

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0481/02

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to the Council

Subject: Participation of east European republics in Community education programmes

The Community education and training programmes such as Socrates, Jeunesse and Leonardo da Vinci are attracting increasing participation from young people in the EU, on whom they exert a strong motivating effect. These programmes encourage cultural exchanges and the creation of a common educational area, thus laying the foundations for the development of a common European consciousness and identity and, by the same token, of mutual understanding and shared practices.

In the context of EU enlargement, these three Community programmes have been extended to the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the EFTA/EEA associated countries and Turkey.

This planned expansion, which is already under way, will draw a new eastern frontier of the Union, bordering directly on the republics of Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. These republics are not yet official applicant countries, but are indisputably part of the European area and identity, while the leaders and governments of all three have stressed their desire for closer links with the EU.

The prospect of the forthcoming EU enlargement, coupled with the development of closer links with the neighbouring countries, must surely, both inevitably and for strategic reasons, imply the expansion of the above-mentioned programmes, including all of their various components (Socrates, Jeunesse, Leonardo da Vinci and others such as Culture 2000 or the Jean Monnet chairs), to bring in the citizens of Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, who are as things stand able to benefit only from the rather more limited Tempus programme.

Does the Council not consider that such an extension of this European educational area would reinforce the dynamic of the European integration and harmonisation process, while also helping raise awareness in these three east European republics among the younger generation who will form their future civil society and ruling class?

Is the Council willing to earmark, under each of these programmes, a specific budget for each of these republics, designed so as to take account of and compensate for the economic gap between their populations and those of the EU Member States and associated countries, given especially that this additional cost would be purely marginal for programmes which are already open to over thirty countries?