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*****I** **REPORT**

on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision amending Decision No 253/2000/EC establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' (COM(2002) 193 – C5-0188/2002 - 2002/0101(COD))

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

Rapporteur: Michel Rocard

(Simplified procedure - Rule 158(1))

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)

Amendments to a legislative text

In amendments by Parliament, amended text is highlighted in ***bold italics***. Highlighting in *normal italics* is an indication for the relevant departments showing parts of the legislative text for which a correction is proposed, to assist preparation of the final text (for instance, obvious errors or omissions in a given language version). These suggested corrections are subject to the agreement of the departments concerned.

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

By letter of 29 April 2002 the Commission submitted to Parliament, pursuant to Article 251(2) and Articles 149 and 150 of the EC Treaty, the proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision amending Decision No 253/2000/EC establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' (COM(2002) 193 - 2002/0101 (COD)).

At the sitting of 13 May 2002 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred the proposal to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport as the committee responsible and the Committee on Budgetary Control for its opinion (C5-0188/2002).

At its meeting of 23 May 2002 the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport decided to apply the simplified procedure under Rule 158(2), thus appointing its chairman rapporteur.

Following the entry into force on 5 July 2002 of the current Rules of Procedure, at its meeting of 10 July 2002 the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport decided to approve the proposal without amendment under Rule 158(1).

The Committee on Budgetary Control decided on 23 May 2002 not to deliver a opinion.

The report was tabled on 15 July 2002.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

Proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision amending Decision No 253/2000/EC establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' (COM(2002) 193 - C5-0188/2002 – 2002/0101(COD))

The proposal is approved.

DRAFT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision amending Decision No 253/2000/EC establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' (COM(2002) 193 - C5-0188/2002 – 2002/0101(COD))

(Codecision procedure: first reading)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission proposal to the European Parliament and the Council (COM(2002) 193) ¹,
- having regard to Article 251(2) and Articles 149 and 150 of the EC Treaty, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C5-0188/2002),
- having regard to its resolution on the implementation of the Socrates programme ²,
- 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 (A5 -0268/2002),

1. Approves the Commission proposal;
2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission.

¹ Not yet published in the OJ

² Adopted texts P5_TAPROV(2002)0088

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

1. The second phase of the Socrates programme - like the first - is made up of 'centralised' and 'decentralised' actions. Under the former, which account for slightly under one-third of expenditure, the application, selection and contractual procedures are run by the Commission itself with the help of a Technical Assistance Office. Under the latter, which account for more than two-thirds of expenditure, these procedures are run by the national authorities in the participating countries through National Agencies.
2. A very large number of projects are administered under two 'decentralised' actions.
 - **Comenius 1:**
 - **school projects** enable schools (at least three schools from three participating countries) to work on a theme of common interest. In 2000, the average grant was €2 750.
 - **language projects** involve two schools from two participating countries working together to promote learning of foreign languages. In 2000, the average grant was €6 750.
 - **school development projects** bring together at least three schools from three participating countries to share experiences of teaching methods, school management or other subjects e.g. tackling violence in schools.
 - **Grundtvig 2** supports small-scale cooperation activities between adult education organisations in at least three participating countries. In 2001, the average grant was €8 700.
3. Under the Decision (No. 253/2000/EC) establishing the second phase of the Socrates programme, projects must be cofinanced. The Community grant may cover up to 100% of the direct costs but (except in the case of accompanying measures) normally no more than 75% of the total cost of projects selected. However, because staff costs are not eligible for support even though the projects cannot be realised without input from staff employed by the beneficiary institutions, the necessary element of cofinancing is effectively guaranteed.
4. The first phase of the Socrates programme (1995-1999) did not stipulate a minimum level of cofinancing and, hitherto, the Community has not required proof of staff costs incurred by institutions participating in projects under the decentralised actions of the programme. However, unless the Decision establishing the programme is amended, the Commission will be obliged to do so. This would mean that all beneficiaries would have to supply proof of staff costs applying for a grant and when reporting on the project it funds; and to keep such proof in case they are later audited.
5. The Commission argues that it would not be consistent with the principles of simplification and proportionality to impose such a new requirement solely in order to demonstrate that the Community grant does not normally exceed 75% of the total costs of the project. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the beneficiary organisations are generally small institutions (e.g. primary or secondary schools) with limited administrative back-up and experience of dealing with international project management.

6. Article 1 of the Commission proposal therefore amends the second sentence of the first paragraph of Section IV Point B.2 of the Annex to Decision No. 253/2000/EC as follows:

Decision No. 253/2000/EC

COM(2002) 193

The Community contribution will not normally exceed 75% of the total cost of any specific project, except in the case of accompanying measures.

In accordance with the cofinancing principle, the beneficiary's contribution may take the form of the provision of the personnel and/or infrastructure necessary for the realisation of the project.

RAPPORTEUR'S COMMENTS

7. The Commission's White Paper *Reforming the Commission* sets out its commitment to simplifying its internal and external procedures where possible and where these affect other institutions, Member States and citizens, to make them more proportional to the aim being pursued.

8. One of the criticisms of the first phase of the Socrates programme was that the administrative burden imposed by the application procedure was disproportionately heavy given the small sums of money involved. The application procedure was especially burdensome for smaller institutions, such as primary schools, and there was some evidence to suggest that this deterred would-be participants in the programme.

9. In its resolution on the implementation of the second phase of the Socrates programme, the Parliament expressed its concern about the heavy administrative burden on applicants to the programme, noting that these were particularly onerous where small grants were concerned. It also called for the abolition of the cofinancing requirement in the case of small grants and the introduction of a fast-track application procedure; and called on the Commission to propose whatever legislative steps it deemed necessary to bring about these changes.

10. The amendment to the Socrates Decision proposed by the Commission is purely technical. It has no implications for Commission staffing or for the Community budget; nor does it signal a change in the Commission's grant awarding policy or a move away from the principle that Community grants should always involve cofinancing. Finally, it is in line with, and in part a response to, the Parliament's suggestions for ways in which participation in the Socrates programme could be made easier. For all of these reasons, your rapporteur recommends that the proposal be adopted without amendment.