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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
to: COUNCIL
Subject: Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 – Interim Evaluation
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above subject, which appears under "other business" on the agenda for the forthcoming Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 19 and 20 May 2011.

Education, Youth and Culture Council 19-20 May 2011

Information Note from the Commission Services

Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 – Interim Evaluation

In accordance with Article 15, paragraph 5 of the Decision No. 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning (LLP Decision), the Commission will present in the coming weeks a report on the interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) for the period 2007-2013. It will build on the findings of the LLP external interim evaluation¹, on National Reports on LLP implementation from the 31 participating countries² and on information gathered by the Commission.

During its first three years, the Programme has financed, with almost EUR 3 billion, trans-national education and training activities promoting the modernisation of education systems in 31 European countries. It has catered for 900 000 learning mobility periods of European citizens, of which more than 720 000 by students, trainees and pupils and almost 180 000 by teachers/trainers/staff. More than 50 000 European organisations have taken part in various forms of co-operation activities.

The external evaluation considers the Lifelong Learning Programme as relevant and instrumental in reaching the key Education and Training objectives agreed at EU level and thereby contributing to the overarching strategic objectives of the European Union. It is also user friendly, highly popular and addresses the needs of its various target communities. The control framework works effectively.

¹ The interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme has been implemented between January and December 2010 by the international consortium led by the Public Policy and Management Institute from Lithuania. The full LLP interim evaluation report can be consulted at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports .

² National reports provided by countries participating in the LLP (27 EU Member States, EEA countries and Turkey) in agreement with paragraph 15.4 of the LLP Decision and covering the 2007-09 period were important sources of information and data for the overall interim evaluation of the LLP.

The positive findings can be summarized as follows:

- The LLP acts as a catalyst for structural change through support to policy development, cooperation and mobility. It improves policy-making by providing quality tools, analysis and research as well as fora for exchanging information on best practices through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).
- In the absence of the LLP, developments in these areas would be fragmented (in terms of scope of activities and coverage of the participating countries), activities would be carried out on a smaller scale and less extensively, and a number of important results would not have been achieved at all.
- LLP supported mobility can be considered as success story. A study on a value of Erasmus Mobility of students and teachers indicated that a period of study in another European country helped to enhance international competences, facilitated access to the labour market and contributed to placing former Erasmus students in international professional positions. Mobility within the LLP also contributed to the development of European identity and such values as combating racism, prejudice, xenophobia and discrimination.
- 80 % of the LLP is delivered through a network of 40 National Agencies which together manage around EUR 900 million per year, while the remaining part of larger-scale cooperation projects and networks is managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The National Agencies effectively used the earmarked funds in the first 3 years of implementation. Extensive use of lump sum grants and of electronic forms was instrumental both for achieving customer satisfaction and cost efficiency. Financial audits of National Agencies also show sound management practice with very low error rates (<2%).

However, the evaluation concluded that not all the potential of the Programme has been achieved.

- An excessive number of objectives set for the Programme has translated into a large number of specific actions, some of which lack the critical mass to have a long lasting impact. Progress towards a lifelong learning approach as opposed to one based on educational sectors is still quite limited.

- While the largest impact of the LLP actions is found on the individual and institutional level, the direct influence of LLP actions on the modernisation of education and training systems is still hard to observe and estimate.
- The LLP still faces some difficulties in reaching individuals and organisations beyond established education circuits. Very high levels of unmet demand, still limited involvement of enterprises as venues for mobile student placements or insufficient language knowledge of participants (notably adults) in mobility actions remain important factors which limit the reach of the programme.
- Regarding management, the start-up phase of the Programme saw a need for successive adjustments at all levels: forms, IT systems, management rules, reporting principles and requirements. The number of audits or quasi-audits is high and they are not always sufficiently coordinated.

These recommendations show that there is clear room for improvements. Some of the recommendations made are of a managerial nature and will be taken on board in the implementation of the current programme. Others are more far-reaching and these will be taken into account while preparing the next generation of EU programmes.
