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**EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES FOR EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT**

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## **Editor's Foreword**

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the development and impact of European Union (EU) programmes in education and training. The programmes must be regarded in the wider context of gradual assumption of competencies in the field of education and training by the European Union. Therefore, the introductory section identifies a number of distinct phases of this process.

Section two describes the conceptual background of the interpretation and implementation of EU educational programmes and the ways in which these programmes potentially influence national provisions in education. In particular the increasing importance of the principle of subsidiarity in the EU legislation and policy is emphasized.

In section three, the development of programmes as a means of implementing EU policies in the field of education and vocational training is outlined. The evolution of programmes provides valuable insights into the way they influence national educational provisions. The chronology identifies two generations of programmes, each with a number of 'waves' of programmes that were initiated as a reaction to wider economic and societal developments of the time. The varying implementation of patterns of the programmes in the different phases are discussed.

In section four, the development of the programmes is interpreted in terms of their influence on the overall and current formulation and implementation of EU education policies. It is argued that the programmes contribute to what has been termed the 'voluntary harmonisation' of the education systems of the EU member states.

The contribution concludes with an assessment of the impact of Socrates and Leonardo on the convergence of education and training in Europe. Further, the main current problems of the two programmes are outlined and discussed.

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# European Union Programmes for Education and Vocational Training: Development and Impact

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## 1. Introduction: The EU and Education and Training

The European Union<sup>1</sup> is a relative newcomer as an actor in the field of education and vocational training. Vocational training featured in the Treaty of Rome 1957, where it was closely bound to the basic aims of creating a common market for goods, services and capital. Over time, the Union's remit has strayed well beyond these relative narrow economic boundaries to encompass a broad range of social, cultural and security policies (Hantrais, 2000).

This development is characterised by a sequence of steps in which the competence of the EU in the field of education and training has developed. The range of EU interests and activities has changed from one period to another. Further, influences on the educational agenda often originated in areas other than the educational field. For example, in the 1980s, the sharp rise in youth unemployment shifted the emphasis considerably towards education for and in the world of work. At the beginning of the 1990s, the political and economic decision for the establishment of the monetary union necessitated closer co-operation in social affairs and education.

Elsewhere, four discrete phases of development of EU educational policies were identified (Ertl, 2000c):

- *Initiation phase*, beginning in 1951 with the provisions of the Treaties of Paris and Rome
- *Foundation phase*, beginning in 1963 with the formulation of ten common principles for vocational education
- *Expansion phase*, beginning in 1976 with the introduction of the first common programmes for education and the concept of the European dimension in education and training

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<sup>1</sup> The terms used to refer to what has become known as the European Union have developed gradually. They can be somewhat confusing and are also used interchangeably at times in the relevant literature.

This study uses European Union, EU or Union to refer to the supranational actor under investigation. It was founded as the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, changed its name to European Community (EC) in 1967 and formally became the European Union (EU) in 1993. This paper attempts to use the appropriate term for the respective periods under discussion.

The language usage in this study, therefore, follows the pattern in other publications, most importantly in Richardson (1996) and Field (1998).

- *Consolidation phase*, beginning with the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty) which provided a new legal basis for EU policies and initiatives in the field.<sup>2</sup>

It will be argued in the concluding part of this paper that we might be at the brink of a new expansion of EU competencies in education and training at the moment, triggered by a variety of developments such as the imminent enlargement of the Union, the commitment to intensified co-operation in higher education (initiated by the so-called ‘Bologna Process’), the commitment of the member states to a ten-year action plan for education (the so-called ‘Rolling Agenda’, developed in several consecutive European Council meetings in 2001 and 2002), and the decision on a corresponding approach for vocational training (set up by the so-called ‘Bruges Process’) in June 2002 (cf. Van der Pas, 2002).

There are numerous more or less coherent accounts describing and criticising the European Union policies in education and training, including one paper in this series (cf. Demeulemeester, 2001). All these accounts have difficulties to cover the complexity and variedness of the topic. Moreover, in the discourse on European integration, a great deal of attention has been given to the process of policy formulation in the field of education and vocational training and the outcomes of these policies at the European Union (EU) and the national levels. Therefore, this paper focuses on one particular instrument of the implementation of EU policies, namely the programmes in education and training. As will be shown in the main sections of this paper, the EU programmes are the main approach of European Commission to initiate co-operation between the EU countries in educational matters. They have also resulted in – to a certain extent – convergence of the member states’ educational policies.

The focus on EU programmes is justified by the continuous appeal the Union has enjoyed, resulting in growing membership in recent decades and the strong wish of many countries in central and eastern Europe to become a part of the Union (cf. Anderson, 1997, pp. 27-36). Further, unlike other international bodies such as the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), or the Council of Europe, the European Union rests on a juridical base which can provide for legislation that is binding on member states, and enforceable by sanctions (Schink, 1993, p. 11). Although these means of enforcement are rarely used in most areas of co-operation, their existence gives the Union a much broader scope for potential action compared to other supranational organisations (Rego, 1997, pp. 7-12; Neave, 1984, pp.

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<sup>2</sup> It is inevitable that the identification of historical periods and phases of time is affected by the individual knowledge-base and attitudes of the researcher. For the pitfalls of historical periodisation in comparative education see Phillips (1994).

For a different periodisation of EU competences in education and training see, for instance, Müller-Solger et al. (1993).

5-7).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the concentration on the European Union is dictated by the political and socio-economic realities in Europe.

The research for this paper was conducted within the thematic and conceptual framework of the European research and training network PRESTiGE (Problems of Educational Standardization and Transitions in a Global Environment). The network is funded by the European Commission's TMR (Training and Mobility of Researchers) Program and consists of institutes concerned with comparative education at the universities in Stockholm, Berlin, Dijon, Lisbon, Madrid and Oxford. Each of these Institutes has specified a particular research focus within the overall thematic framework.<sup>4</sup>

The Centre for Comparative Studies in Education at the University of Oxford is conducting an investigation into the processes of interpretation and implementation of European Union policies in education and training in four EU member states (United Kingdom, France, Germany and Sweden). The conceptual and theoretical framework of this project in Oxford and the overall PRESTiGE network has been described in some detail elsewhere (cf. Phillips & Economou, 1999; Ertl, 1999; Phillips & Ertl, 2002).

## **2. Background: Interpretation and Implementation of EU Education and Training Policies**

In the field of education governments are faced with the task of formulating policy that has to be transmitted via a wide variety of subsidiary competences to the institutional levels at which it is for the most part implemented. Policy decisions are transmitted with varying degrees of urgency and authority, and are subject to differing degrees of interpretation at various stages of the transfer process from governmental to local and institutional levels. This transfer process is highly complex, even in the case of national policy formulation and interpretation. When it comes to supranational policy much greater complexity can be expected, especially whenever such policy – exemplified here by the education and training policy of the European Union – is not binding on individual governments.

There was no specific reference to educational co-operation in the Treaty on European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome), where reference was made only to vocational training. The founding father of the European Community, Jean Monnet, is quoted as saying that if he could have started again he would have begun with education (Sprokkereef, 1995, p.

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account on the differences in the legislative powers of the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of education and training see Ryba (2000, pp. 246ff.).

<sup>4</sup> For further information on the PRESTiGE partners and their work visit the internet site <http://www.interped.su.se/prestige/> or see the project's regular publication *Newsletter*. The areas of interest and the theoretical and methodological concepts of the six part-projects are described in Ertl (1999).

340). If true, this would imply a remarkable retrospective reorientation of the whole concept of the Community, whose *raison d'être* was primarily economic: hence the (logical) inclusion of training (Art. 118 and 128, Treaty on EEC; cf. Moschonas, 1998, pp. 12-15).

For general and higher education, the findings of the Janne Report (*For a Community Policy on Education*) of 1973 stimulated the Education Action Programme passed by the Council of Ministers in 1976 (cf. Neave, 1984), which can be seen as the foundation of EU co-operation in general education (Commission, 1993, p. 17; Delgado & Losa, 1997, pp. 131ff.; Brock & Tulasiewicz, 2000, p. 26). However, it was the ruling of the European Court of Justice which interpreted Article 128 of the Treaty on the EEC in favour of extended competences of Community bodies that encouraged the Community to initiate more activities in education and training from the mid-1980s. The Gravier and Erasmus cases can be seen as the most influential rulings in a series of verdicts that have helped to establish certain rights and expectations (cf. Ertl, 2000c).

As a result of the extended competences awarded by the Court to the European Commission, the Community launched a series of programmes in education. These programmes, such as Petra and Erasmus, provided opportunities for an increasing number of young people to gather experience in a European environment. As the legal basis for these programmes seemed somewhat unclear, the Treaty on European Union (TEU) established a new legal basis for EU activities in education (Art. 126 TEU) and training (Art. 127 TEU).<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the formulation of Articles 126 and 127 and the overarching principle of subsidiarity, EU education and training policy can, it seems, be interpreted in an extremely wide range of different ways. As a consequence of these provisions there is an imperative for the interpretation of EU policies within the member states, and a consequent expectation that such interpretation will differ from one member state to another. It may be expected that these differences will in some cases be the result of clearly formulated policy emerging from individual ministries; in other cases they may result from a distinct lack of involvement by the ministry, since in terms of the implementation of EU education and training policy national ministries are bypassed in many instances (Field, 1998, p. 112).

Field (1998) argues that the 'bottom-up' approach of the Erasmus programme is an instance of such bypassing of competency; so too is the contracting-out of responsibilities for EU policy matters to various sub-national agencies. Hantrais (1995, pp. 56ff.) contends that there is a limited and uneven impact of EU programmes for education and training because national ministries and/or agencies have reacted to programme directives differently. The

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<sup>5</sup> In the consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, Articles 126 and 127 were renumbered as 149 and 150.

notion of a 'Europe of the Regions' (embodied in the work of the Committee of the Regions, established in 1994 following provisions in the Maastricht Treaty) is also of significance in this context as it aims '[...] to bring the European Union closer to the people, involving locals in the development and implementation of EU policies at a regional level' (Brock & Tulasiewicz, 2000, p. 5). These developments facilitate direct contact between Brussels and sub-national agencies with localised responsibility.

The principle of subsidiarity is at the heart of the debate about the relationship between national sovereignty and the convergence of national provision in education. This creates considerable uncertainty on the part of national ministries as they attempt to interpret EU policy (Delgado & Losa, 1997; Jover, 1997). Koch (1998) argues that subsidiarity does not lead to a clear division between national and EU competences, but is subject to interpretation in political decision-making and implementation processes. Identification of successful practice in any one jurisdiction is likely to have implications for change in practice in others. At a time when the evident tendency towards globalisation in so many areas of human activity is creating tensions *vis-à-vis* the desire of nation states to preserve sovereignty in decision-making it is of interest to examine the processes of policy transmission. European Union programmes in education and training represent one example for the transmission of supranational policies in national contexts.

### **3. The Development of EU Programmes as a Means of Implementing Policy in Education and Training**

#### ***3.1 The first generation of programmes: 1974 – 1995***

The chronology of EU programmes in education and training does not begin until nearly twenty years after the European Economic Community (EEC) was established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. In the mid-1970s the European Community launched the first programmes concerned with vocational training and, to a certain degree, with education. Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome provided a relatively clear basis for dealing with vocational training. On the basis of this Article, general principles for a common vocational training policy were established in 1963. Until the mid-1980s the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs bore sole responsibility for vocational training at the European Community level.

*First wave: programmes for particular target groups as a reaction to youth unemployment*

The EC Ministers of Education met for the first time in 1971, although there was no legal basis for the meeting in the Treaty of Rome.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the meeting was held **within** the Council

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<sup>6</sup> The Ministers responsible for vocational training policies met at a European level for the first time in 1963 (Hingel, 2001, p. 5).

of Education Ministers, not **as** the Council of Education Ministers (McMahon, 1995, p. 8). The resulting Resolution on co-operation in education initially covered five topics:

- co-operation between universities with particular reference to student exchanges,
- equal opportunities for girls in secondary education,
- education of second-generation immigrant children,
- effective transition of young people from school to adult and working life, and
- promotion of closer relations between educational systems in Europe (Ministers, 1974).

As a consequence, the first Education Committee was established to facilitate co-operation in the areas covered by the Resolution (Brock & Tulasiewicz, 2000, p. 26). Later, the so-called European dimension in education and co-operation between higher education, business and industry was added (Sellin, 1999, p. 18). In a second Resolution in 1976, the Education Ministers extended the 1974 Resolution and went into much greater detail in all areas stipulated in the first Resolution (Ministers, 1976). On the basis of these agreements and Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome, the first Action Programme for education was launched in 1976. It aimed to facilitate the

- transition of young people from compulsory school to the world of work,
- improvement of educational provision for immigrant workers,
- promotion of language instruction,
- co-operation in the field of higher education,
- inclusion of knowledge about the European Community in teaching provision,
- information on educational systems of the member states of the Community, and
- documentation of educational structures and developments in Europe (cf. Bardong, 1994, p. 64).

The Action Programme ran for three years and was later extended for a further three years. Following the patterns set by the 1976 Action Programme, a host of other programmes were launched from the mid-1970s onwards, most of them initiated as a means of combating increasing youth unemployment. For instance, Strømnes (1997, p. 218) notes that 28 EC programmes and projects in the field of education and training were introduced in the ten years after 1976.<sup>7</sup> In particular, the programmes consolidated and expanded the existing vocational training infrastructures in regions that were struggling economically at the time (for instance, southern Italy, Ireland, Northern Ireland).

*Second wave: programmes for particular educational sectors as a result of the rulings of the ECJ*

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<sup>7</sup> For a different count of these programmes see Fogg & Jones (1985, pp. 293-296).



In the 1980s, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) interpreted Article 128 in a series of rulings in such a way as to give the European Community institutions the right to adopt legislation in the fields of vocational training and education that would be binding on the member states.<sup>8</sup> In particular, the Court interpreted the term ‘vocational’ more extensively. This gave the Commission the right to assume competences in the fields of higher and continuing education. The Court also ruled that the 1963 general principles on vocational education and training formed part of the EC Treaties and that, therefore, the EC had far-reaching regulative powers in vocational training policy. These decisions encouraged the Commission and the Council from the mid-1980s onwards to organise a number of projects and programmes (Schink, 1993, pp. 174-177). The Court accepted that these initiatives were based on Article 235 of the Treaty of Rome which allowed the Council and the Commission to take appropriate legislative measures to attain the Union’s objectives even if the Treaty did not provide the necessary powers (Sprokkereef, 1995, p. 342). In addition, the challenges of new information technology and the consistently high levels of youth unemployment, which were no longer seen as a temporary problem as had been the case in the 1970s, were considered to be important reasons for the creation of action programmes in the following years.

The earliest of these projects, Comett (European Community Action Programme in Education and Training for Technology) was launched in 1986. Comett was joined in 1987 by

- Erasmus (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), and shortly afterwards by
- Petra (European Community Action Programme for the Vocational Training of Young People and Their Preparation for Adult and Working Life),
- Eurotecnet (European Technology Network for Training), Lingua (Programme for the Promotion of Foreign Language Knowledge in the European Community), and
- Iris (European Community Network of Training Programmes for Women).

Thus, a whole new spectrum of programmes developed gradually covering all educational sectors with the exception of compulsory schooling. Despite their ambitious aims, the programmes were funded modestly in comparison with the EC’s substantial Social Fund (Field, 1997, pp. 98-101). Erasmus can be seen as an exception both in terms of the funds made available and of the high number of participants (cf. Sellin, 1999, p. 19).

### *Third wave: update and expansion of the programme range in preparation for the Single Market*

As a reaction to the Single European Act (SEA) of 1986 the programmes were reorganised and restructured. Although the SEA itself contained no new provisions on education and training, ‘[...] it opened the way for a new wave of policy initiatives’ (Milner, 1998, p. 160).

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<sup>8</sup> For detailed analyses of the impact of these cases on EU educational policy see Lonbay (1989).

For instance, some of the aforementioned EC programmes were amended and extended prior to the establishment of the Single European Market in 1993: Erasmus II and Comett II began in 1990; the agreement on Petra was amended in 1991, and as a result Petra II began in 1992; and Force (Action Programme for the Development of Continuing Vocational Training in the European Community) began in 1990 (Funnell & Müller, 1991, p. 75; Europäische Kommission, 1996, p. 89).

At the beginning of the 1990s, the individual programmes can be categorised according to the educational sector, the content areas, and the types of action they cover:

Figure 1: EU programmes in education and training in the early 1990s<sup>9</sup>

Acronym	Full Title	Educational Sectors	Content Areas	Types of Action
Arion (1991-1992)	Programme of study visits for educational specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>schools</li> <li>vocational training</li> <li>higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>general education</li> <li>vocational education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>projects</li> <li>exchanges</li> </ul>
Comett (1990-1994)	Community programme on co-operation between universities and industry regarding training in the field of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training</li> <li>higher education</li> <li>further education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>projects</li> <li>institutional co-operation</li> </ul>
Erasmus (1990-1994)	European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>general education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exchanges</li> <li>institutional co-operation</li> </ul>
Eurotecnet (1990-1994)	European action programme to promote innovation in the field of vocational training resulting from technological change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training</li> <li>higher education</li> <li>further education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>projects</li> <li>networks</li> </ul>
Force (1991-1994)	Action programme for the development of continuing vocational training in the European Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>projects</li> </ul>
Lingua (1990-1994)	Action programme to promote foreign language competence in the European Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>schools</li> <li>vocational training</li> <li>higher education</li> <li>further education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exchanges</li> <li>institutional co-operation</li> </ul>
Petra (1988-1992)	Action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>projects</li> <li>exchanges</li> </ul>
Yes (1988-1991)	Action programme for the promotion of youth exchange in EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vocational education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exchanges</li> </ul>

This categorisation shows that the programmes were created at different points of time to promote different aims and that their target groups and contents overlapped. This action-oriented approach, which has created a diverse and complex range of possibilities, had its origin in the aim of convergence of west European education and training systems.

The programmes in vocational education and training must be regarded as closely linked to the Community's commitment to the principle of converging working conditions and

<sup>9</sup> Sources: Manning (1994, p. 139), Piehl & Sellin (1995, pp. 214f.), and Moschonas (1998, p. 146). For a different categorisation of these programmes see Hantrais (1995, pp. 46-51).

workers' living conditions throughout all member states, as set out in the 1989 Social Charter. Although the Charter has no legally binding character, it stipulates in Article 15 the right for every worker to access vocational training (Barnard, 1995, p. 21). Further aims of EU policies in vocational education and training and the programmes in this field include improved re-integration of unemployed people into the world of work, transnationally recognised vocational qualifications, enhanced responsiveness of workers to the technical modernisation process of workplaces, and increased exchange of information and experience across national training systems (Jordan, 1992, pp. 503f.).

### *Scope and impact of the first generation programmes*

All of the programmes that began between 1974 and the mid-1990s were based on three legal foundations: Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome, the general principles on vocational education and training of 1963, and the 1974 agreement on co-operation in education in the aftermath of the first meeting of the EC Ministers of Education (McMahon, 1995, p. 17). Therefore, this first generation of EC programmes in the field of education and training mirrors the somewhat unclear legal situation in which the European Court of Justice had to decide what actions were in the realm of the Union and what actions were incompatible with the aim of preserving sovereignty of the member states in matters of education and training.

Generally speaking the projects and programmes of the first generation aimed to enhance Europeanised learning opportunities through the

- exchange of participants (for instance, students, trainees, skilled workers),
- promotion of joint pilot projects and transnational initiatives,
- promotion of the exchange of information about educational practices in other countries, and
- implementation of comparative studies among the countries involved (see for instance Field, 1997; Sellin, 1999).

The first generation programmes achieved the objectives to a certain degree in all these areas (Müller-Solger et al., 1993, pp. 24f.). However, their success was limited in many cases to the people and institutions directly involved in the projects funded by the programmes. The transfer of positive outcomes of the projects to the standard systems of education and training proved to be much more difficult. Trade unions argue that EU programmes contribute to rising employment figures only if innovations developed by EU-funded projects find their way into standard practice. In the view of the trade unions this has not been the case for most of the EU programmes in the field of vocational training (Lübke, 1999 and Vojta, 1999).

The reasons for the transfer problems included the inadequate dissemination of project outcomes by the EU and member states, the lack of support for project participants, the resistance in member states to externally proposed reforms and innovations resulting from the

EU projects, the lack of external evaluation of programmes and projects, bureaucratic obstacles at EU or national level (Ertl, 2000b, pp. 482-487), and the lack of involvement of policy-makers in initiating the transfer of project outcomes to other contexts (Sellin, 1999, p. 20).

Further, the projects supported by the first generation of EU programmes only lasted for up to three or four years and in many cases no follow-up financing was available. From the outset, the financial resources for the first generation programmes were strictly limited. For instance, the resources suggested by the European Commission for the second wave of programmes initiated in the late 1980s (Comett, Erasmus and Petra) were substantially reduced by the European Council (Bardong, 1994, p. 68). In these circumstances a direct impact of the programmes on national systems of education and training seems unlikely (Ryba, 2000, p. 252).<sup>10</sup> A further lesson from the first generation programmes is that the programmes have a greater chance of initiating or influencing the direction of reform in areas that are not subject to national regulation. For instance, the programmes in the areas of continuing and further training had a more significant impact than those in the field of initial training, where the scope for innovation for reform in most European countries is limited by various mechanisms of co-determination between the social partners. Also, programmes in higher education, such as Erasmus, proved to be easier to initiate (Milner, 1998, p. 159) and more successful than those in general education or in the training sector (Sprokkereef, 1995, p. 343; Teichler et al., 1999). Participation rates in exchange schemes can be regarded as one indication for the success of programmes. Participation rates in exchange schemes in higher education are traditionally higher than in similar schemes within vocational training programmes. This has not changed since the first generation programmes: from 1995 to 1999 the Erasmus programme was used by about 90,000 higher education students annually to spend some time studying abroad. The corresponding figure for young people taking part in exchange schemes under EU training programmes was only 25,000 (cf. Teichler et al., 1999, p. 17; Commission, 2000f, p. 25 and 2000h, p. 15).

Despite the relative success of EU-funded mobility schemes in higher education, the middle-term objective that one in every ten European students will spend some time studying abroad has not been achieved (Sprokkereef, 1995, p. 343). The better funding of higher education programmes and the relatively far-reaching autonomy of universities (as compared to, for instance, compulsory schools) seem to be the most important factors in this context.

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<sup>10</sup> Impact in this context can be defined as longer-term effects of programme outputs on various groups and areas of education and vocational training (cf. Commission, 2000h, p. 18).

### ***3.2 The second generation of programmes: from 1995***

The next generation of EU programmes in education and training was based on a new Treaty: the Treaty on European Union (TEU, often referred to as the Maastricht Treaty). The TEU dealt with vocational education and training (Art. 127, which replaced Art. 128 of the Treaty of Rome) and with general education (Art. 126). In fact, the term education appeared for the first time in an EU Treaty with the implementation of the TEU. The general principles on vocational education and training of 1963 became obsolete with the regulations in the Maastricht Treaty (Lenaerts, 1994, p. 7). Therefore, the Treaty established a new legal basis for both vocational training and general education.

#### *The introduction of the framework programmes Socrates and Leonardo: first phase 1995 – 1999*

In 1995, the programmes Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci were launched as a consequence of the ratification of the TEU. They eventually replaced all the aforementioned first generation programmes. Socrates was initiated on the basis of Article 126 TEU and covers general and higher education. Leonardo was initiated on the basis of Article 127 TEU and covers vocational training.<sup>11</sup> The Youth for Europe programme can be considered as a second generation programme too since it was also introduced on the basis of the Maastricht Treaty and it covers some areas that had formerly been covered by programmes mentioned in the previous section. However, it is not further investigated in this paper since it does not deal with formal education and training but instead offers opportunities for partnership and co-operation projects involving young European people. At the national level, the Youth for Europe programme was administered by National Agencies nominated by the national ministry responsible for youth affairs, not by National Agencies nominated by the national ministry responsible for education as is the case for Socrates and Leonardo (Commission, 2001a and 2001b). Apart from their new legal foundation, the second generation programmes are characterised by a number of aspects which differ from their predecessor programmes.<sup>12</sup>

First, both programmes preserved and consolidated most of the actions and objectives of their forerunners but added new emphases such as co-operation in the fields of lifelong learning and multimedia. The fact that Leonardo and Socrates continued most of the activities of their predecessor programmes was one of the reasons for their complex and often inaccessible structure (Commission, 2000h, p. 8). A representative of the German employers' association argued that at the outset Leonardo was not much more than a compound of all

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<sup>11</sup> For the specific areas covered by the two programmes see Figures 2 and 3.

<sup>12</sup> For a structural outline of the contents and objectives of the first phase of Socrates and Leonardo see Sellin (1995a, pp. 127-134).

former programmes, lacking coherence and innovation (Gerstein, 1999, p. 2). A further example of the difficult transition from the first to the second generation programmes is the Erasmus programme. Although the European Council decided to include Erasmus in the Socrates framework from 1995, controversies about this decision postponed the adaptation and incorporation of Erasmus into the new framework programme until the academic year 1997/98 (Teichler et al., 1999, p. 7).

Second, the programmes had a stronger emphasis on a 'bottom-up' approach by encouraging practitioners in the field to submit their project ideas following annual calls for proposals. Exceptions to this general practice were measures such as 'exchange of comparable data', where the Commission applied a 'top-down' approach to implement statistical procedures and work programmes. The latter approach was more common in the first generation programmes (Commission, 2000h, pp. 6f.).

Third, the member states and representatives from the social partners (employers and workers) became more involved in the application and selection processes of the programmes; this trend continued when Socrates and Leonardo were re-conceptualised for a second phase.

Fourth, the selection processes for projects seeking funding from the programmes were organised by way of public tender. This made the process more transparent since it made the discussion and definition of clear selection criteria necessary. However, the combination of increased involvement on the part of both the member states and the social partners made the application and selection procedures slower and more expensive. As a result, the financing of the projects under the second generation programmes was delayed in many cases.

Fifth, the second generation of programmes introduced the principle of complementary funding. This means that Socrates and Leonardo only provide for up to 75 per cent of a project's overall budget. The applicants have to obtain the remaining funds from other sources, for instance from national and/or regional or local bodies (Commission, 2000h, p. 7). The first generation programmes normally refunded the total expenditure of projects. This change in the financing regulations was introduced not only to be able to fund more projects but also to ensure compatibility of projects with national/regional priorities in education and training, and therefore to increase the chance of a direct innovative impact of the projects on the development of national/regional systems. However, the need to obtain complementary funding for a project from other sources represents a strong deterrent for potential applicants. This is particularly true in times of restrictions on national and regional budgets.

As a result of the new legal basis laid in the Treaty of Maastricht, the second generation programmes provided a better framework for EU activities in the field of education and training. The new programmes were able to build on almost two decades of experience with transnational co-operation in education and training in Europe. The projects funded by the

programmes of the second generation went beyond the vague notion of the exchange of experience, as had been the case in first generation projects. A greater proportion of partners involved used the opportunity to develop innovative projects.<sup>13</sup>

One of the main aims of the second generation programmes was to improve the transferability and dissemination of project results and their impact on national systems of education and training (Bildung für Europa, 2000a). Lenaerts refers to this aim as ‘voluntary’ harmonisation through the granting of financial aid by the Union (Lenaerts, 1994, p. 35). As outlined in this section, however, the steps taken to achieve this aim, such as increased power of the member states in the selection of projects, involvement of policy-makers and social partners, and the introduction of complementary funding, seem to have produced new problems. Further, the transfer of outcomes and results produced by projects funded by Socrates and Leonardo still seemed to be the major problem of the programmes of this generation.<sup>14</sup> In the member states this led to demands for increased effort concerning the transfer and dissemination of project results in the second phase of Leonardo and Socrates (cf. Winter, 1999, p. 3; DfEE, 1999, pp. 83f.).

It seems that the problem of the programmes’ unsatisfactory impact has less to do with their structure and organisation than with the context in which they are set. Sellin (1999) for instance, argues that the systems of education and training in larger EU member states (such as France, the UK and Germany) are steeped in the culture and traditions of their own national contexts. The governments in these countries regard themselves as a safeguard for the education and training systems. Therefore, EU policies and programmes have had little impact beyond the institutions and individuals engaged in EU-funded projects (cf. Commission, 2000h, p. 18).

In contrast, in smaller EU countries that initiated far-reaching educational reforms as a result of economic development (for instance, Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands), or political change (for instance, Portugal), EU funds contributed to the restructuring of education and training provisions. In these cases national systems of vocational training were adapted with explicit reference to the EU debate (Sellin, 1999, pp. 21f.). For instance, the investigation of the implementation of modular structures in the training sector has shown that

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<sup>13</sup> This represents the opinion of a senior representative of the German employers’ association. She concludes for the first phase of Leonardo that ‘[...] the co-operation has been consolidated, the European partners know each other in Europe’ (Gerstein, 1999, p. 2).

<sup>14</sup> This was the impression given by senior officials at the National Agencies and relevant Ministries during interviews conducted towards the end of the life-span of the first phase and the beginning of the second phase of the programmes. (Interviews in Berlin, November 1998; Bonn, May 1999; and London, September 2000.) According to the officials in the UK and Germany, the National Agencies have made considerable efforts to promote the publication and dissemination of project outcomes. However, the results of these efforts was assessed by the officials in both countries as not yet satisfactory.

new training frameworks were introduced that applied the EU systems of levels of training to the modularised structures in the Netherlands, Scotland and Spain (cf. Ertl, 2001). Thus, it seems that the degree to which national systems of education and training are already regulated and regarded as part of the 'national culture' is an important determinant for the impact of EU programmes in the member states.

Following this line of argument, the first phase of Socrates and Leonardo also provided an important impetus for the reform of education and training provisions in pre-accession countries in central and eastern Europe. These countries were eligible for Socrates I and Leonardo I in education and training and continue to be so for the second phase programmes (Commission, 2000c, p. 7). In Romania, for instance, the Leonardo programme is explicitly associated with the reform of initial training and with recent draft legislation on continuing training (Commission, 2000h, p. 19).

#### *The second phase of Socrates and Leonardo: 2000 – 2006*

After the initial five-year period between 1995 and 1999, the Socrates and Leonardo programmes were extended for seven more years with increased funding and slightly expanded activities. Socrates II and Leonardo II are based on the same legal foundations as their predecessors and do not represent a radical departure from the programmes introduced in 1995. Therefore, it only seems justified to speak of a new 'phase' of the second generation programmes, rather than a new generation.

Like Socrates and Leonardo, the Youth for Europe programme (as the third of the second generation programmes) was updated for a second phase. This was done by launching the new programme Youth which builds on both the Youth for Europe and the European Voluntary Service Programmes. Therefore, Youth integrates for the first time all on-going activities in the youth field at Union level and complements the activities covered by Socrates II and Leonardo II (Council, 2000b and Commission, 2001c).

#### Socrates II

Socrates encourages co-operation in the field of general and higher education. Opportunities are available for schools, colleges, universities and other organisations to work together on European partnerships, projects and professional development. Compared with the first phase of the programme (1995-1999), the second phase of Socrates (2000-2006) incorporates increased opportunities in the fields of lifelong learning, adult education, new information and communication technologies and open and distance learning (Council, 1995 and 2000a).



The objectives of the programme may be summarised as follows:

- to strengthen the European dimension in education at all levels,
- to improve knowledge of European languages,
- to promote and facilitate co-operation and mobility in education,
- to encourage innovation in education, and
- to promote equal opportunities in all sectors of education (cf. Commission, 2000c and 2000j, p. 3).

Over the seven-year duration of Socrates II the EU is due to spend 1,850 million Euro on the programme. In comparison, the initial budget for the five years of Socrates I was 850 million Euro. However, a feasibility study at the half-way stage resulted in an increase to 930 million Euro (Commission, 2000f, p. 5). The main parts of Socrates II are:

Figure 2: **Action areas of Socrates II**<sup>15</sup>

Measure	Scope	Educational Sectors	Types of Action
1: Comenius	actions aimed at encouraging co-operation in school education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ school education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ school partnerships</li> <li>▪ training of school education staff</li> <li>▪ networks</li> </ul>
2: Erasmus	actions aimed at mobility in higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ inter-university co-operation</li> <li>▪ exchanges of students and university teachers</li> <li>▪ thematic networks</li> </ul>
3: Grundtvig	actions aimed at other educational pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ adult education</li> <li>▪ formal and non-formal learning</li> <li>▪ lifelong learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ co-operation projects</li> <li>▪ education partnerships</li> <li>▪ mobility schemes for trainers</li> <li>▪ Grundtvig networks</li> </ul>
4: Lingua	actions aimed at the promotion of teaching and learning of European languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ school education</li> <li>▪ vocational training</li> <li>▪ higher education</li> <li>▪ further education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ exchanges</li> <li>▪ institutional co-operation</li> <li>▪ development of language learning tools</li> </ul>
5: Minerva	actions aimed at information and communication technologies (ICT) in the field of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ mainly open and distance learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ projects to better understand and support innovation</li> <li>▪ projects to design new teaching methods</li> <li>▪ ICT networks</li> </ul>
6: Arion	actions aimed at observation and innovation of education systems and policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ all areas of education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ study visits for decision-makers in education</li> <li>▪ transnational projects developing resources</li> </ul>

These actions are supplemented by

- joint actions with other European programmes (with the Leonardo and Youth programmes) and
- accompanying measures – activities to raise awareness of European co-operation in education, such as conferences, symposia, the dissemination of project results and materials and co-operation with non-participating countries and international bodies.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. DfEE (2000), Council (2000a), Commission (2000i); British Council (2000) and Central Bureau (2000).

These Socrates measures are implemented through a number of different types of initiatives, including support for transnational mobility, for the use of information and communication technologies, for the development of transnational co-operation networks, for the promotion of language skills, and for the support of innovative pilot projects (Council, 2000a, Art. 3(2)).

### Leonardo II

The Leonardo II programme contributes to the implementation of a vocational training policy for the EU, which – according to Article 127 TEU – supports and supplements the actions of the member states. It aims to promote new approaches in vocational training policies. For the seven years of its duration, the European Union has allocated 1,150 million Euro (compared to 794 million Euro for the five years of Leonardo I). At the outset, 620 million Euro were allocated to Leonardo I. However, the budgetary authority raised the annual appropriations (Commission, 2000h, p. 14).

The combined budget of the first phase of the two programmes, therefore, was 1,644 million Euro for the years 1995-1999. In comparison with, for instance, the EU Social Fund (1994-1999) of 57,191 million Euro, the programmes for education and training are regarded as ‘medium size Community programme[s]’ (Commission, 2000h, p. 14). Despite the increase in the combined budget for the second phase of Socrates and Leonardo to 3,000 million Euro, this situation remains unchanged. For a comparison of the expenditure of the first generation programmes in education and training with expenditure for the European Social Fund between 1987 and 1992 see Milner (1998, p. 158).

Leonardo II is characterised by a substantially more streamlined structure than Leonardo I. Instead of a multitude of aims and measures as in Leonardo I, the new programme concentrates on a small number of overarching priorities such as the promotion of the European dimension and the quality of innovation in three main areas of vocational education (initial training, further training and competitiveness) (BIBB, 2000). Leonardo I defined four strands of actions that were then subdivided into no fewer than 23 measures. The number of measures for Leonardo II was reduced to seven (UK National Agency, 2001). For many of these measures the Leonardo I decision defined a number of different priorities which contributed to the confusing structure of the programme (Council, 1994 and 1999a). Leonardo II is structured into three overarching objectives and there are seven measures that aim to achieve them.

The three objectives of the Leonardo II can be summarised as follows:

- Objective 1: improvement of skills and competences of people in vocational education and training at all levels, with a view to facilitating their integration into the labour market;

- Objective 2: improvement of quality of, and access to, continuing vocational training and the lifelong acquisition of skills and competences, and
- Objective 3: reinforcement of the contribution of vocational education and training to the process of innovation, with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship (Council, 1999a).

The seven types of measures which aim to achieve these three overarching objectives are:

Figure 3: **Action areas of Leonardo II**<sup>16</sup>

Measure	Scope	Types of Action
1	actions aimed at promoting mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ transnational placements</li> <li>▪ transnational exchanges</li> <li>▪ study visits for the following target groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- young people in initial or further training</li> <li>- trainers, teachers and training experts</li> <li>- higher education students</li> <li>- graduates for periods of practical training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	actions aimed at initiating pilot projects, including 'thematic actions'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ design, development, testing, evaluation and dissemination of innovative practices in the field of vocational education</li> </ul>
3	actions aimed at promoting language competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ joint development and assessment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teaching material and methods</li> <li>- language audits</li> <li>- language self-tuition</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4	actions aimed at developing transnational co-operation networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ joint work of partners from several countries regarding new approaches to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- training</li> <li>- exchange of good practice</li> <li>- innovation in training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5	actions aimed at developing reference material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ creation and updating of surveys and analyses</li> <li>▪ observation and dissemination of good practice</li> <li>▪ exchange of information</li> </ul>
6	joint actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ improvement of the cohesion of Leonardo measures with other EU programmes</li> </ul>
7	accompanying measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ establishment of national resource and information centres for vocational guidance</li> <li>▪ co-operation with non-EU countries</li> </ul>

In contrast with the first phase of the programme, the projects funded by Leonardo II can combine the content areas of different programme actions. This change aims to reduce the danger of segmentation within the programme (Bildung für Europa, 2000b).

#### *Design, implementation and impact and of the second phase of the framework programmes*

For the seven-year period starting at the beginning of 2000, the Socrates and Leonardo programmes were redesigned, taking into account some of the weaknesses outlined for the first phase. In summary, these changes aim to streamline the programmes in order to make them simpler, more flexible and more accessible. In particular, the following changes were introduced:

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Commission (2000d) and BMBF (2000).

- extension of the duration of the programmes from five to seven years to improve the programmes' impact;
- concentration of objectives (four instead of nine for Socrates and three instead of nineteen for Leonardo);
- simplification of programme design and administrative procedures (for instance, reduction in the number of selection procedures, simplification of reporting requirements);
- improvement of user-friendliness and transparency;
- further decentralisation of management;
- increased flexibility (for instance, flexible handling of the principle of complementary funding);
- inclusion of open and distance learning;
- more emphasis on the use of new information and communication technologies, on lifelong and adult learning, and on the dissemination of good practice, and
- strengthening of the links between programme actions and between the programmes in the field (for instance, introduction of 'joint actions' as a separate programme measure) (Commission, 2000f, p. 19; 2000g, pp. 2f.; and 2000h, pp. 7ff.).

The changes in the programmes were the result of complex negotiations between the member states and the EU Commission. The proposals of the Commission for the second phase of the programmes were substantially changed in these negotiations. A comparison of the initial proposals by the Commission (Commission, 1998c and 1998d), the provisional common position of the Council and the Parliament, and the eventual Decisions of the Council (in the case of Socrates II jointly taken with the European Parliament) (Council, 1999a, 1999b and 2000a) indicates how much the positions of Commission and the member states differed.<sup>17</sup>

The difficult negotiations also mirrored the public criticism of the administration of the programmes within the EU Commission. In particular, the Leonardo Technical Assistance Office faced severe public criticism and played an important role in the notorious 'Cresson Affair' which led to the resignation of Édith Cresson, the Commissioner for education, training, innovation, research and youth, and eventually to the resignation of the whole Santer Commission (Winter, 1999). In 1999, the Commission even refused to renew the contract with the Leonardo Technical Assistance Office owing to its dissatisfaction with the Office's execution of tasks for the implementation of the programme. This led to the temporary interruption of the programme's implementation (Commission, 2000g, p. 5). On top of the accusations in connection with the 'Cresson Affair', the Leonardo Technical Assistance Office was accused of incompetence in its implementation of the programme at the Union level. For instance, in an evaluation conducted for the UK final report of the Leonardo I, programme project contractors used expressions such as 'appalling', 'chaotic', 'useless', and

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<sup>17</sup> This point was also raised in an interview with a senior German official who took part in the negotiations, Berlin, November 1998

‘grossly incompetent’ to describe the services of the Technical Assistance Office (DfEE, 1999, p. 39).

The changes and simplifications in Leonardo are particularly stark. They reflect the criticisms regarding the complicated administrative procedures, and the delays in financing projects and individuals, stated by applicants, participants, and project initiators, as well as administrators. Complaints about the complicated administrative procedures were a constant theme in the interviews conducted at the National Agencies in Germany and the UK (Interviews in Berlin, November 1998; Bonn, May 1999; and London, September 2000). Similar complaints were voiced by the German employers’ association (cf. Gerstein, 1999). In particular small and medium-sized companies were often overburdened by the – in their view – excessive bureaucracy at all levels of application and administration procedures in the framework of Leonardo I (Weidmann, 1999). While larger companies and institutions are generally able to ‘absorb’ late payments by the EU, small and medium-sized companies and institutions rely on prompt payment. This factor was a strong deterrent for smaller companies to participate in the programmes (Winter, 1999, p. 3; DfEE, 1999, p. 85). The late arrival of mobility stipends was also top of the list of Erasmus students’ complaints (Teichler et al., 1999, p. 27).

The reduction of the number of objectives from 19 to three and of the number of measures from 23 to seven is the most striking expression of this simplification of Leonardo. The application and administration procedures were also simplified. Most importantly, the so-called decentralised selection procedure for project applications was extended to more areas within Socrates and Leonardo. This means that the vast majority of projects funded by Socrates II and Leonardo II are selected, administered, monitored and evaluated by the National Agency responsible. During the first phase of the programmes, most projects were subject to a centralised application and administration procedure, in which the European Commission assumed most of the regulative powers. A German ministerial official estimated that in the second phase of Leonardo and Socrates the member states will assume 80 per cent of the responsibilities for implementing the programmes whereas the European Commission will fulfil 20 per cent of the tasks (Schüller, 2000, p. 2). For the first phase of the programmes these shares were reversed (cf. also Commission, 2000g, p. 10; 2000h, p. 13).<sup>18</sup>

The move towards the decentralisation of the programmes will simplify the management of the programmes since it reduces the need for co-ordination between the administrative bodies at the European and the national levels. A stronger emphasis on decentralised project selection may also improve the impact of the programmes. The member states are likely to

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed description of the decentralised and centralised procedures and the scope of their application see, for Socrates: Commission (2000k, pp. 9-15); for Leonardo: Commission (2000d, pp. 12ff.).

select projects that have potential to influence the development of policies and practices in their education and training systems. However, there is a danger that the selection of projects will be dominated by motives of national self-interest rather than by motives of European-wide interest. In other words, EU programme funds could be misused for financing projects that are high on the national agenda without contributing to the European dimension of education and training.

Almost all interviews at Ministries and National Agencies gave the impression that the potential benefit of projects for the development of national provisions for education and training was the single most important factor for decentralised project selection. This was particularly obvious in institutions for which the development of national policies represented the main task, and the implementation of EU programmes represented only a minor task. (Interviews in Berlin, November 1998; Bonn, May 1999; and London, September 2000.) A certain level of monitoring of decentralised selection procedures at a European level is, therefore, necessary to avoid the danger that EU programmes are utilised merely to finance national priorities in the field (cf. Sellin, 1995b, p. 188).

The negotiations for the new Socrates programme were also far from straightforward. Mainly due to the looming crisis of the Commission headed by Jacques Santer, the decision for Socrates II was not taken until 24 January 2000, that is to say more than three weeks after the intended starting date of the new programme (Commission, 2001f). As a result, the activities under Socrates II only started in autumn 2000 in the UK (DfEE, 2000).

For both programmes it remains to be seen to what extent this difficult start to the new phase has damaged the potentially positive impetus of the restructured configuration of the programmes. For the important issue of transfer and dissemination of innovation developed by the programmes it seems that a concept of what constitutes innovation is still lacking. Only once such a concept is fully developed will it become clear if and how projects can add value to current education and training provisions in member states. The UK Final Report on Leonardo I by the DfEE points out that the word 'innovation' is used extensively throughout the documentation (guidelines, good practice guides, application forms) associated with the programme. However, many projects are still described as innovative simply because they 'are on the internet'. Therefore, it is necessary to make clear what is meant by the term 'innovation' (DfEE, 1999, pp. 49 and 85).

#### **4. Beyond Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci Treaty: Current Initiatives and New Programmes**

The question whether Articles 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty and the framework programmes that are based on the Articles should be regarded as the 'last word' of the

European Union in the field of education and training has been a matter of extensive discussion. The issue as to whether or not the Union should assume more competences in the field is highly controversial. Can the fact that the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 does not give the Union further competences in training and education be interpreted as an indication for the determination of the member states to keep education firmly under their control? However these questions are answered, the need for increased compatibility of vocational qualifications and more transparent educational systems is widely acknowledged. Two main reasons for this necessity can be identified:

### *Consequences of economic convergence*

It has been argued that social policy in general, and educational policy in particular, have been primarily regarded as a means of attaining the economic aims of the EU (cf. for example Rubio, 1997, pp. 72ff.) – a fact which was not changed by the Maastricht Treaty (Münk, 1995, pp. 31-34; Feuchthofen, 1993, pp. 74f.). The envisaged unrestricted mobility of goods, services and capital within the European Monetary Union requires a mobile workforce.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, the qualification and education systems in the member states will be more in competition with each other than ever before. Moreover, standardisation and harmonisation will be required for vocational qualifications, in a manner similar to that which was imposed on production methods within export markets a long time ago. The creation of equivalent educational standards, the EU-wide recognition of national qualifications, and the introduction of European qualification levels which facilitate the classification of foreign vocational certificates mirror this need for comparability.<sup>20</sup>

The proposals of the European Commission to streamline and simplify the procedures of recognising professional qualifications shows the commitment in this matter. The proposed Directive aims to replace fifteen existing Directives in the field of the recognition of professional qualifications. Over the years the legal environment for the recognition of professional qualifications has become more and more complex. In order to clarify the rules, the Stockholm European Council asked the Commission to put forward a more transparent and flexible system. Under the system for the recognition of qualifications, the Commission's

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<sup>19</sup> For a list of motives, expressed by employers in the Union, for the employment of mobile workers see Scheerer (1998, p. 20).

<sup>20</sup> For accounts of these three strategies to fulfil the need for comparable qualifications in the EU see for instance CEDEFOP (1993), Zimmermann (1993), Feuchthofen (1993), Münk (1995, pp. 36-39), Sellin (1996), Müller-Solger (1997). For the developments in this question see the CEDEFOP publications Bjørnåvold & Sellin (1998) and Scheerer (1998).

A different approach to create transparency between qualifications in different EU countries is described by Jens Schmidt (1997). In an Irish-German co-operation project Irish electricians and motor mechanics sat the corresponding German initial training examinations. As they achieved similar or even slightly better results than their German counterparts it might be concluded that the training standards of both countries in these fields are comparable.

proposal would introduce a more flexible and automatic procedure based on common platforms established by professional associations at European level, stemming from increased co-operation between the public and private sectors (Commission, 2002a).

As a spin-off of EU initiatives to create a regulatory framework for mutual recognition of qualifications, reforms of national regulations tend to be orientated towards the European classification of qualifications (Cleve & Kell, 1996, p. 16). The influence of EU policies in education and training on national provisions is undeniable. Comparable challenges to national economies as a result of the ever more closely linked global markets increase the likelihood that similar strategies will be applied to modernise training provisions (Georg, 1997, p. 313).

#### *Political will and recent policies of EU bodies to converge national systems*

Despite the clear exclusion of any harmonisation of national educational provisions in the Maastricht Treaty (Art. 127(4), 126(4)), the Council of the EU demanded that general and vocational education systems within the Union undergo a process of far-reaching convergence.<sup>21</sup> This demand seems to be incompatible with the principle of subsidiarity (Art. 3b TEU); nevertheless, a move towards a more flexible interpretation of subsidiarity by the European Commission can be seen to have emerged even before the Maastricht Treaty was passed. In the *Memorandum of Vocational Training in the EC in the 1990s* the flexible attitude towards subsidiarity was represented by the aim of combining national and supranational policies (Commission, 1991, p. 13, para. 48). Based on Article 5 (Maastricht Treaty), which requires the member states to orientate national measures towards the objectives of the Union, this line of argumentation justifies the involvement of the EU institutions to a much wider extent (Koch, 1994, p. 28). As a consequence, Resolutions, Decisions and Directives of EU bodies and most importantly of the Commission, could assert convergence pressure on national systems of vocational education and training.

The proposals for new methods of transnational validation of competences in the 1996 White Paper on *Education and Training: Teaching and Learning* and in the 1997 Green Paper on *The Obstacles of Transnational Mobility* may be seen as an outcome of this policy (Commission, 1996, pp. 53-56; Beckers, 1997, pp. 217f.). Both documents represent the flexible interpretation of subsidiarity by the Commission which allows steps towards more convergent systems of education and training in the member states.

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<sup>21</sup> Conclusion of the European Council in Florence, June 1996; quoted in Münk (1997, p. 6). Münk (1997, pp. 6f.) identifies further evidence for the increasing convergence pressure on national systems. Cf. also Cleve & Kell (1996), pp. 16f.



In spite of this pressure to achieve comparable systems of education in the EU, the member states seem to be extremely reluctant to give up their autonomy to regulate training provision. Clear evidence for this reluctance can be identified in the analysis of the member states' statements concerning the aforementioned *Memorandum* of the Commission for Community policy. This analysis shows that all of the then twelve member states rejected the assumption of more legislative powers by the Commission. Notably, Denmark, Germany and the UK insisted strongly on the principle of subsidiarity in this question (Lipsmeier & Münk, 1994, pp. 132-175; Commission, 1994). Some commentators stress the danger that the principle of subsidiarity will not only be used for the wholesale rejection of any forms of harmonisation, but also for blocking sensible processes of convergence by adapting best practice in other countries to improve their own national system of vocational education and training (Koch, 1996, p. 6).

In this situation, it remains doubtful whether the current EU policies in education and training can fulfil the ambitious commitment to a Union-wide guarantee to provide a place in education and training for every person under the age of 18. Moreover, future developments must be awaited to be able to assess whether the concentration of the Union's policy on programmes of the Leonardo and Socrates type can justify the Commission's wide-ranging claim to be leading the way to the 'knowledge society' of the future (Europäische Kommission, 1996). However, the grant of financial aid through the Community seems to be the only possible way under the current legal arrangements to encourage a certain convergence in education and training between the member states (Lenaerts, 1994, p. 35).

Outside the two framework programmes, one of the major activities in the field has been the development of the EUROPASS training, which was introduced on the basis of a Council Decision, adopted on 21 December 1998 (1999/51/EC; Council, 1999c). It aims to certify a period of training completed by a person undergoing work-linked training as part of their training in another EU member state, complying with a number of quality criteria. These criteria include the establishment of a partnership between the institution where the person completes her or his training and the host body abroad. Within the framework of the partnership, both partners agree on the content, objectives, duration, methods and monitoring of the training phase abroad. The EUROPASS training serves as an information document for these training phases and this possibility has been available since 1 January 2000 (BMBF, 1999; Commission, 2000b). The effects of the EUROPASS training on the training practice and on the mobility of workers have yet to be seen (Benner, 1997; Herz & Jäger, 1998).

The most recent initiatives of the EU in the field of education and training seem to focus on two objectives: the promotion of new technologies in learning processes and the increase of mobility within the EU.

The aims of utilizing new *information and communication technologies* (ICTs) are summarised in the Commission's *eLearning Action Plan*, the *Council Resolution on e-Learning* and the strategy paper on the EU's response to the information society:

- the integration of ITCs in education and training systems;
- the potentials of the use of the internet, multimedia and virtual learning environments for the realisation of lifelong learning and the provision of access to educational and training opportunities for all;
- the provision of training of teachers in the pedagogical use of ICTs and the provision of equipment and of a quality infrastructure for education and training;
- the development of high-quality digital teaching and learning materials;
- the exploitation of communication potentials of ICTs to foster European awareness, exchanges, collaboration, and virtual meeting places;
- the use of e-learning as a European co-operation platform; and
- the enhancement of research in e-learning, (Council, 2001; Commission, 2001e and Europäische Kommission, 2002)

The objective of *increased mobility* is primarily pursued by the Council Resolution concerning an action plan for mobility. This action plan introduces no fewer than twelve objectives and 37 measures, ranging from general plans such as to improve the guidance on mobility and to increase the number of and resources for exchange activities, to concrete intentions such as to set up summer universities and to introduce a European calendar (Council, 2000c). A further EU initiative to facilitate mobility in education and training is the proposal of a common European format for people's curriculum vitae (CEDEFOP, 2002 and Commission, 2002b). This standardised curriculum vitae is intended to enable European citizens to present their qualifications more effectively, thus easing access to education, training and employment in Europe. And finally, the aforementioned Commission proposal for a directive on the recognition of professional qualifications seems to revive the discussion on the transparency and comparability of the outcomes of education and training systems across the EU (Commission, 2002a). In combination with the ongoing effort to promote the EUROPASS training (Commission, 2000b) the transparency and recognition of vocational and professional qualifications is aimed at reducing the '[...] large number of practical obstacles of mobility' (Vivian Reding, Commissioner for education and culture, in: Commission, 2002a).

With these initiatives in the fields of ITCs and mobility the EU seems to address the ambivalent situation it finds itself in the field of education and training. This ambivalence is characterised by the pressure for a more harmonised system on the one hand and the insistence of the member states on national autonomy on the other. By promoting the mobility of European citizens, the EU increases the pressure for education and training systems that allow movement from one national context to another. The convergence of the national

systems is a necessary consequence of this strategy. By promoting e-learning at a European level, the EU facilitates the establishment of European education opportunities that are no longer bound exclusively to national provisions but surpass in many ways the direct influence of the member states. In more general terms, this phenomenon can also be observed in the co-operation at the European level initiated by the EU programmes for education and training (cf. chapter 9 in this present volume). The trans-national development of European training modules that can be used in more than one country is a further example of gradually establishing provisions for education and training opportunities at the European level that function without direct influence of the member states (BMUK, 1998; Ertl, 2000a, pp. 39-43).<sup>22</sup>

It seems likely that the EU institutions will continue to bypass the principle of non-harmonisation in the field of education and training by providing incentives for co-operation of national actors at the European level. This co-operation often causes similar developments of the national education and training systems of different member states. In this way, the divide between national qualification systems could be bridged and the creation of more cohesive systems and contents of qualifications could be facilitated.

## **5. Conclusions: EU Programmes and the ‘Unionization’ of European Education Policies**

The history of the EU as an institution demonstrates profound resistance to a process of standardisation which would indicate a surrender of the member states’ control of their educational systems. Indeed, it could be argued that this term hardly applies to the processes currently underway regarding education policy in the EU. Instead, the aim of bringing the various education systems closer into line with one another has perceptively evolved during the process into a more modest aim – that of achieving transparency between the countries. A review of the literature reveals the subtle changes in the terminology employed – from harmonisation to recognition to transparency (cf. Nowoczyn, 1996 and Blitz, 1999). These nuances in the terminology show that the original aim of harmonisation has proved unrealistic.

However, the language used in recent policy documents indicates that this development might be just about to change direction again. The rhetoric of a ‘European Space of Education’ featuring ‘common principles’, a ‘European Model of Education’ as a result of ‘deepening co-operation’, and a ‘European House of Education’ built by the co-ordination of

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. also the efforts of the EU project ‘Euroqualifications’ in which European training modules were developed at a European level and implemented in EU member states (Sellin, 1991 and 1994, p. 9 and Wordelmann, 1995).

educational developments in an enlarged Union<sup>23</sup> would have not been possible only a few years ago, when discussion on the value of diversity in education was guarded by the sovereign member states and protected by the omnipresent principle of subsidiarity. The support for the principle of subsidiarity as well as the growing influence of the regions in the EU context, indicates that national and regional actors have been increasingly cautious in surrendering power to supranational bodies. This is particularly the case in the field of education (Schröder, 1990 and Rego, 1997).

What becomes clear is that various structures, mechanisms and processes are in place that contribute to the development of more similar areas of political action in the field of education and training in Europe. In other words, a '[...]myriad of processes [is] involved, at every level, in the creation of the European Union' (Nóvoa & deJong-Lambert, 2002). The development and impact of EU programmes represents strong evidence for this 'unionization' in education and training.

#### *Decentralisation and converging implementation patterns*

This paper has identified some of the problems successive generations and phases of EU programmes in the field of education and training have faced since the 1970s. These problems are partly the result of the ways in which the programmes have been implemented and administered. On the other hand, the structures and regulations of programmes have determined the implementation patterns at the EU and the national level.

Probably the most striking weakness of the programmes termed in this paper 'first generation programmes', and of the first phase of Socrates and Leonardo as the most important 'second generation programmes', was the unsatisfactory impact of the programmes in terms of innovation and improvement of the education and training structures in the EU member states. The main strategy applied to tackle this weakness in the evolution of the programmes has been the shift of implementation powers from EU bodies to the member states. The decentralisation process gathered speed when Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci were set up as the Union framework programmes for education and training in 1995. Also from that time, the implementation patterns and the way which the programmes were applied to the education and training systems of the member states have converged. In the wider educational context, the tendency towards decentralised project selection and management procedures for EU programmes seems to be in line with the strong decentralisation of educational government in almost all European countries (Maden, 2000).

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<sup>23</sup> All direct quotes taken from the strategic paper on *Education Policies and European Governance* by Anders Hingel, head of the Education Policy Unit at the European Commission (Hingel, 2001, p. 4).

The implementation patterns at the national level have become increasingly important for the potential impact of the programmes. In principle, the member states are responsible for the implementation processes at the national level. The national ministries of education and/or labour act as the National Authorities. For the implementation of the programmes the National Authorities establish or nominate so-called National Agencies.<sup>24</sup> The National Agencies co-operate with the European Commission, on behalf of the member states, in implementing the programmes at a national level.

The way in which the National Agencies are selected and organised is subject to the decision of the member states, since they '[...] shall take the necessary steps [to implement the programmes] in accordance with national practice' [Art. 5(2) of Council (1999a) and Art. 5(2) of Council (2000a)].<sup>25</sup> The legal status of the National Agencies varies from private or semi-private organisations to ministries or inter-ministerial units. An earlier study investigating the implementation approaches of Socrates and Leonardo in Sweden, Germany and the UK shows that these patterns have become more similar in the different countries (cf. Ertl, 2002). In all three countries there is a tendency toward the 'generalist-agency-model' for the implementation of the programmes at the national level. Broadly speaking, in this model **one** institution acts as National Agency for one of the programmes or even for all EU programmes and activities in education and training.

The advantages of this model compared to the 'specialist-agency-model' (in which **a number** of specialised institutions are responsible for the different action areas of the programmes) are the potential for co-operation across educational sectors, the greater extent to which synergy effects and economies of scale can be utilised, and the better possibilities a generalist agency offers to exploit its stronger position within the institutional framework of an educational system. These advantages could contribute to the improvement of the programmes' impact on national education and training systems. Given that the implementation patterns in the EU countries have become more similar it can be assumed that the impact of the programmes will tend to become more similar in the different national arenas in future.

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<sup>24</sup> During the first phase of the programmes these institutions were called National Co-ordination Units (NCUs) (Commission, 1998b, p. 13).

The following publications provide lists of National Agencies for all EU member states: Leonardo I: Commission (1998a and 1999), Leonardo II: Commission (2001d), Socrates I: Commission (1998b), Socrates II: Commission (2000a and 2000e).

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, the phrase 'in accordance with national practice' was not used in Decisions establishing the first phase of the programmes. This is a clear indication that the member states have more scope for deciding the implementation arrangements of Socrates II and Leonardo II. Cf. the competences for the first phase of the programmes in Article 4(3) of Council (1994) and Article 5(3) of Council (1995).

### *Open questions*

With regard to Socrates and Leonardo, major structural problems have not been changed with the introduction of the second phase of the programmes.<sup>26</sup> Two of these problems are outlined below.

The first structural problem is connected with the legal foundation of the second generation of EU programmes. Field (1998, p. 62) argues that the Maastricht Treaty reinforced the boundaries between education and vocational training because it used two separate articles to cover the two sectors. This separation is mirrored in the distinction between Socrates as the programme for general, higher and adult education, and Leonardo as the programme for vocational education and training. The existence of Youth for Europe (in the first phase of the second generation programmes) and Youth (in the second phase) covering many aspects of informal education also highlights the separation in the structure of the EU programme approach. The position paper on the organisation of the second phase of the EU programmes issued by the German Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology (*BMBF*) has identified this separation as a main reason for the limited success and impact of the programmes in their first phase. The Ministry's suggestion of a single, overarching programme (with three different strands for higher education, vocational training and school education), including a strong, additional strand establishing horizontal links between the educational sectors, was not taken up for Socrates II and Leonardo II (*BMBF*, 1997, pp. 2f., 6-11). A single overarching programme with coherent principles for all of its parts would also have been likely to strengthen the tendency towards the 'generalist-agency-model' of programme implementation.

The second important structural problem of the programmes that is still relevant in the most recent phase of the programmes is the striking discrepancy between the aims of the programmes and their budgets. Sellin (1999, p. 24) argues that Leonardo and Socrates are still attempting to achieve too much. Although the structure of objectives of the programmes was streamlined for the second phase programmes, the scope of the programmes was substantially extended at the same time. The comparatively modest increase of the overall programme budgets hardly matches the expanded scope of the programmes. The lack of cohesion between EU programmes such as Socrates and Leonardo and the financially much more potent EU Social Fund has long been identified but has never been substantially improved (*BMBF*, 1997, p. 5; Rees, 1998).

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<sup>26</sup> For comprehensive accounts of the structural problems of EU programmes in education and training see for instance *BMBF* (1997), Field (1998) and Sellin (1999).

In view of these structural problems it seems unlikely that the changing implementation patterns at the national level will substantially strengthen the overall impact of the programmes in the sense of the long-term impact of the programme outputs on various groups and areas in education and vocational training (Commission, 2000h, p. 18).

However, it can also be shown that the levels of impact of the programmes in the participating countries have become more similar because the pilot projects, initiatives and other activities supported by the programmes are often regarded as 'best practice' models or 'benchmarks' in the member states. The principle of the 'open method of co-ordination' as agreed on by the Lisbon European Council in 2000 proposes new forms of working together in the European arena. Nóvoa and deJong-Lambert (2002) have stressed the importance of European benchmarks, common guidelines and best practice models for the future development of national education and training systems as currently advocated by the European Union. Following this approach, the co-operation of the member states will focus on the joint search for, and dissemination of, best practice and the stimulation of innovation in transnational projects – ways of co-operation that have been used and developed by the projects supported by the EU programmes in education and training since their introduction in the 1970s.

Therefore, it can be argued that the programmes will continue to cause the actors in the member states to pursue similar ways of reacting when faced with new problems. A standardising effect of Socrates and Leonardo on education and training in Europe is the consequence.

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