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ANNEX: Guide to related programmes and instruments

The *e*Learning Action Plan

Designing tomorrow's education

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1. SOCRATES - GENERAL INFORMATION

Socrates is Europe's education programme and involves around 30 European countries. The duration of this second phase of Socrates is from 1 January 2000 until 31 December 2006. Its budget over this period is € 1 850 million. Its main objective is to create a Europe of knowledge, providing a better response to the major challenges of this new century: to promote lifelong learning, to encourage access to education for all and to help people acquire recognised qualifications and skills. In more specific terms, Socrates seeks to promote language learning and to encourage mobility and innovation.

Socrates advocates European cooperation in all areas of education. This cooperation takes different forms: mobility (moving around Europe), organising joint projects, setting up European networks (disseminating ideas and good practice), and conducting studies and comparative analyses. In practice, Socrates offers people grants to study, teach, undertake a placement or follow a training course in another country. It provides support for educational establishments to organise teaching projects and to exchange experiences. It helps associations and NGOs in organising activities on educational topics, etc. Only activities which have a European dimension based on transnational cooperation may receive financial assistance.

Socrates targets all members of the education community, including those in adult education:

- pupils during compulsory education, students, and people of all ages who wish to return to learning
- teachers being trained or in service; ancillary, administrative and managerial staff involved in education
- educational establishments of all types
- all external interested parties: civil servants and decision makers; local and regional authorities; parents' associations, social partners; the business sector; associations and NGOs

Whatever the target group and whatever the type of project, Socrates promotes the multi-cultural character of Europe as one of the cornerstones of active citizenship. It supports the education of the least advantaged groups of people. It promotes equal opportunities for men and women and targets under-achievement at school. It sets great store by the new information and communication technologies and encourages the learning of the different European languages and innovation in education.

Socrates comprises eight separate actions: Comenius: school education; Erasmus: higher education; Grundtvig: adult education and other language pathways; Lingua: learning European languages; Minerva: information and communication technologies in education; Observation and innovation of education systems and policies; Joint actions with other European programmes; Supplementary measures.

Website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates.html>

1.2 COMENIUS

General Description

The overall objectives of Comenius are to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness.

Budget and procedures

A yearly call for proposals is published for both centralised and decentralised actions. Projects for decentralised actions are selected by the National Agencies. The Commission - with the help of academic experts - National Agencies and the TAO select projects for centralised actions. The annual deadline for all Comenius projects is 1 March, except for Comenius 3 projects that have to submit pre-proposals with deadline 1 November.

The overall budget of Comenius in 2000 was € 67 516 000, of which € 53 000 000 was managed by the National Agencies in decentralised actions and € 14 516 000 was managed by the Commission in centralised actions.

Activities related to eLearning

Digital literacy

- Nearly all the Comenius actions make use of ICT as a means of communication and internal project organisation. Transnational cooperation within the project provides a unique opportunity for participants to improve their practical computer skills (multimedia, video conferencing etc.).

Training of school education staff

- One of the priorities for 2001 is to prepare "student teachers and teachers to use ICT as a pedagogical tool, as a means of opening the school to the outside world, and assessing the implications of new technologies for classroom management". Projects selected will include those that facilitate the transition of schools to the information society (school organisation, equipment management, public and private sponsorship etc.)
- Many projects which use ICT as a pedagogical tool are already being funded. 1/3 of the projects selected in 1999 under Comenius Action 3.1 dealt specifically with the use of ICT
- Within Comenius 2 mobility, a certain number of in-service courses developed in the framework of the former Comenius 3.2, provide training opportunities for all kinds of school education staff to develop or improve ICT skills.

Networking of centres for acquiring knowledge

- Comenius 3 encourages the networking of projects on subjects of common interest with the aim of promoting European cooperation and innovation in school education in various thematic areas.

Website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/comenius/index.html>

1.3 ERASMUS

General Description

Erasmus aims at improving the quality of education and promoting the European dimension in higher education by boosting mobility between European countries and by encouraging transnational cooperation between universities. It comprises three interrelated sub-actions: European Inter-University Cooperation, Mobility of Students and University Teachers and Thematic Networks.

Budget and procedures

The annual deadline for submitting proposals is 1 November. Funding is provided for universities organising student and teacher mobility, and for setting up joint projects on curriculum development and intensive programmes as well as for introducing the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to facilitate student mobility. Student and teacher mobility grants are decentralised and managed by National Agencies. The total budget for Erasmus 2000 was € 144 million. The decentralised Erasmus student and teacher mobility actions have a budget of € 114 million, while the budget for the centralised Erasmus actions amounted to € 30 million.

Activities related to eLearning

General

- The use of ICT is given increased importance in Erasmus. The use of ICT is encouraged to promote mobility in European higher education.

Virtual mobility

- Virtual mobility complements physical mobility where a specific period of physical mobility is prepared and followed up with a period of online studies or online courses at the host university. It provides participants from less favoured areas with the opportunity to have increased access to information about universities and other institutions participating in the programme.
- Online language preparation courses could be utilised before taking up on-site courses at the host university.

Implementation of ICT in higher education

- Higher Education institutions are encouraged to make use of ICT and make it a priority in their European Policy Statements. Particular emphasis will be placed on the use of ICT in the framework of Institutional Contracts. This applies to Curriculum Development, Intensive Programmes and Thematic Networks.

ICT in Erasmus Thematic Networks

- Erasmus Thematic Networks make extensive use of ICT both for networking activities and for the production of products or outcomes. Some assess the role of ICT in specific disciplinary areas or in cross-disciplinary themes. Others experiment with the impact of virtual learning environments.

Website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/erasmus/home.html>

1.4 GRUNDTVIG

General description

The aim of Grundtvig is to improve the quality, European dimension, supply and accessibility of lifelong learning through adult education in the broadest sense, to foster improvement of the education possibilities available to people who have left school without basic qualifications, and to encourage innovation in alternative educational pathways.

Grundtvig comprises four sub-actions:

Grundtvig 1: European cooperation projects for the production of teaching products and materials for adult education.

Grundtvig 2: Learning partnerships linking adult education establishments at local level.

Grundtvig 3: Training grants for individuals in adult education.

Grundtvig 4: Thematic networks for promoting and disseminating results and best practices and for discussion of lifelong learning issues.

Budget and procedures

The annual deadline for the submission of pre-proposals is 1 November. The total budget for Grundtvig for the period 2000-2006 will be of the order of € 150 million.

Activities related to eLearning

10% of projects potentially involve new technologies, with a budget of € 15 million for the period 2000-2006.

- Development projects covering teaching materials and methods, and courses to teach new technologies, aimed at various adult target groups, as well as the use of new technologies in managing adult education establishments.
- Dissemination — primarily via networks — of results and best practices concerning the use of new technologies in adult education.
- Mobility grants allowing people in adult education to participate in training courses on new technologies as teaching tools and subjects in other European countries.
- Project networks and thematic networks relating to the use of new technology in various areas of adult education, both as a dissemination tool and as a discussion forum for decision-makers concerned with adult education and new technologies.

Website: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/adult/home.html>

1.5 LINGUA

General description

Lingua aims to promote language teaching and learning. The intention is to foster linguistic diversity in the EU, enhance the quality of language teaching, and improve access for individuals to language learning resources. Lingua covers all areas of education, including pre-primary and adult education. The target groups for certain activities may also be outside the world of education.

Lingua is divided into two parts: Action 2 is the continuation of Lingua D, which supported the development of language teaching and learning methods and materials during the period 1995-1999. Action 1, the objective of which is to promote language learning through awareness enhancement, improved access and dissemination of innovation, will be implemented from 2001. Like the rest of the programme, Lingua will run until the end of 2006.

Budget and procedures

Annual call for proposals within the general framework laid down by the Socrates programme. As an example, the timetable for the call for proposals relating to project selection in 2001 is as follows:

Deadline for submission of pre-proposals — 1 November 2000.

Deadline for submission of complete proposal — 1 March 2001.

The selected projects will start their activities on 1 October 2001.

The overall budget for Lingua 2 in 2000 was of the order of € 5.3 million.

The 2001 budget for the two Lingua actions has not yet been fixed.

Activities related to eLearning

Both Lingua actions are connected with the eLearning initiative.

Activities likely to be included under eLearning priorities:

- Networking of language resource centres in different areas of education
- Sharing of distance-learning resources and resources accessible on the web
- Dissemination of information on innovative approaches to organising distance-learning courses for the less widely used and less taught languages
- Creation of teaching materials and tools to assess language skills, taking account of the innovative pedagogical aspects of using ICT

Website: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/actions/lingua2.html>

1.6 MINERVA

General description

The Minerva action within the Socrates programme seeks to promote European cooperation in the use of information and communication technologies in education and to promote open and distance learning (ODL). It covers all areas of education from pre-primary to adult. Launched in 2000, Minerva can also draw on the success of 166 projects financed between 1995 and 1999 in the field of ODL, the results of which will be exploited under the eLearning initiative. It is scheduled to run for seven years, from 2000 to 2006.

Budget and procedures

Projects are financed on the basis of an annual call for proposals in line with the general framework of the Socrates programme.

Under the call for proposals with a view to the selection of projects in 2001, a pre-proposal had to be submitted by 1 November 2000, and a complete proposal no later than 1 March 2001. The selected projects will start on 1 September 2001. The annual budget is of the order of € 10 million, for medium-sized grants (of the order of € 100 000 per year on average, for two-year projects financed at a rate of 50%).

Activities related to eLearning

All of the activities envisaged under Minerva serve the objectives of the eLearning initiative.

- Prospective study, analysis and pooling of the results of observing uses, and identification and dissemination of best practices.
- Organisational and socio-economic aspects of innovation linked to new learning technologies.
- The pedagogical dimension of integrating new technologies into teaching and learning practices.
- Creation of a network linking the people responsible for training teachers, managers and decision-makers in the integration and appropriate use of new technologies.
- Enhancement of expertise and promotion of European know-how in the area, and comparison with other models.
- European-level development of Internet portals linking learning communities and of quality multimedia education services.

Website: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/minerva/ind1a.html>

1.7 OBSERVATION AND INNOVATION

General description

The main objective of this Action is to improve and promote the exchange of information and experience in the field of education between the countries participating in the Socrates programme. The priority themes to be addressed are defined in close cooperation with education policy-makers who are represented at Community level especially in the Education Committee. This also determines the eligible activities set out in the 2000 call for proposals.

The priorities for Action 6.1.2 are the following:

- the preparation of studies, analyses, the networking of establishments, the organisation of seminars, conferences, workshops, exchanges of experts relating to matters of common educational policy interest, on the **priority themes** decided by the Council.

Budget and procedures

An annual call for proposals is published in the Official Journal of the European Communities giving a precise description of the work programme with clear indications to **the priority themes** to be examined as well as on the range of activities to be funded. The priorities for the Action are defined yearly in close cooperation with education policy-makers who are represented at Community level especially in the Education Committee. No decision has been taken yet concerning the call for proposals for 2001.

Activities related to eLearning

The "priority themes" and sub-themes for the activities supported under next call for proposals 2001 are to be determined by the Council. Taking into account the experience under the call for proposals 2000, those themes, and the activities within them could relate to the objectives of "eLearning", for example:

Priority theme A "The Role of Education in Employment Policies: Refers to the need of our education systems to adapt to the labour market. This concerns for instance the adaptation of curricula, particularly at university level, resulting from the impact of information and communication technologies. Lifelong learning is another priority theme where information and communication technologies have an important impact.

Priority theme B "The Quality of Education and Vocational Training". The objective of this topic is to promote a discussion at European level on the quality of education based on previous indicators identified by experts in the field. Some of those indicators relate to the use of ICT in schools.

More information on Observation and Innovation can be found on this website: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/observation/index_en.html

2. LEONARDO DA VINCI

General Description

The programme (2000-2006) contributes to the implementation of a vocational training policy for the Community and supports and supplements the actions of the Member States. Its aims to; improve the skills and competencies of people, especially young people, in initial vocational training, in particular through work-linked training and apprenticeship; improve the quality of, and access to, continuing vocational training and the life-long acquisition of skills and competencies; promote and reinforce the contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation, with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship.

Budget and procedures

The first call for proposals was published on 27 January 2000 and is valid for three years. There is an annual selection of projects and the last selection of pilot projects was on 19 January 2001. The next call for proposals will be published towards the end of 2002. The total budget for the Leonardo da Vinci programme for 2000-2006 is € 1.15 billion. The budget for 2000 was € 147 million of which 36% or € 53.2 million was available for pilot projects. In addition, a sum of 1% of the total budget (1.47 million) is reserved for joint actions.

In the first phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, 10% of all pilot projects involved the use of ICT this will increase in the second phase of the programme up to € 25 million for ICT-related pilot projects and thematic action projects. It will be possible to make a specific eLearning priority in the next call for proposals, but this will not be published before the end of 2002.

Activities related to eLearning

There are three possible areas of support: pilot projects, thematic action projects and joint actions.

- Pilot Projects develop the use of ICT in vocational training actions and products, supporting the development of transnational open and distance vocational training networks through the use of IT (multimedia products, websites, network transmission etc.), projects designing, testing and validating new vocational training approaches arising from new work situations (e.g. teleworking).
- Thematic action projects concerned with innovation regarding pedagogic methods and organisation connected with the use of ICT. Projects developing new methods of certification and validation of skills and competencies acquired in work situations and outside formal training systems. Projects developing resources and training of trainers and tutors.
- Joint Actions are envisaged with Community programmes in the same domain, in particular with the programmes Socrates and Youth.

Website : <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo.html>

3. MEDIA PLUS

General description

The MEDIA programme aims at strengthening the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry, in particular the distribution of audiovisual works produced in the Member States. Relevant activities essentially take place in four areas:

- (continuing) training for audiovisual professionals;
- development of audiovisual and multimedia works and catalogues;
- distribution (cinema, TV, video, on-line);
- promotion (markets, festivals).

In addition to these four areas, MEDIA PLUS also includes pilot projects (mainly in the field of new technologies).

Budget and procedures

The MEDIA PLUS programme is scheduled to run for five years, from 2001 to 2005.

It is due to be launched on 1 January 2001.

The first calls for proposals will be published as soon as possible after that date.

The Commission has been asked to provide a budget of € 400 million to cover the whole programme and period (2001-2005). Depending on the budget allocated to the new programme, it is estimated that a few percent of it will be specifically used for training and development.

Activities related to eLearning

Each of the four main areas (training, development, distribution and promotion), as well as the pilot projects, are related in part to the eLearning initiative. Other activities envisaged are:

- training for audiovisual professionals in new technologies;
- development and distribution of multimedia content (especially educational games);
- new forms of financing likely to attract capital to innovative SMEs;
- raising of additional capital for the production of cinematographic and audiovisual works.

Website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/avpolicy/mediapro/media_en.htm

4. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND SHOWCASING ACTIONS

4.1 IST Key Action 3 – Multimedia Tools and Content

General description

The aim of the Key Action 3 of the Information Society Technologies (IST) programme is to improve the functionality, usability and acceptability of future information products and services, to enable linguistic and cultural diversity and contribute to the valorisation and exploitation of Europe's cultural patrimony, to stimulate creativity, and to enhance education and training systems for lifelong learning.

Budget and procedures

A series of calls for proposals will be issued within the 2001 - IST Work programme framework. See actions foreseen for 2001 below.

The total budget for Key Action III is € 564 million.

Activities related to eLearning

- Key Action 3 contributes to the eEurope Action Plan, in particular to Areas 4 - "European youth into the digital age" and 10 - "European digital content for global networks", and the initiative "eLearning: Designing Tomorrow's Education". In this context, cooperation is planned with the content industries (including follow-up programmes to INFO2000 and MLIS, and the Internet Action Plan), audiovisual policy (including the MEDIA programmes), cultural initiatives (including Culture 2000), and education and training (including Socrates and Leonardo).

Action lines concerning eLearning planned for 2001

- Self Learning for Work with the objective to enable individuals to define, procure and manage their learning for work, in response to rapidly changing organisational, business and employment needs.
- eLearning Futures: experimental, longer-term research providing significant contributions to insight into the next generation of eLearning systems and services, leading to enhancement of human learning and cognitive processes.
- 2001 - eLearning for European youth in a digital age: the objective is to pull together a critical mass of key actors, from various European sectors, to research, develop and perform large scale validation of novel ICT based systems and services, at a trans-European level, for improving eLearning in schools and higher education institutions in the digital age.

Website: http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/topics/i_educatio.html

4.2 i3- Experimental School Environments (ese)

General description

The aim of i3-ese is to research new kinds of IT-based tools that enable new approaches to learning. Its aim is to encourage the development of new teaching tools and educational technologies for children between four and eight years of age, helping them to develop key skills such as creative problem solving, working in team, learning to learn and making learning fun.

This age group is one of the most challenging but rewarding age groups for designers and developers. Children at this age are often at their most open and expressive, not having yet adopted particular modes of thinking or of expression.

The aim is to explore new relationships between technology and learning, in the context of real school environments.

10 research projects involving IT researchers, designers, educationalists, children and schools, started in 1998.

Budget and procedures

Call for proposals 1997
Proposal evaluation 1998
Project launching 1998
Project terminates 2000-2001
The total budget is € 10 million

Activities related to eLearning

- The action is entirely dedicated to research on new learning environments implying the use of ICT.

More information about ese can be found on the following site: <http://www.i3net.org/schools/>

4.3 Programme "Improving Human Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base" - Key Action "Improving the socio-economic knowledge base"

General description

The Key Action "Improving the Socio-economic Knowledge Base" is one of the action lines of the Horizontal Programme: "Improving Human Potential and the Socio-economic Knowledge Base" of the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) for Research, Technology and Development (1998-2002). Its overall aim is to improve, through research, understanding of the major structural changes taking place in European society, to identify ways of managing these changes and to involve European citizens more actively in shaping their own future. It is implemented through RTD projects, thematic networks, research infrastructures and various types of accompanying measures.

As well as improving the social science knowledge base, this Key Action aims to mobilise the social science research community in Europe and to develop a process of dialogue between this community, policy makers at all levels and other key actors. The Key Action utilises,

builds upon and extends the work carried out in the Targeted Socio-economic Research Programme (TSER) of the Fourth Framework Programme (1994-1998). TSER invited proposals for research from the European research community on three main areas of economic and social research: science and technology policy; education and training and labour market integration; social integration and social exclusion.

Budget and procedures

The implementation of TSER under FP4 and the Key Action 'Improving the Socio-economic Knowledge base' under FP5 is achieved through Calls for proposals. The former TSER Programme was implemented through three Calls for proposals; the Key Action Improving the Socio-economic Research has already launched two Calls. To date more than 200 projects have been funded. The Council and European Parliament should adopt by June 2002 the Community Research Framework Programme (2002-2006) and specific programmes should be decided shortly after then.

The indicative budget is € 165 million.

eLearning related activities

- Extensive research on new ways and models for education through eLearning and its social and economic dimensions. For example, computer-supported collaborative learning in school education; science teacher training in an information society, implementation of virtual environments in education and training; competence evaluation and training for Europe; new assessment tools for cross-curricular competencies in the domain of problem solving etc.
- There are two main clusters of research projects. One focuses on research in learning innovations; the other on the relationship between education, equity and social exclusion in the knowledge society.

Website: <http://www.cordis.lu/improving>

4.4 TEN-Telecom

General description

Trans-European telecommunications networks will introduce new trans-European applications and services in the general public interest.

TEN-Telecom supports the market validation and initial implementation of services, with the focus on implementation projects. The indicative areas of intervention of TEN-Telecom include, among others, application services for training and employment, and application services for culture.

The services will be trans-European, innovative and based on proven technology. As a general rule, they will be implemented in several Member States. To prepare implementation in a multinational context, a feasibility phase may be needed for consensus-building, functional, organisational and financial analysis.

Community contribution

Co-financing up to 50% of the allowable costs for projects covering the business plan elaboration and market validation of a venture.

Up to 10% of total investment costs of the initial market implementation phase, by means of direct grants, subsidies of the interest on loans granted by the European Investment Bank or other financial bodies, contributions towards fees for guarantees for loans from the European Investment Bank or other financial institutions, risk capital participation in investment funds providing capital for TEN-Telecom deployment projects.

The total amount of Community funding does not exceed 10% of the total investment cost of the overall project, regardless of the form of aid chosen and the number of project phases funded. The Community aid of a maximum of 10% of the total project investment cost cannot, in principle, be combined with other sources of Community funding.

Budget and procedures

Indicative budget for the period 2000-2006: € 275 million

Calls for proposals published twice a year, at least.

Project proposals must be submitted either for the preparation of the project business plan and market validation phase or for the initial implementation phase of the project.

Website: www.ispo.cec.be/tentelecom

5. STRUCTURAL FUNDS

5.1 ERDF - European Regional Development Fund

General description

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was created in 1975. The Directorate-General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) is in charge of managing it, and its purpose is to reduce regional disparities in the European Union and encourage the development and conversion of regions. It cofinances multiannual programmes.

Scope of the ERDF

- In Objective 1 regions (regions whose development is lagging behind)

Investment in infrastructure, especially in connection with trans-European networks (transport, telecommunications and energy)

- Material investment in the education and health sectors
- Protection of the environment

- In Objective 2 regions (regions facing structural difficulties)
 - Regeneration of industrial sites and run-down urban areas
 - Improved access to, and revitalisation of, rural areas and areas dependent on fishing, through spatial planning, renovation, construction, protection of the environment and investment in infrastructure and equipment
- In all Objective 1 and 2 regions
 - Direct investment in production to create permanent jobs
 - Aid for SMEs and local development, paying special attention to territorial employment pacts
 - Consolidation of regional research and development capacities
- In regions including an Objective 1 or Objective 2 area
 - Support for the emergence of innovative strategies to boost regional competitiveness (innovative measures)
- Throughout the European Union
 - Economic and social regeneration of urban areas in crisis, through the Urban initiative
 - Support for crossborder, transnational and interregional cooperation, through the Interreg III initiative

Budget and procedures

ERDF management is decentralised. Generally speaking, the regional authorities of the eligible regions are responsible.

Activities related to eLearning

eLearning and, more generally, the information society make up one of the development priorities advocated by the Commission with a view to promoting the development of the regions.

Website: <http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/>

5.2 ESF : European Social Fund

5.2.1 EQUAL (Community initiative)

General description

The ESF Human Resources Community initiative EQUAL¹ is an experimental programme for the period 2000-2006 to test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job. This initiative will be supporting the European Employment Strategy as well as social inclusion policies.

It is based on the principles of innovative approaches, concentration on agreed themes, partnership between all key players, transnational cooperation, empowerment of all participants, and organised mainstreaming of results.

EQUAL applies to the whole territory of the European Union.

Each Member State will choose the *themes* according to national priorities within which it wishes to explore and test new ideas; innovation perspective; new processes or methods; new targets; changes in systems.

Committed players sharing a common purpose (local and regional authorities; public employment services; non-governmental organisations; the social partners) will set up Development partnerships (DPs) and share experience and results both at national and EU level.

Budget and procedures

The total amount of ESF funding for EQUAL for the 2000-2006 period is € 3 026 million. Guidelines were published in OJ C 127 of 05.05.2000:

- MS 4 months preparation of Community Initiative Programmes (CIPs) to be approved by the Commission of the European Communities
- MS-EC 5 months negotiations and finalisation of CIPs
- First national calls for proposals for the establishment of Development Partnership and for the development of its strategy: March/April 2001

National calls for proposals will set out the themes under which potential DPs can apply for EQUAL funding.

Activities that can be funded include: Action 1: setting up DPs and transnational cooperation; Action 2: implementing the work programmes of the DPs; Action 3: thematic networking, dissemination of good practice and making an impact on national policy; technical assistance to support actions 1, 2 and 3.

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 - OJ L 161, 21.06.1999.

Activities related to eLearning

EQUAL has 9 thematic priorities, directly related to the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy. The two themes of the ADAPTABILITY pillar address key issues for eLearning:

- Promoting lifelong learning and inclusive work practices which encourage the recruitment and retention of those suffering discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market
- Supporting the adaptability of firms and employees to structural economic change and the use of information and communication technology and other new technologies

Member States, in their EQUAL programmes, have to specify issues such as:

- promoting the acquisition of new skills (ICT literacy);
- delivering education and training through Open and Distance Learning (ODL);
- clustering, networking and cooperation of SMEs, around effective use of ICT.

Website: www.europa.eu.int/comm/equal

5.2.2 Regional Information Society Initiative: Article 6 of the ESF Regulation 1994-1999

General description

Article 6 supports innovative measures that seek to promote new approaches and identify examples of good practice that may improve the implementation of the operations supported by the ESF. The measures concern innovation in relation to the development of new methods, tools and approaches; formulation of new objectives, including identifying new qualifications and the opening up of new areas of employment; systems development in connection with the labour market.

During the 1994-1999 Structural Funds programming period, Article 6 supported the Regional Information Society Initiative (RISI). The objective of the RISI pilot scheme is to integrate the Information Society concept into the regional and local development and employment policies of Less Favoured Regions (LFRs) in the EU.

This is achieved through the development of

- a regional information society strategy and action plan **RISI 1** (mono-regional)
- experimentation in pilot application **RISI 2** (pluri-regional)

based on key regional players who develop support, commitment and partnership.

Budget and procedures

Each call for proposals defined a minimum and a maximum amount of financial support (usually between € 250 000 and 3 million depending whether mono- or pluri-regional projects). The ESF usually co-finances up to 50% of the approved budget of selected RISI projects. Promoters were required to make a contribution to the operation.

The Commission used open calls for proposals, publicised in the Official Journal. Project proposals were submitted by regional authorities/bodies. Funded activities include studies, pilot and demonstration projects and exchanges of experience.

Projects are currently achieving their implementation phase (by March 2001) and are followed directly by the services of the Commission. Most RISI mono-regional projects RISI 1 carry on networking within the European Regional Information Society Initiative association eris@ they have set up and exchange experience through thematic working groups (e.g. education and training). <http://www.erisa.be/>

Activities related to eLearning

The use of IT tools for training, quality services, EU cooperation and dialogue

- development of coherent regional approaches to ICT use including in all fields of learning
- ICT for training and delivery of public services
- ICT for enhancing employability and contributing to social inclusion
- ICT awareness raising and training for special groups (disabled)

Website : http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index_en.htm

5.2.3. Article 6 of the ESF Regulation 2000-2006

General description

Article 6 supports innovative measures that seek to promote new approaches and identify examples of good practice that may improve the implementation of the operations supported by the ESF.

The measures concern innovation in relation to the development of new methods, tools and approaches; formulation of new objectives, including identifying new qualifications and the opening up of new areas of employment; systems development in connection with the labour market.

During 2000-2002 the calls for proposals will focus on two thematic fields:

- Adaptation to the new economy within the framework of social dialogue
- Local employment strategies and innovation

Budget and procedures

The annual amount of credits for innovative measures for the 2000-2006 period is set according to the annual allocation of budgetary credits, up to a ceiling of 0.40% of the ESF annual funding. Project proposals can be submitted by social partner organisations, private companies, non-profit organisations, national, regional and local authorities, and education and training bodies in the EU. Activities that can be funded include studies, pilot and demonstration projects and exchanges of experience. A call for proposals will define a minimum and a maximum amount of financial support (usually between € 300 000 and 3 million) as well as the percentages of intervention of the ESF. Promoters will be required to make a contribution to the operation.

The Commission will use open calls for proposals, publicised in the Official Journal and on the Europa website. As a general rule, projects will be managed directly by the services of the Commission.

Activities related to eLearning

Under the thematic heading "Adaptation to the new economy within the framework of social dialogue" two of the eligible types of activities concern eLearning:

- the use of IT tools in the framework of social dialogue
- social inclusion through the use of IT tools

Possible activities related to the eLearning priorities could include:

- using IT to improve communication within and between companies, including training for ICT literacy;
- using ICT tools to deliver services to excluded people;
- using ICT tools to improve access, information, skills and tools for their participation in the changing economy/work/society;
- using ICT to improve their employability.

Website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index_en.htm

6. THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK AND eLEARNING

General description

The European Investment Bank Group (EIB) is the European Union's long-term financing institution. Its mission is to further the objectives of the European Union by making finance available for sound capital investment projects. The Bank can consider intervening in an investment in principle where two conditions are satisfied: a project which is economically productive at the level of the country or the Union; and the existence of a financial vehicle which can assume responsibility for the funding and its reimbursement.

The Resolution on Growth and Employment, adopted by the Amsterdam European Council in June 1997, invited the EIB to extend its mandate to the financing of general education in all Member States. This initiative was consolidated at the Cologne Council in 1999, and extended throughout the countries which are candidates for accession to the Union.

Development of Human Capital is one of the Bank's priorities in Europe. Following the recent Lisbon summit, the EIB's commitment to investment in innovation and the development of the 'learning society' has been translated into the "Innovation 2000 Initiative". This recent initiative is organised around five action lines:

- human capital formation: by financing schools, colleges and universities. In particular, the provision of computing equipment and lending in support of IT training centres;
- research and development: by co-financing public or private-sector research programmes, corporate investment in R&D, research infrastructure, centres of excellence and measures enabling SMEs to obtain access to research programmes;

- information and communications technology networks: by financing trans-European broadband and multimedia networks and physical or virtual infrastructure providing local access to such networks, especially in the Union's less advanced regions. The Bank will focus its lending in this field on innovative technology projects such as ADSL, XDSL and UMTS;
- dissemination of innovation: by financing “online healthcare” services and the use of information technologies to bring Europe's citizens closer to local authorities and public services; by helping to equip companies, especially SMEs, with advanced information technologies; support for audiovisual industry;
- development of SMEs and entrepreneurship: by strengthening venture capital support for the development of innovative SMEs, fostering science parks and company incubators and launching new products tailored to the business needs of very small enterprises.

This new programme offers significant opportunities to support to the achievement of the *eLearning* initiative. The EIB therefore represents an important incremental source of capital for the development of digital literacy across the European Union.

Activities related to eLearning

In the framework of the “I2I Initiative”, the EIB can finance projects in the following areas:

School infrastructure and equipment - connection of schools to digital networks, IT equipment and hardwires, computer classrooms, virtual libraries and universities;

Training facilities and programmes for educational staff to sustain the use of information and communication technologies in the learning process;

Development of multimedia educational software and content, and inter-connection of universities and research centres across the European Union; and

Development of science parks and incubators to promote innovation and open implementation towards the labour market.

Budget and procedures

The “i2i” programme has been set-up for a period of three years, with a lending envelope of up to € 12-15 billion

Nature of EIB contribution

The Bank has available traditional instruments, i.e. individual loans for large-scale projects (upwards of € 25 million) and “global loans” made available via banks or financial institutions for small and medium-scale projects. Individual loans could be used to support smaller projects on case-by-case basis, depending on the specific types of project and their contribution to the achievement of EU objectives. Additionally, there is considerable experience with Public Private Partnership structures. Secondly, the EIB Group is now developing equity venture capital operations. Indeed, the European Investment Fund (EIF), the venture capital branch of the EIB group, operates as a “fund of funds” and supports the development of innovative start-ups as well as incubators and research parks.

Website: <http://eib.eu.int/>