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REPORT

on the Commission report to the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) submitted pursuant to Article 8 of European Parliament and Council Decision 2493/95/EC
(COM(1999)0447 - C5-0205/1999 - 1999/2163(COS))

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

Rapporteur: Cristina Gutiérrez Cortines

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 15 September 1999, the Commission forwarded its report to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) submitted pursuant to Article 8 of European Parliament and Council Decision 2493/95/EC (COM(1999) 447 – 1999/2163(COS)).

At the sitting of 25 October 1999 the President of Parliament announced that she had referred the report 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 (C5-0205/1999).

The Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport had appointed Cristina Gutiérrez Cortines rapporteur at its meeting of 20 October 1999.

The committee considered the Commission report and the draft report at its meetings of 5 June 2000 and 12/13 July 2000.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Giuseppe Gargani, chairman; Vasco Graça Moura and Ulpu Iivari, vice-chairmen; Cristina Gutiérrez Cortines, rapporteur; Konstantinos Alyssandrakis (for Alexandros Alavanos), Ole Andreasen, Roberta Angelilli (for Thierry de La Perriere), Per-Arne Arvidsson (for Sabine Zissener), Christine de Veyrac, Geneviève Fraisse, Lissy Gröner, Ruth Hieronymi, Maria Martens, Mario Walter Mauro, Jens Dyhr Okking, Doris Pack, Christa Prets, Frédérique Ries (for Marco Formentini), The Earl of Stockton (for Christopher Heaton-Harris), Luckas Vander Taelen, Eurig Wyn and Teresa Zabell Lucas.

The opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is attached.

The report was tabled on 14 July 2000.

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

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the Commission report to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) submitted pursuant to Article 8 of European Parliament and Council Decision 2493/95/EC (COM(1999)0447 - C5-0205/1999)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission report (COM(1999)0447 - C5-0205/1999),
 - having regard to European Parliament and Council Decision No 2493/95/EC of 23 October 1995 declaring 1996 the European Year of Lifelong Learning¹,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon and Feira European Councils,
 - having regard to Article 47(1) of Parliament's 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 (A5-0200/2000),
- A. whereas all individuals have a fundamental right to a proper level of education and training in order to develop their potential and achieve economic, social and cultural integration,
- B. whereas the development of lifelong learning should further the fight against the failure at school level which leads to social marginalisation,
- C. whereas training should follow the four main lines of action established by the Luxembourg extraordinary summit, namely improving employability, developing entrepreneurship, encouraging adaptability in businesses and their employees, and strengthening equal opportunities policy,
- D. whereas the European year is to involve training for women and immigrant women as members of minority groups with greater needs,
- E. having regard to the present very rapid growth and development of skills and knowledge in all areas, requiring individuals to adapt constantly to new specialities and demanding the constant adaptation of educational and training systems,
- F. whereas Europe, if it wishes to be competitive, must facilitate lifelong training for those working on cutting-edge technologies at the highest academic levels, since they will be responsible for passing on their knowledge and skills to businesses and training centres,

¹ OJ L 256, 26.10.1995, p. 45

- G. whereas the growth in information technology has made it a crucial factor both in the topics and methods of learning and training, and one which should feature strongly in any attempt to further the principle of lifelong learning;
 - H. whereas there are still too many rigidities and barriers between education and training, and not enough opportunities to move from one to the other or to experience new forms of teaching on a lifelong basis,
 - I. whereas it is necessary to promote improved cooperation at all levels between education and training structures and the world of business,
 - J. whereas training should be viewed as an investment and not a matter of current expenditure,
 - K. whereas lifelong learning has a far from negligible role to play in the fight against social exclusion,
 - L. whereas under the principle of the mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications institutions and businesses throughout the EU should recognise diplomas issued by and training received in any recognised educational establishment within the European area,
 - M. whereas the European Union should encourage the teaching of new technologies in rural and peripheral areas, so as to ensure that equal opportunities are available to all Europe's inhabitants,
 - N. whereas lifelong learning should contribute to awareness of the fact that in Europe there is a constant passing-on of knowledge, on the basis of a shared cultural heritage and values,
 - O. whereas the European Year should help to integrate policies and initiatives scattered between the various programmes established by the Union with a view to linking the sectors concerned with implementing them in each country, so that all may benefit from a process of mutual enrichment,
- 1. Observes that training, in all its aspects, should constitute a priority consideration for the Member States when adopting any initiative designed to implement the guidelines laid down for employment policies for 2000;
 - 2. Stresses that Lifelong Learning is also an efficient way of improving the quality of labour and making work organisations more human and more efficient;
 - 3. Points out that general education and vocational training are not only of major significance to personal development and to improving one's chances for the future; they also represent a significant factor in the Member States' attempts to meet the challenges of global competition;

4. Stresses that Lifelong Learning is also crucial in order to secure personal fulfilment, social integration and participation in democratic decision-making processes and can, therefore, not be seen merely in terms of demand and supply;
5. Stresses that the impact which the year had on businesses and social forces in terms of awareness-raising was positive;
6. Regrets the slow start of the activities under the European Year for Lifelong Learning and calls upon the Commission to speed up preparatory work and internal procedures in order to allow for a timely launch of Community actions in future;
7. Stresses the importance of the necessary attention being paid to the lifelong learning factor in the implementation of the new generation of programmes such as Socrates II and Leonardo;
8. Recalls that the Lisbon and Feira European Councils have called on the Commission and the Member States to define coherent strategies and practical measures to make lifelong education and training accessible to all;

Budgetary aspect

9. Regrets the fact that the budget for the European Year of Lifelong Learning 1996 was only ECU 8.4 m for the fifteen Member States and their three EEA partners;
10. Believes that the fact that the ECU 8.4 m budget was trebled by the cofinancing provided by the participant countries, thus bringing the total budget to ECU 34 m, proves how much interest there is in initiatives of this kind in Europe;

The Commission's report

11. Believes that the general terms in which the request for projects to be submitted was formulated, with no definition of lifelong learning, resulted in an ambiguity which makes it difficult to devise criteria for the quality of the programmes or the aspects which need to be selected when issuing future requests for submissions;
12. Regrets the notorious lack of qualitative data in the Commission's report which makes it virtually impossible to assess whether the programme has been implemented in accordance with the European Parliament's priorities; calls upon the Commission to improve the quality of future evaluation reports;
13. Regrets that the report does not contain sufficient information about examples of good practise, their dissemination at European level and their possible transfer into other Community policies, nor an analysis of the weaknesses of the Community intervention; calls upon the Commission to establish a compendium of projects to be disseminated at European level;

14. Regrets the fact that the Commission's report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning 1996 did not offer a basis for a full and detailed assessment of the initiative;
15. Regrets the fact that there is no evaluation of the involvement of democratically elected local and regional bodies;

Requests to the Commission

16. The Commission (following the EU's experience in these matters) and the Member States are urged to define various concepts and aspects of vocational training and lifelong learning more precisely in future programmes, distinguishing between:
 - training designed to correct failure at school level, or to provide less-favoured or minority groups with basic teaching,
 - training for a first job and for joining the working population, whatever the age of the pupil,
 - training for sporting practitioners who, having previously abandoned their studies and/or employment to dedicate themselves full-time to sporting activity, now wish to enter the world of work,
 - the acquisition of new qualifications and the adaptation and updating of skills,
 - distance learning for adults in areas conducive to both general and cultural education, including new technologies,
 - vocational qualifications required for formal and non-formal education,
 - lifelong learning for teachers and researchers as a means of updating knowledge and skills;
17. Asks that in the requests for submissions the objectives should be clearly defined as regards both designing and assessing the projects, using new technology and the Internet to publish the criteria and including all the projects sought, with those promoting them and the results of the final selection;
18. Observes that under the guidelines laid down by the Luxembourg extraordinary summit of 1997 training courses should provide adaptable and flexible training which will enable students to develop their entrepreneurial spirit;
19. Calls on the Commission to rapidly implement action programmes and specific measures in the context of a strategy for lifelong education and learning, in coordination with the Socrates II and Leonardo programmes;
20. Urges the Commission and the Member States to devise specific measures to encourage relations between formal education, vocational training and lifelong learning, so as to develop integrated training and open up channels of communication between the various educational models;
21. Asks that the contents of the various professional occupations and training courses be defined, so as to facilitate mutual recognition of professional qualifications and render the labour market more transparent;

22. Asks that lifelong training be applied likewise to the highest levels of excellence and to the university world, as well as to traditional occupations, especially in the crafts sector;
23. Urges the Commission to create European networks of vocational training centres and enterprises with a view to identifying the most frequent technical and professional problems, the content of the key skills required, etc;
24. Urges the Commission to ensure that the priority projects include vocational training in the sectors where innovation and change are most urgently needed;

Requests to the Member States and the Commission

25. Calls on the Member States to cooperate with the Commission in the collection of data concerning lifelong learning, with a view to ensuring the future comparability of data at European level;
26. Calls on the Member States to extend the information networks so as to ensure wide public access to targeted information on the existing programmes in this field;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States and of the Republic of Iceland, the Kingdom of Norway and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. BACKGROUND

'Lifelong learning' was presented as a strategic idea by the 1994 White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, in the context of the position that the adaptation of the sectors concerned to the new technological, social and employment challenges should be a priority for Community action.

Under the three-pronged impact of the information society, the development of scientific and technological civilisation and economic globalisation, the European society of the late twentieth century has been characterised by profound transformations.

The information society will have substantial repercussions on teaching methods, replacing the over-passive education-educatee relationship by a new model of interactivity. The new information technologies are entering, on a massive scale, both productive activity and education and training. Economic globalisation is creating an unprecedented degree of free movement of capital, goods and services. The 'opening-up' option, now being debated at the Seattle summit, is having a stimulating impact on the European economy, and is likely to increase general wellbeing by ushering in a more efficient allocation of resources at world level.

These changes, however, will not come risk-free. The risk of a serious social and cultural rift between the haves and have-nots of the world of knowledge is most certainly there, with all its potential adverse and dramatic repercussions.

The extent of change is such that our citizens will, to a greater extent than in the past, have to undergo periods of specific training to enable them to handle change at any moment of their professional lives. A report written in the late 1980s, in the wake of a conference of experts, for the French Employment Ministry predicted that the next twenty-five years would see more new occupations created than had been devised before in all of human history.

It should thus be clear why training and adaptation are likely to become key factors in this equation. Hitherto, education and training have been overwhelmingly linked to the first stage of life. The coming generations, however, will have to integrate the idea that education and training will not come to an end with the cessation of formal study, but will be a lifelong process, something to be taken up again at any moment in order to adapt and meet the challenges of changes in society. Those who cannot or will not adapt to the new employment perspectives and the new skills required are likely to become victims of unemployment.

Adaptation to change also presupposes a level of basic education which is high enough to develop the faculty of adapting to new contexts. In other words, we have to rethink and develop the link between education and training.

If Europe is to maintain its competitiveness at world level, it has to develop human resources and knowledge. That, however, in the present context, will require a small-scale revolution in our ways of thinking: we will all have to integrate the idea that education is possible at any moment of our lives. By confronting these objectives of adaptation and renewal of skills we can also endeavour to reduce structural unemployment, which is higher in Europe than

elsewhere. Nonetheless, lifelong learning is not merely a conjunctural phenomenon linked to unemployment - it is also a social idea: the further we progress, the more important it becomes that all should be offered equal opportunities, whatever their position in society.

Social reproduction has hitherto been based solely on basic education, which, as is well known, tends to favour certain social classes at the expense of others. A higher profile for lifelong learning will help ensure greater fairness and more truly equal opportunities.

Another important factor, not always taken into account, is leisure time. The tendency is for leisure time to increase, with the result that the existing linear sequence of education, work and retirement risks becoming obsolete. We have to consider how leisure time can be turned to advantage through training.

II. THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF LIFELONG LEARNING

In this context, the Commission proposed to Council and the European Parliament that 1996 should be declared the European Year of Lifelong Learning, the aim being to make the public more aware of new concepts in the field of academic and vocational education and to develop, with all the agents concerned, a global conception of the role of education and training and the issues facing them on the eve of the 21st century. All of us will need permanently to renew our capital of skills, as an absolutely vital condition if we are to meet the challenges of the new millennium.

In its communication on this initiative², the Commission set out four cardinal objectives intended to guide the actions of the European Year:

- to make the European public aware of the importance of lifelong learning as a key factor in the personal development of individuals and for a European model of competitiveness and growth which is employment-intensive;
- to foster better cooperation at all levels between education and training structures and the business community, particularly the SMEs;
- to help establish a European area of education and training through the academic and vocational recognition of qualifications within the EU and through the introduction of a European dimension in education and training;
- to stress the importance of improving the equality of opportunities in access to education and training, particularly between men and women.

In the context of the European Year, various initiatives were proposed, incorporating a wide spectrum of participants including local associations, national organisations and pan-European institutions. These initiatives spanned eight areas, namely:

- the importance of a high-quality general education free from discrimination of whatever form:

² COM(1994)0264

- the promotion of vocational training paths resulting in qualifications for all young people;
- the promotion of continuing education and training and initial vocational training;
- encouragement of access to lifelong education;
- closer cooperation between the educational sector and the world of business, especially SMEs;
- sensitisation of the social partners to the importance of education and training;
- sensitisation of parents to the importance of education and training for children and young people;
- development of the European dimension of initial and continuing education and training.

The European Year was conceived to encourage a wide-ranging debate, which, in the pursuit of shared objectives, distinguished, in line with the principle of subsidiarity:

- actions to be carried out at local and national level;
- actions to be undertaken at European level;
- actions of cooperation and mutual support linking the EU, its Member States and the three non-EU countries which are EEA members (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

Throughout 1996, conferences, seminars, competitions, multimedia development activities, educational software launches and TV programmes were organised everywhere in the EEA.

The European Year was organised by national committees designated by the relevant ministries in the Member States and coordinated by the Commission's DG XXII. The EU's contribution to the activities was ECU 8 m.

The initiative '1996 - European Year of Lifelong Learning' was favourably received by the European institutions involved.

In its resolution of 16 March 1995³, the European Parliament expressed its support for the project, while also stressing a number of important points, namely:

- lifelong learning should not be conceived as a lifelong obligation, but, rather, as learning which accompanies a person through life. The rapporteur, Mrs Renate Heinisch, proposed that in German the Year should be renamed 'Lebensbegleitendes Lernen', rather than 'Lebeslange Lernen';
- the Year should serve as a model for the promotion of equal gender opportunities;
- the Commission's draft did not give sufficient attention to the teaching of Community

³ OJ C 89, 10.4.1995, p. 113

languages;

- the campaign needed to be coordinated with the regional level;
- the promotion of lifelong learning could only be considered valid if there was greater recognition of the equal value of vocational and academic qualifications.

The Council submitted a common position which was marked by a cooperative spirit, accepting, in whole or in part, a large number of Parliament's amendments (25 out of 39). At the second reading of Parliament⁴, the Council accepted the idea of opening up to the social partners, via collective agreements, the possibility of contributing to the provision of lifelong learning, while the Commission agreed to encourage the mutual recognition of diplomas and to take due account of the problems of exclusion in the implementation of the European Year.

This convergence of ideas led to the implementation of European Parliament and Council Decision No 2493/95/EC of 23 October 1995, declaring 1996 the European Year of Lifelong Learning⁵.

III. ASSESSMENT OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The Commission, in its communication of 15 September 1999⁶, reported to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning 1996. It stated: 'The extent to which lifelong learning has gained acceptance in public opinion (...) indicates clearly that the European Year was a timely initiative (...)'⁷. In addition, the new Treaty enshrines the principle of lifelong learning in its preamble: the contracting parties declare themselves 'determined to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating'.

Despite the meagre budget allocated to the European Year - ECU 8 m plus a contribution from Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein - it succeeded in generating activities estimated at a value of some ECU 34 m. This clearly demonstrates the interest aroused at European level by cultural and educational initiatives in general.

The national agencies received over 200 projects, of which the Commission selected 454 (national) projects; to these should be added 88 European projects and 10 media projects.

The activities developed under the aegis of the European Year were extremely diverse in nature. 70% of them, however, took the form of a conference, seminar or workshop on one or more subjects related to lifelong learning.

With respect to the target groups, the events broke down as follows:

⁴ OJ C 166, 3.7.1995, p. 108

⁵ OJ L 256, 26.10.1995, p. 45

⁶ COM(1999)0447

⁷ idem, p. 2A

- organisations from the world of education and training: 27%;
- organisations dealing with young people, women and the elderly: 19%;
- public groups, professional associations, social partners: 16%;
- organisations specialised in equal opportunities and addressing the problem of exclusion: 17%;
- the business sector, particularly the SMEs: 13%;
- others: 11%.

On the promotional level, the Commission distributed a general information brochure in three languages; four numbers of the magazine Contact 96 and a Compendium (setting out the main themes of the European Year and listing the names and addresses of all the promoters) were also distributed in three languages (English, French and German). However, it was felt that the most effective promotion instruments were the brochures, posters and flags which were made available in all the EU languages; it is, furthermore, difficult to understand why, in a Union which has 11 working languages, only three (French, English and German) should have been employed. Even the Commission's services felt that 'the availability of the Compendium and the four Contact 96 Newsletters in only three languages and of the "step-by-step guide" in English only, limited widespread usage and effectiveness'⁸.

With a view to stimulating further debate on the European Year, the Commission commissioned a number of studies, as well as a 'Eurobarometer' poll of young people and adults, in order to garner opinions on the subject of lifelong learning. It also created an Internet site.

The European media published over 4 000 articles on themes and events related to the European Year.

The Commission also organised, for the first time at European level, a competition centring on multimedia educational software.

However, the great merit of the European Year of Lifelong Learning 1996 initiative was to make the idea itself, which has in the past had little currency outside the world of educational specialists, familiar to a wider public and to increase its political visibility.

Your rapporteur warmly welcomes the success of the European Year of Lifelong Learning 1996 and the impetus it has given to the development and progressive acceptance of a new notion, namely the need for continuing learning. Lifelong learning should enable the Union's citizens to find their bearings in the information society on the basis of a critical spirit, vis-à-vis the images and information which they receive from multiple sources, and, subsequently, to develop their aptitudes for employment and activity.

We nonetheless regret the fact that the Commission's communication on the implementation,

⁸ COM(1999)0447, p. 8

results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996)⁹ is not quite the detailed and comprehensive document which the initiative deserved. This communication states that five studies on the subject of the European Year were commissioned, one of these being a report on the external assessment of the Year: 'this study, conducted by an external consultants bureau, brought out the impact of the European Year and has been taken into account in the drafting of the report¹⁰'. This study, despite its inherent interest, constitutes a response to intellectual objectives of a different nature, and is not an assessment of the Year in relation to its declared objectives. We know that the budget for the initiative (ECU 8 m) was meagre and was not such as to permit large-scale expenditure, but it may still be suggested that the event was nonetheless somewhat under-publicised. It is, furthermore, difficult to understand why, in a Union which has 11 working languages, only three (French, English and German) should have been employed¹¹.

In addition, the Commission's report refers to the breakdown of events between the different target groups and displays a number of percentages¹². Your rapporteur would have welcomed more detailed information on the various target groups.

The uneven nature of the information obtained concerning the results in the various countries suggests either that no follow-up mechanism was included in the planning of the Year or that no objective administrative process exists for facilitating the management of a programme with these characteristics.

⁹ COM(1999)0447

¹⁰ COM(1999)0447, p. 8

¹¹ COM(1999)0447, p. 8

¹² COM(1999)0447, p. 7

2 February 2000

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

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

on the report from the Commission on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of Lifelong Learning (1996) (COM(1999)0447 – C5-0205/1999 – 1999/2163(COS))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Draftsman: Jillian Evans

PROCEDURE

At its meeting of 22 November 1999 the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs appointed Jillian Evans draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 24 January and 1 February 2000.

At the last meeting it adopted the following conclusions by 37 votes with 1 abstention.

The following were present for the vote: Michel Rocard, chairman; Marie-Thérèse Hermange and Winfried Menrad, vice-chairmen; Jillian Evans, draftsman; Sylviane H. Ainardi, Jan Andersson, Philip Rodway Bushill-Matthews, Chantal Cauquil (for Ilda Figueiredo), Luigi Cocilovo, Elisa Maria Damião, Proinsias De Rossa, Den Dover (for Maria Antonia Avilés Perea), Harald Ettl, Carlo Fatuzzo, Hélène Flautre, Fiorella Ghilardotti, Marie-Hélène Gillig, Anne-Karin Glase, Roger Helmer (for Raffaele Lombardo), Ian Stewart Hudghton, Stephen Hughes, Anne Elisabet Jensen (for Massimo Cacciari), Karin Jöns, Ioannis Koukiadis, Arlette Laguiller, Jean Lambert, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Mauro Nobilia, Neil Parish (for Tokia Saïfi), Manuel Perez Alvarez, Bartho Pronk, José Ribeiro e Castro, Herman Schmid, Peter William Skinner, Anne E.M. Van Lancker and Barbara Weiler.

GENERAL COMMENTS

1. The background

By submitting the present paper, the Commission fulfils its obligation to report on the implementation and the results of the 1996 'European Year of Lifelong Learning' as stipulated in Article 8 of the respective legal base.

Under the joint decision¹ by the European Parliament and the Council to proclaim 1996 as the 'European year of lifelong learning' an amount of ECU 8.34 m was made available for

¹ Decision No 2493/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 1995 establishing 1996 as the "European year of lifelong learning ", OJ L 256 of 26/10/1995, p. 45

information, awareness raising and promotional activities to achieve the aim of the European Year of Lifelong Learning, i.e. 'the promotion of personal development and sense of initiative of individuals, their integration into working life and society, their participation in the democratic decision-making process and their ability to adjust to economic, technological and social change'.

As the respective decision was subject to the codecision procedure, the European Parliament had a considerable influence on the priorities and the structure of the one-year programme. In fact, the Council accepted 28 of the 39 amendments the European Parliament had adopted in first reading. The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs was closely involved in the legislative procedure leading to the decision on the European Year. In fact, the committee's opinion² was established under the Gomes procedure, thus giving it the same status as the report of the Culture Committee.

The programme as amended by the EP focused on a total of eight (broadly) defined priorities relating to lifelong learning, i.e. the promotion of high quality general education and vocational training systems, the promotion of continuing education and training, the motivation of individuals for lifelong learning with particular targeting of groups previously excluded such as girls and women, cooperation on education and training between institutions and the business community, the involvement of the social partners, awareness raising of parents and the development of the European dimension of initial and continuing education and training.

Eligible activities under the programme included information and promotional campaigns, competitions highlighting achievements and experiences on the themes of the European year as well as studies and surveys.

2. Summary of results

2.1. Quantitative analysis

Despite its limited financial resources, the programme attracted considerable interest in the Member States. The national agencies received over 2000 project proposals, of which 454 were selected by the Commission for funding. This is a reflection of the enthusiasm for the initiative and the commitment of many voluntary and community organisations to its aims.

Apart from these local projects the Commission funded another 88 projects focusing on European-wide activities, plus 10 media projects.

4% of the funds available were used to fund studies including research on the economic dimension of lifelong learning and on the budgetary implications of education and training, as well as an external evaluation report of the European Year.

Another 2% were set aside for a European competition for multimedia educational software

² Opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment for the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media establishing 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning, PE 210.873/fin. (Draftsperson: Mrs Waddington)

designed to develop creativity among pupils, students and teachers.

2.2. Type of activities

According to the Commission, 70% of projects included or wholly consisted of a conference, seminar or workshop. Many of the projects contained an awareness-raising element: 18% included press/mass media activities and another 18% were information/public relations campaigns. Beneficiaries of funding included organisations from the world of education and training, NGOs dealing with young people, women and elderly, professional associations, social partners and the business sector.

3. Points of criticism

3.1. Late start

The Commission admits that the volume and the timing of the arrival of the promotional materials, including a European newsletter and a video, did not always match the needs of national agencies. Also the Internet site which was created for the European Year made only a slow start. The Commission argues that the delays were due to the late adoption of the legal base for the programme: As the decision was only adopted in October 1995, the Commission could not start the contractualisation procedure for the management and implementation of the information campaign until November 1995. The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is regularly confronted with similar arguments when it inquires about the reasons of low execution rates under its budget lines at the end of the financial year. Although the argument is in principle valid, doubts remain whether the Commission could not have speeded up the procedures to allow for a timely launch of the European Year. In fact, the legislative procedure leading to the decision was already sufficiently advanced at the beginning of autumn 1995 as to allow adequate preparatory work for the launch of the European Year. Even if the Commission cannot commit funds before the formal adoption of a programme, it needs to examine possibilities to speed up internal procedures in justified cases.

3.2. Lack of qualitative assessment

The EP had established clear priorities regarding the objectives and eligibility of projects under the programme, inter alia 'motivation of individuals for lifelong learning and developing such learning for the benefit of groups who have hitherto hardly or not at all benefited from it but who particularly need it, such as girls and women' and 'the raising of awareness of the social partner of the importance of the creation of, and participation in, new opportunities for lifelong learning [...]'³.

Article 3 of the decision stipulates that priority in the selection of actions should be given inter alia a) "to those promoting the idea of lifelong learning amongst the social partners' and b) those which disseminate the results of Community interventions.

The report submitted by the Commission provides little or no information on whether these objectives have been achieved. The report provides a quantitative breakdown of actions (for

³ Article 2, paragraphs 4 and 6 of the decision

example a list of broadly defined beneficiary groups and the percentage of projects which have produced a publication) but hardly any assessment of the quality of results. For example, we do not know to what extent people in rural areas were involved although they have previously suffered from geographical isolation which can now be overcome by new technology. Under these circumstances it is almost impossible to assess whether the priorities contained in the decision have been duly taken into account.

The same is true for other provisions of the decision. Both Article 3, paragraph 2 and Article 7 of the decision refer to the consistency and complementarity between action provided for in the decision and other Community action, 'in particular the Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes'. The current report however, does not give any indications whether this was achieved and if so, how.

3.3. Sustainability and dissemination of results

According to the Commission, about two-thirds of all activities assessed have continued after 1996. Although doubts remain whether the activities 'assessed' refer to all projects or only to a selection of projects, the high rate of sustainability of the actions financed (if it was calculated on the basis of all projects) under the European Year is a success. However, whereas the follow-up to the European Year at national level appears to be satisfactory, it is not clear whether the same is true for the European level or for the regional and local level. Whilst Parliament clearly emphasised the important part that regional and local authorities which have a responsibility for education and training should play in this project, there is little or no reference to them in the Commission's evaluation. This is a serious omission in terms of evaluating the most effective way of implementing EU programmes and providing information to the citizens of the Union. In fact, the current report shows little evidence of a systematic follow-up on the lessons that could be learnt from the European Year.

Although the European Year focused primarily on awareness-raising activities in the Member States, it also provided an opportunity to identify examples of good practice at the grass-root level, which could be disseminated at European level or transferred into other Community policies in the field of education and training. The report refers to some specific projects but doesn't provide any detailed information or contact addresses. Neither does the report contain any indication of whether some of the results could be transferred into other community policies. In order to fully exploit the potential of expertise generated by the European Year, a summary or a compendium of projects should have been disseminated throughout the European Union. This would have been both useful and interesting.

Similarly, the weaknesses of the programme have not been analysed seriously: The breakdown of beneficiaries shows that the participation rate of the business sector remained low (13% of projects), although businesses have a crucial role in the provision of vocational training and are directly affected by skills shortages. Again, a point raised by the European Parliament in 1995 was the importance of working with SMEs to raise awareness of the changes taking place in industry and with the introduction of new technology and ensuring that they were aware of other sources of funding available to them to adapt to the changes. There is no reference to this in the report. The Commission should have looked at the reasons for the low participation rate of SMEs and drawn some conclusions for future actions (for instance for the Leonardo II programme).

A 13% participation rate was also reported for organisations 'specialised in equal opportunities and addressing the problem of exclusion'. This raises concern about the extent to which those previously excluded groups in society were actually reached during the year. It might also be a reflection of the inability of certain groups to participate due to a lack of childcare or the timing and location of schemes. Again, a much more detailed analysis would have given us the answer to this question.

CONCLUSIONS

The committee on employment and social affairs asks the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, as the committee responsible, to take account of the following conclusions:

1. Takes the view that given the high current unemployment rates, the rapid technological change and the demographic challenge, the development of Lifelong Learning is fundamental
 - to meet the challenges of economic and social change and sustainable development and to enable people to react to changing demands at work,
 - to secure the economic and social integration of all people by providing access to education and vocational training
 - to achieve equal opportunities between women and men
2. Stresses that Lifelong Learning is also an efficient way of improving the quality of labour and making work organisations more human and more efficient;
3. Points out that general education and vocational training are not only of major significance to personal development and to improving one's chances for the future; they also represent a significant factor in the Member States' attempts to meet the challenges of global competition;
4. Stresses that Lifelong Learning is also crucial in order to secure personal fulfilment, social integration and participation in democratic decision-making processes and can, therefore, not be seen merely in terms of demand and supply;
5. Regrets the slow start of the activities under the European Year for Lifelong Learning and calls upon the Commission to speed up preparatory work and internal procedures in order to allow for a timely launch of Community actions in future;
6. Regrets the notorious lack of qualitative data in the Commission's report which makes it virtually impossible to assess whether the programme has been implemented in accordance with the European Parliament's priorities; calls upon the Commission to improve the quality of future evaluation reports;
7. Regrets that the report does not contain sufficient information about examples of good practise, their dissemination at European level and their possible transfer into other Community policies, nor an analysis of the weaknesses of the Community intervention; calls upon the Commission to establish a compendium of projects to be disseminated at European level;

8. Regrets the fact that there is no evaluation of the involvement of democratically elected local and regional bodies;
9. Regrets the fact that no consideration is given to extending lifelong learning to sections of the population which until now have been rather ignored, namely the elderly, those who have taken early retirement and also those who live in rural or thinly populated areas, etc;
10. Regrets the fact that lifelong learning and training are not regarded as guiding principles.