Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council — European Year of Languages 2001

(2000/C 56 E/14)

COM(1999) 485 final — 1999/0208(COD)

(Submitted by the Commission on 19 October 1999)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community and in particular to Articles 149 and 150 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions,

Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 251 of the EC Treaty,

Whereas:

(1) In the preamble to the EC Treaty, it is stated that the Member States are: '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';

(2) Article 18 of the EC Treaty establishes the right of every citizen of the European Union 'to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States', and whereas the ability to use foreign languages is essential to the ability in practice fully to exercise that right;

(3) The Council Conclusions of 12 June 1995 on linguistic diversity and multilingualism in the European Union emphasised that 'linguistic diversity must be preserved and multilingualism promoted in the Union, with equal respect for the languages of the Union and with due regard to the principle of subsidiarity', and whereas Decision No 2493/95/EC of the European Parliament and Council, adopted on 23 October 1995 and establishing 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning [1] highlighted the importance of the role of lifelong learning in developing competencies, including linguistic, throughout an individual's lifetime;

(4) The Commission's 1995 White Paper 'Education, training, research: Teaching and learning: towards a learning society' [2] established as its Objective Four proficiency for all in three Community languages and whereas the Commission's 1996 Green Paper 'Education, Training, Research: The obstacles to transnational mobility' [3] concluded that 'learning at least two Community languages has become a precondition if citizens of the European Union are to benefit from occupational and personal opportunities open to them in the single market';

(5) The measures in the Lingua programme, adopted on 28 July 1989 under Decision 89/489/EEC of the Council [4], were reinforced and partially integrated as horizontal measures into the Socrates programme established on 14 March 1995 by Decision No 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and the Council [5] and modified on 23 February 1998 by Decision No 576/98/EC [6], and whereas those measures have promoted the improvement of knowledge of the languages of the Union and have thus contributed to greater understanding and solidarity between the peoples of the Union; whereas the Council in its common position of 21 December 1998 proposes that those measures be further developed and reinforced in the second phase of the Socrates programme [7];

(6) The Leonardo da Vinci programme, established on 6 December 1994 by Decision 94/819/EC [8] of the European Parliament and the Council, has, building on the results achieved under the Lingua programme, supported activities aimed at developing linguistic skills as part of vocational training measures; whereas that support will be further developed and reinforced in the second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, established on 26 April 1999 by Decision 1999/382/EC of the Council [9];

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[1] OJ L 256, 26.10.1995.

[2] Commission's White Paper: 'Education and Training: Teaching and learning — Towards the learning society' (based on COM(95) 590 final, 29 November 1995), Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1996.

[3] Commission's Green Paper 'Education, Training, Research: The obstacles to transnational mobility' (based on COM(96) 462 final, 2 October 1996), Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1996.

[4] OJ L 239, 16.8.1989.

[5] OJ L 87, 20.4.1995.

[6] OJ L 77, 14.3.1998, p. 1.

[7] OJ C 49, 22.2.1999, p. 42.

[8] OJ L 340, 29.12.1994.

[9] OJ L 146, 11.6.1999, p. 33.

(7) A multiannual programme to promote the linguistic diversity of the Community in the information society was established by Council Decision 96/664/EC of 21 November 1996;

(8) The Report of the High Level Panel on the Free Movement of Persons [1] presented to the Commission on 18 March 1997, considered the 'multiplicity of European languages (to be) ... a treasure to be safeguarded' and suggested measures to foster language training and the use of languages in the Community;

(9) In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as defined in Article 5 of the EC Treaty, the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, *inter alia* because of the need for a coherent Community-wide information campaign avoiding duplication and achieving economies of scale; whereas those objectives can be better achieved by the Community, owing to the transnational dimension of Community actions and measures; whereas this Decision does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve those objectives;

(10) It is important to develop appropriate cooperation between the European Community and the Council of Europe so as to ensure consistency between actions undertaken at Community level and those undertaken by the Council of Europe, and whereas such cooperation is expressly mentioned in Article 149 of the Treaty establishing the Community;

(11) This Decision lays down for the entire duration of the programme, a financial framework constituting the prime reference, within the meaning of point 33 of the Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 6 May 1999, for the budgetary authority, during the annual budgetary procedure [2];

(12) The Joint Declaration of 4 May 1999 by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission sets out the practical arrangements for the implementation of the procedure laid down in Article 251 of the EC Treaty [3],

HAVE DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Establishment of the European Year of Languages

1. 2001 shall be designated as the 'European Year of Languages'.

2. During the European Year, information and promotional measures will be undertaken on the theme of languages, with the aim of encouraging language learning by all persons legally residing in the Member States, notably by raising awareness of the influence of language competencies on the quality of life and on economic competitiveness. These measures will cover the official languages of the Community, together with Irish, Letzeburgesch, and other languages recognised by the Member States.

Article 2

Objectives

The objectives of the European Year of Languages shall be:

(a) to raise awareness of the richness of linguistic diversity within the European Union;

(b) to bring to the notice of the widest possible public the advantages of competencies in a range of languages, as a key element in personal development, in intercultural understanding, in making full use of the rights conferred by European citizenship and in enhancing the economic potential of individuals, enterprises and society as a whole;

(c) to encourage the lifelong learning of languages and related skills by all persons legally residing in the Member States, whatever their age, background or previous educational experiences and achievements;

(d) to collect and disseminate information about the teaching and learning of languages, and about skills, methods and tools which assist that teaching and learning and/or facilitate communication between users of different languages.

Article 3

Content of actions

The actions designed to meet the objectives set out in Article 2 above may include, in particular:

— the use of a common logo and of slogans,

— a Community-wide information campaign,

— the organisation of meetings and events at Community, transnational, national, regional and local level,

— the organisation of competitions and prizes at Community, transnational, national and regional level,

— financial support for initiatives, at transnational, national, regional and local level, which promote the objectives of the European Year of Languages.

Details of these actions are set out in the Annex.

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[1] Report of the High Level Panel on the Free Movement of Persons, chaired by Mrs Simone Veil, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1998, Chapter V.

[2] OJ C 172, 18.6.1999.

[3] OJ C 148, 28.5.1999.

Article 4

Implementation

1. The Commission shall be responsible for the implementation of this Decision.

2. Each Member State shall designate an appropriate body to organise its participation in the European Year, and to be responsible for the coordination and implementation at national level of the actions provided for in this Decision, including through assistance with the selection procedure described in Article 7.

Article 5

Committee

The Commission shall be assisted by an advisory committee composed of the representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission.

The representative of the Commission shall submit to the committee a draft of the measures to be taken. The committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter, if necessary by taking a vote.

The opinion shall be recorded in the minutes; in addition each Member State shall have the right to ask to have its position recorded in the minutes.

The Commission shall take the utmost account of the opinion delivered by the committee. It shall inform the committee of the manner in which its opinion has been taken into account.

Article 6

Financial arrangements

1. Actions which are Community-wide in nature, as described in Part A of the Annex, may be financed in total by the Community budget.

2. Actions which are local, regional, national, or transnational in nature, as described in Part B of the Annex, may be co-financed by the Community budget, up to a maximum of 50 % of the total cost.

Article 7

Application and selection procedure

1. Applications for the co-financing of actions from the Community budget under Article 6, paragraph 2, shall be submitted to the Commission through the body designated under Article 4, paragraph 2.

2. Decisions on the financing and co-financing of actions under Article 6 shall be taken by the Commission in accordance with the procedures set out in Article 5. The Commission shall ensure a balanced distribution among Member States and among the different relevant fields of activity.

Article 8

Coherence

The Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, shall ensure:

— consistency between the actions provided for in this Decision and other Community actions and initiatives, in particular those in the field of education and training,

— optimal complementarity between the European Year and other existing Community, national and regional initiatives and resources, where these can contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the European Year.

Article 9

Budget

1. The financial framework for the implementation of this action for the period 1 January-31 December 2001 shall be EUR 8 million.

2. The appropriations shall be authorised by the budgetary authority within the limits of the financial perspectives.

Article 10

International cooperation

In the framework of the European Year, and in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 5, the Commission may cooperate with relevant international organisations. In particular, it shall make appropriate arrangements for cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Article 11

Monitoring and evaluation

The Commission shall submit, by 31 December 2002 at the latest, a report to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the actions provided for in this Decision.

Article 12

Entry into force

This Decision shall be published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*. It shall take effect on the day of its publication.

ANNEX

1. **Nature of the actions referred to in Article 3**

A. *Actions which may be financed up to 100 % from the Community budget*

1. Meetings and events:

   (a) organisation of meetings on a Community level;

   (b) organisation of events raising awareness of linguistic diversity, including the opening and closing events of the Year;

   (c) organisation in each Member State of one or more presentations of the Year;

2. Information and promotional campaigns involving:

   (a) the development of a logo and of slogans for the European Year, for use in the framework of all activities linked to the Year;

   (b) an information campaign on a Community-wide scale;

   (c) the production of tools and aids, for use throughout the Community, designed to raise public awareness of the conditions for successful language learning and of effective teaching and learning techniques;

   (d) the organisation of European competitions highlighting achievements and experiences on the themes of the European Year.

3. Other actions:

   Surveys and studies on a Community-wide scale, having notably the aim of better defining:

   — the situation in Europe with regard to languages, their use and language teaching and learning,

   — the expectations of different target groups with regard to the objectives of the European Year,

   — the way in which the Community could fulfil those expectations both in the course of the Year and afterwards, in particular in the framework of its programmes in the fields of education and training,

   — evaluation studies concerning the effectiveness and impact of the European Year.

B. *Actions which may be co-financed by the Community budget*

Actions at local, regional, national or transnational level may qualify for financing from the Community budget up to a maximum of 50 % of the cost, according to the nature and circumstances of what is proposed. These may include, *inter alia*:

1. Events around the objectives of the European Year;

2. Information actions and actions disseminating examples of good practice, other than those described in Part 1 A of this Annex;

3. The organisation of prizes or competitions;

4. Surveys and studies other than those mentioned in 1 A above;

5. Other actions promoting language teaching and learning, provided that those actions would be ineligible for funding under existing Community programmes and initiatives.

C. *Actions receiving no financial aid from the Community budget*

The Community will offer its moral support, including written authorisation to use the logo and other material associated with the European Year, for initiatives undertaken by public or private organisations, where those organisations can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Commission that the initiatives involved are or will be in progress during the year 2001 and are likely to contribute significantly to one or more of the objectives of the European Year.

2. **Technical assistance**

In carrying out the action, the Commission may have recourse to technical assistance organisations the financing of which may be provided for within the overall envelope for the programme. It can, under the same conditions, have recourse to experts.