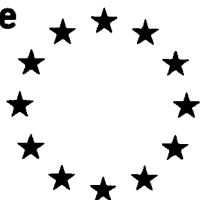


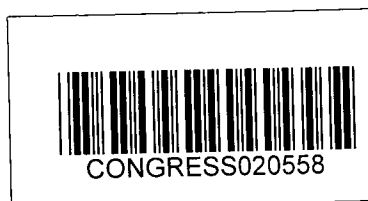
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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux de l'Europe

Strasbourg, 11 February 1997
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CG (3) 13
Part II

THIRD SESSION

OPENING UP EUROPE TO THE YOUNG

TOWNS AND REGIONS IN ACTION

Rapporteurs: Mrs Olga BENNETT (Ireland)
Mrs Marie-Rose WOLTERINK-OREMUS (The Netherlands)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

* Objections to the Standing Committee procedure must reach the Head of the Congress Secretariat a clear week before the meeting of the Standing Committee; if 5 members object, the report will be submitted to the Plenary Session

Les éventuelles objections à l'examen en Commission Permanente doivent parvenir au Chef du Secrétariat du Congrès une semaine avant la réunion de la Commission Permanente; si 5 membres du Congrès présentent des objections, le rapport sera soumis à la session plénière.

Introduction

As far back as 1993 the CLRAE's Committee on Social Affairs and Health, chaired by Mr K.C. Zahn, decided to conduct a study on mobility of young people in Europe, covering young people of all social origins but with special emphasis on those from underprivileged neighbourhoods and backgrounds.

The Committee considered, firstly, that the European youth programmes were not succeeding in suitably tackling the needs of the least privileged categories of young people and, secondly, that it was of prime importance for the future of European unity to open all young people's minds to Europe. Indeed, if the project of a united Europe is to win grassroots support it must be opened up to all parts of society and all young people must be given a genuine awareness of Europe.

Some years earlier the same Committee had launched the "New European Journeymen" programme for young craftworkers. Unfortunately, after having functioned successfully for several years, this programme was brought to an end. It therefore also became necessary to give new impetus to this important aspect of youth mobility.

In the meantime a number of initiatives and projects had been completed. With Resolution 237 (1992) the CLRAE adopted the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life, which had been drawn up at an international conference held in Llangollen (United Kingdom) in 1991.

Part I of the Charter, which deals with sectoral policies, contains some ideas for a youth mobility policy (paragraph 19) and aims, in particular, to promote international youth exchanges and school twinnings, multicultural exchanges in the school context and the development of networks such as the New European Journeymen. The Charter also underlines the need for financial backing for such exchanges, which allow young people to experience international contacts from a very early age and open up new horizons for them.

In Resolution 243, adopted in 1993 following a conference held in Charleroi (Belgium) in 1992, the CLRAE, in a forward-looking initiative, focused on the concept of citizenship and involvement in the community as a means of combating the loss of security and the economic, social and political exclusion which were affecting large numbers of people in Europe. There is no hiding the obvious: for people in certain population groups or social strata, Europe is an abstract idea and any opportunity to experience the European ideal in action an unattainable dream. As the Charleroi Declaration aptly says, every person or group has "the right to join with others in the building ... of a shared world". Exclusion, in particular social exclusion, poses a threat to democracy and generates fear, contempt, intolerance, racism and rejection of others.

If young people from underprivileged backgrounds and neighbourhoods are to be involved in the project to build a united Europe and take part in it alongside others, it is necessary to support the activities of those who work with and trust young people, to create opportunities for young people to get together, to encourage any form of meeting of young people from all kinds of backgrounds, to establish fora and to ask young people themselves

to contribute to thinking about the types of activities and structures needed to open their minds to Europe.

It follows that, in this respect, a policy to encourage mobility of the least privileged young people cannot be dissociated from youth policy in general or from a policy of citizenship for everyone. Adoption of policies to further youth mobility and promote European opportunities for young people must go hand in hand with implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life (Resolution 237) and of the Charleroi Declaration (Resolution 243).

A number of meetings of youth workers, youth leaders and outreach workers, held in Strasbourg in 1993 and 1994, showed that mobility of young people in Europe, particularly the least privileged of them, was a concern for all these categories of social workers. Moreover, they called for a European mobility policy in favour of their own group, as mobility of young people is not possible if those who accompany them are not mobile.

A survey entrusted to one of these social workers, Mr C. Grosse, an outreach worker with *Prévention Spécialisée* in Strasbourg, which was completed in 1995, confirmed that a number of the European circles concerned - naturally including young people themselves, youth associations, elected representatives and local and regional authorities - were interested in the possibility of devoting more imagination and effort to making Europe really accessible for all categories of young people, especially those from underprivileged neighbourhoods and backgrounds and young workers.

Like the earlier survey our report has two parts. The first is devoted above all to mind-broadening European opportunities for young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods and backgrounds, notably group trips abroad. The author is Ms O. Bennett (Ireland). The second concerns mobility of young workers, including young craftworkers and apprentices in general, and was written by Ms Wolterink-Oremus (the Netherlands).

The report and the draft resolution based on it take account of the CLRAE's earlier work, including the above-mentioned survey. They were examined and adopted at the last meeting of the working group on "Youth" on 9 December 1996.

However, before commenting briefly on the structure of the report, it is perhaps not devoid of interest to take a look at the instruments and programmes which currently exist in Europe to promote and facilitate mobility of young people in general and the categories of young people with which we are concerned in particular.

First of all, at European Union level the SOCRATES programme (1995-1999) is designed to promote the European dimension in education, from primary school to university. The introduction to the programme stipulates that schools catering for underprivileged young people will be given priority when Community aid is granted.

The "Leonardo da Vinci" programme (1995-1999) aims to promote vocational training of young people and, within this framework, pays special attention to activities conceived on a transnational basis and to exchanges for young people undergoing training. 20% of the available funds (which total ECU 620 million) are earmarked for underprivileged young

people.

"Youth for Europe III" (1995-1999) is an exchange programme for young people, which has no connection with education and training systems and aims to give young people practical experience of active European citizenship and to encourage them to move in that direction. Emphasis is placed on participation by young people at risk of relegation to the fringes of society, who as a result encounter the greatest difficulties in taking part in Community programmes. The programme therefore focuses on providing information and on specific back-up measures. At least one third of the funds earmarked for Community activities directly involving young people must be used to benefit those who are underprivileged. Part of the programme relates to the European dimension of training for youth leaders and youth workers.

Other Community initiatives, such as Employment-Now, Horizon, and Youthstart, can also have an effect on the mobility within Europe of young workers with few qualifications.

The Commission very recently proposed a scheme to enable young Europeans to carry on a social-solidarity activity in another country. A genuine "European voluntary service" scheme for young people should be run from 1998 to 2002 and allow 100,000 to 200,000 young people to take part in exchanges. The scheme is aimed at young people between 18 and 25, both those who have been well-educated and those from underprivileged neighbourhoods. Its objective is to support long-term (six months to one year) and short-term (three weeks to three months) transnational projects. Voluntary-sector associations, local authorities and other organisations will be hosts to the young people, who will receive a monthly allowance. A tutor will monitor what happens. Young people wishing to join the scheme will have to apply to the national body responsible for running it in their member state. The Commission in Brussels plans to take out insurance policies to guard against the risks involved and provide the voluntary workers with social-security cover. It should also be noted that the member states are committed to guaranteeing residence rights and social-security cover and to refraining from withdrawing entitlement to unemployment benefit or family allowances.

At the Council of Europe a draft convention on voluntary service is being drawn up within the European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field. There are many similarities between the two European organisations' projects, except of course for their funding.

Council of Europe member states' ministers responsible for youth have moreover discussed the issue of youth mobility on several occasions.

In particular, they decided that Inter-rail cards should continue to be issued, subject to the conditions for their use laid down in 1995. The International Union of Railways has agreed to pay one ECU per card sold into a "Mobility Fund for Underprivileged Young People" run by the Council of Europe's Youth Directorate. These arrangements should make it possible to subsidise travel expenses for several thousand underprivileged young people a year. In order to be entitled to this aid, young persons must be part of a group of at least ten making a train journey and must be "underprivileged" (young people from economically disadvantaged or outlying regions, those who have been unable to benefit from a good

standard of education, young apprentices with insufficient resources).

The ministers also proposed that the Youth Card should be relaunched as a service card giving access to health, accident, civil liability and repatriation insurance cover.

It should be pointed out, in this context, that the European Youth Foundation (EYF) funds projects which also encompass mobility-related aspects.

In its Recommendation No. R (95) 18 to member states, adopted on 12 October 1995, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe points out that an increase in the mobility of young people is a positive step for Europe in several respects and recommends that member states take all appropriate measures to encourage and facilitate youth mobility. The recommendation refers to "mobility projects", which are "any stay in another European country, the objectives of which are educational, and which promotes international understanding via intercultural learning for a duration of between one week and three months, or longer if so agreed between the parties, such as voluntary service. Mobility projects are collective projects, notably in the field of youth exchanges organised in one or several host countries for the purpose of voluntary activities, such as training, cultural, linguistic, artistic or sporting activities, or with a view to carrying out socio-cultural projects, environmental and development aid programmes."

Such "mobility projects", which concern young people under 25, entitle participants to rights and advantages granted by host states and the state of residence. The states are to implement "support measures", including scholarships, exchange programmes involving trainers and training programmes intended for organisers.

Special attention is paid to disadvantaged young people: the states should give priority to encouraging the mobility projects of disadvantaged young people with the co-operation of youth organisations and other relevant services. Host states undertake to facilitate administrative formalities. Co-operation bodies are to be established, the role of youth organisations recognised and information circulated. States are encouraged to conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements.

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The first difficulty encountered by the report's authors was that of defining the target categories of young people and the type of mobility envisaged. If we talk of young people in general and general mobility we may be using attractive catch-phrases, but there is a danger that our words will go unheeded as long as the authorities are unable to take action in terms of specific administrative categories.

Although it was clear that the primary target group was young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods or backgrounds, we were confronted with another difficulty since, as the initiatives taken by some fifteen European municipalities have shown, these young people must not be separated from their peers and mobility policy should not be dissociated from the overall context of policies, activities and measures in favour of young people in general.

The concept of mobility then had to be defined. Here, the same initiatives confirmed our initial premise in that they showed that it is mainly a question of group trips for relatively short stays abroad (from a few days to two weeks). To achieve their defined objectives and aims and be meaningful and effective such group trips or exchanges must be properly organised and supervised. The answers given by people involved in such mobility initiatives when completing our questionnaires or in on-the-spot interviews helped us to identify the principles of this kind of mobility. However, to form an idea of the operational aspects of such mobility a whole series of administrative and practical issues and matters had to be addressed. These - when put together - constitute a public policy.

On the other hand, how can Europe reasonably be made more accessible for young workers? The "New European Journeymen" programme run by the CLRAE in the second half of the eighties was above all aimed at young craftworkers and apprentices. The report tells the story of this programme and draws conclusions, which we now intend to apply to all young workers who have learned a trade in which they have obtained a diploma or another form of vocational qualification.

The practical difficulties are perhaps greater in this field as this form of mobility involves a longer stay abroad than that of a group making a trip. There are therefore other types of obstacles to this kind of mobility. However, the fairly successful experience with "New European Journeymen" shows that, where politicians and the administrative authorities are determined to do so, it is possible to reduce the number and size of these obstacles to a significant extent, if not to eliminate them entirely.

Given that the existing Community programmes do not seem to pay sufficient heed to these important categories of young people, it would be appropriate to consider a commitment by the European Union to provide financial backing for these forms of youth mobility, with priority focus on the dynamic, central role of European municipalities.

First Part

**Providing European opportunities for all young people, including those from
deprived neighbourhoods and backgrounds:
group trips abroad**

I.

Some information on youth mobility initiatives in Europe

The town of Turin (Italy), with a population of 1 million, has established a youth department which brings all its youth services, including both an Information Centre and a Centre for International Youth Exchanges, under one roof. The latter organises exchanges directly as well as supporting youth organisations which plan to do so.

The Head of the Centre for Youth Exchanges believes it is unwise to put too much emphasis on underprivileged young people, since narrowly defined programmes run the risk of isolating these people. Instead, young people in general should be catered for.

Exchanges include group trips of young people between the ages of 15 and 20, each focusing on a specific subject (cultural, sporting, linguistic, recreational etc). Visits abroad last from 10 to 15 days and the majority take place during the school holidays, at a price which is designed to be affordable for everyone. The visits are organised in conjunction with a foreign partner (public institution, association, school etc), which arranges for the young people to take part in activities and meet people during their visit.

The Centre for Youth Exchanges also helps to organise visits of foreign groups to Turin itself. In addition, the town's youth department runs language and culture courses for officials in international youth organisations (in conjunction with the EYF/EYC in Strasbourg) and training courses for youth leaders and officials in youth organisations, which include a section on international exchanges.

The Information Centre advertises, among other things, training courses and seminars on youth exchanges and helps associations wishing to take part in European Union programmes.

Every year, in September, Turin's town council organises a party for all the young people who have taken part in an exchange during that year.

The towns of Strasbourg (France) and Kehl (Germany), together with local youth associations, have set up a meeting place on the site of the former German border post. Strasbourg's youth department seeks to put partners from the two countries - youth organisations as well as socio-cultural centres and clubs working to prevent exclusion - in touch with one another. Its work is therefore highly focused and is a form of transfrontier co-operation which is open to young people because, paradoxically, it would seem that it is easier to build partnerships between distant countries than between two border towns which, although separated by a river, are linked by a bridge.

Exchange programmes in general are seen in Strasbourg as contributing to the revitalisation of twinning arrangements with Dresden, Stuttgart, Leicester and Boston. For instance, exchanges of social workers (and town councillors) on social questions have been held with Leicester. As regards youth exchanges, the Town Council hopes to act as an

intermediary rather than become directly involved. For example, in the Alsace-Kracow project, exchanges were organised by the Strasbourg CEMEA and Krakow's Jordan Youth Centre. As in other French towns, the Local Support Committee for Youth Projects (CLAPJ) in Strasbourg helps young people to carry out a personal or group project. For instance, about ten young people from an outlying area of Strasbourg took part in an exchange with New York.

The Youth Association of Venissieux, a town in the suburbs of Lyon, organises youth exchange projects in partnership with the municipality and central government. In return for government support, young people must perform work of public interest. To be approved projects must have an educational purpose, for instance setting up a generator in a school in the Lebanon, establishing a village library in Senegal, studying the management of a sports club in London, taking part in the Seville Exhibition, participating in an international youth camp, etc. The association also runs a youth centre which promotes contact between all the young people in the town.

The town of Maastricht (the Netherlands) apparently has no specific policy on the international mobility of young people in general and young people living in underprivileged neighbourhoods in particular. Generally speaking, it considers that priority should be given to employment. On the other hand, the municipality asks associations to organise activities and perform social work and this allows them to organise international youth exchange projects. The organisers of the Trajekt Association think that exchanges are beneficial for youth employment and for community life.

The small town of Sittard, near Maastricht, while it does not have a specific policy, has devised many exchange programmes with German and Belgian towns. According to a town official, both paid and voluntary organisers need to be helped to design projects in specific contexts. The next step is to win round the municipality, schools and youth centres which work with young people in difficulty.

As part of the current administrative restructuring, the Hungarian Government is granting municipalities funds to enable them to draw up youth projects. The mobility of young people, and especially of young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods, is apparently very slight. However, outside official structures, there are some interesting examples such as the Kekemet camps, which bring together about 2000 young Europeans every two years. However, associations are having trouble finding sponsors and partners in other countries. For the time being, little attention is being paid to young people from underprivileged backgrounds in urban and rural areas affected by unemployment and in the Rrom population. In Szolnok, however, the Director of the Centre for Orphaned or Abandoned Children is developing exchanges with Turkey, Switzerland, Slovakia, Canada and St. Petersburg.

While the city of Athens (Greece) often organises seaside camps for groups of young people from abroad, it rarely organises meetings or exchanges between young Greeks and young people from other countries; where exchanges take place they are between schools. The youth department of Piraeus would like to develop international contacts. However, human resources are limited and very few associations deal with young people. It should be pointed out that the Khethea Association, which combats dependency, has developed a

programme with Exodus, its Italian counterpart, designed to provide medical and other assistance to children in the former Yugoslavia.

In the United Kingdom, local authorities seem, as a general rule, to encourage youth mobility. For example, youth exchanges in Birmingham normally include underprivileged young people. The organisers try to target young people who cannot afford to travel abroad. However, associations feel that the authorities should be made more aware of the value of international exchanges.

The town of Wroclaw (Poland) seeks to support local associations and organisations working with young people in order to encourage them to take part in programmes set up in partnership with other European towns. According to municipal officials, underprivileged young people need to be included in broad exchange programmes.

In the suburbs of Dublin, in Darndale (Ireland), projects promoting exchanges and contact with young people from other countries are one aspect of a comprehensive policy to help underprivileged young people, who suffer mainly from a high rate of unemployment, and to help improve community life in these neighbourhoods, in particular as regards relations between the generations. In local youth clubs and associations working with the local Church or in partnership with municipal authorities, for example, young volunteers organise trips abroad as part of this policy. It is considered tremendously exciting to leave the town and go somewhere else; youth exchanges with young people from other countries are of real benefit to Ireland's young people.

In Germany, the town of Cologne supports international youth exchange projects. However, this kind of mobility could be improved if parents were better supported, schools were more involved and local people were better informed. It would also be beneficial if social centres from different countries were to work together. International exchanges are considered to make a very useful contribution to personal development. Whereas young participants tend to draw on situations and circumstances from their own environment, when they travel abroad they are facing the unknown. They therefore have to learn and use new forms of communication and become more independent. The idea is that, to be successful, travel/exchanges must lead to a "positive break".

The town of Dorsten (Germany) considers that exchanges must be educational. In order to avoid isolating and stigmatising certain categories of young people, steps need to be taken to integrate young people from different social backgrounds. The measures in question, which are designed to be educational, enable young people to try out in their daily lives what they have learnt from their contact with others.

The example of the "Platform Network"

It is worth mentioning this example separately. It concerns an informal group of representatives from local authorities and youth organisations from sixteen European regions in 15 countries. Its main activity is promoting youth mobility and developing interregional co-operation.

Members, who take it in turns to run the network, hold an annual meeting and run

centralised multilateral activities. In particular, the meeting aims to assess the past year's activities, raise awareness of the host region's youth policies, identify the network's future line of approach and finalise the arrangements for exchanges. The existence of local networks allows associations and municipalities to work in complementary ways. Networks make sure that European mobility is accessible to young people from all social backgrounds. Exchanges must be reciprocal and affordable. The multilateral initiative brings together 80-100 young people every year in a youth camp. Young people act as guides and ambassadors for their region or town.

The Platform Network does not have specific policies for young people from underprivileged backgrounds, but its approach enables them to become involved in broader activities. However, some of the Network's organisers acknowledge that exchanges with underprivileged young people require extensive preparation that part-time or voluntary youth leaders are not always in a position to undertake. They therefore need active support.

II.

A closer look: general and specific observations on providing European opportunities for young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods and backgrounds

The examples mentioned above give us an initial overview of the various aspects of this issue.

In particular, they show us that some towns and regions have policies on both young people and youth mobility and are able to draw upon a rich network of associations and individuals familiar with the subject. Others have a youth policy but attach little importance to youth mobility. In yet other towns, mobility projects have been launched on the initiative of associations, youth clubs, social workers, volunteers, schools, youth centres or churches.

The mobility of young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods or backgrounds is generally a product of this more complex reality. It is impossible to introduce the one without working on the other.

Although practice is piecemeal, disparate and limited and situations vary greatly from one country to another, depending on who initiates, organises and participates in these projects, there seems to be, if not agreement, then at least interest in developing a policy and practice in the area of international exchanges, designed to include young people from the underprivileged neighbourhoods of Europe.

However, much remains to be done to convince the sceptics and undecided. Perhaps greater efforts could be made to take effective action and introduce satisfactory practices and genuine policies that cover the whole of Greater Europe, as far as is reasonably possible.

It might therefore be useful to supplement the available information and briefly outline the replies given by youth leaders, social workers and youth and outreach workers in questionnaires or interviews in the towns themselves. Of these, we shall highlight those

which, in our view, are the most interesting and contribute most to a better understanding of the subject, and those which can help us to identify the goals more effectively and devise an operational approach to providing European opportunities for young people from underprivileged backgrounds.

Complementary action

Firstly, opening up Europe cannot be considered an end in itself, but rather as simply one stage in a broader project. This is especially important where young people from underprivileged backgrounds in Europe are concerned. While for young people from more affluent families, travelling abroad, at least in Europe, is an increasingly common, even run-of-the-mill, activity, this kind of travel is still exceptional for children and young people from the poorest families. The mobility of this last category is often limited to the street, or to the neighbourhood or village.

In other words, the general situation of young people from underprivileged backgrounds should be borne in mind when it is planned to offer them greater opportunities in Europe, even if programmes are aimed at young people in general, regardless of background, education, class or income. This means that mobility cannot in itself provide an answer to problems of education, training, socialisation or housing - in short, to the precarious living conditions of a proportion of the population. It is fairly clear that young people who are seriously affected by problems of housing, food, written expression and money cannot easily be persuaded to take part in international exchanges.

Mobility and foreign travel must therefore be seen as one aspect of a comprehensive youth policy which, together with other public policies, tackles the living conditions of the hardest hit young people. With this kind of backing, such mobility could serve an educational purpose and become a starting point for something else and a dynamic experience that helps to lift young people out of their isolation, give them new self-confidence and make them responsible for carrying out a specific project.

If mobility is to be useful and effective, firstly the living conditions of young people cannot be ignored and secondly mobility must have a positive impact on these conditions.

We therefore consider that it might be difficult for a mobility project, or more simply a group trip abroad, to be spontaneously and directly organised by young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods or backgrounds acting individually or in groups. It might be hard for these young people to conceive of "leaving" and "returning" without help. An exchange involves meeting people, sharing things and forming ties and entails an ability to operate in a different environment. These young people only rarely take part in associations, youth clubs, socio-cultural centres and so on. Means of providing European opportunities for them can only be devised and elaborated on in close liaison with the people who know them - social and outreach workers, voluntary associations, the social services, churches, schools and training centres. Moreover, families need to be involved.

Thus, it is important to make a careful distinction between, on one hand, the project and preparations for mobility as an element of a broader long-term strategy and, on the other hand, the organisation of the trip itself, which also presents difficulties, although these are

mostly contingent and technical.

A project cannot be devised, prepared and handed to young people on a plate as if it were a consumer product. Indeed, it is through their involvement in preparing the project that young people can claim the project as a whole - with its emotional, educational, social, technical and human aspects - as "their own" and be encouraged to play an active part from the beginning. Increased awareness begins with the first step and its educational value is derived from the whole process.

Once preparations for the trip abroad have been made, ie once the trip has been integrated into the broader context described above, it can have a variety of immediate goals. The aim might be simply to explore a town or region, to meet other young people abroad for an activity promoting solidarity, to celebrate a sporting event, to take part in an exhibition, to protect the environment, etc.

Solidarity

Reports of successful trips highlight the shock of the new, the enthusiasm and active participation, the combating of prejudices, tolerance, recognition and enhanced self-esteem for young people, etc.

However, one aspect in particular, which has been raised by various people, is worth emphasising, namely solidarity. Of course this is connected to the group dynamic but in actual fact it precedes this because it already exists in embryonic form in the initial project.

Firstly, when the initiators devise and prepare a trip with young people from underprivileged backgrounds, they are demonstrating their solidarity: they know the communities from which the young people come and in a sense they share their difficulties. The young people, feeling that their worth has been recognised, trust them, are willing to take part in the project and devote time and energy to it. This is the first kind of reciprocal exchange.

Secondly, we share the view of several youth leaders that programmes, projects and trips should not be aimed solely at the most underprivileged young people. In other words, it is important to open them to young people from all social backgrounds. For exchanges and trips should not simply enable young people to do something they are unaccustomed to doing, but above all to do it with other people. The travel project can therefore foster group solidarity, which is totally different from young people forming "gangs", and which is geared instead to a specific purpose. The project therefore becomes the hidden thread running through a story which can be told later, especially if it has generated friendships. It is a huge responsibility to extend projects to young people from underprivileged backgrounds, since the social problems and difficulties relating to attitudes and resources are undoubtedly very serious. This is why a project requires extensive preparation, which consists mainly in participants' learning about one another. Participants need to get to know and respect one another and to work together. Foreign exchanges, with places and young people from abroad, need to be prepared, ie preceded by reciprocal exchange in the area where preparations for them are made. Learning about equality makes it possible to pave the way for solidarity and friendship.

By taking part in a shared project, young people play a role which can just as easily lead to recognition and enhanced self-esteem as to their exclusion. Any activity which results in people being left out makes no sense and will have negative effects, because it will make them withdraw into a shell and will further undermine their confidence.

When the trip takes place, the quality of the time spent together and the benefits of sharing daily tasks will depend upon the degree of cohesion and solidarity achieved by the group before the departure.

Continuity

The preparation stage, the travel and the period following the return all need to be taken into account. The visit must have long-term benefits. The return should not mean sending young people back to square one but rather creating a stepping stone towards something else.

After the trip is over and the participants have returned, questions will arise. Have they changed? If so, how? But, above all, are the project and its successful completion actually going to change the behaviour and everyday lives of the young people, in particular those from underprivileged backgrounds?

The more teachers think about these questions, the more they will find answers which enable them to help young people more effectively. We have confidence in teachers. However, a few aspects which they themselves have emphasised are worth mentioning here.

For example, as regards assessing the visit, young people could be encouraged to write down their impressions of the trip and more generally their experience of the project from start to finish. They could then discuss this in groups. How can group solidarity be maintained? If friendships have been forged, surely we should try to help them develop in formal or informal structures (clubs, youth organisations, associations), as well as in everyday life? Surely we should take steps to ensure that the group thinks up other projects, to be carried out where they live or elsewhere, in an increasingly independent way?

While it is true that young people's family circumstances, quality of housing, income and level of education cannot be improved overnight purely through going on a trip, there is no doubt that a successful exchange visit will introduce an element of novelty into young people's lives and open up new prospects for them and their teachers, providing both a reference point and a source of support.

To sum up, it could be said that an exchange visit creates expectations both of the trip itself and as regards the daily lives of the young people, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds. A project can be considered a success when both sets of expectations have been met.

III.

Political and practical aspects

We shall now look at the general framework needed to open Europe up to young people from underprivileged neighbourhoods/backgrounds.

In general, in this kind of exercise it is difficult to be comprehensive and this is especially so in an area in which the practical arrangements are all-important and in which projects are devised, developed and improved on in the light of past experience. Our aim is not therefore to advocate a mobility policy created out of nothing at European level, but rather to draw attention to eleven priorities which we believe to be relevant in conducting a local policy on youth exchanges as part of a training strategy for underprivileged young people.

1. Firstly, it is worth reminding the authorities and especially European regional and municipal authorities of the need to introduce a youth policy by implementing the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life. This provides, inter alia, for a policy on leisure activities and community life as well as a youth mobility policy.
2. The authorities should support social workers and in particular all kinds of outreach workers and youth leaders, first of all by making it easier to set up European groups of these workers or associations representing them and then by facilitating exchanges between workers from different countries for the purposes of study and of fostering mutual knowledge. Since these workers constitute the main impetus behind the mobility of underprivileged young people in Europe, they should be helped to learn to play this role. Demand for mobility is in fact very strong in these communities. These workers need to find partners abroad. Towns could therefore incorporate exchanges of social workers in their approach to and management of twinning arrangements and partnerships.
3. There are numerous financial, administrative and other pitfalls to organising an exchange of young people or a trip abroad.

Even when municipalities do not organise these trips abroad themselves, they help to provide information for the various groups concerned, including associations, schools and churches, and play a co-ordinating role.

4. An international exchange cannot take place without financial backing. While the authorities can help to find private sector funding when the type of trip lends itself to this, direct financial aid is likely to be needed to enable young people from less-well-off backgrounds to travel abroad. Municipalities and regions should therefore establish a budgetary appropriation specifically for this purpose.

Such backing need not cover all the costs, but on the other hand consideration should be given to the nature of the group requesting it. Even if such funding is supplementary, the decision to award it should be taken well before the date fixed for the trip, in view of the time required for preparations. It is reasonable to consider that if funding applications are made every year in the autumn, decisions could be taken at the latest in January in the year

in which the trip is to take place.

5. The authorities can also facilitate young people's travel arrangements. During the trip, municipalities can provide a permanent point of contact and give the visit an official dimension, for example by organising a reception at the town hall to welcome their young foreign visitors.

6. Other difficulties are administrative in nature. For instance, the young people may turn out not to have the nationality of the state in which they are resident, which is often the country where they were born. This raises the problem of entry into the host state. Similarly, there may be obstacles to travel to or from several central and eastern European countries. Some of these difficulties may be overcome with the help of the state¹, while others require the intervention of local or regional authorities.

7. It has been pointed out that when young people over the age of eighteen are unemployed and receive benefits and financial assistance, some regulations require them to be continuously available for work on the spot. Using their powers to overcome this difficulty, municipal and/or regional authorities could bring pressure to bear on central government to recognise group trips abroad as an element of general or vocational training for this category of young people.

8. Another question which is frequently raised concerns sickness and accident insurance cover. It seems to us that when this difficulty is not resolved by existing provisions, municipal authorities could come to an agreement with an insurance company so as to enable the organisers to arrange group insurance.

9. Attention has also been drawn to the problem of ensuring that girls and young women apply to go on trips. It is fair to say that we cannot resolve this difficulty once and for all, but can only ensure that those working in the mobility field, youth services, associations and youth leaders are aware that particular attention should be paid to encouraging women to take advantage of opportunities in Europe.

10. The question of language has been raised on several occasions. It is clear that young people from underprivileged backgrounds have poorer than average linguistic skills. In the circumstances, young people on "official" exchanges will need to be accompanied. If the trip is organised by a school, these difficulties can be alleviated. However, the practical importance of this question needs to be kept in perspective because, as has often been observed, the language of exchange is not that of the host or sending country and in any case young people quickly find effective ways of communicating on their own.

More generally, the issue of language could be tackled in the context of a policy of medium- and long-term twinning arrangements and partnerships which would also entail exchanges of youth organisers, social workers and youth leaders.

¹ Section 8 of Recommendation No. R (95) 18 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth mobility, concerns this very aspect of the administrative formalities required of young people, which states "shall endeavour to facilitate".

Interest in learning a foreign language may be one of the benefits of a successful trip and this should be followed up in the subsequent educational and cultural strategy concerning the young people in question.

11. The timing and length of the trip depend upon a set of contingent factors which are so closely connected to the categories of young people targeted, the theme and the destination that it is impossible to give general advice. We can only reiterate that the date will be determined by the time required for preparations and by the decision to provide financial backing.

Second part

Providing European opportunities for young workers

Towards the end of the 1980s, the CLRAE launched the New European Journeymen Project (NEJ), on the initiative of the Chair of the Committee on Social Affairs of the time, Mr P Duvoisin (Canton of Vaud, Switzerland). This project drew on the experience of the Journeymen of Duty who used to travel from town to town pooling their skills with those of local craftworkers. It is worth remembering that in the past, craftworkers were mobile and that for them Europe had a real meaning. Many of them had specialist building skills (and were for example masons, stone cutters, architects, decorators, painters etc) and thanks to them techniques and styles circulated widely and this is how there came to be a surprising continuity in Europe over the centuries and from one area to another.

The aim of the NEJ Project was, of course, infinitely more modest and involved giving young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who had learnt a trade and acquired a vocational qualification the chance to explore Europe through paid work for a limited period.

The concerns of this project were the same as those behind the current initiative to provide European opportunities for young people from deprived neighbourhoods and backgrounds. The socio-professional categories to which young craftworkers in Europe now belong are finding it harder to incorporate the European dimension into their lives and work than other categories. While it is true that young people from these backgrounds have probably already been abroad and often have some language skills, their occupations do not automatically provide them with European opportunities. There is no obvious way for a young butcher/ baker/ mason/ hairdresser/ electrician/ florist/ mechanic/ cook, to name but a few examples, to work elsewhere in Europe, short of actually moving to another country. This category of young people therefore needed help to devise and organise their own kind of limited but genuine occupational mobility.

Although the focus was mainly occupational, the goals were much broader. In particular, the NEJ's goals were identified as follows:

- to supplement vocational and language training through work for fixed periods in different European countries;
- to improve young people's occupational status and facilitate their integration into the jobs market when they returned to their own country;
- to increase their future opportunities for geographical and occupational mobility;
- to enable them to acquire experience which was likely to foster their personal development;
- to promote the European concept so that there was a better understanding of different lifestyles and working practices in the regions visited and an awareness of European identity.

The type of mobility envisaged therefore combined the idea of a placement with paid work. The host (business, craftshop, shop, craftworker etc) was intended to derive technical and occupational as well as more general social and human benefits from the temporary presence of a foreign visitor. Moreover, the scheme was designed to be reciprocal, and

reversing the roles was not only possible but was encouraged.

On the CLRAE's initiative, the following local authorities took part: the Canton of Vaud (Switzerland), Genbloux (Belgium), Rennes and Melun (France), Dorsten (Germany) and Barcelona (Spain). The original intention had been to enable young people to gain occupational experience in a number of different countries, each visit lasting not longer than three months. Later, the network could have been extended to include other towns. The CLRAE Secretariat in Strasbourg was responsible for overall co-ordination, while local authorities organised and oversaw each placement (sending, receiving and supervising the young people). On completion of the placement, a diploma was awarded in Strasbourg.

The NEJ project took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. About a hundred exchanges were organised, mostly between just two places, Dorsten (Germany) and the Canton of Vaud (Switzerland). Both these local authorities had set up a separate administrative unit to deal with the project, making it possible to co-ordinate the fairly large numbers of exchanges between them. In addition, the central co-ordination in Strasbourg of several successive European exchange programmes for a growing number of young people could not be achieved without a corresponding increase in the number of administrative staff. Since taking on large numbers of new staff was totally unrealistic, the project was limited to bilateral exchanges. When one of the cornerstones collapsed on the death of the person who worked full-time on the project (in the Canton of Vaud), the initiative came to an end.

For want of an accurate assessment of the activities organised as part of the NEJ project and more particularly of the exchanges between Dorsten and the Canton of Vaud, we are reduced to more or less plausible speculations on the organisational methods used by each local authority and on the general and individual practical difficulties which had to be resolved each time. Nor do we have records of who took part (classified by age, gender, trade, qualification, language skills, various interests etc). Nor do we have information on any follow-up.

Several studies and documents produced by the European Communities and the Council of Europe have listed the obstacles and difficulties which hinder the mobility of all categories of young people in member states. They have been classified by category of young person and by subject. Since they are too numerous for it to be possible to mention them all, we shall cite only the following examples, taken from all the countries: the loss of unemployment status and benefits, specific problems concerning residents who are not nationals of a member state (as regards entry, residence and social security cover) and the issue of repatriation costs in the event of serious illness or death. The incompatibility of contracts and lack of recognition of placements has been mentioned in only a few countries. Of the practical difficulties which may affect young craftworkers, we shall mention only: housing, level of income, language skills, the fear of losing one's job, the need for support on departure and arrival.

As things stand, Community programmes do not seem to cater specifically for young craftworkers. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme apply to this category of workers. This is also the case for transnational programmes for finding young people initial occupational training placements which may be short-term (three to twelve weeks) or long-term (three to nine months). Provision should be made for these visits, at

least the long-term ones, in the curriculum and occupational skills should be recognised. The European Communities plan to help young workers - which obviously includes qualified young craftworkers - to take part in international placements lastly normally for three months and for a maximum of twelve months. In the latter programme, priority is given to young people who have had practical vocational training.

The European Employment Service Network, designed to promote the transnational mobility of workers could, if necessary, be of help to the NEJ. It comprises 350 Euro-advisers and officials from government departments, trade unions and employers' organisations throughout the whole of the European Economic Area who provide information to, advise and help people who would like to take part in mobility projects as well as companies interested in recruiting internationally. They are linked by a system of electronic mail. They can therefore be useful in linking apprentices and craftworkers who are keen to work in other parts of Europe.

To sum up, the admittedly limited but apparently successful NEJ initiative prompts the following considerations.

1. The CLRAE should come out clearly in favour of policies aiming to provide European opportunities for young craftworkers and apprentices, emphasising that a stay in another European country:

- makes it possible to add a European dimension to general training and training specifically for young people;
- is a means of improving their language and technical skills;
- may consolidate young people's occupational status and facilitate their entry into the jobs market on their return to their own country;
- is an experience which may lead to stable links between young people in Europe and all kinds of joint projects and have a positive impact upon the future of European integration.

2. These mobility policies should give priority to young workers who have learnt a trade in which they hold a diploma or acquired another form of vocational qualification and who are aged between 18 and 25.

3. In addition, these policies should be aimed at young people in vocational training who are over the age of 16.

4. A bilateral agreement should be drawn up on each occasion between two or more municipalities or other area authorities concerned, preferably between ones which have already established various kinds of contact (twinning arrangements, partnerships, joint initiatives or projects etc), with a view to forming a small-scale network.

5. Qualified young workers who wish to do so should have the opportunity of paid work abroad for a period of about three months while young people undergoing vocational training

should be offered a shorter placement (about one month). These two measures should not be incompatible; rather they should form part of a single policy.

6. The application of these policies runs up against a series of obstacles of different kinds (socio-economic, administrative, linguistic, practical and others)² that only a suitably organised body is in a position to analyse in advance in order to take appropriate measures on each occasion.

7. This is why officials with responsibility for these policies in municipal (and in other local or regional) authorities must make a direct and clear commitment, for instance by setting up a co-ordination unit - perhaps in the local youth organisation - and by appointing someone to run it. On the other hand, tasks relating specifically to implementation and management could be given to an association with NGO status.

8. The implementation of these policies requires co-ordination at different levels and with several partners:

- local vocational schools, in particular those for young apprentices, but also those for recently qualified young people;
- local chambers of commerce and crafts, which should be invited to set up an organisation to promote the mobility of young craftworkers in Europe;
- central and local government departments responsible for youth employment and any other public authority which can facilitate the implementation of the policies concerned;
- youth and other associations which have experience of, or which work in, the field of youth mobility;
- the European Employment Service Network.

9. The system to be established is based upon reciprocal exchanges and cannot function unless the co-ordinators in both countries (respectively, the sending and the host country) keep in close contact. Therefore, each of them must be aware of the context in which their counterpart is working. This requires not only that they be in constant communication but also that they should visit each other in order to understand the local situation. The whole process should lead to preparations being made before the start of the exchange and to a methodology for bilateral co-operation, specific to each occasion, which can be improved, as and when appropriate.

² For example: the loss, in certain cases, of unemployed status and unemployment benefit; loss of health insurance cover; problems relating to the entry, residence and social security cover of non-nationals; the incompatibility of contracts and the non-recognition of placements, problems relating to housing, financial resources, linguistic skills; fear of losing one's job; the need for support in the host country.

10. Co-ordination should lead to the establishment of a monitoring system right from the start. A brief assessment report could be sent to the CLRAE once a year.

11. The visit abroad would lead to a diploma drafted in both the languages concerned, bearing the Council of Europe's logo and mentioning the CLRAE. A possible title for the project is "Europe for young workers" (with, if appropriate a sub-title of "New European Journeymen").

12. It would be a good idea if, after the CLRAE has adopted a text (resolution), the system were to be launched between 1997 and 1999, so that by the year 2000 many towns and other area authorities in Europe are already running such a scheme.

13. The CLRAE could ask all local and regional authorities, the national associations of local and regional authorities and central government bodies to support the project.

Conclusions

The real conclusions of our report are to be found in the draft resolution, which will be submitted to the CLRAE's Standing Committee for adoption at its meeting on 7 March 1997.

The draft resolution mentions a number of facts which constitute the basis for the initiative envisaged by the Working Group on Youth, now being proposed to the Congress and to the local and regional authorities of greater Europe.

After underlining the case for truly opening up Europe to young people, especially those from underprivileged neighbourhoods and backgrounds and young workers, the resolution draws attention to the need for a general youth policy implemented at the local and regional levels, such as that recommended in the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life. It also refers to the "New European Journeymen" programme.

The recommendations to European towns and regions include "principles" and "measures" in respect of European opportunities for all young people.

After mentioning the three fundamental principles that must govern all aspects of mobility, which in particular takes the form of foreign travel by groups of young people, viz complementarity, solidarity and duration, the text recommends both general preliminary measures and specific measures concerning social workers, organisation (notably information and co-ordination, financial support, transport and contacts) and removal of obstacles to youth mobility.

After recognising the importance of increasing the European awareness of young workers and young people still in vocational training, the draft resolution recommends, inter alia, to towns and regions that this form of mobility should be founded on an agreement between two or more municipalities or other authorities, preferably ones which have already forged some form of link, so as to create mini-networks. The "New European Journeymen" example shows that an exchange scheme for young workers based on reciprocity can work if the relations between the home town and the host town have first been organised in all respects. This necessitates a detailed analysis of the obstacles to this form of mobility, close co-ordination, firstly within each town between the different parties involved and secondly between the two towns, and the appointment of an easily identifiable person in charge. This insistence on in-depth, organised, careful, well-monitored bilateralisation has its origin in the belief that such an approach will truly give the project a direction, limiting any excessive ambition and avoiding any vague impulses, by imposing a gradual progression starting with an initially small operation, but nevertheless with scope for expansion to include other towns in a mini-network.

The draft resolution specifies the age-group of the young workers concerned (18-25) and of the apprentices (from the age of 16), as well as the length of stays abroad. It recommends that executive and administrative responsibilities should be entrusted to an NGO.

Participants in visits abroad will be awarded a diploma. If the **towns** and **regions** begin to plan youth mobility seriously as of now, the scheme could be launched in 1997-98 so as to be fully operational by the **year 2000**.

What better gift could be made to Europe's youth on the eve of the third millennium?