph 2(b)

(b) to provide an outside view of the school ensuring that it is in a process of continuous improvement;

(b) to provide an outside view of the school, **taking care that this is not restricted to purely administrative checks, and to contribute to** continuous improvement;

*Justification:*

*This amendment makes it clear that the issue involved here is a qualitative improvement in education.*

(Amendment 8)  
Title I, paragraph 3(a)

(a) to add a decisive and creative element to school self-evaluation,

(a) to add a decisive and creative element to school self-evaluation; **self-evaluation, moreover, is the tool which is best suited to take into account the specific characteristics of each school, particularly those which teach children experiencing the greatest difficulties, with the aim of combating the number of young people who drop out of the school system early.**

*Justification:*

*The appropriate responses must be provided for situations in which difficulties and school failure are particularly marked.*

(Amendment 9)  
Title I, paragraph 4(a)

(a) to make school self-evaluation function effectively as an instrument strengthening schools' capacity to *improve*;

(a) to make school self-evaluation function effectively as an instrument strengthening schools' capacity to **develop**;

*Justification:*

*This amendment involves more precise wording.*

(Amendment 10)  
Title I, paragraph 6(c)

(c) the building of European expertise in the area, which could be made available for authorities in Member States concerned,

(c) the building of European expertise in the area, which could be made available for authorities in Member States concerned **and also with a view to fostering the recognition of qualifications,**

*Justification:*

*The evaluation of schools and of educational modules may ultimately contribute to transparency in the educational system and promote mutual recognition of qualifications.*

(Amendment 11)  
Title II, paragraph 1

1. to encourage, in close cooperation with the Member States, and on the basis of existing programmes, and subject to their objectives and normal, open and transparent procedures, the cooperation referred to in point 6 between the authorities responsible for quality in school education, also involving organisations and associations of school education institutions with a European remit and the necessary experience in quality assessment and quality assurance;

1. to encourage, in close cooperation with the Member States, and on the basis of existing programmes, and subject to their objectives and normal, open and transparent procedures, the cooperation referred to in point 6 between the authorities responsible for quality in school education, also involving organisations and associations of school education institutions with a European remit and the necessary experience in quality assessment and quality assurance. **The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) is a body which could very legitimately play an active part in such cooperation;**

*Justification:*

*Being a research centre for vocational training, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training is clearly cut out for cooperation.*

(Amendment 12)

Title II, paragraph 2

2. to establish a database for the dissemination of tools and instruments of school self-evaluation. The database should also contain examples of best practice within school evaluation. The database should be accessible on the Internet;

2. to establish a database for the dissemination of tools and instruments of school self-evaluation, **and pilot self-evaluation projects**. The database should also contain examples of best practice within school evaluation. The database should be accessible on the Internet. **In addition, special efforts must be made in respect of any initiatives intended to promote the optimum dissemination of the information in the database, aimed in particular at central and decentralised administrative authorities in education;**

*Justification:*

*This amendment emphasises the importance of the dissemination of good practice.*