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*****II**

RECOMMENDATION FOR SECOND READING

on the common position adopted by the Council with a view to adopting a European Parliament and Council decision on a multiannual programme (2004-2006) for the effective integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education and training systems in Europe (*eLearning Programme*)
(8642/1/2003 – C5-0293/2003 – 2002/0303(COD))

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

Rapporteur: Mario Mauro

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

At the sitting of 8 April 2003 Parliament adopted its position at first reading on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision on a multiannual programme (2004-2006) for the effective integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education and training systems in Europe (*eLearning Programme*) (COM(2002)0751 – 2002/0303 (COD)).

At the sitting of 3 July 2003 the President of Parliament announced that the common position had been received and referred to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport (8642/1/2003 – C5-0293/2003).

The committee had appointed Mario Mauro rapporteur at its meeting of 21 January 2003.

It considered the common position and the draft recommendation for second reading at its meetings of 11 and 29 September 2003.

At the latter meeting it adopted the draft legislative resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Michel Rocard, chairman; Vasco Graça Moura and Theresa Zabell, vice-chairmen; Pedro Aparicio Sánchez, Thierry de La Perriere, Marielle de Sarnez, Raina A. Mercedes Echerer, Ruth Hieronymi, Ulpu Iivari, Lucio Manisco, Doris Pack, Christa Prets, Marieke Sanders-ten Holte and Sabine Zissener.

The recommendation for second reading was tabled on 30 September 2003.

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the common position adopted by the Council with a view to adopting a European Parliament and Council decision on a multiannual programme (2004-2006) for the effective integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education and training systems in Europe (eLearning Programme) (8642/1/2003 – C5-0293/2003 – 2002/0303(COD))

(Codecision procedure: second reading)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Council common position (8642/1/2003 – C5-0293/2003),
 - having regard to its position at first reading¹ on the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2002) 751²),
 - having regard to the Commission's amended proposal (COM(2003) 245³),
 - having regard to Article 251(2) of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Rule 80 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the recommendation for second reading of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport (A5-0314/2003),
1. Amends the common position as follows;
 2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council and Commission.

¹*Texts Adopted*, 8 April 2003, P5_TA-PROV(2003)0146

² Not yet published in OJ

³ Not yet published in OJ

Amendment 1
Article 8, paragraph 1

1. The financial framework for the implementation of the programme for the period specified in Article 1 is hereby set at EUR **33** million

1. The financial framework for the implementation of the programme for the period specified in Article 1 is hereby set at EUR **44** million

Justification

Following the constructive talks held with the Council and the Commission after the common position had been delivered, your rapporteur hopes that the Council will note the effort made by Parliament in proposing a global financial framework of EUR 44 million for the eLearning programme. A dignified agreement to that effect would not prejudice the successful implementation of the programme in any way and would respect its original ambitious scope.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

1. The overall aim of the multiannual programme (2004-2006) proposed by the Commission in December 2002¹ was to encourage the integration of the new information and communication technologies into European education and training systems, thereby improving their quality and accessibility.

2. The Commission stressed that the programme was not designed to replace the Member States' actions in this sector, but to support and complement them. It would provide the financial contribution for: pilot projects, research and monitoring, strategic actions by European networks and partnerships, European organisations aiming to set up 'platforms', and technical and administrative assistance, in the following areas:

- concerted actions between the Commission, the Member States and other partners in the field of education to examine national experiences and promote best practice regarding the use of e-learning in fighting the digital divide;
- multilateral and multiannual partnerships in the field of higher education, in order to promote new models for 'European virtual universities' and 'virtual mobility';
- twinned European secondary schools and promotion of awareness of other languages and other cultures in Europe;
- encouragement for the dissemination of good practice and products, cooperation to boost e-learning among the interested parties, in particular through public-private partnerships.

3. The Commission proposed a multiannual budget of EUR 36 million, broken down as follows:

- fighting the digital divide 25%
- European virtual campuses 30%
- e-twinning of European schools 25%
- promotion of good practice 10%
- technical and administrative assistance 10%.

4. The entire cost relating to the services purchased (e.g. studies, publications) and the provision of a support structure for school twinning (e.g. a central website) was to be borne by the Commission. In addition, the funding in question might be covered up to 80% of the costs of other projects carried out under the auspices of the programme.

PARLIAMENT'S FIRST READING

5. Parliament delivered its opinion on the Commission proposal in its first reading on 8 April 2003². It accepted the Commission proposal, subject to 26 amendments. The key amendments were:

¹ COM (2002) 751, 19.12.02

² A5-0080/2003

- an increase in the budget from EUR 54 million, to reflect the ambitious scale of the programme and the fact that e-Learning is one of the EU's political priorities;
- a redistribution of the proposed expenditure amongst the five areas of the programme, as follows:
 - fighting the digital divide 10%
 - European virtual campuses 30%
 - e-twinning of European schools 40%
 - promotion of good practice 10%
 - technical and administrative assistance 10%.
- e-twinning projects should apply to primary as well as secondary schools, expenditure on this being divided 'approximately equally' between the two categories of school;
- there should be two levels of twinning: (1) the basic and further training of teachers, involving exchanges of good practice between teachers in various Member States or setting up 'virtual training rooms' for updating professional skills; (2) exchanges of experience between schools as regards specific learning targets, with a view to disseminating good practice, creating a database of educational material, etc.
- greater emphasis should be placed on training teachers, e.g. by ensuring that the Action Line 'European Virtual Campuses' also includes the development of European teacher training programmes;
- the development of high-quality multi-media European software, content and services should be promoted, in order to reduce dependence on US-manufactured software;
- projects aimed at combating the 'digital divide' should focus especially on the gender dimension and on the needs of immigrants, people living in rural areas and the disabled;
- particular attention should be paid to experience gained in Australia, New Zealand and Canada in developing e-Learning networks; and, following on from this, the funds allocated to travel expenses for experts from non-EU countries should be increased.

THE COUNCIL'S COMMON POSITION

6. In its common position, adopted on 16 June¹, the Council accepted in full, in part or in essence, 14 of the Parliament amendments which had been accepted by the Commission.

Among the grounds it gave for rejecting the remainder were:

- Amendments 8, 18, 15, 21: references to gender equality and disability were already covered, while it was not appropriate to identify particular kinds of geographical locations which might all, for various reasons, experience particular difficulties;
- Amendment 12: it was neither feasible nor appropriate for the programme to promote educational software, content or services;
- Amendment 26: inclusion of a reference to translating and interpreting languages went beyond the scope and possibilities of the programme;
- Amendment 27: it was not appropriate to make mention of specific countries in provisions for participation in international projects.

¹ C5-0293/2003

7. It gave no grounds for rejecting Amendment 16 (financial framework), but stated in its explanation of the amendments it had made to the Commission proposal that 'The Council is of the opinion that a financial framework of EUR 33 million would enable the programme to meet its objectives, while bearing in mind the need to exercise budgetary restraint'.

RAPPORTEUR'S REMARKS

8. Your rapporteur commends the efforts made by the Council during the preparatory stage of the report on the multiannual eLearning programme. He welcomes, in particular, the fact that the Council endorsed the priorities established on first reading by Parliament as regards the programme objectives and their respective share of budget appropriations.

9. Your rapporteur also notes the compromise reached at the Thessaloniki European Council and fully appreciates the efforts made by the Member States to hammer out an agreement.

10. However, the figure of EUR 33 million set in the Council's common position for the multiannual programme's overall budget (January 2004 - December 2006) is an inadequate reflection of the programme's ambitious objectives and the priorities set out in the Commission's original communication, and subsequently endorsed and extended by Parliament. Consequently, your rapporteur cannot regard this compromise sum as acceptable.

11. Following the constructive talks held with the Council and the Commission after the common position had been delivered, your rapporteur hopes that the Council will appreciate the effort made by Parliament in proposing a global financial framework of EUR 44 million for the eLearning programme.

12. If the Council agrees to accept this dignified solution, it would enable the programme to be started on time in January 2004 without prejudicing in any way the successful implementation of the programme, while respecting its original ambitious scope .