

**External Evaluation of Socrates:**

**PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
(Specific Evaluation Lot 6.1)**

**European Agency for Development  
in Special Needs Education**

**(FINAL REPORT)**

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**July 2000**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SPECIFIC EVALUATION

The Community Action Programme SOCRATES was established by the European Parliament and the Council on 14th March 1995. In its communication of 21<sup>st</sup> February 1996 on **Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into all Community Policies and Activities** (COM (96) 67 final), the European Commission presented a new strategy - *mainstreaming* - that aimed to integrate the principles of equal opportunities for all people in all community actions. This was followed by the Council Resolution of December 20, 1996 that ratified the principle of mainstreaming as an approach to be integrated into all Commission policies and actions and the Communication of Commission of July 30, 1996.(final COM (96) 406) on the matter which is the key reference text on the model of the mainstreaming approach incorporated in the field of equal opportunities.

One of the aims of the SOCRATES programme is to enable pupils, students and adults with physical, sensory and intellectual impairments to participate fully in the various activities within the programme. Specifically, in the Decision it is stated that:

It is necessary to ensure that children and adolescents with disabilities are able to participate as fully as possible in the Socrates programme. (page 11 of the decision)

In Spring 1999, the Commission invited for tender for the external evaluation of the SOCRATES programme. Specific Lot 6.1 would focus upon the levels of participation of people with disabilities within the programme. Specifically, the Commission's interest in the participation of people with disabilities in SOCRATES resulted in the following questions under pinning the contract:

- Do people with disabilities and special needs participate in the Socrates programme?
- Which factors support or hinder the participation of people with disabilities and special needs?
- Based on the evaluation what recommendations and suggestions can be formulated?

The specific evaluation aimed to further the development and implementation of the Community disability policy and meet the principles underlying the Communication of the Commission on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Universally accepted definitions for disability are quite impossible to find. The World Health Organisation (1997) suggests that a *disability* is the functional result of an *impairment* (physical, sensory or intellectual difference or change in a person). A *handicap* is the possible social result of a disability. If a person has a handicap, it results in them having particular and individual, *special needs*. However, there are many different interpretations of these terms held within the European member states. These are clearly presented in the study report prepared with the support of DGXXII (now DG Education and Culture), **Integration in Europe: Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs**, Meijer (1998).

The definition of disability and special needs applicable to the specific evaluation of the SOCRATES programme was operationalised as *all kinds of physical and sensory impairments* and *all learners who are given a special support due to their special educational needs*. These special needs must have been identified by the competent authorities of the concerned country. These operationalised definitions of disability and special need fitted into the premise that it was essential to take account of the differences in country-based contexts for defining disability.

The evaluation study had three elements of information collection and analysis:

- 1. Facts:** statistics regarding potential and actual participation rates
- 2. Reasons:** participants' and non-participants' (both with disabilities and able bodied) reasons for being involved in to be programme or not. Covering all actions/activities and focusing upon the identification of decision-making and influences upon involvement.
- 3. Examples:** of experiences of people with disabilities (or their organisational representatives) who participated in the programme.

All data and resulting conclusions are presented within the full report in connection with each activity of seven separate data collection tasks undertaken. A summary of conclusions and recommendations is presented here.

### **Key Findings**

Two factors had impact upon the design and implementation of the study. The first of these is the issue of subsidiarity in the programme – the centralised (Commission)



and National (National Socrates Agencies) management structures and functions had to be accounted for.

The second is the issue of different definitions and ways of considering disability within participating countries; this had clear implications for the evidence and findings of this study. Collecting the specific baseline data required from the countries to accurately pinpoint figures of potential and actual participation has been for some countries very problematic. The nature of the data to be collected is very sensitive, both for individual people concerned and also when considered within the social and political situations of different countries. It has been difficult to collect data for some questions and not possible for others. As understandings for even commonly used categories of people or resources vary considerably comparisons between countries are problematic and resulting conclusions therefore tentative – based on *indicators* rather than pure empirical data.

The difficulties in identifying a representative sample of people with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme had a direct impact upon all results and conclusions of this evaluation. Identifying mobility and project participants with disabilities and projects focussing upon special educational needs has been difficult. People with disabilities are – for a number of reasons - not formally identified in their places of work or study or within the SOCRATES programme. General or specific projects focusing upon special education or disability issues are not recorded as a matter of course within the programme structure.

These two issues highlight an underlying problem faced by SOCRATES programme managers wishing to promote participation. There are major differences in the understanding and implementation of the principle of mainstreaming evident within the three levels of actors within the programme - organisational, National and European. These differences cannot be overstated although it should be acknowledged that a closer co-ordination of the general and specific activities of the Commission and National SOCRATES Agencies designed to support the participation of people with disabilities has gone some way to addressing this issue.

This specific evaluation clearly shows that monitoring the participation of people with disabilities throughout the programme in a centrally managed way is very necessary. With respect to any future monitoring of participation within SOCRATES II, it will be necessary to have a working definition of disability that incorporates legal and situational definitions in all of the participating countries and accounts for how a person is considered (and supported) within their own society.

The general conclusion of the specific evaluation is that the motives for participation of both mobility and project participants with and without disabilities is consistent. All people participate as they see the programme as a real opportunity for personal and professional development. The actions taken within the programme so far to promote the participation of people with disabilities have gone a long way to achieving the aim and a lot of progress has been made. Within the preparation for phase two of the programme, there is a real opportunity to develop this good work by extending the investment of financial, material and time resources and linking these to better targeting and more focused support systems.

### **Recommendations for SOCRATES II**

The specific recommendations from the evaluation relate to four areas of the programme: 1 mobility actions, 2 project based actions, 3 provision of information and 4 programme management. Specific suggestions for developments are listed under each of these areas.

#### 1. Developing participation in individual mobility actions

I - For participants in mobility actions, specific, practical information on potential organisations to be approached for placements is essential in supporting participation. Detailed and uniformly presented information upon which comparisons of suitability and decisions about next steps can be made is necessary. There is a need to provide **more systematic information on the organisations and the support they can offer students and staff with disabilities** who are eligible to participate in all mobility actions. This is particularly relevant for students within the Erasmus action, but it also applies to teachers and other educational staff who are eligible for Erasmus, Lingua and Arion actions.

II - The possibility of using existing mechanisms – such as the European Credit Transfer scheme - for identifying and **monitoring indicators of quality provision for people with disabilities in institutions** could be investigated. Indicators for quality provision could be linked to **statements of minimum criteria for support that should be expected** for students and staff with disabilities. These minimum standards could be seen as a long term plan, its starting point being the clear identification of what types and levels of support are available for participants with disabilities and the widespread dissemination of this information to all programme actors and potential participants. Whilst this recommendation is applicable to all

mobility actions, it is felt that the nature of the Erasmus student mobility activities makes this suggestion particularly important.

III - A general **review of the administrative procedures that must be followed by participants** in the programme is a further positive step. The application stage procedures, timescales and their implementation in different countries in particular needs to be examined in terms of responding flexibly to meet individual applicants' needs. A person with a disability who wants to participate in the SOCRATES programme needs to be far more proactive than their non-disabled peers. Very often, they are used to this course of action in their daily lives, but there is a real need for practical and attitudinal support from programme systems and implementers to allow these participants to be more proactive.

IV – Providing practical information in the form of **a collection of examples of good practice in supporting the mobility of people with disabilities** would be a further positive step to take. The collection of such information would open a dialogue between National Agencies and institutions involved in the programme, which in itself would raise awareness of the steps needed to promote the involvement of people with disabilities within actions.

## 2. Developing participation in project based actions

I - Most respondents reported project participation - for both their learners and themselves as co-ordinators – was a worthwhile experience. However, there was a widespread view that participation involved an un-proportional amount of paperwork and administrative tasks in relation to the educational focus or outcomes of their involvement. In line with the recommendation for a review of administrative procedures in relation to mobility actions, there could be **a review of administrative procedures from the perspective of requirements placed upon project participants**. One specific factor that this must be linked to is that of accessibility to information (please refer to the next section). Such a review should include a consideration of the formats and ease of access all compulsory paperwork is available in and whether this is supportive or prohibitive to participants with different disabilities.

II - The dissemination of information on examples of special education projects within all the actions appears to actively promote the participation of more learners with special needs and their representatives. There are many National and European level initiatives for sharing information outcomes from projects – some of these are

themed or subject based. However, none have clear special needs elements or are solely focused upon disability issues. Having **clear special education themes within existing mechanisms for disseminating project outcomes** (i.e. compendiums of projects; website action sheets etc) is a positive step to take. **Establishing a targeted source of information about and from projects looking specifically or generally at issues of special education across the actions** could be another.

### 3. Improving access to information

Many services or public bodies work to the “right of access” in terms of information. The European Commission’s principle of transparency is one objective in line with this principle. Its further aim to make information available in as many community languages as possible is another aspect of its intention to make access to information a right for its citizens. Within the mainstreaming principle, this right of access is implicit. However, giving a right of access to information cannot in itself guarantee accessibility. There is a need to remove barriers (physical and social) that are faced by people with disabilities by considering what forms of communication support will allow full access to all of the programme information for all potential and actual participants, no matter what their disability.

The possibilities for accessing the information provided within the programme at a European level was described by more than one visually impaired participant as “discriminatory”. Within a number of National contexts, some of the information provision within the programme – particularly that provided via the DG Education and Culture website - actually contravenes National disability discrimination guidelines and in some cases, even laws. National level programme managers have in some instances completed a lot of additional work in order to ensure they are complying with equal opportunities legislation in their country whilst working within the constraints of the structures and demands of the programme. This good practice should be built upon as much as possible.

I - It is strongly recommended that **a policy of accessibility to information for all should be adopted and implemented** at a European level within the programme. Such a policy should be used as the exemplar for information accessibility in all participating countries and worked towards by all organisations and institutions involved in the programme.

II - The implementation of such a policy within the programme can obviously not occur immediately – steps need to be taken to make such an aim a reality. A **first step could be to conduct a systematic analysis or audit of documentation the programme makes available to participants**. What is there; what formats are available; where are the gaps in terms of the meeting access needs of certain groups of people with particular disabilities?

III - Guidelines for methods and standards of accessibility are available on a National and international level for all print, electronic and visual/audio media are available (for example the W3C, World Wide Web Consortium, that seeks to set standards by which the coding used to create web pages is determined). Such **guidelines could be used as the basis for the identification of minimum standard set of SOCRATES information accessibility guidelines** proposed and implemented by the DG Education and Culture itself to be worked towards by those participating countries and individual organizations that do not as yet meet such minimum requirements.

IV - **Awareness raising of the principles of accessibility and practical information on how to put these principles into practice** would be a vital component of any such initiative. Here the strengths in this area obvious in some countries could be drawn upon and models of good practice in accessibility from National Agencies, information provision units, project outcomes and individual participants could be drawn together in a systematic way in order to promote further good practice.

#### 4. Developing programme management

The points presented below refer specifically to issues that impact upon the management structure of the programme at both a National and a European level.

I - The first issue can be phrased by way of a question: to what extent do the users of the SOCRATES programme have a voice? More specifically, to what extent do the users who have disabilities have a voice within the programme. Users - the participants of the programme – generally perceive SOCRATES as a top down programme; there is limited opportunity for feedback from participants to be passed to programme managers.

Access to information has already been raised as an aspect deserving action. However, access to information can be seen within a dynamic programme such as

SOCRATES as needing to be a two way process. There needs to be **a more effective and open – transparent – mechanism for information from programme users with disabilities to be fed back into the decision making structures of the programme.** A real opportunity for development within the next phase of the programme would be to establish and clearly promote the use of a means for information to flow from users – with or without disabilities – to programme decision makers and back again. Such a flow would provide the necessary information programme managers need to make their decisions regarding all other developments.

II – Within both project and mobility actions, **raising awareness of the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the programme via promotional and support information needs to be considered.** Such awareness raising needs to occur within the Commission structures, National Agencies and eligible institutions. In particular, the need to adequately prepare the human, administrative and logistic environment in order to support participation should be an aspect directly raised with promoters of projects and participating institutions by the National Agencies in co-ordination with the Commission.

III - The 1997 working paper on **Mainstreaming Disability Within Employment and Social Policy (DGV)** suggests that Member States should also be encouraged to undertake systematic research when appropriate data is lacking on the number, specific problems, needs and geographical distribution of people with disabilities. It is the clear outcome of this study that the necessary sources of data required in order to effectively monitor the implementation of mainstreaming within SOCRATES do not presently exist in the countries. Some form of **systematic monitoring of the participation of people with disabilities within the programme is required** in order to make sure positive action to make mainstreaming a reality is being taken.

Precursors to the principle of mainstreaming being naturally implemented by all programme actors can be identified as more time, more awareness raising and more positive action. Most importantly, the clear identification of people with disabilities who could potentially or who are already participating in the programme is necessary in order to direct assistance in terms of resources, specialist information and support, to those who need it most.

IV - In a number of different ways, but from all of the different programme actors, the suggestion that **a mechanism for centrally co-ordinating and directing disability**

**related initiatives and action** was made. Some actors suggested the need for a specific action dedicated to disability issues. Whilst attractive in its potential completeness, this would rightly be seen by many as a retrograde step in terms of implementing the principle of mainstreaming. A separate action would have the potential to encourage segregation rather than integration of people with and without disabilities.

A further suggestion was for some form of disability working party or observatory looking across the programme. The aim of such a working group would be to monitor, integrate and direct initiatives at local, National and European level. Part of the brief of such a working party could be to co-ordinate the forms of specialist information asked for by a number of programme actors: information agents; National Agencies; project and individual mobility participants.

It is felt that one of the main unanticipated outcomes of the evaluation study is that that this exercise has in itself raised awareness of the participation of people with disabilities within the programme. Programme managers should note the number and urgency of requests for further information and support received from universities, information agents and National Agencies as well as individual project and mobility participants. There is an obvious need for a mechanism to monitor and respond to such requests in a co-ordinated way.

Such a mechanism could be established through a disability working group that included representatives from all the SOCRATES programme actors – managers, information agents and users – as well as representatives of disability and special education advisory organisations.

V - Although a tentative conclusion, it is suggested by evidence from this study - and others - that for some of the sectors of education across Europe that the SOCRATES programme covers, the numbers of learners and employees with disabilities is extremely low. An example of this would be within the foreign language-learning field covered by Lingua; a further example would be the numbers of students with disabilities within the higher education sector covered by Erasmus. It can be estimated that between 8 to 10% of the students within higher, adult and professional training sectors should have recognised disabilities. However, using the limited numbers and estimates available in this study, the rates of participation are seen to be far lower - students with disabilities within the post compulsory school education sectors are under-represented for a variety of reasons.

A deduction from this evidence would be that promotion of participation in sectors where the participation of people with disabilities is low maybe a fruitless exercise. It could be argued that if the SOCRATES programme is to truly promote participation within actions, it must also ***work towards promoting the participation of learners and employees with disabilities within all sectors of education generally.***

Two means within the programme itself can be highlighted for working towards an aim of promoting participation in education generally: firstly, priority could be given to activities that worked towards or practically implemented the aim of participation of people with disabilities in education sectors where they are under represented. Secondly, actions could be used in a developmental way: Comenius could offer priority for projects and activities designed to promote the later participation of young people with disabilities within the higher, vocational or adult education sectors.

VI The SOCRATES programme is unique in its coverage of sectors of educational provision across Europe. It is therefore in a unique position to potentially act as a model of good practice in relation to promoting the participation of people with disabilities within education. SOCRATES and the way it is managed and promoted by the DG Education and Culture could potentially be ***a model for what all agencies and organisations associated with the programme should do in terms of supporting participation*** by making the programme accessible to all learners and educational employees.

The DG Education and Culture is unlikely to be able to insist that all National and local level actors in the programme follow an agreed set of procedures regarding participation and access to the programme. They can however, consider ***identifying and instituting a minimum set of standards*** – in line with the recommendations set out here – which they themselves work to as a model of good practice. The SOCRATES programme has the potential to be a model programme for promoting the participation of people with disabilities within education, but for this potential to be achieved it is necessary for the DG Education and Culture to take the initiative and itself act as a European level role model for promoting all forms of participation.

### **Concluding Comments**

The challenge for the DG Education and Culture is to live its vision of mainstreaming by promoting the participation of people with disabilities in education generally, through using programmes such as SOCRATES as an inspirational source of good



practice. The use of the mechanisms of the programme needs to be co-ordinated with use of every avenue and initiative for promoting participation of people with disabilities in all education sectors wherever possible.

In addressing the question of whether people with disabilities participate in the programme, the answer is yes, as long as appropriate support and opportunities are available. Positive and proactive attention and support appear to be the necessary precursors to equality of opportunity within the SOCRATES programme. The information collection, analysis and recommendations presented here all lead to the conclusion that there are real opportunities for the programme to be a model of mainstreaming in action. Many positive steps have been taken within the first phase of SOCRATES to make this happen. This good practice needs to be built on and some problems preventing further, more widespread access need to be addressed. It is hoped that some of the suggestions in this report can help in taking that development further.

***Please note:***

*The formats and style of this report have been selected so that it can be manipulated both in print and electronic formats by anyone who may wish to do so in order to better support their access to this specific evaluation information.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preamble

The Community Action Programme SOCRATES was established by the European Parliament and the Council on 14th March 1995. A full outline of the programme is detailed in the official Journal of the European Communities, L87, 20/4/95 under **Decision number 95/819/EC of 14 March 1995** of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Community action programme in the field of education (SOCRATES). This document sets all working parameters for the programme and outlines the guiding principles for Socrates as a Community Action Programme as:

- The need to encourage transnational projects
- Respecting educational diversity of educational systems in the Member States
- Promotion of projects that perform a multiplier effect in terms of supporting and assisting pupils and students
- The promotion of intercultural dimensions in the education of pupils
- The combating of exclusion
- Ensuring equal opportunities for boys and girls, men and women.

Socrates is the Community action programme designed to promote co-operation in the field of education. It has operated over a 5 year period from 1995 until 1997 and – following an interim evaluation and recommendations for developments – from 1997 until 1999. It incorporates a number of existing programmes – ERASMUS and LINGUA – under one overall programme in the field of education at the European level as well as building upon the work of previous action programmes such as Helios, a programme established by the Council of European Ministers in 1993 with the aim of promoting equal opportunities for and integration of people with disabilities.

In its communication of 21<sup>st</sup> February 1996 on **Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into all Community Policies and Activities (COM (96) 67 final)**, the European Commission presented a new strategy - *mainstreaming* - that aimed to integrate the principles of equal opportunities for all people in all community actions. The **Communication of the Commission of 30 July 1996 (COM 406 final)** presented the principle of mainstreaming in relation to the equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

One of the aims of the SOCRATES programme is to enable pupils, students and adults with physical, sensory and intellectual impairments to participate fully in the various activities within the programme. Specifically, in the Decision it is stated that:

It is necessary to ensure that children and adolescents with disabilities are able to participate as fully as possible in the Socrates programme. (page 11 of the decision)

The resolution of the Council of 20<sup>th</sup> December 1996 confirmed this orientation, reasserting the Commission's adoption of the principle designed to avoid and to abolish all kinds of negative discrimination based on disability, handicap or special need (**Guide for Applicants, 1998**).

Incorporating this principle, the SOCRATES programme is particularly geared towards favouring the participation of people with disabilities in all the actions. The approach of mainstreaming requires that the principle of inclusion should be considered in all the actions of the SOCRATES programme as a significant additional priority in the consideration of applications for mobility and in the selection of projects.

In Spring 1999, the Commission invited for tender for the external evaluation of the SOCRATES programme. It was proposed that there would be an overall evaluation (DGXXII/05/99) - conducted by a team co-ordinated by Gesamthochschule Kassel - as well as three specific evaluations (DGXXII/06/99). Two of the specific evaluations would examine Comenius 1/Lingua E (conducted by Deloitte and Touche Corporate Services), Erasmus/engineering and technology (conducted by Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação).

Specific Lot 6.1 would focus upon the levels of participation of people with disabilities within the programme. Specifically, the Commission's interest in the participation of people with disabilities in SOCRATES resulted in the following questions underpinning the contract:

- Do people with disabilities and special needs participate in the Socrates programme?
- Which factors support or hinder the participation of people with disabilities and special needs?
- Based on the evaluation what recommendations and suggestions can be formulated?

The specific evaluation Lot 6.1, was established to address the issues outlined above in depth. The evaluation aimed to further the development and implementation of the Community disability policy and meet the principles underlying the **Communication of the Commission of 30 July 1996 (COM 406 final)** on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

During the Spring of 1999, the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education submitted a successful tender for the contract Lot 6.1. This report is a presentation of the evaluation study as a whole.

## 1.2 Aims of the evaluation study

The evaluation study extended the original themes of the contract by aiming to:

- Provide a mix of qualitative and quantitative information regarding the application of the principle of mainstreaming to participation of people with disabilities in **all** of the SOCRATES programme objectives within **all** programme sectors, activities and themes.
- Identify and make an analysis of the factors supporting or hindering the implementation of the mainstreaming principle in relation to the promotion of **access** and **participation** of people with disabilities within all of the programme sectors and considering the programme's conception, content and management and the promotion and subsequent application of the mainstreaming principle
- Examine the participation of people with disabilities and the numbers of special needs related projects (either as a general or specific theme) taking place within the programme
- Analyse the distinction between real and potential participation in the programme
- Draw conclusions upon the extent to which the mainstreaming concept has been implemented.

The evaluation study needed to take account of the certain structural and stakeholder elements of the situation of the SOCRATES programme in order to be effective in assessing the participation of people with disabilities within the programme. The elements that the evaluation was required to take account of can be identified as:

- the structure of the Commission, National Agencies, Regional organisations - their management styles and the different ways key initiatives can be filtered and re-interpreted through different stages of implementation

- the cultural, social and organisational diversity within the participating countries (EU member states, European Economic Area (EEA) and Central and Eastern European Associated (PEKO) countries) who have very different understandings of disability and may not agree upon a common interpretation of the principle of mainstreaming
- the diversity of SOCRATES programme sectors, actions, activities and themes, each with own objectives within which mainstreaming may or may not be an obvious part.

These issues have been the guiding factors for the implementation of the evaluation study.

The study therefore needed to consider all these factors and the ways they specifically relate to:

- Programme management bodies (Commission, specifically Directorate General Education and Culture; National SOCRATES Agencies)
- Information agents (the Information Network on Education in Europe, EURYDICE; Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres, NARIC, units)
- Programme participants across all potentially participating countries
- Potential programme participants

A series of objectives and associated tasks emerged from the agreed aims for the evaluation study . In summary, these developed into:

- Setting mainstreaming within Socrates in context (*through a literature review*)  
Overview of potential participation in the whole programme (*via key baseline data analysis*)
- Overview of participation within all actions (*action surveys analysis*)  
Identification of factors influencing participation (*survey analysis and analysis of case studies*)
- Identification of factors influencing access to information from the programme's main information activities (*Eurydice and Naric surveys*)
- Identification of factors influencing participation within programme management and implementation (*National Agency and Commission survey and interview analysis*)
- Overview of analyses (*data synthesis*) leading to preliminary conclusions and recommendations

### 1.3 Structure of the evaluation study report

The brief sections above have been included to give an overall introduction to the full evaluation study report. The main issues considered here are developed in chapter 2 of the report, which provides **relevant background information** on the SOCRATES programme; the evaluation of SOCRATES; the specific evaluation and the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education as contractors for the evaluation study. Contextual information is also presented in chapter 3 that focuses upon a **review of previous related work**. The intention here is to draw on relevant information from previous evaluations as well as to clarify key concepts and set the scene regarding the implementation of mainstreaming and similar policies within the countries considered in the evaluation study.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the process of the evaluation. Chapter 4 covers the **evaluation study design** in terms of the underlying concepts and perspectives adopted for the evaluation study: working definitions; factors to be considered in participation; decisions made. Chapter 5 presents the **methodology** employed: data collection methods; the sample; a chronology of actions taken as well as reflections on methods used.

**Results** are presented in chapter 6. Baseline data from the participating countries as well as elements from other evaluator's work are presented in order to set the main findings in context. The findings are organised under sections relating to the Erasmus institutional survey; project co-ordinators; individual programme participants; information providers and programme managers.

**Conclusions and recommendations** are given in chapter 7. This is followed by **references** and **appendices** which presents data collection tools and the data (questionnaires and case study) per action.

### 1.4 Presentation issues

One of the key issues arising from this evaluation study has been that participation begins - or does not begin - long before a person engages in some form of actual SOCRATES related study activity. A premise of this evaluation study is that participation begins with knowledge about the programme. This knowledge is acquired through access to relevant information. The process of participation is then

characterised by active decision-making to get further information and maybe apply to participate.

The starting point is access to information. For people with particular types of disabilities this means access to information in different, more flexible formats of information that can be changed in appearance and style so as to make the information accessible for the individual person reading it. The correct size and style of fonts can help people with some visual impairments access printed material more easily. The possibility to change the size and style of fonts, the colour of the type and background are all features of documents presented in electronic formats that can help people with different types of visual impairments access information more easily. Using particular word processing packages also aids compatibility with technology aids that manipulate written material for people with visual difficulties. These possibilities have been incorporated in this report, both in printed and electronic formats.

For eventual web page versions of this information, it is hoped that a set of web design guiding principles will be followed which incorporates all of the visual accessibility aspects as well as additional elements such as the use of “approximate” target buttons for links within hyper text that can aid people with physical disabilities.

The presentation of this report may appear to some readers a little simple or unimaginative. This is because the authors have made an attempt to make the information as easily accessible to as wide range of people as possible. The type size, font and layout of tables has been chosen so it can be manipulated both in print and electronic formats by anyone who may wish to do so.

The intention is that by trying to support access to this specific evaluation information, the evaluation study may itself demonstrate how participation can be supported within future developments of the community action programme SOCRATES.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The aim of this chapter is to put the specific evaluation study into a clear context. In order to do that it is necessary to give a little information on the historical background to SOCRATES and the principle of mainstreaming as well as explain the role of the overall and specific evaluations. Some notes regarding the work of the European Agency and its expertise and interest in the field of disability and special needs education presents a complete picture.

### 2.1 SOCRATES – the community action programme for education

#### 2.1(i) Historical information

SOCRATES, the European Community action programme for cooperation in the field of education, was adopted on 14 March 1995. Spanning the period until the end of 1999, it was applicable to the 15 Member States of the European Union as well as to Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in the framework of the European Economic Area agreement.

The overall aim of SOCRATES is to:

Help improve the quality and relevance of education for children, young people and adults, by enhancing European Co-operation and increasing access to a range of learning opportunities available across the Union (page 11, 1998, Guide for Applicants).

It is worth noting here the emphasis placed upon the development of co-operation, sharing of knowledge and skills and promotion of contact between teachers, students, pupils and adult learners.

SOCRATES is based on Articles 126 and 127 of the **Treaty on European Union**. Article 126 states that the Community “shall contribute to the development of quality education” by means of a range of actions carried out in close cooperation with the Member States. The specific objectives of SOCRATES laid down by the Decision creating the programme, are to:

- Develop the European dimension in education at all levels
- Promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union



- Promote wide-ranging and intensive cooperation between institutions in the Member States at all levels of education
- Encourage the mobility of teachers
- Encourage mobility for students
- Encourage contacts among pupils in the European Union
- Encourage the academic recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications
- Encourage open and distance education in the context of the programme
- Foster exchanges of information and experience.

Central to all of the programme objectives is the principle of mainstreaming: maximising participation of all groups of people to ensure equal opportunities for men, women and children and adults with disabilities:

The SOCRATES programme attaches particular importance to promoting the participation of disabled persons...The new "mainstreaming" approach requires the principle of integration to become a significant additional priority when selecting projects for all Actions of the SOCRATES programme (page 27, 1998, Guide for Applicants).

In part, the emphasis upon mainstreaming arose within SOCRATES as a result of outcomes and practice evident within other Community programmes. One such programme - Helios – was solely focussed upon the specific situation of people with disabilities in social, employment and educational situations.

Helios I and Helios II were established by council decision to promote integration and equal opportunities for people (adults and children) with disabilities. The programme included a number of actions designed to promote exchange and information activities between organisations in the field of disability with the aim of improving co-operation and co-ordination between professionals involved in the field in the different countries of the European Union.

The programme was managed by the DGV (Social Affairs) and marked an important step in terms of European action in the area of disability. The program promoted the active involvement of people with disabilities and their representative organisations, mainly in decision-making regarding the structures of the programme. It promoted a model of change in social learning by trying to provide equal opportunities to all people.

Six thematic areas were established within Helios with organisations from four sectors of society (the economic, educational, social support and functional support fields) participating in each:

- Integrated education group (with 13 thematic sub groups established)
- Employment group
- Independent living group: mobility and transport
- Independent living group: European forum on sports for people with disabilities
- Independent living group: tourism for all
- Forum of national technical education centres for Handynet

The organisations from the different sectors had different objectives for the programme outcomes; for representatives of the economic, educational and social sectors it was obvious that integration (inclusion) was the first aim to reach, while for the functional sector, the aim was focused upon rehabilitation issues.

The educational aim of involvement in Helios activities was the promotion of integration (inclusion in its widest sense) and consequently, the educational framework of the Helios II action programme (February 1993 – December 1996) ended with the adoption of the **Charte de Luxembourg** (1996). This charter is a summary of the main results raised from study visits, working sessions and seminars of the 13 thematic groups working in the field of education.

The statements in the charter are presented under three headings:

- Principles - those statements, which have to be taken in account when discussing inclusion.
- Strategies - the practical actions which have to be considered when the general principles of inclusion are to be implemented
- Proposals - prospective changes for the future.

One of the first priorities stressed in the charter's proposals was the need to engage in changing people's attitude towards disability:

Awareness raising about the special needs of individuals must still be considered a priority.

Within this context and at a time when the SOCRATES programme was being prepared, the participants of the Helios programme stressed the need for the specific situation of children and adults with disabilities to be considered an integral part of the educational programmes of the European Community.

The implementation of the *mainstreaming principle* within SOCRATES (and all other Community programmes) must be seen within the developmental context of past work at a European level. It must also be viewed within the context of the other key concepts underpinning all of the Commission's action programmes: quality; innovation; transparency; co-operation; the European dimension.

### 2.1(ii) The Structure of the Programme

It should be noted that although some explanatory necessary information about the SOCRATES programme is given in this sections, it is by no means a full and complete account and readers are directed to the overall evaluation report produced by Gesamthochschule Kassel (2000) for further details.

The Decision establishing the SOCRATES programme gave responsibility for its implementation to the European Commission supported by the SOCRATES Committee (consisting of two members designated by each Member State and chaired by the Commission). The main function of the Committee is to give its views on proposals, submitted by the Commission, concerning key issues affecting the programme (including the overall and specific evaluations).

The Decision also made provision for the establishment of National Agencies for SOCRATES, designated by the Member States. Each National SOCRATES Agency has specific responsibilities in terms of:

- Disseminating information about the programme
- Providing assistance in finding suitable project partners
- Giving guidance and advice about submission of applications.

The National Agencies are also involved in selection of projects; distribution of grants; monitoring of finances and providing feedback on the functioning of the SOCRATES programme.

The SOCRATES programme has seven different *sectors* with various actions, activities and themes within the sectors. The sectors cover different aspects of the education system across countries:

- Higher Education (Erasmus)
- School Education (Comenius)
- Promotion of Language Learning (Lingua)
- Promotion of Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

- Adult Education
- Exchange of Information & Experience on Education Systems and Policy (Education managers and policy makers)
- Complementary Measures (Organisations and information providers)

Sectors 3 to 7 are termed Horizontal Measures as they do not specifically relate to any particular phase of the education system (i.e. higher or school) but rather to individual people or organisations engaged in a specific field of educational activity (i.e. language teaching or adult education).

Within SOCRATES there are two basic types of Actions: the "Centralised Actions" which are run by the Commission and the "Decentralised Actions" which are run by the National Agencies. This two-element format of programme implementation and management characterises the nature of subsidiary within the programme.

**Table 1** below provides an overview of programme sectors. Centralized actions are marked with an \*. In order to give a rough indication of the size of each action, the allocation of the 1999 budget is shown in percentage form.

**Table 1** Overview of Programme sectors

Action	Percentage of overall budget (1999)
<b>Erasmus – Higher Education Sector</b>	<b>55</b>
Action 1: European dimension (*)	15.95
Action 2: Student Mobility	39.05
<b>Comenius</b>	<b>16.89</b>
Action 1: School partnerships (*)	12.19
Action 2: Intercultural education	2.35
Action 3: In-service training	2.35
3.1 Projects(*)	
3.2 Grants for participants	
<b>Lingua</b>	<b>14.35</b>
A: Co-operation programmes (*)	1.5
B: In-service training	3.45
C: Assistantships	1.8
D: Instruments (*)	1.8
E: Joint educational projects	5.8
<b>Exchange of information</b>	<b>10.18</b>
Questions of common interest (*)	.78
Arion	1.44

EURYDICE (*)	.65
NARIC (*)	.1
<b>Open and Distance Learning (ODL) (*)</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>Adult Education (*)</b>	<b>3.09</b>
<b>Complementary measures (*)</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>Information (*)</b>	<b>1.95</b>
<b>Evaluation (*)</b>	<b>.35</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen from the table, the SOCRATES programme targets the majority of support to the higher education sector across Europe (over 50% of the overall budget allocation) with the compulsory school sector receiving approximately 17% of the allocation and horizontal measures approximately 30%.

Within the sectors, the sorts of activities that are supported are likely to cover:

- Creation and promotion of transnational projects, networks, partnerships and associations
- Development of curricular, modules, teaching materials and other educational products
- Exchanges and mobility
- Transnational training courses for educational staff
- Visits to facilitate project preparation or sharing of experience
- Studies, analyses, guides and data collection activities
- Dissemination of results.

All work within the SOCRATES programme needs to demonstrate how the implementation of the principle of mainstreaming is supported and being considered:

The SOCRATES programme attaches particular importance to promoting the participation of disabled persons...The new "mainstreaming" approach requires the principle of integration to become a significant additional priority when selecting projects for all Actions of the SOCRATES programme (page 27, 1998, Guide for Applicants).

The SOCRATES programme allows for a dual approach to be taken in projects. General and specific projects which either incorporate or are particularly focused upon the concept of mainstreaming are both considered for support.

### 2.1(iii) The Future of the Programme

Since 1995, it has been estimated that more than a million people in the European Union have taken advantage of the European Community programmes in education – SOCRATES being one of these. The European Council and the Parliament have agreed to renew the SOCRATES programme for seven years from the year 2000. For the second phase of SOCRATES they have also agreed to increase the funds by some 30 % overall.

In the discussions leading up to these decisions, the Commission made a number of proposals, including a number of suggested improvements. The national authorities and experts within the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions examined these. As a result, the following changes have been agreed: concentration of objectives; simplification of design and procedures; further decentralisation of management; more flexibility in and links between the programmes; more emphasis on the use of new technology, on lifelong learning and on the dissemination of good practice; more help for disadvantaged people.

Many of these decisions have been based upon on-going feedback and monitoring conducted within the programme. They have also been based upon the outcomes of initiatives and co-operation between SOCRATES programme actors and other institutions within and outside of the Commission. Examples of co-operative work that has influenced decision-making regarding SOCRATES phase II includes close co-ordination with DG Employment and Social Affairs; Commission Officer participation in the participation in the Inter Services Group.

Within SOCRATES phase I, a number of co-operative initiatives have had disability issue and provision for people with special educational needs as their focus. These include: specific support provided within the framework of the budget line B3 1000 concerning general co-operation in Education; revisions to the SOCRATES Guide for Applicants with more information on the mainstreaming approach and what this means in practice as well as principle; the drafting of a chapter on special education in **Key Indicators for Education** published by Eurydice; co-operation with OECD in an attempt to identify indicators for special educational needs.

However, the formal external evaluation of the SOCRATES programme was planned and established in order to provide specific information that would develop the areas

of decision-making outlined into practical implementation of the next phase of the programme.

## **2.2 The evaluation of SOCRATES 1995 – 1999**

In spring 1999, the Commission invited for tender for the external evaluation of the SOCRATES programme. It offered a contract for a global evaluation (DGXXII/05/99) as well as a number of specific evaluations (DGXXII/06/99).

In the summer 1999, the Commission had concluded contracts for external evaluations with in the following four areas:

- Overall evaluation to be conducted by the Gesamthochschule (Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work) Kassel University and the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (EIESP)
- Evaluation of Erasmus/engineering and technology conducted by the Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação;
- Evaluation of Comenius 1/Lingua E conducted by Deloitte and Touche Corporate Services
- Evaluation of the participation of people with disabilities within the programme conducted by the European Agency for development in special needs education.

The overall evaluation was to last for twelve months, and the specific evaluations for ten months. In addition, the Commission was to submit to the other European institutions, by 30 September 2000, a final evaluation report on the implementation of the SOCRATES programme.

The purpose of the overall evaluation was to:

- Assess the extent to which the programme objectives have been achieved,
- Provide quantitative and qualitative data regarding results and the range and types of impact on the target population and the education systems,
- Assess the effectiveness and the efficiency of the organisational and operational mechanisms.

The global evaluation would be complemented by and complementary to the 3 specific evaluations which would each examine specific aspects of interest to the Commission in preparing for the next phase of the SOCRATES programme.

### **2.3 The specific evaluation of the participation of people with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme**

Mainstreaming is such a key underlying principle of the SOCRATES programme, that it is essential that its implementation should be monitored and evaluated systematically.

The participation of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities is a vital element of the mainstreaming principle within the SOCRATES programme. It is stated in the Council Decision that:

It is necessary to ensure that children and adolescents with disabilities are able to participate as fully as possible in the SOCRATES programme (page 11).

In order for informed decisions regarding the future development of the SOCRATES programme to be made, it was necessary to evaluate the extent to which maximum participation of children, adolescents and adults with disabilities had been achieved in line with the Council Decision and the principle of mainstreaming. The evaluation would contribute to the further development and implementation of the Community disability policy and meet the principles underlying the **Communication of the Commission of 30 July 1996 (COM 406 final)** on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

The evaluation of the implementation of the mainstreaming principle was phrased by the Commission in the concrete terms of *levels of participation within the programme*. The central focus of the evaluation study would be to provide both qualitative and quantitative information regarding the application of the principle of mainstreaming to all of the SOCRATES programme objectives within all programme sectors, activities and themes.

The evaluation study was required in order to consider and draw conclusions upon the extent to which these programme concepts and objectives have been implemented with the principle of mainstreaming being a clear and constant theme. The evaluation needed to identify and make an analysis of the factors supporting or hindering the implementation of the mainstreaming principle in relation to people with disabilities within all of the programme sectors. Such an analysis would need to consider the programme's content and management as well as the clarity of the promotion and the subsequent application of the mainstreaming principle in relation to participation of people with disabilities.



Mainstreaming aims to promote *access* and *participation* of all persons in the Socrates programme. The mainstreaming principle is applicable to all actions within the Socrates programme. However, the official Journal of the European Communities, L87, 20/4/95 under Decision Number 819/95/EC specifically refers a number of specific actions and themes as a means of ensuring the participation of people with disabilities.

The evaluation study therefore needed to consider:

1. The overall level of comprehension of the mainstreaming principle and the extent to which the Council's intention to promote and give priority to the participation of people with disabilities in the Socrates programme has been understood and followed as a guiding principle by ALL programme promoters, applicants and participants.
2. The general and specific factors that support and hinder both access to and subsequent participation in the programme. Such an analysis of factors would need to consider promotion, structural, content and management aspects of the programme at Commission, Country and project participant levels.
3. An analysis of access and participation in all programme actions as well as a specific analysis of access and participation in those actions and themes specifically mentioning and promoting the participation of people with disabilities.
4. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data to identify suggestions and recommendations for developing and improving access and participation of people with disabilities at Commission, Country and project participant levels.

The original call for tender identified that essentially different factors in the application of the mainstreaming principle can be identified:

- The application of the mainstreaming principle within projects (To what extent? What has been the quality of application?)
- The application of principle in the programme mechanisms itself (What evidence is there of the mainstreaming principle in information sources and programme procedures?)

As the core aim of the SOCRATES programme is to:

help improve the quality and relevance of education for children, young people and adults, by enhancing European Co-operation and increasing access to a range of learning opportunities available across the Union (page 11, 1998, Guide for Applicants).

Both aspects of the application of mainstreaming to people with disabilities needed to be considered within the evaluation.

In discussions developing the themes and foci of the study between the Commission as contractors and the evaluating team (the European Agency) a number of considerations for the study became apparent:

1. The importance of co-ordination with the general evaluation and the other specific evaluations - necessary from the point of view both of the methodology and of the criteria or terms of reference to be used.
2. The question of the definition of disability and special needs. Who were the target groups for this evaluation?
3. The term participation required specification in terms of presence in the programme. The aspect of "potential" participation and the reasons for non-participation, as well as the reasons for different degrees of participation depending on the Member States, needed to be taken into consideration.
4. Taking account of the impact of Helios II and the affiliation between the two programmes.

These issues highlight the basis for a number of crucial decisions that needed to be made as a basis for the whole design of the study. They will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4 of this report.

## **2.4 The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education**

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education is an independent, self-governing institution supported by the Ministries of Education in the 18 participating countries (15 EU member countries, Iceland, Switzerland and Norway) and the European Commission. The Agency is a unique organisation. Its membership and structure is a model of international co-operation that is not found anywhere else in the field of special education research or information dissemination.

The Agency has a unique network of country based experts who are able to collect and then disseminate information in efficient and targeted ways best suited to individual country situations. The Agency has a Representative Board whose members are nominated by the Ministries of Education in the participating countries. National Working Partners are also nominated by their Ministries of Education. They are based in their own countries and are in close contact with the Agency Secretariat. They act as National Co-ordinators, and one of their main tasks is to collect relevant information in their own countries and help make this knowledge available to other countries that may need it.

The main objectives of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education are to work for the improvement of quality in special needs education and the creation of a long-term extended European collaboration in this field. As a European facilitator of the dissemination of information, the organisational aim of the Agency is to collect and process the information and knowledge that is available in individual countries and to make this knowledge available to other countries that may need it. This includes information about special needs education practice in the 18 participating countries as well as information about new and innovative measures, research and development at the national and European levels.

With this in mind, the Agency is careful to disseminate information in a number of different ways and in different formats so as to meet as far as possible to needs of various end users, ranging from teachers and other professionals to parents and policy makers. The model of National networks of experts in the field co-operating on research projects, means the collection of information on practice in special education provision, access to research situations and expertise and channels for dissemination of information in the 18 countries is unrivalled. For example, the Agency's web-site currently receives 30,000 requests for pages per month. The existing Agency networks are essential in the identification of research issues that will have impact upon practitioners in the field, the collection of information and primary research data in real special education settings and the subsequent dissemination of these reassert findings to practitioners and researchers across Europe.

The structure as well as expertise within the Agency was essential in the completion of the study evaluating the participation of people with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme.

### 3. PREVIOUS RELATED WORK

A decision that was made very early on in the planning process of the study, was to look in some detail at previous work that could provide a rationale for the research approach and decisions taken and perhaps help to explain and develop a better understanding of the data emerging. Two areas for literature review and analysis were identified as being essential:

- Key documents relating to the European Commission and the country contexts in relation to disability and participation
- Previous evaluations of SOCRATES and other relevant Community programmes (notably Helios II).

Main points – issues to be accounted for, methods and recommendations - from previous work that have been important in the development of this study are highlighted in italics.

#### 3.1 Disability – differing approaches that must be accounted for

The longstanding and current situation regarding information on people with disabilities in the European Union is summed up in a working paper for DG V services entitled **Mainstreaming disability within EU employment and social policy** (1997):

In spite of the large number of disabled people, there are still no reliable European-level statistics in this field. Comparison of the situation at EU level is further complicated by the fact that each Member State has its own system for defining the disabled population (page 4).

They go further when they point out that much of the work presenting data on disability from countries must be handled with care as it may not always be comparable:

Interpretation of such data must take account of legislative definitions and eligibility criteria [of disability] (page 6).

This study has not been able resolve either of these issues satisfactorily and they must be fully acknowledged in any consideration of the findings.

The fact that *Disability is a multi-faceted concept that represents the relationship between an individual and his or her environment* is highlighted in this working document (and has already been discussed here as one of the main conceptual

considerations of this study). A consequence of this multi faceted concept is identified in the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs 1999 report on **Good practice in employment of people with disabilities:**

Policies for integration of people with disabilities across Europe reflect the diversity of cultures and legislative frameworks in the Member States (page 10).

This document provides a full review of employment legislation for people with disabilities, which clearly show the range of interpretations of the concept of disability and the subsequent strategies for supporting and promoting societal integration.

Both of the documents referred to here make the point that the population of people with disabilities is heterogeneous. A person's limitation(s) could result from a wide variety of impairments that have differential impacts on their participation in society. This fact is recognized in this study and highlighted wherever appropriate in order to orientate discussions or findings.

The situation with regards to school policy and practice for children and students with disabilities can be seen as reflective of more general policies towards people with disabilities in countries. The report **Integration in Europe: Provision for pupils with special educational needs: Trends in 14 European countries**\_aimed to re-assess the situation during 1997 with regards to inclusion and to describe developments since the publication of the EC study: **Report of the Commission on the progress with regard to the implementation of the policy of school integration in the Member States (1988-1991)**\_(November 1992). It found that:

- Definitions and categories of special educational needs vary across countries. Some countries define only one or two types of special educational needs. Others categorise pupils with special educational needs into more than 10 types. Most countries distinguish 6 - 10 types of special educational needs.
- It is believed that the medical approach to the concept of 'handicap' should be replaced by a more educational approach i.e. the consequences of the disability for education become central. However, at the same time it is clear that this is a very complex issue and at the moment countries struggle with the practical implementation of this paradigm. Nevertheless, the description of disabilities in terms of educational consequences is being debated in almost all the European countries.
- In most countries a wide range of facilities is available. Every country has already implemented, or is implementing, policies in order to make integrative education

possible. Some countries have more experience of inclusion than others do and some countries have just started to improve the conditions for inclusion in mainstream education

- The number of pupils that are registered as having special educational needs varies enormously. Some countries register less than 1% of all pupils, others register more than 10%. These differences in the percentage of registered pupils between countries may reflect differences in assessment procedures, funding arrangements and provision. These figures do not reflect differences in the incidence of special educational needs across countries, but rather the differences in defining and identifying special needs or disabilities.

The main findings of this report pinpoint crucial issues that have to be accounted for in the current study given the nature of SOCRATES as an educational support programme.

It is suggested in the DG V services working paper that Member States should also be encouraged to undertake systematic research when appropriate data is lacking on the number, specific problems, needs and geographical distribution of people with disabilities. One of the aims of this study was in effect to do this on behalf of DG Education and Culture, involving the Member States by means of the mobilizing the European Agency network of special education experts.

### **3.2 The Commission's position on disability.**

The European Commission can clearly be seen to fully endorse the position on equal opportunities for people with disabilities as being a fundamental right. This position is presented in the United Nations Standard Rules on equal opportunities for people with disabilities and the UNESCO Salamanca statement promoting access to education for all. Both of these documents are referred to and used as a rationale in a number of Commission reports, papers and publications.

In 1995, the European Union made a crucial policy shift to a rights-based approach in the field of disability. This new strategy was advocated by the Commission in its July 1996 Communication on the integration of people with disability and then politically endorsed in a Resolution of the Council of Ministers in December 1996. The basis of the policy - integration rather than accommodation - was now seen as the key to the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream society. The new approach was based on the shared commitment of all Member States to identify and remove

barriers to equal opportunities and to promote the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Disability is clearly a major public policy issue in Europe. The growing acceptance of a need to protect the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities and to secure both their full inclusion within society and a right to equality of opportunity is manifest in recent legislative and constitutional developments within a number of Member States. These developments are based upon a civil rights approach to disability: an approach to this area which the European Union is now committed (1997 page 4).

The **Compendium on Member States' Policies on Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities** prepared by Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (1998) states that:

The Resolution now serves as a reference framework to stimulate the clarification of common goals and the identification of best practice in addition to the structured exchange of information and experience between Member States (page 5).

A number of guidelines were set out in the Resolution and adopted by government representatives of the Member States during the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 20 December 1996:

- Empowering people with disabilities for participation in society, including the severely disabled, while paying due attention to the needs and interests of their families and carers
- Mainstreaming the disability perspective into all relevant sectors of policy formulation
- Enabling people with disabilities to participate fully in society by removing barriers
- Nurturing public opinion to be receptive to the abilities of people with disabilities and towards strategies based on equal opportunities.

The Resolution stresses the point that disability policy goes beyond the provision of social and medical services in order to reduce functional limitations and increase independence. It argues that a comprehensive equality of opportunity policy must also embrace issues of accessibility, education, employment and social security.

The Compendium (1998) argues that:

It is clear that each Member State has its own way to establish and shape the various programmes and services targeted at people with disabilities. A sound understanding of the present institutional diversity of disability policies at both a national and regional (local) level is therefore required (page 5).

This point reflects a further guiding principle of the Commission: that of respecting the diversity of cultural difference that exists within and between member States.

The Compendium clearly sums up the implications of such an approach:

The context of each national policy must therefore be taken into account ... The challenge, in this respect, is to develop a common way of capturing these different contexts and, at the same time, stressing that –despite significant differences in the organization of programmes and policies - all disability systems are faced with a set of key policy issues in implementing equal opportunities (page 5).

It must be pointed out here that approach has been instrumental in the formulation and execution of the study design and methodology, as well as in the analysis of results and findings.

The position of the DG Education and Culture (formally DGXXII) with respect to mainstreaming and disability issues is clearly described in the document **SOC/COM/00/033 (2000)** and adopted by the SOCRATES Committee in February 2000 relating to the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities within Socrates. It highlights the emphasis placed upon all Community programmes and policies to contribute to achieving the objective and argues that education, as well as employment, has a fundamental role to play.

The SOCRATES II programme, the Community's main instrument in the this field, needs to be able to respond fully to this challenge (page 1).

A key issue identified in this report in relation to SOCRATES is the need to integrate the principle of equal opportunities more strongly, strengthening the social dimension of the programme. It argues that the focus must be to:

Integrate these principles into concrete application... both in the management of the programme and in the projects being supported (page 2).

This intention of the DG Education and Culture was an essential guide to the design and implementation of this study: what information and recommendations were needed from this project in order to assist in the concrete application of the principle of equal opportunities for people with disabilities with the SOCRATES programme?

### **3.3 Previous evaluations**

This section is intended to provide a brief overview of the main points from previous evaluations of SOCRATES and related programmes.



The initial review was completed in order to:

- Avoid replication of problems and mistakes evident in previous evaluations
- Examine previous methodologies and identify good practice that could be to incorporated into the study
- Highlight relevant recommendations that may need to be investigated in this study
- Draw upon past discussions relating to definitions of key terms that inform the thinking for this study

This review begins with a summary of the main elements covered in each of the evaluations considered here.

### 3.3 (i) Documents Covered

All information here is taken from EU sources: reports, papers and documents concerning official (Commission initiated and sponsored) evaluations of Community programmes. It has not been possible to include information from country based evaluations, or project level evaluations.

It should be noted that the Interim Report on Equal Opportunities is not strictly an evaluation, but is in fact an analysis of mid term projects and their outcomes. It has been included here as the issues raised in this review are relevant to the current study.

**Table 2** presents a summary of the main findings of these documents. **Table 3** an overview of methodologies used.

3.3 (ii) Summary of main elements

**Table 2 Summary**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Main Evaluators</b>	<b>Areas Covered</b>	<b>Time –frame</b>
1. The Evaluation of Helios II	The Tavistock Institute: Evaluation, development and Review unit	Entire Helios II programme. 6 key questions addressed covering degree of involvement of disabled people, impact, transfer of practice, value added, synergy with other initiatives, match of aims and structures.	The full Helios II period. 1993 - 1996
2. University responsibility for European co-operation and mobility	CRE (Association of European Universities)	Analysis of 1,600 University policy statements in line with 3 factors: institutional objectives; prioritisation of European activities; perception of SOCRATES as an opportunity to develop strategy and practice.	Policy statements from the year 1996. Collection of data during 1997.
3. European Students opinion about European Programmes in the field of education	AEGEE (Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe)	Main focus - HE students' perceptions of the programme. Aim to identify main difficulties and strengths from a participants' point of view. All HE actions were considered, but opportunities for mobility was the main aspect discussed by students.	Entire SOCRATES programme period up to 1998.
4. The Erasmus Experience: Programme Evaluation	Kassel University.	Examines: administrative and academic arrangements in institutions; perceptions of students; impact of programme participation; recognition of involvement in the programme; costs and funding; value added for institutions and administrative issues.	1987/88 - 1993/94
5. Student Mobility within the European Union	European Institute of Education and Social Policy and Comité de Liaison des Conférences des Recteurs	A statistical analysis of the different types of student mobility within Higher Education in the EU - with particular attention to student mobility as a result of Erasmus and Lingua programmes.	1993 - 1994 (Statistics for some countries were only available for year '92 - '93)
6. Interim External Evaluation of SOCRATES	Consortium headed by Quaternaire	A global evaluation covering structure and implementation; financing; impact and results; procedures within all actions and activities.	January 1995 - October 1997
7. Participation of pupils and students with SENs in	EADSNE	An initial investigation of the practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle within SOCRATES specifically looking	1995 and 1996

SOCRATES		at the role of National Agencies; SEN general and specific projects; the guide for applicants and examples of projects.	
8. Interim report on the implementation of the medium term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women	D.G. for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs	Examination of the findings of the programme in relation to the 6 policy aims laid down by Council decision: achieving gender mainstreaming; mobilising all actors to achieve equality; promoting equality in changing economies; reconciling work and family life; promoting gender balance; creating optimum conditions for equality. The strategies of innovation, partnership and transfer of good practice were investigated.	1996 until July 1998

### 3.3 (iii) Methodologies used

**Table 3** Methods Used

Study	Methodology
1. The Evaluation of Helios II	Direct interviews; Europe wide postal questionnaire; dedicated case study of specific programme aspect (HANDYNET); data base analysis of participants; self evaluation by identified actors (e.g. team of experts); case studies examining programme implementation and impact
2. University responsibility for European co-operation and mobility	Analysis of 1,600 policy statements submitted as part of initial applications for SOCRATES funding; site visits to 20 institutions to validate statement analysis; 3 workshops of key institutional players.
3. European Students opinion about European Programmes in the field of education	Simultaneous events held in 100 institutions across Europe on 12/11/98. General qualitative data was collected from participants. 9 case studies of specific institutions and their participants' opinions.
4. The Erasmus Experience: Programme Evaluation	An on-going research project that collected data from 18 different studies over the period '87 - '93. 6 annual statistical analyses of student mobility; 6 student surveys and reports (3 ICP and 3 ECTS); a 3 and 5 year student tracer survey; 3 teaching staff surveys; an institutional management survey; conversations with key actors in Commission.
5. Student Mobility within the European Union	Collection and then analysis of statistics available from: national Statistical offices; Erasmus and Lingua programmes managers; admissions departments of Universities.
6. Interim External Evaluation of SOCRATES	Analysis of 1497 postal surveys; 358 interviews with participants; National Agencies, Commission and TAO representatives; analysis of project reports and studies.
7. Participation of pupils and	Seminar of Agency working partners leading to a series of questions being developed, answered in the countries, analysed centrally

students with SENs in SOCRATES	and synthesised into a global report.
8. Interim evaluation of equal opportunities	Analysis of projects, reports and products in line with the 6 Council objectives and 3 strategies of the programme. A complete financial breakdown is given along with an overview of the management of the programme.

### 3.3 (iv) Methodological problems identified

A number of points became apparent that would need to be accounted (or at least acknowledged) for in this study:

Investigating issues at a numerical level leads to assumptions being made about who identifies themselves and or other people as having disabilities or special needs (1).

There are issues relating to working from incomplete sets of data: student details, teachers' details (4a). This also relates to the statistical data that is available from relevant bodies (5).

Identifying and then accessing concrete examples of disability or special education related projects has great difficulties (7).

Problems of comparing between and across projects - it is not always possible to guarantee a comparison of like with like (7).

The EADSNE study (7) clearly points to the complexity in organisation and administration of the National SOCRATES Agencies as being a methodological problem for evaluation as well as having an influence upon the potential participation of groups of people or not.

### 3.3 (v) Relevant findings and recommendations

These have been selected as points that needed to be considered in relation to the study i.e. they were highlighted in previous evaluations as requiring attention in future work to see if they have been addressed and to what degree.

Helios II replicated within itself the problems of exclusion experienced by disabled people in wider society (1). One of the key issues highlighted in the evaluation is the need for any EU programme, which involves organisation of, and for disabled people to be concerned with the "professionalisation" of those organisations. They define this as their acquisition of expertise and information relevant to working at an international level. This point is taken further when the study raises the issue of the EC's future role in supporting the on-going professionalisation of such organisations as part of new and developing Community programmes.

Page 47 of the Helios II evaluation (1) presents an interesting paradox - the full integration of disabled people into Community programme actions and activities can only be achieved when steps are taken to ensure full representation of disabled people within "mainstream" actions. BUT they argue that: "the interests of disabled people within mainstream activities cannot be ensured without the existence of suitable actions to promote their full representation".

The CRE study (2) emphasises the principle that student mobility in all forms should be made available to all sections of the student population and that action on the part of the Commission and also Universities at strategic and practical levels needs to be taken to make this a reality. They do not mention disability directly.

The report links the above to a subsequent discussion of how limited funds are a major disincentive for Universities to get involved in any programmes and they go on to discuss the perceived rigidity and "petty bureaucracy" of the programme as viewed from an organisational administrator's point of view.

The AEGEE (3) study begins its concluding comments with a discussion of how the limited financial support under the various programmes is a reason for so few students from "disadvantaged" backgrounds take part in relevant programmes. The report identifies six other major factors in limiting participation of students: lack of information and contact, selection criteria, contact with host universities, non-recognition of ECTS and language preparation. All of these seem relevant factors to consider in relation to disabled as well as non-disabled students.

The Erasmus study (4a) points out that as the SOCRATES programme develops and participation increases; there will be implications for curriculum development in all relevant organisations. This may be an issue that needs to be investigated in relation to special educational provision.

The interim evaluation of SOCRATES (6) makes a number of specific recommendations regarding the future of the programme up to and beyond 2000, all of which could be categorised under three headings: reduce the number of programme goals; reduce the number of actions; simplify administrative procedures. Whilst none of the recommendations specifically refer to disabled people, they are all applicable and need to be considered in our context as this list of recommendations highlights a number of limitations to the programme that could have a significant impact upon participation and non-participation. The EADSNE

study highlights a number of points: statistically, the level of participation of people with disabilities is low. The factors for this need to be clearly identified (7).

There is a need to investigate and evaluate carefully the forms of and conditions for participation of people with special needs and disabilities (7).

Students with special needs appear to be least favoured in exchanges and all forms of mobility. These reasons need to be clarified (7).

Most clearly identified projects with disability and special education elements involve special (segregated) schools. The possible reasons for this need to be clarified (7).

The guide for applicants needs to be clarified in terms of participation of people with disabilities (7).

The priority nature of participation of people with disabilities needs to be made clearer in the Guide for Applicants and throughout the programme in general (7).

The programme and all documentation should take account of the country situation in relation to the participation of people with disabilities and not risk excluding some participation in projects by promoting (for example) integration as above other forms of provision in schools (7).

It was suggested (and acted upon) that a wider range of associations and groups be listed in the guide as being eligible potential participants (7).

It was strongly recommended that a specific action for people with disabilities be developed, aimed at promoting participation and mainstreaming and carefully avoiding the promotion of segregation which had been levelled as a potential criticism of the Helios programme (7).

The interim report on equal opportunities (8) highlights a number of factors underpinning the success or not of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in relation to men and women. These factors most importantly focus upon structural, policy and decision making elements of the programme and their subsequent effect upon implementation of the principle. These factors are highlighted as being crucial in relation to gender mainstreaming and so we may want to examine them in a similar way in relation to disability mainstreaming.

### 3.3 (vi) Points to note

The Helios II evaluation involved quantitative research focussing upon the number of participants with disabilities and qualitative aspects concerned with availability of resources, accessibility to information, level of involvement and quality of exchange between participants. This proved to be a successful evaluation strategy.

The Erasmus experience (4a) study has as its main focus student mobility. ICPs, teacher mobility and ECTS are not covered in as much depth. In addition, although this study analysed questionnaires sent to 3,000 students and 5,000 project co-ordinators, nowhere was there an opportunity for respondents to identify themselves as disabled or consider the implications of their disability for their participation in Erasmus activities.

The statistical analysis of student mobility (5) provides a useful clustering of countries where student exchanges are common. (page 2 onwards). This clustering and analysis of the focus of the mobility (i.e. incoming or out going students) may be something we need look at in relation to disabled students. Which countries do disabled students want to visit and why? The UK hosted over 28% of mobile students in most years (4b). This trend needs to be investigated in relation to disabled students.

The implicit definition of impact used in the interim evaluation of the SOCRATES programme (6) is useful as it focuses upon quantitative, large scale issues (how many extra people are involved; what new networks have been established) as well as the person centred, qualitative impact factors (what benefit has it been; how has it helped your career) investigated by Erasmus research (4a and 4b).

Of the methodologies employed by evaluators, there appears a relatively standard set of procedures employed: interviews; questionnaires; analysis of statistical data.

Three interesting methods were:

- The use of self-evaluation on the part of programme actors;
- Analysis of policy statements held by relevant organisations;
- The analysis of final project reports and studies.

The Helios II evaluation (1) uses the concept of value added by the programme to both the European and National levels of work in the field of disability. It may be an interesting concept to look at as it extends the idea of impact, which is more individual person or



organisation focused and looks at the possible wider effects of the programme upon groups, between groups and within wider society.

The evaluation proposes a number of very clear implications for future actions (seven) as well as identifying limitations of the Helios II programme (see pages 47 - 51 of conclusions). They identify one key area as worthy of future research: the notion that disability and disadvantage are social and structural in nature. The implications of this (particularly in relation to such programmes) maybe an interesting area for examination.

### 3.3 (vii) Discussions relating to definitions of key terms Special Needs and Participation

EADSNE (7) adopts a clear educational definition of special needs (i.e. SEN is the term used throughout the document) and makes no attempt to define disability or participation.

The evaluation of Helios II (1) does not consider special needs, but does focus on disability. It centres its consideration upon the changing context and understanding of disability. The main element of a definition is described as a move from a medical to a social definition of disability. They discuss (page 6) the disability movement's push away from increased benefits and resources as the focus of attention towards recognition of rights and the influence such changes in perception have had upon international organisations and national legislation. They touch upon the differences in infrastructures for supporting disabled people in countries.

The evaluation of Helios II does not define participation as such. What was investigated was how, to what degree and in which different ways people with disabilities participated in the programme. Evaluation questions and criteria were used to investigate participation in the programme; its consultative structures and specific activities (pages 16 - 18). Participation was examined in terms of three identified levels of involvement: real, tokenistic or peripheral.

Via this first analysis of the studies it appears that disability (or special needs) is not an issue addressed by other evaluations in any way at all.

There are learning points from all the documents, but - in addition to the previous small scale project conducted by the European Agency - the two studies that appear to be most significant are the Helios II evaluation (with its clear disability focus) and the interim evaluation of SOCRATES (because of its approach to covering the entire programme). The evaluation of Helios II conducted by the Tavistock Institute and its partners presents a

consideration of definitions of disability and an overall strategy that are very relevant to this study. The interim evaluation of SOCRATES highlights elements of the programme structure that will need to be taken into account in the research.

## 4. CONCEPTUAL BASIS FOR THE STUDY

As the focus of the specific evaluation, the Commission's interest in the participation of people with disabilities has resulted in the following questions being posed:

1. Do people with disabilities participate in the SOCRATES programme?
2. Which factors support or hinder the participation of people with special needs?

Two aspects require careful clarification: what is meant by disability and what constitutes participation?

In this chapter, these and related conceptual issues underpinning the study will be clearly presented before the methods used for data collection and analysis are presented in the subsequent chapter.

### 4.1 Working definitions

#### 4.1(i) Disability and special needs

Disabled people are defined in the invitation to tender as people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. However, this definition is not necessarily agreed upon or understood by all potential SOCRATES programme participants and managers. There is no clearly held agreed interpretation of terms such as handicap, special need or disability available for individuals or policy makers to use. It is also too wide to be used as the basis for the systematic investigation that was required as part of this study.

The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** (1997) makes a distinction between impairment, disability and handicap.

#### **Impairment:**

Lack or abnormality of anatomic, psychological and physiological functions and structures of a person

#### **Disability:**

Functional difficulties or deficiencies following impairment which hinders or make impossible typical all day activities

### **Handicap:**

Disadvantages for a person, which are the result of an impairment or a disability.

The **Deutscher Bildungsrat** (1974), which has a very important position in German structures defines handicap as follows: "Educational sciences must consider a person with a handicap as all children, adolescents and adults who are so compromised in their training, their social behaviour, their speech communication or in their physical capacities in such an important chronic manner that a normal participation in society's life becomes difficult. Therefore they need special educational support". The handicap can have its cause in the effect of a visual, hearing, speech or physical disability or mental and/or emotional development.

Educational sciences should not refer to a medical explanation that considers handicap in a cause-effect chain with its different results on the person. Medicine reflects mainly on the causes of the impairment, while educational sciences reflect mainly on the chain handicap–social harm.

Therefore:

*Impairment* is the visible change in a person;

*Disability* the functional result of this change;

*Handicap* the possible social result of the disability.

A person has a handicap, which results in them having particular and individual (special) needs

The use of the term "disabilities" involves a reduction of the number of people who may be considered as falling within the target group for the study. Working within this order of ideas, people with "difficulties", but without "disabilities", are not considered as belonging to the group. For example, a socio-cultural disadvantaged pupil can have learning difficulties, but not learning disabilities. This can be the case of the child of recent immigrants who may have problems in understanding the language of the new Country.

With reference to DSM IV, the term "disorder" is used to refer to specific developmental learning disorders or impairment in the development of learning skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) not accounted for by the chronological age, mental age or by inadequate

schooling. Regarding the term "difficulties" a further preliminary remark is necessary. Since it is used sometimes with a broad meaning and sometimes with a narrow meaning (often as synonym of "disabilities" or "disorders"), we must be careful in understanding the use of this term in the various countries of Europe. We must be aware of and acknowledge the lack clarity in the situation and will have to choose between different sources of international literature that promote definitions of terms. On basis of the above remarks, it is opportune to be careful in the use of the three terms widely applied in education.

It is from the educational perspective that the term and the approach of considering special needs arises.. These must be met if they are to be supported in overcoming the potential social harm their handicap can lead to.

The above discussion and conclusions require us to consider each action of the SOCRATES programme separately and define the potential population of people with disabilities and special needs within that action according to the specific aims of the action.

Universal definitions for the terms related to disability and handicap are quite impossible to find. There are many different interpretations. This variety of interpretations is clearly presented in the study report prepared with the support of DGXXII, **Integration in Europe: Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs**, edited by Meijer and published by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (May, 1998).

A clear design feature of the study is therefore that the definition of disability and special need would not come from the evaluators themselves. Rather the target groups for each of the action would be clearly identified and respondents in the different countries to the various surveys and interviews would use their own contexts to interpret whether they or the groups of learners they were responsible for fell into the target group or not.

#### 4.1(ii) Participation

In the **ICIDH-2** (WHO, 1997) participation is defined as 'the nature and extent of a person's involvement in life situations in relation to impairments, activities, health conditions and contextual factors'. The standard against which a person's participation is compared refers to the nature and extent of participation of a person without disability in the same society, culture or subculture (WHO, 1997).

The ICIDH-2 presents a classification consisting of seven types of participation. Of these participation in mobility, participation in exchange of information, participation in social relationships, and participation in education and work seem most relevant in the perspective of the SOCRATES programme. In formulating questions for (potential) participants in the SOCRATES programme these types of participation have to be addressed.

Participation of people with special needs in the SOCRATES programme can be defined as the active involvement in one of the Actions of the programme, based on a deliberate decision to submit an application, leading to a grant from the European Commission and for most Actions resulting some form of a report on the outcomes.

#### **4.2 Identification of target groups**

For the majority of activities in the different actions, the definition of special needs applicable to the evaluation of the SOCRATES programme can be reduced to a consideration of handicap resulting from a physical disability. In order to be explicit (and therefore clearer) in the operationalisation of the sample we must include in this definition *all kinds of physical and sensory impairments*. In all cases it will be important to know details about the physical problems of the different participants concerned.

The only activities where the definition of special needs will be - and must be – wider, is for the *COMENIUS action*. In that action we must consider the target population as being all children who are given a special support due to their special needs, these special needs having been identified by the competent authorities of the concerned country.

These operationalised definitions of disability and special need fit into the working premise that survey and interview respondents should self identify (or be identified by and organisational representative) so as to take account of the differences in personal and country-based contexts.

In order to plan and implement effective data collection procedures, it was necessary to clearly identify the exact target groups for each of the actions examined in the study. In **Appendix One** tables are given that present the actions and activities, the target population and aim of the activity as identified within the programme, along with the study target group. As a result of this analysis, it is possible to summarise the study target group into the following:

- The evaluation study examines the participation of individual people who are involved either in mobility actions or who are organisational representatives within projects who have some form of physical or sensory disability.
- It examines the participation of learners within project actions who have a range of recognised special educational needs.

Three actions under Horizontal measures are not included in this analysis of target groups: *Complementary measures* would be considered within the study on a case study basis given its nature and relatively small size. *Eurydice* and *Naric* would be considered under information provision using ideas and an approach similar to that of information collection in relation to programme management bodies. (Please refer to the next chapter for specific details).

A important point should be made here: the identified study target groups not only allows the study to investigate the experiences of the people already participating in SOCRATES programme, but also people that potentially *could* have participated in the programme. This was very necessary, as a full investigation of reasons for participation must include the viewpoints of people who could potentially participate (i.e. people with disabilities who are eligible for the programme) but who have not done so for particular reasons. Considering the views of potential as well as actual programme participants with disabilities is an important aspect of this study.

### **4.3 Active participation**

The second question posed in the original conception of the evaluation attempts to identify the factors supporting or hindering the participation of people with disabilities in the SOCRATES programme. In the invitation to tender of the Commission and in the tender from the European Agency, some of the possible factors were identified: programme content, programme management and promotion of the programme.

There are obviously more factors than these and the development of a frame of reference was necessary in order to help identify possible factors.

A starting point in selecting a frame of reference is to analyse the goals and ways of working of the SOCRATES programme.

The SOCRATES programme is based on a number of goals. The Commission expects to realise these by inviting students, teachers, schools, higher education institutes etc. to participate in Actions in the programme. The Commission has selection criteria, offers funds to participants and evaluates the participants' contribution to the programme. A secondary goal is to enhance the participation of people with disabilities within various Actions in the programme.

In the preparation of the Actions and the decision-making of people with disabilities, a number of steps can be distinguished:

1. The Commission develops a programme, actions and selection criteria. It expects the programme and the Actions to be attractive for people with disabilities, funding to be appropriate and the criteria not to limit the participation of people with disabilities.
2. Potential participants have to be informed about the existence of the programme.
3. Potential participants are able to send in proposals. They have to regard the Actions as interesting, as linking in with their own work and the financial support as sufficient.
4. To apply the applicants have to prepare a project, fill in forms and follow the prescribed procedures. They have to be able to invest time and resources in completing these procedures.
5. The DG and/or the National Agencies (depending upon the Action concerned) decide upon the proposals. Decision-making should be based on the selection criteria. It is expected that the criteria do not hinder the participation of people with special needs.
6. If support for the project is granted, the project (contract) has no additional demands inhibiting the participation of people with special needs.

In the this evaluation of the participation of people with disabilities in the SOCRATES programme, participation is defined as *the active involvement in one of the Actions of the programme*. Participation of people with disabilities results from a deliberate decision to apply for funds, to make a plan and actively take part in one of the Actions. People with disabilities deciding to take part in SOCRATES can be regarded as consumers. They make rational decisions on how to spend their time, how to plan their training and career and whether to participate in one of the SOCRATES Actions.



The frame of reference for the design of the study methodology is based on this idea. People with disabilities are regarded as independent, critical consumers making rational decisions on how to spend their time, how to plan their training and career and how to take part in SOCRATES Actions. Research on the motives and the behaviour of consumers can serve as a possible reference source in looking at the factors relevant in deciding to participate in SOCRATES or not.

The behaviour of consumers has been described extensively. Research has focussed on the factors that influence consumers' decisions to buy or not to buy certain products or services and to use these. Next to these factors, attention has also been given to the decision-making process of consumers. It is obvious that most of this research has been performed from a marketing perspective, but the central issue here is how to satisfy consumers' needs – a feature of the SOCRATES programme.

Consumer behaviour is defined as the processes involved when individuals select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 1999). In research on consumer behaviour, several factors relevant in describing consumers' behaviour are distinguished. Amongst these *perception, motivation, values, involvement* and *attitudes* seem of particular relevance in deciding on participation in the SOCRATES programme.

Perception: consumers are often exposed to far more information than they are capable or willing to process. People do not passively process all the stimuli that are present. By actively selecting, organising and interpreting stimuli people filter the stimuli that relate to their current needs. Amongst the factors that determine if a stimulus is perceived are:

- The amount of exposure,
- The attention generated and
- The interpretation.

Reference groups can influence the information gathering process.

*Motivation*: satisfying consumers' needs require discovering not only what these needs are, but also why they exist. Motivation has to do with the arousal of a need that the consumer wishes to satisfy. The consumer experiences a discrepancy between the present state and some ideal state. Most of these ideal states, or goals, can be fulfilled in different ways.

*Values:* are basic general principles used to judge the desirability of goals. A goal can be valued positive (learning from other cultures) or negative (avoid being regarded as a narrow minded nationalist). Values are part of the (sub) culture the consumer belongs to. Cultures can differ in the relative ranking of values. Research has shown that for instance 'warm relationships with others', 'self-respect', or 'security' are valued differently between people in Norway, Germany and the U.S (Grunert & Scherhorn, 1990). Knowledge about values is important in understanding why people in different countries are attracted to different products and services.

*Involvement:* refers to the level of interest a stimulus evokes in a specific situation. It can be regarded as the motivation to process information. People are getting involved with a specific product or service if they feel it can help them in meeting their needs. Involvement can range from inertia to passion.

*Attitude:* is defined as a lasting evaluation of products or services. Unlike values, which are more general, attitudes are always linked to specific objects, persons or issues. Attitudes are formed because they can help in gaining rewards or avoiding punishments (Compliance), because they support being similar to another group (Identification) or because they are the translation of deeply held value system (Internalisation). Reference groups are known to influence a person's attitude towards a product or service. People can also have different attitudes towards specific objects: multi-attribute attitude models. For example, student exchange in Erasmus can be simultaneously seen as a good opportunity to learn, as a bureaucratic procedure, as a nice way to visit other countries, or as a time without the warm social contacts of family and friends.

Consumer (dis) satisfaction is determined by the overall feelings a person has about a product after it has been purchased. Consumers want quality and value. Satisfaction with a product or service is influenced by prior expectations about the quality. In the SOCRATES programme, participants can be disappointed because they do not learn anything, because the funding does not allow them to participate fully, because the conference venue is inaccessible, etc. In this situation participants can decide to stop participation in the programme (the consumer throws the product away) or gives the participation some other interpretation.

Decision-making by consumers is often approached from a rational perspective. It is believed that people carefully gather information about the product, evaluate each of the alternatives and arrive at a rational decision. The most important phases in this process are:

problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, product choice and outcome evaluation. In daily practice however, consumers are quite efficient and skip many of these phases in their decision-making. Particularly in situations of low involvement consumers buy things on impulse or out of habit. This routine response behaviour occurs with low-cost products, frequent purchasing and familiar products (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 1999). In a situation characterised by more expensive products, infrequent purchasing and unfamiliar products consumers may go through a process of extensive problem solving before buying a product. Other characteristics of extensive problem solving are: high risk, high involvement, extensive search, active information processing, strongly held beliefs, many criteria used.

The decision to participate (or not) in the SOCRATES programme has many of the characteristics of extensive problem solving.

#### **4.4 Data gathering to establish active participation**

The questionnaires, surveys and interview schedules used in the study were based on the frame of reference presented above. They address consecutively:

- Problem recognition (the need),
- Information search (amount of exposure, attention generated, interpretation, influence of reference groups),
- Evaluation of alternatives (goals, values, involvement, influence of reference groups, attitudes),
- Programme/action choice
- Evaluation of outcome.

Data gathering techniques were needed that would ascertain whether potential or actual programme participants were aware of the existence of the SOCRATES programme, if they regarded the programme as interesting, if it linked in with their daily work, if the funding was adequate, etc. The intention was that this part of the evaluation would result in empirically supported factors relevant to the participation of people with disabilities within SOCRATES. If for instance the programme content appeared to be a factor in the participation of people with disabilities, it maybe that compared to people who do not have disabilities in the sample, the target group of people with disabilities regard the programme content as less interesting.

The data gathering tools were designed to also contain a number of questions regarding the nature of participation the person has experienced. Specifically, these questions were included in order to address participation in mobility, participation in exchange of information, participation in social relationships and participation in education and work within the perspective of the SOCRATES programme.

The SOCRATES programme actions can be considered as falling into two types:

- Those actions supporting individual people to experience mobility
- Those actions supporting organisations and representatives of organisations to be involved in networks and projects.

The data gathering tools had to be designed to take account of this fact.

Actions Erasmus 2, Comenius 3.2, Lingua B, Lingua C and Lingua D and Arion are all Actions aimed at supporting individual people visiting other countries to learn in another environment. People with disabilities are free to decide to participate in any of these Actions as individuals making critical consumption decisions.

All other Actions allow for common projects between schools or organisations of learners in different countries. Pupils and students with special needs or disabilities cannot choose individually to participate, but schools and organisations with pupils and students with special needs or disabilities can be involved in the Actions. In general schoolteachers of pupils with special needs will decide on the pupils' behalf whether to participate or not. In these Actions, the people with disabilities are not in a position to act as critical consumers, but their organisational representative will take that role on their behalf.

The issues addressed in the data gathering tools had to be the same, but to whom they were addressed (the individual participant or their representative) and therefore the phrasing of the questions was adapted to the context of the Action.

The points considered above all focus upon how relevant data needed to be collected in order to address the issue of factors influencing the participation of people with disabilities and special needs in SOCRATES. However, in order to satisfactorily answer the first question posed by the evaluation - do people with disabilities and special needs participate in the SOCRATES programme? – it was necessary to collect and process sets of background

(*baseline*) data relevant to the Actions which put the data regarding factors into a correct context.

It is not enough to count the number of, for example, students with disabilities in the student mobility programme in Erasmus 2. The number of students does not tell us if their participation is relatively low or high. Even the proportion of students with disabilities out of all students participating in Erasmus 2 does not tell us much. In line with the suggestions of the WHO, the standard against which a person's participation is compared, refers to the nature and extent of participation of a person without disability in the same society, culture or subculture (WHO, 1997). Therefore, we should compare the percentage of students with disabilities in Erasmus to the proportion of students with disabilities that potentially could have (or actually have) participated in the programme. An exemplar: if 1.5% of the students participating in Erasmus 2 are disabled, while 4% of the students in the target group has disabilities, it can be concluded that the participation of students with disabilities in Erasmus is disappointing. In order to be able to answer the first evaluation question, it is necessary to calculate the proportion of people with disabilities that actually participated in the various Actions in the SOCRATES programme and compare that to the proportion of people with disabilities in the various target groups.

**Figure 1** presents a graphical image of the target group for one of the selected SOCRATES Actions. The large square represents all people actually or potentially participating in one of the Actions. The horizontal line divides people with and without disabilities. The shaded area represents the people actually involved in a SOCRATES Action. (The figure represents an as yet hypothetical situation in which the proportion of people with disabilities participating in a SOCRATES Action is relatively low).



**Figure 1**

To answer the question do people with disabilities and special needs participate in the SOCRATES programme? The following must be known:

1. The total amount of people in each of the target groups
2. The percentage of people with disabilities in the target groups
3. The number of people actually participating in each of the relevant SOCRATES Actions and
4. The number of people with disabilities actually participating in each of the relevant SOCRATES Actions.

In the next chapter, the methods used in collecting the necessary data will be described in detail.

## 5. STUDY METHODS

In the previous section, the key concepts and principles the study is based upon have been outlined. In this section, the intention is to describe the steps and methods taken in collecting the data needed to answer the questions posed.

Three groups of players had a role in the selection and development of the data collection methods and tools. Firstly, the study co-ordinating team; secondly the Commission representatives and thirdly the European Agency Working Partners (please refer to section 2.4 for an explanation of their role) from 18 member states, who acted as advisors as well as information gatherers. Regular meetings between these groups – particularly in the early stages – were instrumental in determining the approaches eventually taken.

In addition to the central questions to be addressed in the study, a number of factors guided the choice and development of the data collection techniques:

- The requirements of the evaluation contract from the Commission to cover participation in all aspects of the programme: all actions and all programme actors
- The nature of the programme in terms of size of actions
- The decision – taken early on in the study design, supported by Agency Working Partners and endorsed by the Commission representatives - to provide hard quantitative information, but also direct feedback (qualitative information) from programme participants themselves.
- The study methodology had to be designed in such a way as to address the following specific issues relating to access and participation in the SOCRATES programme
- What proportion of projects have a clear disability or special needs related element? Of these, what proportion can be identified as special needs specific projects?
- How accessible is the programme to people with disabilities and those who work directly with them?
- What are the levels of participation of people with disabilities in the programme?
- Are these considered by the different programme actors to be adequate, representative and effective?
- What are the existing indicators and mechanisms that have been developed in order to reliably assess and follow up the levels of participation?
- Are these effective and what maybe the alternatives?
- What are the general and specific factors that support and hinder both access to and subsequent participation in the programme?

- What are these factors in relation to programme, structure, promotion, content and management?
- How can the supportive factors with the programme be best maximised, whilst the hindering factors diminished or even removed?

These questions when linked to the working definitions of disability and participation and the model of participants as being active decision makers dictated the eventual selection of a mixed approach of methods for data collection and subsequent analysis.

The evaluation study had three elements of information collection and analysis:

1. **Facts:** statistics regarding potential and actual participation rates
2. **Reasons:** participants' and non-participants' (both with disabilities and able bodied) reasons for being involved in to be programme or not. Covering all actions/activities and focusing upon the identification of decision-making and influences upon involvement.
3. **Examples:** of experiences of people with disabilities (or their organisational representatives) who participated in the programme.

So as to provide consistency and for the reader, the methods used in the study are presented below – as far as possible - in line with the way they have been grouped and presented in the results section. However, as will be seen from the descriptions and chronology, the actual methods used did not fit neatly into the categories used below – data collection methods were often overlapping and multi functional.

Each of the section below are presented in the same format:

- An indication of the purpose of the data to be collected is given
- A description of the actual methods employed
- The sample size and the return rate achieved. Key statistics are highlighted in bold for ease of recognition.

## **5.1 Baseline data**

### 5.1 (i) Purpose of the data



In order to answer the first question posed by the evaluation - do people with disabilities and special needs participate in the SOCRATES programme? – it was necessary to collect and process baseline data relevant to the Actions which put the data into a correct context.

The data required was essentially factual: population statistics; numbers of people in various education sectors; numbers of people with disabilities; numbers of people with disabilities in the different education sectors.

#### 5.1 (ii) Description of methods

The method used to collect this information focussed upon a survey to each of the participating countries asking for specific country statistics:

- A. Population statistics
- B. Higher education statistics (universities and all other institutes of higher education)
- C. Compulsory school phase statistics
- D. Adult education
- E. Other educational staff (i.e. administrators, policy makers, managers, support staff etc who may be eligible for Arion)

The specific working definitions of disability and special educational need as have been detailed in the previous chapter were employed here as far as possible.

As part of the initial search for background information to the study, a review existing statistical data in relation to these questions was made. General data from EUROSTAT and specific education data from EURYDICE provided some useful starting points, but the data was far from complete and it was necessary to try and obtain further information from each of the countries.

#### 5.1 (iii) The sample

The procedure employed followed the pattern of the prepared overviews circulated to each of the **18** Agency Working Partners (the Flemish and French communities of Belgium were surveyed separately) and to Ministerial representatives of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Lithuania. Country representatives were then asked to check and complete the information using the most recent information available from official country sources.

A copy of the proforma used (with country data, annotations and sources) can be found in **Appendix Two**. National sources of information were used and notes of the sources made for reference. As can be seen from Appendix Two, in the main these were ministerial level sources.

Whilst this methodology had the disadvantages of drawing upon a broad range of sources of information that could mean comparisons were difficult to make, it had the advantages of accessing the most up to date information and being flexible enough to acknowledge and account for the variations in country based situations.

In terms of the return rate, data was collected from each of the **18** Agency member countries, but **none** was received from the four other countries surveyed.

## **5.2 Erasmus Institutional Survey**

### 5.2 (i) Purpose of the data

A decision as taken to conduct a separate survey of higher education institutions involved in the Erasmus action for two main reasons: firstly, on the grounds that the Erasmus action being the largest within the SOCRATES programme required specific attention; secondly, as it was felt that there was a need to collect other areas of background information in relation to the action; thirdly, that the model of surveys to project and individual participants would not be applicable to the staff (teachers and administrative staff such as International officers) within higher education institutions who promote and implement the action. Their particular perspective on the participation of people with disabilities within the programme was required. They had access to important information on participation rates within their institutions; were potentially in positions to comment upon factors relating to participation and – most importantly – may also have disabilities and were therefore a potential target group for the evaluation as a whole.

### 5.2 (ii) Description of methods

The institutional survey was conducted in co-operation with the overall evaluating team, specifically the researchers at Kassel University, Germany. As part of the Global Evaluators' study methods, a survey was being sent to all Erasmus participating institutions in 24 countries. It was arranged that in conjunction with this large scale survey, a short, focused

questionnaire would be included. A copy of this questionnaire is presented in **Appendix Three**.

The definition of disability used in the survey was any sensory (hearing, speech or vision) difficulty or physical (mobility or any form of motor) impairment which is identified or registered by the institution, but that may or may not lead to some form of support being given to the person concerned.

The survey was constructed so as to include particular questions relating to the participation of students, teaching staff and administrative staff with physical or sensory disabilities within the higher education institutions as well as general questions relating to the institutions itself, its involvement in SOCRATES and the facilities and services available for staff and students with disabilities. Specifically, the survey looked at:

- The overall numbers of students with and without disabilities enrolled at the institution
- The numbers of students with and without disabilities sent and received for a period of study
- The numbers of staff with and without disabilities employed at the institution
- The number of teaching staff with and without disabilities sent and received within SOCRATES
- An estimation of the participation rates of students and staff with disabilities in the SOCRATES programme
- An identification of the potential reasons for the participation rates of students and staff with disabilities in the SOCRATES programme
- An identification of how participation within SOCRATES could be improved for students and staff with disabilities
- Information on any support system for students with disabilities
- Contact details of key individuals for further information regarding support for students with disabilities
- Information regarding the person completing the survey
- An indication of willingness for staff and students at the institution to be involved in a follow-up study.

### 5.2 (iii) The sample

In total the questionnaire was sent to **1,623** higher education institutions across the countries and **492** responses were received, an approximate return rate of **30%**. **Table 4** below shows the breakdown of questionnaires sent to and received from countries.

**Table 4** Erasmus institutional survey sample

Country	A	B	DK	F	GER	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	S	SF	SP	UK
<b>Sent out</b>	58	79	87	306	236	31	91	28	2	66	67	48	77	66	188
<b>Received</b>	29	22	31	71	87	15	21	8	1	10	24	14	24	17	36
<b>Rate (%)</b>	50	28	36	23	37	48	23	29	50	15	36	29	31	26	19

Country	CZ	H	LT	PL	RO	SK		TOTALS
<b>Sent out</b>	22	36	2	46	30	8		<b>1623</b>
<b>Received</b>	8	18	1	14	16	3		<b>492</b>
<b>Rate (%)</b>	36	50	50	30	53	38		<b>30</b>

### 5.3 Participation within the different actions

#### 5.3 (i) Purpose of the data

As has been detailed in the previous chapter, the rationale for this study is that participation is the focus of the evaluation. The structure of the programme was a major consideration, but not the starting point for evaluation study decision-making.

In order to investigate effectively factors regarding the participation of people with disabilities within the programme – using the rationale and framework outlined in the previous chapter - it was necessary to use data collection methods that were developed to specifically target people involved in different types of participation, rather than people involved in different actions of the programme. This is not to say that the differences in aims and foci of the different actions were ignored, but rather that this fact was accounted for within the framework developed around the rationale of participation factors and not programme structure factors.

Two means of participating within the actions in the programme were highlighted as being necessary for investigation:

- Participation as an *individual* within mobility actions
- Participation as a *project member* within networking or exchange actions

In addition, participation within the programme can also be seen if people employed within the implementation or management of the programme have some form of disability. This means also required to be taken into account within the methodology.

Within these means of participation, a number of different aspects required examination:

- Information about individual *respondents* themselves
- Insights into their *motives* for participating
- Details of their *participation within the action*
- Information about their (or their learners' in the case of project participants) *special needs*
- Data on the *outcomes of participation*
- A consideration of *issues from a special needs perspective*

(Each of the areas highlighted above acted as a focus for the subsequent analysis of the data.)

Given the small scale of the Complementary Measures action and its focus of information dissemination, a decision was taken not to include this within the model used for all other actions. A breakdown of the focus of projects supported over the period of the programme was made based on information supplied directly by responsible Desk Officers. This overview information was looked at in line with three questions for analysis relating to the potential activities within the action have for promoting the participation of people with disabilities within SOCRATES. This overview analysis is presented in the next chapter.

### 5.3 (ii) Description of methods

Two methods of collecting data relating to these aspects were selected for data collection in relation to Erasmus, Comenius, Lingua, ODL, Adult Education and Exchange of Information – postal *questionnaires* for a representative sample of participants across Europe and follow-up detailed case studies for a small number of respondents.

#### *The Questionnaires.*

Using the rationale above, questionnaires were developed that examined the experiences of different participants within the actions. All of the questionnaires are presented in full in **Appendix Four**.

In total nine different questionnaires were developed targeting participants within the different actions; one each for:

- Erasmus Teachers
- Erasmus Students
- Comenius (whilst the questionnaire provided an opportunity for respondents to indicate whether this was a project participation or not, for the purposes of analysis, the Comenius questionnaire was constructed along the lines of project participation as it was important to identify the special needs of learners as well as the teachers themselves)
- Lingua individual participants
- Lingua project participants
- ODL
- Adult Education
- Exchange of Information project participants
- Arion

The questionnaires mainly used closed, multiple-choice questions (in various formats). Questions were numbered and respondents were directed through linked paths of questions dependent upon their responses. Some open questions were used in order to obtain more extensive information relating to personal situations, attitudes and opinions. Space for completely open comments was given at the end of each questionnaire.

The questionnaires were prepared centrally by the evaluation co-ordinating team and distributed via Working Partners in each of the participating countries. Working Partners had used their networks of contacts in order to identify potential questionnaire respondents. However, early on in the study, initial contact was made via the co-ordinating team with all National Agencies across the 18 countries. This was then followed up by direct personal contact from the Working Partners. The National SOCRATES Agencies in the countries acted as the main of information regarding contact details for potential respondents.

Whilst called here a postal questionnaire, the actual means for distributing the questionnaires were more varied. Certainly, the majority of questionnaires were distributed and returned via conventional mail, but almost one third were sent and received via electronic mail (a method that supported a number of visually impaired respondents to the questionnaires).

The distribution of the questionnaires was timed so as the preliminary analysis of responses could be used in order to identify:

- The focus for case study questions and areas for discussions
- The areas that needed to be addressed within questionnaires to be distributed to other programme actors included in the evaluation

Final analysis of the questionnaires (in total **173**) was conducted via database inputting and analysis (Erasmus, Comenius and Lingua) or framework based inputting and analysis. Results of the analysis of trends and patterns emerging from the questionnaires is presented in chapter 6.

### The Case Studies

In order to collect qualitative data i.e. an examination of the mechanisms and processes of participation in more depth; further identification of factors supporting and hindering participation; explore outcomes of projects – case studies in the form of open, person to person interviews were decided upon. Case studies were included for two reasons: methodologically, they provided a potentially good source of qualitative information. More importantly, they very much fitted with the philosophy of the *user voice*: providing users of services and products with opportunities to provide feedback on usefulness, appropriateness and suitability of resources provided for them. This evaluation opportunity is viewed by the evaluators – and by the people with disabilities taking part in the study – as an opportunity for the users of SOCRATES to have a voice that will be heard by all other programme actors.

Individual participants providing case study information would be identified via the questionnaires and would either be disabled themselves or could be a representative of people with disabilities who had been involved in some disability or special needs related project.

The areas to be considered in interviews were generated from two sources. Firstly, the initial analysis of questionnaires highlighted a number of areas that required further exploration via the collection of qualitative data. These were:

- Personal situation and involvement in the programme
- Reasons for participating
- Successes and problems establishing/arranging participation
- Study visits
- Successes and problems of participation outcomes
- Extent of participation
- Future

- Suggested developments to the programme/action.

In addition, specific questions were raised emanating from the questionnaire data provided by case study respondents. These specific questions, in the main examined the issues of problems faced in participation; resolution of these problems; the main factors supporting participation; the most important outcomes of participation.

Mainly the evaluation co-ordinating team conducted case study interviews. Two interviews were conducted by country Working Partners. Some interviews took place via the telephone; most were conducted in person.

In total, 13 interviews were conducted. The basic outline of questions is presented as a proforma in **Appendix Five**. It should be noted however, that this questions were used as interview discussion guides only and may interviewees followed trains of thought that were recorded as relevant data.

In addition, a number of detailed written submissions were received. Two were sent in place of interviews which could not be arranged; three were from questionnaire respondents who wished to submit additional information.

Given the rich nature and complexity of the information presented in the case studies, the analysis was made on two levels: firstly following the framework for analysis used in relation to the questionnaires; secondly a more open analysis of issues and themes emerging from the data itself. A structured analysis of the data collected is presented in chapter 6. All the case studies are presented in full in **Appendix Fifteen** as it is felt that the information provided in these direct reports presents important evaluation feedback in their own right.

### 5.3 (iii) The sample

The sample and return rates for both questionnaires and case studies are presented below in relation to individual participation and project participation separately.

Within the time and financial constraints of this evaluation, it was not possible to collect information relating to all the actions from all the countries. Therefore a representative sample of countries across Europe was decided upon. For the larger actions – Erasmus, Comenius and Lingua – six countries representing a geographical North, Mid and South Europe spilt were identified. A similar pattern including five countries was identified for the



other actions. So as to spread the workload of questionnaire distribution and collection, each country was allocated no more than two actions.

The tables below indicate how many questionnaires were distributed for each action within each country. The number in *italics* indicates the actual number of questionnaires returned.

In **Table 5**, for Erasmus, two potential return figures are possible S – students and T – teachers.

**Table 5** Individual Participants

	A	B(fr)	Dk	F	Ger	GR	I	IS	IRL	L	N	NL	P	S	SF	SP	UK
Erasmus HEIs surveyed	0 3 S *			4 0	10 2 T 9 S		5 4 T 15 S							4 2 T 8 S	4 0	5 2 T 9 S	7 1 T 1 S
Lingua B C D		117 5						17 0	110 0		10 2	139 13	5 0				
ARION			7 4			2 2		5 3	90 2	5 3							

In addition, for the Erasmus action, 4 HEIs were surveyed in the Czech Republic, with no returns; 4 HEIs were surveyed in Hungary from which three teachers and two students sent replies.

\* In Austria, a university had received a copy of the questionnaire from a German colleague and had kindly submitted replies from students although Austria was not part of the study “official” sample.

Case studies were developed from information from the following individual mobility participants:

**Erasmus:**

Disabled Erasmus student (Sweden)

Disabled Erasmus coordinator/administrator (UK)

Non-Disabled Erasmus teacher working with students with disabilities (Lithuania)

Two Non-Disabled Erasmus teachers working with Erasmus students with disabilities (UK)

Non-Disabled Erasmus co-ordinator working with students with disabilities (Italy)

**Exchange:**

Arion - Non-Disabled participant who works with pupils with SEN (Greece)

**Table 6** Project Participants

	A	B(fr)	D	DK	F	GR	I	IS	IRL	L	N	NL	P	S	SF	SP	UK
<b>Comenius</b>	10 6			66 21	100 11	11 10							6 2				
<b>Lingua</b>		117						17	110		10	139	5				
<b>A &amp; E</b>		0						0	24		1	24	0				
<b>ODL</b>	2 1		6 2								9 2					2 1	11 1
<b>Adult Education</b>					3 0		2 0					42 4		4 2	2 2		
<b>Exchange</b>				7 0		2 0		5 0	90 4	5 1							

Case studies were developed in relation to the following project participants:

**Comenius:**

Non-Disabled project partner, Action 1 project involving pupils with SEN (Denmark)

Non-Disabled project partner, Action 1 project involving pupils with SEN (Greece)

Non-Disabled teacher, Action 3 study visit, working with pupils with SEN (Greece)

Non-Disabled classroom assistant working with SEN children (Luxembourg)

**Lingua:**

Non-Disabled project partner, Lingua E project involving pupils with SEN (Netherlands)

**ODL:**

Non-Disabled co-ordinator of project including people with disabilities (Austria)

**Adult Education:**

Non-Disabled co-ordinator of project for people with disabilities (Finland)

## 5.4 Information Providers

### 5.4 (i) Purpose of the data

One of the initial issues posed for the study questions how accessible the programme is for people with disabilities and those who work directly with them. As has been previously outlined, the starting point for accessibility is access to information. The accessibility to different types and sources of information provided by the programme was an area of detailed questioning in both the participants questionnaires and case study interviews.

As two of specific actions within the programme focus upon mechanisms to provide information, it was decided that it was necessary to investigate issues related to participation through *access to Information* about and from the programme.

#### 5.4 (ii) Description of methods

As well as including specific questions within the questionnaires and case study formats conducted with programme participants, a decision was taken early on the use initial data emerging questionnaires to construct specific questionnaires targeted at the information provision structures within the programme – specifically the Eurydice and Naric units.

The questionnaires focused upon the way participation in the programme – via an application of the mainstreaming principle – was considered in work of the units; how needs of people were considered in relation to accessing information products and services of the units; the actual participation of people with disabilities within the work and decision- making of the units. The questions were presented and asked so that emerging issues could be directly cross referenced with themes and ideas emerging from the programme participants' responses.

Full copies of the respective questionnaires can be found in **Appendix Six A** and **B** respectively.

#### 5.4 (iii) The sample

For EURYDICE, **29** units (including PEKO countries) were surveyed. **16** responses were received from: Brussels (central co-ordination); Czech Republic; Finland; Greece; Iceland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Poland; Portugal; Slovenia; Sweden; UK (England); UK (Scotland); plus 1 anonymous return and detailed notes from 1 head of unit.

None of the respondents indicated that they would be available to take part in a follow-up interview.

In relation to NARIC, **26** units (including PEKO countries) were surveyed. **Eight** units replied from Austria; Denmark; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Poland; Slovakia and the UK.

Again, none of the respondents indicated that they would be available to take part in a follow-up interview.

## 5.5 Programme Managers

### 5.5 (i) Purpose of the data

In order to systematically address a number of key evaluation questions it was necessary to direct specific questions to the SOCRATES programme managers – both National Agencies and also DG Education and Culture Desk Officers responsible for the specific actions. Such questions needed to identify indicators and mechanisms that have been developed in order to reliably assess and follow up the levels of participation; perceptions of the general and specific factors that support and hinder both access to and subsequent participation in the programme and the relation of these factors to the programme, structure, promotion, content and management.

In order that the information from programme managers would fit in with the rationale for the study and that data emerging could be cross referenced with that of programme participants, it was decided that it was necessary for the format and focus of the questionnaires to programme managers would be similar to the questionnaires for other programme actors.

Issues relating to perceptions and mechanisms for mainstreaming, access to information and products and services as well as perceptions of participation were the focus. In line with the rationale that participation within the programme could include work within the action, specific questions were directed towards identifying staff with disabilities with the Agencies and Commission units. A full copy of the questionnaires addressed to National SOCRATES Agencies and Commission based SOCRATES desk officers are presented in **Appendix Seven A** and **B** respectively.

### 5.5 (ii) Description of methods

The questionnaires were distributed by the evaluating team to named National SOCRATES Agency heads of units via email. Reminders and explanations about the questionnaires were provided by National Working Partners for Agency member countries and the evaluation team for non Agency countries. Completed questionnaires were returned via email, fax and post.

Questionnaires for Commission desk officers were also distributed and returned via email.

### 5.5 (iii) The sample

Questionnaires were sent to **58** National Agencies. The overall number of completed questionnaires returned was **18**.

Of these 19, the breakdown of actions units hold responsibility for is as follows (it should be noted that many Units covered more than one action within the programme).

Erasmus	5
Comenius	10
Lingua	8
Adult Education	5
Arion	6

Relies were received from the following countries: Belgium (Flemish); Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland x 2; France; Germany x 2; Greece; Iceland; Ireland; Luxembourg; Netherlands x 2; Norway; Sweden x 2

No units indicated that they would be willing to take part in a case study interview. However, it was possible to interview a Commission desk officer who had been newly appointed directly from holding the Head of National Agency post in an EU country. He was able to provide case study information from the perspectives of the National Agency staff. This interview synopsis is presented in **Appendix Fifteen**.

For the DG Education and Culture **12** desk officers were surveyed. A questionnaire was also sent to the head of the Technical Assistance Office (TAO) in order to get specific information relating to this department's role and work in relation to mainstreaming within SOCRATES.

**Five** complete replies were received from Units A1; Erasmus mobility; Adult Education; Comenius 1; Comenius 2 & 3. Written notes and comments were also received from two other officers.

It was possible to conduct an interview with the Erasmus student mobility co-ordinator from DG Education and Culture. This interview synopsis is also presented in **Appendix Fifteen**.

## **5.6 Non Participants**

### 5.6 (i) Purpose of the data

In order to present as full a picture as possible of the factors influencing participation in the SOCRATES programme it was necessary to collect and analyse data from people with disabilities (or those representing them) who were eligible to take part in the programme, but who, for some reason, had not done so.

The questionnaire followed the same areas and included the same questions as used in the participants questionnaires, but the phrasing and emphasis was placed upon potential participation and perceptions rather than experience. In addition, specific questions relating to reasons for not participating in the programme were included.

5.6 (ii) Description of methods

The questionnaires were distributed via the Working Partner networks of the countries selected. Respondents were known to be eligible for participation, but had not taken part in the programme.

It was not considered necessary to cover all of the actions within the programme, rather to select actions representative of individual mobility participation and project participation. Questionnaires concerned with individual participation were developed for potential participants within Erasmus and Lingua B, C and D. Comenius and Lingua A and E were the basis for questionnaires relating to project participation.

5.6 (iii) The sample

Questionnaires were distributed to individuals who could potentially have participated in one of the SOCRATES actions as follows:

**Table 7** Non-participants sample

	Universities surveyed	Individual replies
<b>Erasmus:</b>	UK 8	1 teacher
	Austria 1	2 students
	Germany 1	0
<b>Comenius:</b>	Distributed in Luxembourg	14
	Distributed in the UK	1

<b>Lingua:</b>	Distributed in the Netherlands	0
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It was possible to collect case study data from a University teacher with disabilities (UK) through a detailed written submission and a non-disabled International co-ordinator/administrator working with students with disabilities (UK).

The analysis of questionnaire data is presented in chapter 6 in relation to either individual mobility or project participation. Case study information is presented in **Appendix Fifteen**.

### 5.7 Chronology

The evaluation study period was 10 months, September 1999 – June 2000. The table below presents a guide to when the key tasks of the study were completed within the 10 month time span and how they needed to be staggered as well as sequenced.

**Table 8** Evaluation study period

<b>Task</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Familiarisation with requirements for the study	🏠									
Literature review	🏠	🏠								
Finalising evaluation criteria and sample		🏠	🏠							
Development of data collection tools			🏠	🏠		🏠	🏠			
Data collection - Erasmus institutions						🏠	🏠	🏠		
Data collection – individuals					🏠	🏠	🏠			
Data collection – projects					🏠	🏠	🏠			
Case studies						🏠	🏠	🏠		
Data collection – information providers							🏠	🏠		
Data collection – programme managers							🏠	🏠		
Data analysis					🏠	🏠	🏠	🏠	🏠	
Interim report							🏠			
Writing up								🏠	🏠	🏠

As can be seen from the above, through necessity, the tasks that needed to be carried out for the study were staggered so as to be developmental to each other. The study followed a standard pattern tasks and time-frame, but there were exceptions that need to be highlighted.

The initial data analysis began as soon as data was received by the evaluating team. This was so that information from programme participants could be used as the basis for formulating the specific questions to be raised with:

- Firstly, case study respondents. The initial questionnaire data from individuals and projects highlighted a number of issues that were looked at in more depth in case studies
- Secondly, information providers. An initial data analysis identified that access to information was much more significant issue than had been originally anticipated. This information (both from questionnaires and case studies) was therefore used in the development of the data collection tools for information providers.
- Thirdly, programme managers. A decision had been taken early on in the study to address issues raised by programme participants directly with programme managers via the specifically designed survey. This was achieved by making the task of data collection from programme managers the last task undertaken in the study.

Although each of the elements of data collection had a specific function, much of the data overlapped functions and whilst the data analysis followed strict formats, the identification of conclusions and recommendations, wherever reasonable, drew on relevant rather than specific types of data.

The following chapter presents all analyses conducted in line with the descriptions of methodologies above.



## 6. RESULTS

In this section, overviews of each of the areas of data collection are given. The aim here is to present a clear summary of the main findings emerging from the data as they relate to the original questions posed for the evaluation. It should be noted that the quantity and detail of much of the data collected could have led to a number of ways of analysing and subsequently interpreting the data. The framework for analysis used here is firmly in line with the rationale for the evaluation study as outlined in chapter 4 of this report. It also follows the chosen pattern of collecting data that provides information and insights into *facts* regarding potential and actual participation rates, the *reasons* participants and non-participants decide to be involved in the programme or as well as *examples*: of experiences of people with disabilities (or their organisational representatives) who participated in the programme.

The grouping of elements of information has been made in order to provide a complete picture of the findings, therefore, all information relating to individual participation in SOCRATES – covering a range of actions - is presented under one heading and information relating to project participation under another. This method of presentation has been selected as it follows the rationale of participation being the focus of the evaluation study, rather than the structure of the programme in terms of action being the starting point for evaluation study decision-making.

The information collated and analysed is presented here in a concise way as possible in order to give the reader a clear overview of all the findings. This chapter is presented in sections as described above: a description of the findings is followed by the drawing out of implications and specific conclusions in relation to that set of results.

### 6.1 Baseline data

#### 6.1 (i) Country baseline information

As has been outlined in previous sections, in order to fully address the issue of levels of participation of people with disabilities in the SOCRATES programme, it is necessary to have accurate population figures to compare with and make judgments against.

EUROSTAT estimates drawn from national surveys within ten Member States (between the years 1991-1992) identified broad similarities across the Union in respect of the proportion of

the population that is disabled, at around 12%. (This is quite an old piece of information, but it is the last reference study covering the general population in so large a number of countries.) Differences only existed with respect of Spain where the figure is much higher (15%) and in France, Greece and Portugal where the proportion is lower (10%). The European Disability Forum currently uses the figure of 10% of the total population in Europe as having disabilities.

Disability affects older people disproportionately and in all countries between 35 and 45% of disabled people are 65 years old or over - with the exceptions of Germany (45%) and Spain (55%). Since less than 3% are under 20, between 45% and 65% of disabled people in the Union are of working age according to these estimates and they make up 6 to 8% of the population aged 15 to 64. Disabilities are disproportionately represented among ethnic minorities and lower socio-economic populations.

Another characteristic of the population of people with disabilities found in many surveys is a low level of educational attainment – an important characteristic with implications for this evaluation. This is demonstrated by EUROSTAT data (1995) and Lauth et al., Helios (1996).

Such information is a useful starting point, but is not detailed enough to give an accurate picture of who could potentially participate in the programme in each of the countries. The following information was collected in an attempt to collect the information needed. As has been outlined in the previous chapter, the information providing global data on population statistics in relation to people with disabilities, whilst providing consistency, is not detailed or specific enough for the purposes of the evaluation. More focused elements of information were required from the participating countries.

The following areas of information for each of the countries was required for comparisons to be made:

**A. Population statistics**

- Population of country
- Population of country who have disabilities

**B. Higher education statistics (universities and all other institutes of higher education)**

- Number of HE students
- Number of HE students who have disabilities
- Number of HE teaching staff

- Number of HE teaching staff who have disabilities

### **C. Compulsory school phase statistics**

- Number of compulsory school aged children
- Number of compulsory school aged children who have SENs
- Compulsory school age phase teachers (including specialist and all special education teachers)
- Compulsory school age phase teachers who have disabilities
- Compulsory school non-teaching staff (non-teaching support staff, assistants etc)
- Compulsory school non-teaching staff who have disabilities

### **D. Adult education**

- Number of Adults in education
- Number of Adults in education who have disabilities
- Number of Adult education teachers/trainers
- Number of Adult education teachers/trainers who have disabilities

### **E. Other educational staff (i.e. administrators, policy makers, managers, support staff etc who may be eligible for Arion)**

- Number of other educational staff
- Number of other educational staff who have disabilities

All the baseline data collected from the countries involved is presented in full in **Appendix Eight** as separate tables relating to the five areas listed above. These tables (presenting data from the 18 countries) present the figures only. All sources for these figures can be found in Country Baseline Data, **Appendix Two**

### **A. Population statistics**

**Appendix Eight, Table 1** shows the population statistics for the 18 member countries of the European Agency. All countries provided data, the total number of citizens being 376,628,410. (This figure appears to be comparatively lower than the EUROSAT 2000 figures of 375,346,459 for the 15 EU member countries.)

Only 10 countries (Austria, Flemish Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, UK) were able to supply accurate figures on the numbers of people with registered disabilities in their countries. The total of people with disabilities for the 10 is 21,186,594.

The sub-total of the overall population for the 10 countries is 253,898,638. The percentage rate of people registered with disabilities can be estimated for these 10 countries as being 8.01%.

This is quite a low figure in comparison with other recognised statistics (i.e. see EUROSTAT, 12% and European Disability Forum 10%). There is also an extremely large spread of figures (and percentages ranges) presented by the countries.

A number of factors that could explain this situation. Firstly, the use of the term registered disabled means different things in different countries. For some countries it may exclude numbers of people with various types of disabilities who may within other interpretations be included in statistics, although for some countries (Austria for example) the definition gives rise to a quite high figure.

Secondly, the countries who were NOT included in this calculation include Denmark, Iceland and Finland, three countries which do not officially keep statistics on the population of people with disabilities, but who in practical terms recognise a far higher percentage of people as having recognised special needs than some other countries (for example, all three countries state they have in excessive of 8% of their school population as having recognised special educational needs). For countries such as Iceland, Finland and Denmark, it could be argued that the social, political and legal means of identifying and recognizing disability in these countries is reflected in the procedures for keeping detailed statistical data of this nature. All three countries reported that such official figures are not kept. (It should be noted here that this pattern was reflected in data gathering from Higher Education Institutions where similar information on the numbers of students and staff with disabilities within institutions was required and was not possible to collect).

For the French Community of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Greece, Iceland, Italy and Spain, no reliable figures were available.

It should be noted that Ireland, and Portugal used 10% as the figure for estimating the population of people with disabilities in their country.

The information available as a result of this survey appears to be highly variable and not reliable enough to make clear deductions. It is therefore preferable to make use of established figures in relation to the population of people with disabilities – in particular, the figure of 10% used by the European Disability Forum. If this generally accepted and applied

figure of 10% of the general population is used, then it can be estimated that approximately 36,620,000 people have recognized disabilities in the 18 countries surveyed.

## **B. Higher education statistics**

As can be seen from **Appendix Eight, Table 2**, all states were able to provide figures on the numbers of students and staff within higher education institutions – 12,992,781 and 1,021,453 respectively. For the purposes of this evaluation study, these figures represent the numbers students and staff who could potentially participate in the SOCRATES programme.

Only six countries (France, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and UK) were able to give a figure for the number of students with disabilities within higher education. In total, this figure is 104,047. It must be noted that none of the countries supplying this figure stated that it was accurate – all described ways they had in some way estimated the figure.

Only the Netherlands and UK, could give figures for the possible number of higher education teachers with disabilities – 1,126 in total. Again, this figures were calculated in different ways (please refer to notes in **Appendix Two**).

There are a number of possible factors for the fact that so little data is available with regards to the number of students and staff with disabilities in higher education. Readers are referred to the final discussion chapter as well as the following section of this chapter examining the Erasmus institutional survey for reasons reported by higher education institutions themselves. However, a number of important points be raised here in order to qualify these findings. Countries such as Germany stated that there were laws restricting the holding and sharing of such data in and by public institutions. Whilst not reported by other countries, it could be suggested that a similar situation may exist elsewhere.

In relation to the identification of staff with disabilities, most of the countries reported that employment laws in their country restricted the systematic identification of people with disabilities in such a clear way as it could be considered discriminatory.

A further explanatory factor can be drawn not only from the direct reports of the Agency Working Partners collecting this information, but also from higher education institutions completing the Erasmus Institutional survey. A number of countries (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, UK) were very clear in their assertions that the higher education entitlement of the country means that the identification of students with disabilities

is not considered necessary. These countries reported in various ways that students are entitled to access to support structures within institutions if they requested it. The emphasis is upon students self identifying as having disabilities resulting in learning needs and their rights to privacy prohibited the systematic recording of details of students' disabilities. (For an expansion upon this issue, readers may wish to refer to a case study interview with an Erasmus institutional co-ordinator – himself disabled – presented in **Appendix Fifteen**).

It must be clearly stated here that the actual participation rate of students with disabilities within the higher education sector is likely to be higher than the data presented in this study suggests. Comments from Working Partners supplying this baseline data and institutional representatives completing the Erasmus institutional survey leads to this assertion. Students with disabilities do participate within the higher education sector. For the reasons outlined above – and others as yet unknown – it is not possible to prove this assertion or quantify the exact rate of participation.

### **C. Compulsory school phase statistics**

The information relating to the compulsory school age phase, presented in **Appendix Eight Table 3**, in countries was easier to obtain with respect to the first 3 questions posed. All states were able to identify the number of children in compulsory school – giving a total of 48,012,270 – and the number of children with recognised special educational needs - 1,640,197. The figure of 3.3% overall corresponds with the mid-point estimates of earlier reports (for example Meijer (1998)) in terms of the percentages of children identified with serious special needs requiring systematic and possibly long term support. Meijer's work suggests that countries register within a range of less than 1% to more than 15% of pupils.

3,755,494 teachers were identified as being employed in the compulsory school age phase across the 18 countries responding. Of these 18, only Italy could identify a figure of 48,367 for the number of teachers with disabilities. It can be speculated that the same reasons (employment laws etc) as were identified in relation to higher education staff and students could have an effect here.

Again, if the conservative estimate of 10% of the population can be identified as having disabilities was used, the expected number of teachers with disabilities in schools across Europe would be approximately 381,000. In practice, this number is not likely to be accurate. A number of countries (the UK and Germany as examples that reported this fact) have teacher employment regulations that require medicals and certain levels of health and

mobility. This may preclude some groups of people registered as having disabilities from entering the profession.

Only three countries (Flemish community of Belgium, Norway and Netherlands) were able to identify the number of educational support staff working in schools – the total being 38,727. It should be pointed out here that the definitions of support staff used by the countries does not correspond and that for Netherlands and Norway, there are clear descriptions of how the figures are estimated based on limited sources.

No countries were able to identify the numbers of these educational staff with disabilities.

From this data it is clear that estimates and calculations regarding the potential participation rates of children with special needs within the SOCRATES programme are possible (and also legitimate given the accuracy of figures available). No such calculations can be made in relation to teaching or non-teaching staff with disabilities as accurate figures are not available.

#### **D. Adult education statistics**

The information presented in **Appendix Eight Table 4** regarding the numbers of adults in education within the 18 countries is also highly variable. 15 countries – all except Austria, Ireland and Luxembourg - were able to respond giving a total of 44,953,317. Of these only France, Norway, Sweden and the UK could give figures for the numbers of these adults with disabilities – 198,800. All of these countries stated these were estimated figures.

Only six countries (Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and UK) could give the numbers of teachers in adult education – 219,330. Only the UK could identify the number of these adult education teachers with disabilities – 1,500.

The 1995 data from EUROSTAT shows that in most countries the educational level of adults with disabilities is very low (Lauth et al., Helios 1996). It is not possible to make reliable deductions from the figures, but the lack of accurate information and references to similar studies leads to the conclusion that the participation rate of adults with disabilities in different forms of public education is disproportionately low.

#### **E. Other educational staff statistics**

As can be seen from **Appendix Eight Table 5**, only Ireland, could give estimates for the number of other educational staff working in the school system – 1,000 – although it was not possible to give a figure for the numbers of these staff with disabilities.

The lack of hard data relating to the actual numbers of staff in the adult educational and non-teaching education sectors poses serious problems for any attempt to make suggestions as to the potential participation rates of such staff within the SOCRATES programme. For some of the countries it was difficult to define and determine exactly who these groups of employees actually were. An issue here is that these sectors of provision may actually be subsumed under other headings or names (further, vocational or higher education).

It would be an interesting exercise to attempt to identify whether the actual participants within the Adult Education and Exchange of Information programmes are mainly employed within these identified sectors of educational provision or whether they are mainly based in other sectors (i.e. higher education and school sectors). Initial indications from the data collected in this study, seems to suggest that the participants within these actions mainly identify themselves as being employed within the compulsory school and higher education sectors respectively. The difficulties in actually identifying and attracting specific target populations for these actions encountered in this study may be replicated in the SOCRATES actions themselves.

#### 6.1 (ii) SOCRATES programme information

The table below provides an overview of the size of the different actions and activities within SOCRATES as determined by budget allocation. The figures are taken from the 1999 (ex post) budget.

**Table 9** 1999 Ex Post Budget

Action	1999 Allocation	Percentage of overall budget
<b>Erasmus</b>	<b>119,635,660</b>	<b>55</b>
Action 1: European dimension	34,700,000	15.95
Action 2: Student Mobility	84,935,000	39.05
<b>Comenius</b>	<b>36,700,000</b>	<b>16.89</b>
Action 1: School partnerships	26,500,000	12.19
Action 2: Intercultural education	5,100,000	2.35
Action 3: In-service training	5,100,000	2.35
<b>Lingua</b>	<b>31,150,000</b>	<b>14.35</b>
A: Co-operation programmes	3,250,000	1.5
B: In-service training	7,500,000	3.45



C: Assistantships	3,900,000	1.8
D: Instruments	3,900,000	1.8
E: Joint educational projects	12,600,000	5.8
<b>Open and Distance Learning (ODL)</b>	<b>7,900,000</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>Exchange of information</b>	<b>22,146,000</b>	<b>10.18</b>
Questions of common interest	1,700,000	.78
Arion	1,400,000	.65
EURYDICE	3,150,000	1.44
NARIC	206,000	.09
Adult Education	6,750,000	3.09
Complementary measures	3,930,000	1.8
Information	4,310,000	1.98
Evaluation	700,000	.35
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>217,531,660 Euro</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen from the above, the actions are presented in descending order – the activity receiving the most support (Erasmus) through Comenius, Lingua, Exchange of information, ODL, Adult Education to Complementary Measures.

For the purposes of this study, it is interesting to see the numbers of individual participants and projects related to people with disabilities within each of the actions (if possible). An exemplar of information from DG XXII of disability and special education related projects is reported in the document: **Rapport sur les activités de la DGXXII ayant une incidence sur l'intégration du principe d'égalité des chances pour les personnes handicapées** (1997). This document attempts to summarise the level of support (pilot co-operation projects, exchanges, studies and research) supported under centralised actions. A summary of the findings is presented in **Appendix Nine**.

This level of analysis –counting projects identifying disability issues; highlighting the numbers of individual participants with disabilities and the percentages of the budget allocation allotted to them - whilst interesting, misses an important point. It is also necessary to look at the actual participation rate in line with the potential participation rate (i.e. in relation to the populations of countries involved). Using this train of thought, it is anticipated that the incidence of participation of people with disabilities across actions, should be in line with the identified (or if necessary estimated) percentages of people with disabilities in the different education sectors that the actions relate to.

However, this particular document is important to refer to as it is one of the first attempts to identify the levels of participation evident in the SOCRATES programme. This overview document prepared by staff within the (then) Unit 3, Vocational Training and Policy, highlights an issue that was faced by the later study of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (1997) looking at the participation of students and pupils with SOCRATES: there is great difficulty in identifying projects, activities and individual person participation that involves people with disabilities as there is no means of formally recording such participation built into the programme structure.

This factor has had a direct bearing upon the quantity and quality of baseline information that could be collected for this evaluation study.

#### 6.1 (iii) Other Evaluators' information

A further source of relevant background information has been found within other evaluators' studies. The project information for Comenius, Lingua ODL and Adult Education supplied by EIESP part of the overall evaluating team. (Readers are referred to the full report of the Global Evaluation 2000). The EIESP entail analysis of data for these actions comes from examining statistics provided by the Technical Assistance Office to the DG Education and Culture and also from aspects of their own questionnaire surveys to project participants.

**Table 10** shows the number of projects funded each year per action considered (including new and renewed projects – projects renewed more than once are included every year they were renewed).

**Table 10 a** EIESP data

Action	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
<b>Comenius 2</b>	160	115	98	109	99	581
<b>Comenius 3.1</b>	47	115	163	132	155	612
<b>Lingua A</b>	0	31	38	40	33	142
<b>Lingua D</b>	34	43	41	31	0	149
<b>ODL</b>	33	69	54	60	68	347
<b>Adult Education</b>	19	57	63	76	79	294

Source: Technical Assistance Office statistics.

The table below shows information supplied by the EIESP as of 30/6/00 and gives an overview of the global evaluation sample size and response rate in relation to the actions covered.

**Table 10 b** EIESP data

Action	Sent	Received	%
Comenius 2	150	73	48.66
Comenius 3.1	169	72	42.60
Lingua A	46	21	45.65
Lingua D	38	19	50.00
ODL	74	33	44.59
Adult Education	88	48	54.54

The following table indicates the number of projects identified by respondents as having a disability of special education focus.

The types of disabilities indicated as being represented in projects are also listed, but it should be noted that some projects covered pupils or learners with a number of types of disabilities and the totals for the last six columns of the table do not correspond to the number of actual projects.

**Table 10 c** EIESP data

Action	No. of Projects in sample	Projects involving people with disabilities	Countries (with number of projects)	Disability types					
				Physical disability	Visually Impaired	Hearing impaired	Learning difficulties	Severe learning difficulties	Other
Comenius 2	73 (12.5%)	29 (<5%)	B(1), DK (1), F (5), GER (2), I (3), IRL (2), IS (1), N (1), P (1), S (2), SF (2), SP (6), UK (2)	3	5	4	17	9	6
Comenius 3.1	72 (11.75%)	22 (<3.6%)	A (2), F (3), GER (1), GR (1), I (2), P (2), S (1), SP (4), UK (6)	8	2	1	11	5	4
Lingua A	21 (14.8%)	4 (<2.9%)	GER (1), UK (3)	1	1	-	1	-	-
Lingua D	19 (12.75%)	3 (<2.1%)	GR, I, SP	-	-	1	-	-	1
ODL	33	7	B, D, DK, F, N, S, UK	1	1		1	4	-

	(9.5%)	(<2.1%)							
<b>Adult Education</b>	48 (16.3%)	6 (<2.1%)	I (3), S( 2), SP (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1

Summary of Global Evaluator's findings.

The study of Comenius 1 and Lingua E conducted by Deloitte and Touche (2000) found that out of the 13,002 pupils involved in their study, 4 % were pupils with recognised special educational needs. Form a sample of 1582 teachers, 25 had disabilities resulting from a physical or sensory impairment – approximately 1%.

Both of these findings support the general findings of the baseline data: the numbers of pupils with special educational needs involved in SOCRATES be identified as between 3 – 15% and the number of teachers with disabilities is well below the population average of 10%.

#### 6.1 (iv) Conclusions

Using a combination of the figures above and accepted reference sources, it could be argued that within the different sectors of education across Europe, between 3 – 15 % of compulsory school phase participants should have recognized special educational needs and between 8 to 10% of the higher, adult and professional training sectors should have recognised disabilities. In addition, between 8 – 10% of employees (teachers and other educational staff) across the sectors should have recognised disabilities.

However, using the numbers and estimates to deduct the participation rates of people with disabilities in certain sectors of education across Europe does not present what is known to be the reality of the situation. An example of this can be presented by examining the information available in relation to higher education participation rates. If an estimated figure of the expected numbers of students and staff with disabilities in higher education across Europe were to be calculated, it would have to be done so on the basis of approximately 10% of the population having disabilities. On the figures given above, the estimate of the numbers of people with disabilities would be 1,453,986 students and 100,365 staff. Experience leads to the conclusion that this is not the true situation – students with disabilities within the higher educations sector are under-represented for a variety of reasons.

The argument that people with disabilities are generally under represented in all education sectors except compulsory schooling and that people with disabilities are under represented in employment situations within the education field must be highlighted here.

A very useful resume of the problems evident in trying to identify the participation rates of people with disabilities in both the education and employment sectors, is provided in the as yet unpublished report on **Transition** From a review of key publications in this area, Soriano (in press) summarises the main problems raised in education and employment. These include in education a high percentage of education drop out, lack of formal qualifications, limited access and restricted choices to educational routes. For employment, apparent factors include high rates of unemployment, inaccessibility in workplaces and changing work and employment patterns to name a few. A full review of this work is presented in **Appendix Ten**.

It is not possible to identify useful or justifiable expected participation rates of people with disabilities within the different actions of SOCRATES based on the collection and collation of statistical data available in the countries carried out in this study. Any conclusions that were drawn from such an exercise would be ignoring the complexity of factors that dictate the actual involvement of people with disabilities in non-compulsory education.

If the information presented here as baseline data is looked at in line with the expected participation rates of people with disabilities in order to make any justifiable deductions, it can only sensibly be done in relation to Comenius project participation where the figures are far more reliable in relation to pupils with special educational needs in schools. Here the number of identified special education related projects would be expected to be in the range of 3 – 15%.

The collection of baseline data for use in this evaluation was an essential exercise. However, the data collected does not appear to reflect the reality of the situation across Europe, as there are too many questionable elements and far too much missing data to allow comparisons to be made or conclusions drawn.

## **6.2 Erasmus institutional survey**

The SOCRATES programme has particular provision within the Erasmus action to promote the mobility of students with disabilities. The Council Decision (1995) specifically states that

the needs of students with disabilities should be taken into consideration when the amounts of ERASMUS student mobility grants are determined. The SOCRATES Guidelines for Applicants (1998) outlines the fact that National Agencies can make special, discretionary awards for additional provision for students who require particular support to meet their needs. Provision is available within the National Agencies' Action 2. There is also an additional reserve fund available at Community level to support the costs of students with exceptional disability and special needs who require support in addition to the established maxima and cannot be accommodated within the existing system. It should be noted that these facilities appear to have a relatively low take up from Universities.

There are very clear procedure with guidelines for Commission, National Agencies, higher educational institutions and individual students to follow. As seen from the information provided below, funds are available and there is take up, but information about the nature or appropriateness of this take up is limited. One of the main points of rationale behind the decision to undertake the Erasmus institutional survey was the fact that the promotion of participation of students with disabilities within Erasmus is a priority area, but specific information regarding the target populations is not available.

This self contained element of the overall study is addressed to the issues of:

- Attempting to collect accurate figures on the potential population of students with disabilities who may be eligible for or who have received support
- Investigate whether there is a population of higher education teachers with disabilities who are already are or wish to get involved in Erasmus
- some of reasons why a low take up
- Collect baseline data applicable in the other elements of the study.

Erasmus is the largest (and possibly the most complex) of the SOCRATES actions. It includes much more of an institutional focus and involvement – within specific activities and administratively – than in other actions. It was therefore decided that it would be appropriate to try and obtain an overview of facts, ideas and opinions regarding the participation of people with disabilities in the action from an organisational perspective. The information collected include issues related to perceived motives of potential participants as well as perceived supporting or limiting factors. The information collected therefore informed other findings from later surveys.

The survey (please refer to **Appendix Three** for a full copy and section 5.2 for a full description of the methodology for distribution and analysis) was essentially quantitative in

nature. Information requested focused mainly on data numerical relating to participation in SOCRATES and ratings of issues and factors regarding participation of students with disabilities. There were a small number open questions where respondents could add additional comments to expand upon or qualify their responses. Respondents very rarely used these.

Of the 1,623 surveys distributed, 492 were returned, a return rate of 30%. The return rate varied considerable – from 15% (Netherlands) to 53% (Romania) (Please refer to **Appendix Twelve, Table 1**). The return rate alone, however, does not present an accurate picture of the nature of the data collected. Generally, there was a lot of “missing data”- questions and elements not completed by respondents. Patterns of questions that were difficult for respondents to address are apparent. There was a trend for certain requests for information – particularly in relation to the numbers of students and staff known to have disabilities – to elicit the response that no data was available. These patterns are highlighted in the overviews presented below. Whilst the definitions of the targets groups for the questionnaires – students and staff with sensory or physical disabilities – was clearly stated, there is no guarantee that these were used in the recording of information by respondents. In fact, some of the few additional notes point out that figures include all groups of registered disabled students, not just those with the targeted difficulties.

The reliability of the data in terms of identifying definite findings is problematic. However, some trends and issues can be identified from the data – some of these related to the problems faced in collecting the information. The sections below provide an overview of the findings in relation to specific issues: levels of participation, views of this participation and support available in institutions. General conclusions from the findings are presented in 6.2 (iv).

#### 6.2 (i) Levels of participation

The levels of participation of people with disabilities to be considered here falls into three categories: students with disabilities involved in mobility; staff with disabilities involved in mobility; staff employed at the institutions involved with SOCRATES generally.

Data provided by the Kassel team of Global Evaluators indicates that there are approximately 4,435 eligible institutions for Erasmus support (Please refer to **Table 2, Appendix Eleven**). Across the 30 participating countries, in 1997/98 there were 1,484

institutional contracts (new and including renewals); in 1998/99, 1625, and in 1999/2000, 1,766 institutional contracts for Erasmus were agreed upon.

The 492 institutions involved in this survey represents a sample of approximately 28% of the number of institutions receiving Erasmus support. From these institutions, in 1995/96 there were 2,369,162 students enrolled at the institutions. Of these, 7143 (0.3%) were identified as being disabled. During 1998/99, 2,829,607 students were enrolled. Of these, 13,510 (0.48%) were identified as having disabilities (Please refer to **Table 2, Appendix Twelve** for full figures).

Although the fact that many of these institutions stated they were unable to provide figures on the numbers of student with disabilities registered in their institutions, the figures show over an increase of over 50% in the numbers of students with disabilities being identified in the 3 year period whilst the overall population of students rose only very slightly. It is impossible to say for certain what the reasons for this are, but probable suggestions may be that institutions are generally becoming more open to students with disabilities (although in comparison to general population figures, these participation rates are still very low). A more systematic identification procedure of students being employed in institutions in order to meet special needs could be a further explanation.

The pattern of increase is seen across all of the countries - except Germany where there is an actual decrease evident. For some countries (Greece, Spain and some of the Central and Eastern European associated countries for example) huge increases –in excess of 500% rises - in the numbers of students with disabilities known to be enrolled at higher education institutions are evident. Although these numbers are very small, they require notice. It is also interesting to note that even countries with a strong tradition of support for students with disabilities within all sectors of education (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway) - although not as marked as in some countries - show the same pattern of increased numbers of students identified as having disabilities.

It must be pointed out that the figures here identify the numbers of known and reported students with disabilities enrolled at institutions. The actual figures may be very different and the suggestion from other research and further data collected for this study, is that the figure is likely to be higher as students do not – for a number of reasons – identify themselves as being disabled and institutions do not – again for a number of reasons – record such numbers. However, the argument that such participations rates are not in line with overall



population rates of potential students with disabilities, remains. The actual reasons for this finding require clarification and are deserving of a more detailed study in their own right.

The estimated numbers of students receiving Erasmus for support in 1995/96 and 1998/99 (the years targeted in this survey) were 160,470 and 199,171 respectively. (**Table 3 Appendix Eleven**). As can be seen from **Table 3, Appendix Twelve**, within this survey, in 1995/96, 13,044 students were supported by Erasmus. Of those, 21 (0.16%) had recognised disabilities. In 1998/99, the figure for participating students was 19,261, with 33 (0.17%) being students with disabilities.

Figures provided by the responsible desk officers of the Erasmus Mobility unit within DG Education and Culture outline the numbers of students with disabilities supported directly by the Commission (the levels of support allocated are also indicated). The total budgets available (in ECUs) for students with disabilities were:

1997/98 – 137,541

1998/99 – 119,260

1999/2000 – 150,000

The numbers of students supported and allocations approved by the Commission are shown in **Table 11**.

**Table 11** Erasmus support provided by DG Education and Culture

Country	Students 97/98	Amount	Students 98/99	Amount	Students 99/00	Amount
Austria	1	3,266	2	2,444.35	5	12,951
Belgium (Fl)	1	13,180	-	-	-	-
Belgium (Fr)	-	-	1	1,000	-	-
Finland	2	4,772	-	-	2	5045
France	5	31,540	3	13,991	5	19,832
Germany	7	20,370	7	28,815	6	14,086
Italy	2	2,171	4	6,683	1	50,000
Portugal	-	-	-	-	1	3,344
Spain	8	34,998	4	17,603	11	22,969
UK	2	22,000	4	17,400	1	2,751
Czech	-	-	-	-	1	450

Republic						
Latvia	-	-	-	-	2	9,350
Poland	-	-	-	-	4	3,580
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>132,297</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>87,936.35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>154,358</b>

It should be noted that the figures above represent the actual allocations given; requests for support submitted by National Agencies were different from actual allocations. For 1998/99, the requested figure was 100,426,35 (less than the budget allocation, but more than the actual amount awarded) and for 1999/2000 it was 168,296.51 (more than the budget allocation, but less than the actual amount awarded).

The Commission figures of numbers of students with disabilities supported by them falls in line with the figures found here – the numbers of students supported under SOCRATES have risen slightly. However, this rise is certainly not in line with the increase in identified numbers of students with disabilities registered at higher education institutions across Europe (and that figure itself is thought to be less than the true reflection of the numbers of students with disabilities in the higher education sector). None of the countries surveyed shows a dramatic rise in the numbers of students with disabilities supported with the exception of Austria where the figures were 0 for 1995/96 and 3 for 1998/99. The numbers of students with disabilities has remained fairly stable, which is not in line with the general disability population trend across Europe evident from this survey.

In **Table 3, Appendix Twelve** an interesting trend can be observed. The figures of students received supported by SOCRATES are 10,308 for 1995/96 with 2 (0.02%) being identified as having disabilities. For 1998/99 the figures are 16,243 with 9 (0.06%) being identified as having disabilities. The overall number of students received both with and without disabilities shows a greater increase than for students sent under SOCRATES. An explanation of this finding could be that far more institutions involved in the reception of students responded to the survey. A further possible – although not proven – trend could be that receiving institutions are far more likely to identify a student as having disabilities if they are called upon to make exceptional arrangements for that individual as part of their study visit (i.e. arrangements that the home university of the student either provides automatically or is not required to provide as the student is able within their home environment to cater for their own needs).

The numbers of students sent and received not supported by SOCRATES shows an interesting trend when compared with the numbers supported within the programme. For

1995/96 3,822 students were sent abroad not supported by SOCRATES, 10 (0.26%) of these having disabilities. In 1998/99 the figures were 7,261 overall with 40 (0.55%) having disabilities. The numbers of students received not supported by SOCRATES was 4,561 with 1 (0.02%) having disabilities and 8,856 with 5 (0.06%) having disabilities for 1995/96, 1998/99 respectively.

The identified numbers of students with disabilities being sent abroad is relatively lower within SOCRATES (for both years examined) than for other programmes. However, the number of students with disabilities received supported by SOCRATES and other study abroad programmes is the same. As over twice as many students are reported to be sent and received for study with SOCRATES support than with other programmes, the expected pattern would be that there should be both more students with disabilities sent and received under SOCRATES than with other programmes. However, this is not the reported case.

It should be noted that for both SOCRATES and other study abroad programmes, the rise in the numbers of students with disabilities received is not in line with the overall reported rise in the population of students with disabilities in the institutions. The numbers of students sent to study abroad not supported by SOCRATES is far more in line with the general population increased trend. Although the figures are small, it is a marked increase that is not evident within the SOCRATES programme. The possible reasons for this deserve some further examination – what are these other programmes; what policies do they have for students with disabilities studying abroad; what levels of funding are offered etc.

Overall, the percentage of students involved in all mobility programmes is far lower than would be anticipated from the general figures provided here and the available baseline data presented in the preceding section.

The mobility of teaching staff was also examined in the survey. **Table 4, Appendix Twelve** presents the numbers of staff with and without disabilities in the institutions surveyed. In total 156,083 teachers were identified as being employed at the institutions surveyed during the year 1999/00. Of these 586 (0.36%) were identified as having disabilities. It should be noted here that the explanations and possible reasons why such a figure is not altogether accurate, presented in relation to students, also need to be considered here. Not all institutions were able to provide figures for this question – some indicated that they did not, or were not allowed, to keep records as this contravened employment regulations. However, on the figures provided and with the qualifications outlined, it can be suggested that the population of teachers employed within the higher education sector is low.

**Table 5, Appendix Twelve** presents all data for teachers sent and received for both short duration and teaching fellowships. There are large increases in the numbers of teachers involved in the SOCRATES programme over the period covered by the survey. In 1995/1996, 632 higher education teachers were reported as being involved in study visits of a short duration and 110 teachers in fellowships. For 1998/1999, these figures were 2515 and 391 respectively – indicating a rise of over 200% for each programme.

However, the same degree of participation is not evidenced within the identified population of teachers with disabilities. In 1995/96, 1 (0.16%) member of staff with a disability was identified as being involved in a visit of short duration. During 1998/99, this figure was 6 (0.24%) which does not follow the rate of increase in participation in the programme generally. No staff with disabilities were involved in teaching fellowships during 1995/96 to 1998/99. This zero rate of participation is patently not in line with either the general growth of participation in those areas or the numbers of identified teachers with disabilities who would be eligible for participation in the activity.

In relation to the number of staff received under the programme, a similar pattern of participation rates can be seen. In 1995/96, 372 teachers were received for short duration study visits and 367 for teaching fellowships. In 1998/99, there were 1,244 and 654 teachers involved in the activities respectively. These numbers show an increase of approximately 300% and 100%. No staff with disabilities were received under the teacher fellowship activity in either of the years looked at. In 1995/96, 1 (0.27%) member of staff was received on short duration visit and in 1998/99, 2 (0.16%) were received. This shows a decrease – not a trend that is in line with the overall growth of the activity.

The figures for both staff sent and received under both activities are very small and no real patterns in relation to country involvement can be identified except in relation to Germany which sent in 1998/99 over half of the staff sent for short duration study visits.

Overall, it can be observed that the participation of teaching staff with disabilities in activities within the Erasmus action is very low. If the issue of identification of such teachers were resolved, a difference in the findings maybe evident, but the low rates of participation, particularly for the teaching fellowship activity, requires further investigation. The organisation of the actions and the demands – personal and professional – placed upon staff with disabilities may be of such a prohibitive nature, that participation in these actions is not felt to offer sufficient opportunities for development.

A further group of potential participants with disabilities within the Erasmus action are administrative staff directly involved in the programme's implementation. In 1999/00, 93,457 administrative staff were identified as working within the institutions surveyed. Of these, 1,253 (1.34%) were identified as having disabilities. The percentages of administrative staff with disabilities covered a wide range across the countries. Some (Germany, Ireland) identified over 3.3 % of staff as having disabilities; others (Austria, Czech Republic, UK,) between 1.5 and 2%. Rates as low as 0.20% (Belgium, Spain, Sweden) were evident for countries that identified some staff as having disabilities. All of these figures can be found in **Table 4, Appendix Twelve**

A point that must be noted here was the number of institutions again reporting that the figures for staff with disabilities were not recorded. In examining the spread of such responses, it is interesting to note that as many comments to this effect were recorded – in proportion to the overall number of returned questionnaires from the countries - from all countries, including those with and without strong traditions of inclusion of people with disabilities in employment.

1,261 administrative staff were directly involved in the implementation of the SOCRATES programme during 1999/00. 15 of these staff were identified as having disabilities (1.12%). Whilst this participation rate is far higher than that of the rate for teachers (albeit of a very different nature), it is still low in comparison to the overall numbers of administrative staff with disabilities identified in the institutions and also overall employment population statistics.

Finally, it should be noted that within the survey, there was no means of recording the participation of teaching staff with disabilities involved in preparing students for mobility or working with colleagues or students received under the SOCRATES' programme. This form of participation is similar in nature to that of participation of administrative staff and could be an interesting area for future investigation.

#### 6.2 (ii) Views of participation

In addition to factual data on the numbers of people involved in the institutions generally and the SOCRATES programme in particular, respondents to the survey were asked to give their views on different aspects of the participation of people with disabilities in the programme activities.

The first question asked respondents to give a description of the participation rate of students with disabilities in their institution. (All the information for this aspect can be found in **Table 6, Appendix Twelve**. 358 respondents completed this rating. Their responses were:

Excellent	9
Good	12
Average	20
Limited	59
No participation	269

Respondents were also asked to rate the participation of staff with disabilities in the same way. 341 respondents answered this question:

Excellent	8
Good	12
Average	16
Limited	26
No participation	294

The spread of responses was even across the countries for both of these ratings. No country in particular indicated that the participation rate was more or less satisfactory in proportion to others. In general, the responses show overwhelmingly that most respondents felt there was little or no participation of both students and staff with disabilities within the programme.

When asked to identify possible reasons for these rates of participation, respondents were far more able to respond in relation to students than to staff with disabilities. (All replies are presented in **Table 7, Appendix Twelve**). 310 replies were received in relation to possible reasons for the low level of participation amongst students with disabilities. These responses broke down into:

Lack of information	44
Not relevant to study/work area	52
Difficulties in completing/submitted applications	7
Language difficulties	27
Insufficient finances to meet personal needs	61
Difficulties in making additional arrangements	62

Specialist support not available 57

Some written comments alongside or in place of “none” responses were mainly expressions that there were no students with disabilities identified in the institution.

When asked to identify potential reasons for non-participation in relation to staff, fewer responses were received – 191 in total, which broke down into:

Lack of information	32
Not relevant to study/work area	48
Difficulties in completing/submitted applications	4
Language difficulties	18
Insufficient finances to meet personal needs	25
Difficulties in making additional arrangements	31
Specialist support not available	33

This lower response rate suggests that it was far harder for respondents to identify the reasons why staff did not participate – a number of written notes and comments testify to the fact that there was little experience of staff participation upon which to make judgements.

The pattern of responses in relation to both staff and students with disabilities is not similar. The relevance to the individual’s work area was prioritised for staff, with specialist support not being available and difficulties in making arrangements rated quite highly. For students, difficulties in making adequate arrangements was prioritised with insufficient finances and specialist support not being available seen as almost as much of an issue.

Across the countries, there was an even spread of types of responses. There were no patterns evident in terms of one country responding in a way that seemed to suggest – for example - more of a lack of information than was as experienced by institutions in other countries.

### 6.2 (iii) Organisational support

Respondents were asked to identify whether their institutions provided different forms of support for students with disabilities. The responses were extremely broad and although, not all respondents completed this question, approximately 70% responded to this question. Approximately, two thirds of respondents indicated that their institutions provided some form

of support in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. (*Table 8, Appendix Twelve* presents this data in full). Respondents were able to indicate from a range of options, the system and type of support their institution offered. Many respondents gave multiple replies, which gives such a high response in terms of the total number of support units etc available in the institutions. The spread of replies reveals however, that across Europe dedicated support for students with disabilities is apparent and varied.

The support systems for students were identified as:

None	149
Support Co-ordinator	113
Staff networks	51
Support Unit	65
Student networks	42
Other	64

Proportionally, the countries from Central and Eastern Europe offered less support structures within their institutions. France, Italy and Denmark also identified proportionally a high number of institutions indicating there was no formal support for students with disability. The form of support mentioned most often was a support co-ordinator although it must be pointed out that many respondents indicated that their support system involved a co-ordinator and other forms of support.

The different types of support provided were identified as:

Educational/learning	153
Technical	163
Counselling	173
Advisory	152
Other	52

Again, most respondents indicated that their systems provided a mix of types of support – these figures should be read as coming from far fewer numbers of institutions than the totals alone portray.

Counselling and technical support in the way of aids and resources was indicated as the most frequently made available. The respondents addressing this question had all previously



identified themselves as providing support and no real country based patterns are evident. From the limited information provided here, it was not possible to identify how these support systems are made available to visiting students or how much specialist support staff are involved in the work of supporting students sent or received in the programme. This would be a very useful area for follow up investigation.

#### 6.2 (iv) Conclusions

The potential difficulties in obtaining some of the requested data, can be possibly identified when the respondents to the questionnaire are identified. All respondents were asked to indicate their main role in the institution. Results (all of which are given in full in **Table 9, Appendix Twelve**) are presented below in summary:

Erasmus Co-ordination	325
Teaching	78
Administration	165
Disability Support	23
Other	1 (unidentified).

(Please note, over 70 respondents identified themselves as carrying out dual roles).

The questionnaire was distributed to named Erasmus co-ordinators in participating institutions and in the main, these were the people who completed the questionnaire. The information regarding general participation within the programme was obviously readily available to Erasmus co-ordinators and administrators. However, a significant number indicated that they did not have access to information relating to the numbers of students with disabilities. Either this information was not available in the institution or it was held by someone else. Conversely, replies from teaching and disability support staff provided more detailed information regarding the numbers and support available for students with disabilities, but these responses did not provide as accurate a picture of overall participation in the programme. A limited number of replies indicated that they had been completed by a team of institutional staff – these few (under 20) provided a very complete picture of participation of people with disabilities in institutions. This finding indicates that the sorts of information requested, required a co-ordinated approach to collection.

The pattern of fragmentation of information evident in the data collection may reflect a pattern of fragmentation of services experienced by students with disabilities participating or

potentially participating within SOCRATES. Erasmus co-ordination and support and disability services may not work as part of co-ordinated team in all institutions.

The countries that tend to receive the most students and staff within the programme are usually consistently the same ones. The Global Evaluators' data suggests that the most popular receiving countries for students are France, UK, Germany, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. The data here concurs with Germany and France being evidently the most popular. In terms of students with disabilities, the pattern is similar – the UK and France receive the highest number of students with disabilities.

For teachers, the Global Evaluators' data identifies Germany, UK, France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands as receiving the highest number of staff. The data from this study suggests that for teaching fellowship, France attracts far more than other institutions (an anomaly of the responses from three institutions which recorded very high responses for this question) followed by Germany. For visits of a short duration Germany, France, Finland and the UK were most popular. For staff with disabilities, Austria, Finland and Germany were the only reported hosts.

The potential reasons for this need examination. The patterns could be due to the courses and teaching areas undertaken by participants i.e. modern language specialists are far more likely to be involved in visits to France, Germany or the UK – whether they have disabilities or not. The question of established partnerships also arises – visits within the confines of the institutional contract mean students and staff are limited to the choice of institution by the number and range of partners involved. As the countries mentioned are reportedly the most frequent contract partners, this is also a factor.

When comparing the pattern of countries receiving students and staff with disabilities with those reporting high numbers of specialist support services, there does not appear to be a clear relationship. Similarly, the most popular countries are not those with long traditions of including people with disabilities higher educational provision. It seems likely therefore that students and staff with disabilities are directed in their choice of receiving institution by the same factors as their non-disabled peers. This deduction requires a much closer examination and will be returned to in this study.

Information supplied by the responsible desk officers of the Erasmus Mobility unit within DG Education and Culture points out that apart from the budget envelope for support for the participation of students with disabilities, there is no “quantitative objective” for the

programme in relation to participation rates. This fact is perhaps reflected in the fact that whilst requests for support for students from National Agencies were higher, the special reserve budget allocations have not been spent suggesting a hesitancy and perhaps lack of clarity as to the direction of the budget on the part of National Agencies and the Commission representatives. Such clarity can only be achieved by the consideration of detailed and accurate information on the needs of students – and staff – with disabilities within the programme.

The clear impression from this survey – and readers should note this is supported by later information from disabled students taking part in later surveys and case studies – is that the sort of information required by the National Agencies and the Commission representatives is not available. Very clear basis information on numbers and supports requirements coupled with details of support facilities in participating institutions.

This sort of detailed information is of the precise nature that many institutions - and students and staff within them – themselves require if they are going to make adequate judgements about the feasibility of students and staff with disabilities being involved in the SOCRATES programme.

A final question posed in the survey asked whether named people from within institutions would be interested in providing follow-up, more detailed information regarding the experiences of staff and students with disabilities. 208 “volunteers” were recorded. This high rate of interest in the area suggest that the issue of meeting the special needs of people with disabilities in higher education institutions is being taken very seriously.

In conclusion, when the findings of this survey are looked at in relation to the two original questions posed for the evaluation, the following responses are evident:

- do people with disabilities participate within the Erasmus actions? Yes, to a limited extent and whilst this extent is increasing for students with disabilities, the participation of staff is very low.
- what are the potential reasons for these participation rates? This is difficult to pinpoint, but the areas of more support in terms of information, finance and specialist resources are identified by institutional level representatives as being most significant.

### 6.3 Individual participants in Erasmus, Lingua and Arion

This section and the following one are based solely on the questionnaire data received from programme participants. The thrust of the analysis is an attempt to identify the main reasons for participation and factors that support or hinder that participation. As questionnaires were sent in the main to a random sample of respondents, replies were received from people with, but more often without disabilities. As a major part of the rationale was to compare the motives and participation behaviours of participants with and without disabilities, all information received is presented below. Specific information from respondents with disabilities is clearly marked.

Information is not presented according to actions, but rather data from the various actions is grouped into themes or related issues. The information here is taken from database analyses of responses. A number of statistical tables have been prepared to accompany this text overview of the trends and issues emerging from the data. These tables can be found in **Appendix Thirteen, Tables 1 – 4**. They show all responses given in relation to every option of the questions posed and readers should consult these tables with clear reference to the original questionnaires for the actions that are presented in **Appendix Four**.

An indication of the numbers of responses to questions is shown by **N**.

#### 6.3 (i) Respondents

The students participating in Erasmus are on average 24 years old (range 21 to 31; N = 48). The teachers in Erasmus (N = 15) have on average 16 years teaching experience, with a range of 4 to 30 years. Teachers in Lingua have on average 13 years experience, ranging from 1 to 36 years. In Arion the average teaching experience is unknown.

Two thirds of the students in Erasmus and the participants in Arion are male. The teachers in Erasmus are more evenly divided between both sexes, whilst those in Lingua are mostly female (81%).

Most of the Erasmus students are involved in business studies (39%) and social sciences (17%). There are no students from the medical or physical sciences. Two thirds of the Erasmus students are fourth grade or above.

The Erasmus teachers and the Arion participants are in daily life involved in respectively teaching or student support and in education management or advisory functions. Almost all Lingua participants work as secondary education teachers.

Three of the students participating in Erasmus report having special needs due to a sensory or physical disability. Only one of them specified the impairment. This participant is blind. None of the participants in the other Actions reported having special needs.

### 6.3 (ii) Motives

The theoretical framework for the study (please refer to chapter 4) is based on a *consumer*, active decision-making approach. Potential participants are regarded as independent, critical consumers making rational decisions on how to spend their time, how to make their organisation benefit and how to take part in SOCRATES Actions. It is assumed that the decision to participate in the programme depends largely on the perceived advantages and disadvantages by potential participants.

The Erasmus students regard learning about another culture and learning another language (both 80%) as the main advantages. In addition they see learning from other teachers, being away from home some time and studying abroad as a positive point for their curriculum vitae, all as relevant advantages (all about 30%).

The teachers in Erasmus and the participants in ARION indicate that having contact with other colleagues, learning about another educational system, and developing networks and contacts (all about 75%) as important personal advantages of working with European partners. Following that, the ARION respondents also regard experiencing another culture as a relevant aspect (66%).

The participants in Lingua have a different view of the advantages of involvement. They mention having contact with other colleagues, improving language skills and learning new skills (all about 80%) as important assets of the Action.

With regards to the main disadvantages of participation, the students and the teachers in Erasmus and in Lingua mention that working in another country is expensive (respectively, 54, 47 and 55%). For some of the teachers in Erasmus and ARION participants it is also difficult to organise international co-operation (both 35%). All the other potential

disadvantages presented in the questionnaires (see **Appendix Four**) are generally not viewed as important to the respondents.

Research has shown that people's personal attitudes are influenced by the opinions in their reference group. The majority of the respondents feel that their reference group regard studying in another country as important for personal and professional development. The reference group of teachers in Erasmus, Lingua and the Arion participants all hold learning from other teachers as the second most important factor.

These factors are not the same for the reference group for students in Erasmus. They are perceived as seeing the programme as a great opportunity to learn another language (73%) and as an experience to report in a curriculum vitae (38%).

### 6.3 (iii) The Actions

Both the Erasmus students and teachers learned about the SOCRATES programme via information from colleagues and from the own university. The participants in Lingua relied upon information from colleagues and on publicity material; those in Arion on information from professional organisations and on information provided by their own institutes. Very few used the EU web site or their National Socrates Agency as their first source of information.

About a third of the Erasmus teachers and the ARION participants investigated other possibilities to work in another country before applying for a SOCRATES Action. Very few of the Erasmus students and the Lingua participants have shown interest in other options to study abroad. Only four out of the 92 participants in these actions found it difficult to gather information about the Action they were interested in.

All of the Lingua and most of the Arion participants (75%) and the Erasmus students (68%) wrote the application to study abroad themselves. 62% of the Erasmus teachers had someone to do this for them. Only a few express having had difficulties in writing the application, mostly due to language problems or not being able to use a readable format for the blind. Only four participants were not selected in the Action the first time they applied.

All Arion participants have been involved in study visits. The participants in Lingua were mostly involved in Lingua B (82%), the rest in Lingua C.

Germany, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom are the countries most selected by the Erasmus students and teachers. The Arion participants clearly favoured Italy. For Lingua, reliable data on the countries selected is not possible to ascertain. In total 74% of all respondents selected the partner countries themselves, the rest has mainly been selected by the institute or university of the respondent. 50% of the respondents selected the host institution as a free choice and 34% had to work with their institute's choice of a host.

#### 6.3.(iv) Personal special needs.

Apart from three of the students in Erasmus, none of the participants has reported having special needs due to a disability. One of the three states that it has been difficult to fully participate in all the educational activities during the study visit, two reports not having been able to fully participate in all social activities in this period because of difficulties in mobility. One of them applied for an additional mobility grant, which was received. Despite these problems all three report that the host university has been able to meet all of their educational needs.

#### 6.3 (v) Outcomes

The teachers participating in Erasmus and the participants in Arion were asked to describe the outcomes of the visit. Many of the participants describe the outcomes in terms of products such as teaching and learning materials. Following that they describe outcomes in terms of personal development: understanding, knowledge, contacts, friendship and social skills.

About one third of the participants in Erasmus have been able to consider the special needs of end users in disseminating the project outcomes and products. These participants have improved existing teacher materials and made use of different formats for presenting materials. Less than one third of participants in Arion had considered the possible needs of end users.

An element of the outcomes of participation in the Actions is also maintaining contacts with the people met during the study visits. A total of 78 per cent of all participants still maintain contacts with colleagues and friends, the majority of the Erasmus students even report having frequent contacts.

The participants in the Actions described here are generally very positive about participating in SOCRATES. They are mainly positive in their assessments of the programme and state that it is easy to make an application, that the objectives are clear, that it is not an Action with a lot of regulations and limitations, that it is a good means to learn from colleagues, that the Action has appropriate practical support, that it supports learners' learning, that it stimulates professional development, and that it helps learning about other educational systems. The

Lingua participants generally (90%) feel that it is an Action with appropriate financial support. Only a few of the Erasmus students (around 20%) and a third of the Erasmus teachers (33%) regard the funding as insufficient.

The students in Erasmus report having learned a lot, improved their language skills and their understanding of the culture in partner countries (50 and 77%). The other participants generally agree with that and add having been able to make new professional contacts (45 - 60%). None of the participants in this study ended participation prematurely.

Overall the participants rate the Actions as a positive opportunity to work and study for a period of time in another country (83% 'good' or 'excellent'). A considerable number of the participants (36%) have suggestions to improve the programme. These include:

- Making regulations about amongst other things duration of the visit more flexible,
- Increasing the financial support
- Widening the promotion of the Actions
- Arrange housing for Erasmus students
- Develop a website with all the products of the exchanges.

### 6.3 (vi) Special needs perspective

An important aspect of this specific evaluation is the question of whether participants with and without special needs arising from a disability have different motives in participation. The relies relating to actions described above included very few participants with disabilities. Due to the small number of participants with disabilities it is difficult to establish similarities or differences between people with or without special needs. On the limited evidence, it appears that that the respondents with special needs tend to regard being away from home far less of an advantage as their non-disabled peers and mention being away from home and the need for special services more often as disadvantages.



The opinions of the three Erasmus students with disabilities are quite comparable to those of their non-disabled colleagues, in that they hold the view that the Action does not have an appropriate level of funding. One difference is that they – unlike their non-disabled colleagues - stress having made new professional contacts as being something that is important as an outcome of their participation.

### 6.3 (vii) Non-participants

To really appreciate the opinions and experiences of participants with and without disabilities in SOCRATES it is necessary to be able to compare these with the opinions of non-participants with disabilities. As part of the evaluation design separate data gathering has been planned focussing on this group. Since non-participants are not registered or clearly identifiable as having disabilities, it has been extremely difficult to trace them within the time period available. In total, only three non-participants with disabilities answered a questionnaire in the time period.

One of them works as university teacher, one is university student and one works as representative of disabled students. All three have special needs due to a impairment and have special services provided to them by work or study organisation. None of them has ever studied in another country. All three have heard about the SOCRATES programme.

They see the same potential advantages as most of the participants described above, but they hesitate about participating in the programme because they state :

- It will be difficult to organise a stay elsewhere
- They need special services that are hard to get in another country.

Their reference group stresses the value of participation for personal and professional development; think it is important to learn about other educational systems; worry that disability needs may not be properly met and think it costs a lot of money.

Suggestions to improve the accessibility to study abroad programmes focus on providing special counsellors to advise people with disabilities on courses of action. The respondents think it is important to appoint people with disabilities in these positions because they know what they are talking about. One of the respondents expects problems with health insurance funds by staying for a longer period in another country and worries that it will be difficult to find a broker for specialised medical demands. People with special needs may need specialist equipment: depending on the system in a person's home country, it may or may

not be possible to take and use this overseas. This obviously has implications for participation in SOCRATES.

### 6.3 (viii) General conclusions

Whilst the size of the sample – particularly in relation to people with disabilities – is relatively small, it is possible to highlight some issues and trends emerging that require further consideration.

Firstly, there are obvious differences in the motives for participation between, but not within the actions. Participants within actions had relatively similar views on why they would benefit from participation. The numbers were very small, but these motives were not so different for participants with disabilities.

Similarly, the perceived disadvantages for participants with and without disabilities seem consistent – funding levels and the difficulties in making practical arrangements. For the participants with disabilities the difficulties in making practical arrangements were paramount - it needs to be highlighted that this factor is seen by non-participants in the programme as the biggest potential disadvantage.

The experience of most of the participants was positive – this included students with disabilities. A point to stress here was the obvious need for participants with disabilities to make additional, “proactive” arrangements – even in relation to accessing information about the programme and being able to complete forms etc – so as to ensure their participation could happen and that it would be positive.

Promotion of the programme in formats and methods that are accessible for people with disabilities appears to be a factor for consideration – both in relation to attracting participants and also disseminating the outcomes of the programme. Access to information in appropriate formats appears to be a supporting factor for participants with disabilities. The possibility of providing expert advice and information during participation seems to be a further suggestion for programme development worthy of note.

## **6.4 Project participation in Comenius, Lingua, ODL, Adult Education and Exchange of Information**

As with individual participants, all data received was collated into statistical tables. These are presented in **Appendix Fourteen, Tables 1 – 5**. They should be read with full reference to the data collection questionnaires.

### 6.4(i) Respondents

The in total 48 Comenius and the 49 Lingua project participants in the sample study have been involved in education on average for respectively 21.7 and 20.3 years (ranging from less than 1 to 40 years). The participants answering the Comenius, Lingua and the Exchange of Information questionnaires are fairly equally divided between both sexes. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Adult Education respondents were mainly male (respectively 100% and 71%).

Except for one of the respondents in Lingua, one in Exchange of information and one in Adult Education, none of the project participants has reported having special needs due to a disability.

The project participants in Comenius work mainly as class teachers (71%), as senior school management or in support organisations. About a third of the classroom teachers replying are involved in educating pupils/students with special educational needs. Most respondents work in schools for primary education (29%) or in schools for secondary education (44%). The size of these schools varies between with up to 2800 pupils / students. The number of pupils / students with special needs in the respondents' schools is relatively high.

Most (over 70%) of the Lingua respondents work as foreign language teaching specialists in secondary education schools, in special education or institutes for higher education. Many indicated they had other duties as well, such as international links or school management. Over 15% stated special educational support was their main role. The project participants in ODL are mainly involved in adult and higher education, those in Exchange of Information in school education and those in Adult Education, within the adult education sector.

The majority of the Comenius and the Exchange of Information respondents have not been involved in EU community action programmes before (78% and 66% respectively). Those who have, participated in other Comenius projects, in Helios or in other Exchange of

Information projects. The respondents in Lingua, ODL, and Adult Education are generally more experienced: about half of them have been involved in previous projects.

#### 6.4.(ii) Motives

In applying the consumer, active decision-making approach the decision to participate in the SOCRATES programme is regarded as depending largely on the perceived advantages and disadvantages by potential participants. The respondents in Comenius and Lingua generally regard having contact with other colleagues, learning about another educational systems, experiencing another culture, improving language skills and developing networks and contacts as important personal advantages of working with European partners.

These same factors appear important motives for most of the ODL, Exchange of Information and Adult Education participants. Within ODL, improving teaching skills and -learning new skills and approaches and in Exchange of Information improving promotion prospects are also regarded as relevant aspects.

In relation to perceived disadvantages the increase of their workload, difficulties in organising international co-operation and the additional costs of participation are stressed as key influencing factors. Both the respondents with and without disabilities in Exchange of Information and Adult Education report as a disadvantage that it is difficult within these projects to arrange the special services that are needed.

Respondents who have been involved before in other EU community action programmes have the same positive view of the advantages of participation as the 'new' participants - but the 'experienced' participants see less disadvantages. They make light of the difficulties such as organising the co-operation, the language problems and the increased workload. This is to be expected as people with negative experiences are not likely to participate for a second or third time. However, compared to the 'new' participants, a higher percentage of the respondents previously involved in EU programmes hold the view that participation is expensive.

Research into consumer behaviour reveals that personal motives to buy a product or a service are influenced by the opinions in their reference group. The project participants in Comenius, Lingua, ODL and Exchange of Information think that their friends/family and colleagues regard involvement in international co-operation as important for personal and professional development, an opportunity to learn about another culture, a good means to

learn from other colleagues and as an activity that takes a lot of organisation. The ODL, Exchange of Information and Adult Education respondents add that it is also seen as important to be involved in innovation, research and development, but that their reference group does not like being separated from them because of study and work visits elsewhere.

The project participants in general act on behalf of their organisation and their pupils / students. Therefore, it is not only their own personal motives that are relevant here, but also the perceived advantages and disadvantages they see in participation for the pupils / students in their organisation. The majority of the respondents in Comenius (69%) regard having contact with pupils/students from other countries and the chance to experience other cultures as valuable to their pupils / students. In Lingua, ODL, Exchange of Information and Adult Education it is stressed that their learners have access to new learning experiences, expertise and resources not otherwise available.

As negative aspects of the participation the project participants report that participation is expensive and resulted in budget cuts elsewhere in their organisation and that it is difficult to transfer the outcomes of the project into everyday work with the pupils / students in their organisation.

#### 6.4 (iii) The Actions

Out of the 48 Comenius respondents returning the questionnaire 32 were involved in Action 1, two in Action 2, eight in Action 3.1 and six in both Action 1 and 3.1. The majority of the Lingua respondents have been involved in Action E, the joint projects. Out of the nine respondents in Exchange of Information four were involved in 'Elaboration of studies' and two in 'Implementation of operational activities' (3 non-responses). The seven ODL participants were all involved in Activity A. Half of the Adult Education participants were involved in 'Key issues' and the rest in 'New Technologies'.

The respondents not involved in EU community programmes before, learned about the SOCRATES action via information from the National Socrates Agencies, from professional organisations or from colleagues. In Comenius, Lingua and Adult Education, very few (less than 10%) mentioned the EU web site as their first source of information, in ODL and Exchange of Information, this source was used by respectively 43 and 33% of the respondents. The respondents involved before in EU community action programmes got information mainly by professional organisations and publicity material and had relatively less contacts with their National Socrates Agencies.

Before applying for a Comenius project, about 20% of respondents did investigate other possibilities to work with colleagues in other countries (examples mentioned here were ARION, European Agency networks or Leonardo). A third of the respondents in Lingua and over 50% of the project participants in ODL and Adult Education also investigated other options. None of the Exchange of Information respondents investigated other possibilities.

Except for seven out of 120 total respondents, none of the project participants found it difficult to gather information about the Action they were interested in.

In total, 80% of the project participants responding to the questionnaire wrote the application for the project themselves. The majority of them had no difficulty in writing the application. A few report that it was “a lot of paperwork” and that they had language / translation problems. Over 90 % of the projects were selected for the Action the first time that an application was submitted. A few report that they were not selected at the first attempt due to formal mistakes they made, an insufficient number of partners (Adult Education) or due to budget problems. Three quarters of the project participants also completed the financial monitoring forms for the project themselves. Four Comenius (11%), 12 Lingua (31%), four ODL (57%), one Exchange of Information (11%) and four Adult Education (57%) project participants had difficulties in completing these forms. They report having a lack of experience in accurately completing the forms, needing to have information phrased differently and finding the forms too detailed and in general, rather complicated.

In most of the projects, partners numbered on average of 3 to 4 countries. The vast majority of projects had between one and six partner countries. The UK, Germany and Italy were the countries most often noted as partners. More than half of the respondents selected the partner countries themselves, 13 % relied on National Agency support, another 16% had to work with the only countries available / interested and the rest has been selected by the institute of the project participant. Making contacts with potential partners was largely based on personal contacts and on information from the National Socrates Agencies. PartBase as a means to make contacts has played a minor role for the respondents in this study.

The main focus of the involvement in the SOCRATES programme was identified by the respondents in Comenius as intercultural education (46%), development of the European dimension and culture (54%) and -raising the achievement of children with special needs (48%) (respondents could choose more than one answer). The respondents in Comenius also mention developing tools and approaches for improving equal opportunities, raising

school achievement, developing approaches to evaluate quality in education and school improvement (each about 18%).

The foci of projects in Lingua were extremely diverse although all linked to European and or cultural issues. Only one was clearly identifiable as a specifically focussed special education project. In ODL, the focus was mainly on the practical use of ICT, virtual networks, in-service training of teachers, micro economic theory in mobility and on inclusion.

Over half of the Comenius projects and approximately one third of the Lingua projects included an element of considering special educational needs. Six out of the seven ODL, four out of five Exchange of Information projects and five out of the seven Adult Education projects report having an element of considering special needs in their work.

#### 6.4 (iv) Personal special needs

Whilst a considerable number of the projects have elements focusing upon raising the achievement of children with special needs (see above), **Table 12** shows that half of the Lingua projects, a third of the projects in Comenius and Exchange of Information and 14% of the projects in Adult Education report that from their own institution or school no pupils / students with special educational needs were involved in the project. Generally Comenius and Adult Education have the most pupils / students with special educational needs from their own school participating in the project.

**Table 12** Pupils/students with Special Educational Needs in projects

	<b>Comenius</b>	<b>Lingua</b>	<b>ODL</b>	<b>Adult Ed</b>	<b>Exchange</b>
None	28%	52%	0	14%	33%
< 10 %	18%	23%	56%	28%	33%
10 – 30 %	15%	7%	28%	30%	17%
> 30 %	39%	18%	16%	28%	17%

(Note: the number of responses to this question per action was 43, 44, 7, 7 and 6 respectively)

The information in **Table 13** reveals that a considerable number of the partner institutions in Comenius, Adult Education, ODL and Exchange of Information had special needs pupils /

students participating in the project. Only within the ODL did all of the partner institutions have learners with special educational needs.

**Table 13** Pupils/students with Special Educational Needs in project partners' organisations.

	<b>Comenius</b>	<b>Lingua</b>	<b>ODL</b>	<b>Adult Ed</b>	<b>Exchange</b>
<b>None</b>	18%	57%	0	17%	43%
<b>&lt; 10 %</b>	24%	25%	40%	17%	14%
<b>10 – 30 %</b>	16%	5%	20%	49%	0
<b>&gt; 30 %</b>	42%	13%	40%	17%	43%

(Note the number of responses to this question per action was. 43, 40, 5, 6, 7)

As described earlier, only three of the questionnaire respondents had special needs as a result of a disability, but 12% of the projects overall involved teachers / staff from partner institutions with a physical or sensory disability.

A limited percentage (9%) of the respondents made a preparatory visit to specifically check the suitability of support and resources for participants with disabilities. Very few of the respondents (7%) report pupils / students and/or colleagues having difficulties in mobility due to a disability or not being able to participate fully in all the activities of the project. In most cases the (partner) organisations were able to meet the pupils / students and / or colleagues special needs. The problems reported are all difficulties related to mobility.

4% of the respondents received additional financial aid to support the participation of people with special educational needs. One Adult Education respondent with special needs was not aware of the possibility to apply for extra support.

#### 6.4.(v) Outcomes

The outcomes of the projects can be divided into two categories. Many of the participants describe the outcomes in terms of products as: books, CD ROM's, magazines, newspapers, videos, films, web sites, software, curriculum, learning materials and reports. Alongside these products, the Comenius respondents in particular describe the outcomes in terms of personal development: understanding, knowledge, contacts, friendship and social skills. The production of outcomes of the project using different media and formats was achieved by



almost all of the ODL projects, two thirds of the Lingua projects, about half of the Comenius and Adult Education projects and none of the Exchange of Information projects.

However, the use of different formats must be seen alongside the fact that a very limited number of the respondents have been able to consider the special needs of end users in disseminating the project outcomes and products. Only these few participants have given special attention to accessibility to products with people with special needs. This had been achieved through changing the layout of materials in order to enable pupils with special needs to use these, a few others produced booklets and videotapes, made a circulating exhibition or organised a conference.

The majority of the respondents (85%) maintained contact and worked with the partner organisations after completion of the project.

The participants are generally very positive about participating in SOCRATES. In particular, they think that the objectives are clear, that it supports learners' learning, that it stimulates professional development, that it is a good means to learn from colleagues and that it helps learning about other educational systems. They also feel that they learned a lot, improved their language skills, made new professional contacts, understand the culture in partner countries better and are convinced that pupils / students have benefited from being involved (44 – 88%). The Lingua participants are relatively even more positive about their participation.

Alongside positive comments, a number of disappointments (varying between 10 and 55%) are reported: difficult application forms, limiting regulations, insufficient funding, inability to participate fully and special needs unmet are listed dissatisfactions. That said, only one of the Exchange of Information participants ended participation prematurely and only a few projects report one of the partner institutions ending participation during the project period for various reasons (accidents, death and personal conflicts are mentioned).

Overall the participants rate the Actions as positive opportunities for their own professional development (61% 'good' or 'excellent') and for their pupils / students development (59% 'good' or 'excellent'). Twenty of the participants in Lingua, 20 in Comenius, two in ODL and four in Adult Education have a number of suggestions to improve the programme. Their suggestions focus upon making the application forms and financial reporting easier, reducing the demands for project reports, increasing financial support for all students' costs, allow funding to be transferred to another project year, make regulations about duration of the

project more flexible, focus more on EU countries with a low profile in adult education and to enable follow up of projects over a longer period.

#### 6.4.(vi) Special needs perspective

An important aspect of this evaluation of the programme is the question of whether participants with and without disabilities have different motives for their participation. The actions, focussing more on organisations and their project participants described above, have very few individuals with disabilities acting as project participants, but quite a number of these project participants are involved in working with pupils / students with special educational needs.

In order to investigate if the motives for participation for project participants working mainly with pupils / students with special and educational needs and those working mainly with pupils / students without special educational needs were different, the Comenius and Lingua respondents were looked at in some depth. (The number of participants in the other Actions is limited and these have therefore not been included in this analysis.)

A distinction has been made between Comenius and Lingua project participants not or only marginally working with pupils / students with special educational needs (less than 10% involved in this study) and participants having more than 10% special needs persons involved in the project. These two groups have been compared on their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of working with colleagues from other countries, about the advantages and disadvantages for the pupils / students of the participation in SOCRATES, about eventual difficulties in mobility and participating in all project activities and finally about the action as an opportunity for professional development and as a learning opportunity for their pupils / students. To compare those Chi-square and Mann-Whitney U tests (Siegel, 1956) have been applied.

The results show no significant differences between the two groups in both Comenius and Lingua. The participants working with pupils with special educational needs tend to regard experiencing other cultures more important and improving language skills as less important for their pupils / students. They also report a few cases in which difficulties in mobility and in participation occurred and the Comenius participants seem to value the Action more as a learning opportunity for their pupils / students. On average however, the differences between the two groups in both Comenius and in Lingua are very small or absent.

#### 6.4 (vii) Non-participants

In the way the views of potential participants in individual mobility actions have been examined, the views of non-participants who are eligible to take part in projects within SOCRATES have been ascertained. All non-participants (18 in total and all female) surveyed worked in schools and were eligible to take part in Comenius. Given the nature of some of their backgrounds and expertise, a small number were also eligible to take part in Lingua, ODL or Exchange projects.

Respondents worked mainly in the primary education sector, only one from the secondary sector. One respondent worked in a segregated special school and one for a resource centre for special education. All respondents worked with pupils / students with special education needs – 15 reported all and the remainder above 10%.

Only one of the respondents reported they had a disability.

Two of the respondents had been involved in EU education programmes previously – Helios and Erasmus. One of these respondents was themselves disabled and they reported having experienced significant difficulties in mobility and accessing the educational and social activities during their previous participation.

In terms of possible motives for being involved in education programmes such as SOCRATES, the potential advantages were seen as being similar to those reported by actual project participants – learning from colleagues, learning about another subject and learning about other cultures were viewed very highly. Potential disadvantages also mirrored the actual disadvantages experienced by participants – over half the respondents identified finance as a potential disadvantage. Difficulties in making practical arrangements and feelings of it being hard away from home were highlighted by almost one third of the respondents. Other reasons suggested included lack of time and not enough clear information on how to organise visits. The respondent with a disability was clear that it would be difficult to organise the special resources and services needed.

The potential advantages to pupils / students if involvement in partnership programmes were highly rated. Contact with other students and experiencing other cultures were mentioned by 60 and 62% of respondents respectively. Improving language skills (35%) and access to unique learning experiences (35%) were also seen as clear potential advantages. The main

potential disadvantage for pupils / students was seen as insufficient funding (50%) with transfer of learning (33% and difficulties in accessing special services (20%) also mentioned.

The reference group of potential project participants are perceived as thinking that involvement in such programmes is important for professional learning and personal learning. Reference groups see problems of organisation and working in other languages as the potential disadvantages.

14 of the respondents report that they have not seriously considered taking part in an education partnership programme enough to investigate possibilities further although over 80% of the respondents had heard about the SOCRATES programme, mainly via colleagues or through their schools or institutions. None of this group had information or contact with their National SOCRATES Agency. None of the respondents felt it would be difficult to gather information about the programme if it was needed.

Respondents generally did not rate opportunities to develop educational partnerships as something that was a good thing for them as highly as they rated it being a good thing for their pupils / students. In comparison with actual participants in the programme, they rate participation opportunities as very much lower, both for themselves and for their pupils / students.

When asked to identify the elements that are important in supporting participation in partnership programmes, 15 respondents stated that having clear objectives to the programme was very important 15 suggested it was important or very important for the programme to be fully accessible and relevant to all learners regardless of their special educational needs. 18 respondents suggested that it was important or very important for there to be adequate practical support and 13 that there should be appropriate finance. 12 said it was important that there were a minimum number of regulations and limitations within the programme. Learning about other educational systems was not rated as high a priority as by actual project participants.

#### 6.4 (viii) General Conclusions

As was outlined in section 6.3 (vii), whilst it is difficult to make definite statements of conclusions to be drawn from the data given the size and homogeneous nature of the sample, it is possible to identify some trends and issues that should be considered in the future.

Firstly, although there were a greater range of countries mentioned, the countries used as partners most often in projects were similar to those most often used in mobility exchanges – Germany Italy and UK with France being almost as frequently mentioned. Partners were most often found via personal contacts and networks with some input from National Agencies. The juxtaposition of these two elements could be significant. Are the same countries used as partners because they are already part of established networks? If so this has implications for introducing other countries' organisations into existing personal networks that project participants draw upon when establishing projects.

A related issue centres upon non-participants statements that suggest they have had minimal contact with National SOCRATES Agencies although almost all of them were aware of the programme and had seen information regarding it. This suggests that National Agencies could possibly have a current role as follow up, rather than first sources of information. If this is the case – and this requires clarification and confirmation via further investigation or cross referencing to the Global evaluation findings – then there maybe be a case to suggest that the work of National Agencies could be developed in terms of acting as a promotional tool, especially in relation to introducing potential project participants to “lesser involved” countries.

The identified advantages and disadvantages of project participation are similar to those of individual mobility participation; personal and professional learning as the main advantage and financing as the main disadvantage. An additional aspect however is the consideration of advantages and disadvantages for pupils / students. Here the same perceptions are evident – the main advantage is seen as the learning opportunities for pupils / students and the main disadvantages are the financial burdens and making practical arrangements. No differences in these aspects were evident for project participants working mainly with pupils / students with special needs or not. Similarly, these points were viewed by non-participants as the *potential* advantages and disadvantages of programme involvement. It could be argued that further promoting the benefits of the programme in terms of learning opportunities for all participants whilst strengthening the perceived weaknesses in financial arrangements for the programme would be just as beneficial to project participants with or representing those with disabilities and special needs as those without.

It appears from the data that the Comenius action has the highest proportion of projects addressing disability and special educational needs issues as the *specific* focus. ODL, Adult Education and Exchange of Information projects are most likely to be *general* projects with particular themes or elements addressing such issues. The Lingua action seems to be under

represented in relation to both specific and general projects and further targeted analysis as to the possible reasons for this may be beneficial.

The number of project participants with disabilities within the sample was very low, although it must be reiterated that the reported number of partners with disabilities involved in projects totalled around 12%. It is not possible to investigate from the data available here how this figure compares with general and evaluation study baseline data on participation of people with disabilities in certain sectors of education employment. This would certainly be an interesting follow-up exercise that maybe possible by analysing the available data and in conjunction with supplementary data on project partners.

Finally, a general comment can be made that is applicable to the data and results obtained in relation to project and individual mobility participants. It can be observed that the proportion of disability and special education related projects identified in the sample for this study is far higher than the figure obtained by the Global evaluation study (please refer to section 6.1). A number of possible reasons could explain this. Firstly, the methodology of Agency Working Partners (in the main) identifying questionnaire respondents could have lead to a skewed population being used i.e. Working Partners may have targeted known disability or special education related projects as their sample. Whilst this was necessary in order to obtain information relating to people with disabilities and their experiences, it has methodological implications. Secondly, it could be that respondents who received the questionnaire were aware that it had a special needs focus and themselves being involved in such projects, were more pre-disposed to complete it. Thirdly, the very explicit line of questioning in the survey could have pinpointed aspects not covered by the Global evaluation team.

It is most likely that a combination of these factors lead to the emerging findings. In terms of implications to be drawn from this, it could be argued that it is necessary to make requests for information regarding disability and special needs participation within the programme as clearly defined and carefully targeted as possible. This point may need careful consideration within any proposals for future monitoring of the participation of people with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme.

## **6.5 Complementary Measures**

As has been described in the previous chapter, a decision was taken not to include the Complementary Measures action within the same framework of data collection and analysis

as other actions, due to its relatively small size within the programme, its focus and aims (see below) and also the encountered difficulties in obtaining data comparable with other actions considered.

It was therefore decided that participation within this action would be examined based upon a consideration of the activities supported and their aims in relation to disability and special educational needs issues.

The central aims of the action are to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of promoting European co-operation in any sector of education;
- Draw attention to examples of good practice in the organisation of European cooperation;
- Disseminate information on important developments in the specific sector or aspect of education.

In the Guide for Applicants (1998) it is clearly stated that support is provided under the action for activities oriented towards disseminating information regarding meeting the special needs of people with disabilities in the context of SOCRATES. The action can be seen as potentially having an important role to play in the promotion of participation of people with disabilities and special needs by disseminating information that promotes good practice in this area.

The focus of the action upon information dissemination had particular relevance for this evaluation and three key questions were identified for consideration:

- i. How many activities supported had a clear disability or special needs focus?
- ii. How many activities involved sharing or promoting good practice in relation to meeting the needs of people with disabilities within SOCRATES?
- iii. How many activities made use of approaches and tools that made the information to be disseminated as accessible as possible for people with different disabilities?

#### 6.5 (i) Activities with a disability or special needs focus

SOCRATES Complementary Measures cover all sectors of Education and for this reason projects supported were distributed between the different Units of the DGXXI (now Education and Culture).

During 1995, there were 126 projects across all the actions; 1 can be identified as having a clear disability/special education focus. This figure does not include the 70 projects identified as National Agency information activities.

The table below presents the numbers of projects in relation to the different actions during 1996 – 1999.

**Table 14** Complementary Measures Projects

Year	Comenius		Lingua		Erasmus		Adult education	
	Number of projects	Disability focus	Number of projects	Disability focus	Number of projects	Disability focus	Number of projects	Disability focus
<b>1996</b>	124	7	34	0	30	2		
<b>1997</b>	84	2	12	0	15	1		
<b>1998</b>	90	4	29	0	37	0		
<b>1999</b>	62	5	11	0	21	0		
<b>2000</b> (Feb. round)					4	1		
<b>1996-1999</b>	360	18	86	0			22	0

#### 6.5 (ii) Activities sharing or promoting good practise

It is not possible to address the second question posed in any coherent way from the data it was possible to collect as part of this study although some exemplar information is available that is of interest in relation to this question.

DG Education and Culture desk officers provided examples of projects supported under the Erasmus action:

1995 – a study abroad publication looking at requirements for services in universities to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

1996 – a special pilot project on the participation of students with disabilities in Higher Education

1996 to 1999 – a higher education accessibility guide (HEAG); an online resource of information from universities indicating the services available for students with disabilities within their institutions.



1997 – a congress on meeting the diverse needs of students in higher education that included one workshop on the needs of students with disabilities.

February 2000 – the dissemination of DEUAPA ("Diplôme Européen en activités physiques adaptées") in Europe".

#### 6.5 (iii) Activities making information to be disseminated accessible

It is not possible to answer this question as data is not available to indicate what formats for dissemination were used for activities and publications. Some activities' products are known to be available via internet (for example the HEAG project) that does present some possibilities for flexible manipulation for users with visual impairments. However, the use of internet presentation does not guarantee accessibility issues are fully addressed as specialist considerations regarding navigation, format, font, graphics and general format flexibility need to be considered in just as much detail as would be considered if print media was being assessed for accessibility.

#### 6.5 (iv) General Conclusions

The lack of comparable information regarding this action makes it hard to draw out useful conclusions. It should be pointed out that a more detailed and systematic search for and examination of information relating to the Complementary Measures action than was possible within the confines of this evaluation study, may result in these questions being fully answered and firmer conclusions being drawn.

However, it could be considered that the fact information regarding the action was quite difficult to this is in itself a conclusion. If reliable data is difficult to find with regard to the participation of people with disabilities within the action and if it is accepted that the action has such a potential role to fulfil in promoting disability participation through information dissemination, then perhaps the action is not being used to its full potential in this respect, or alternatively the mechanisms needed for monitoring and recording the action's contribution in this area are not effective enough in order to make judgements.

### **6.6 Information providers**

A central element within the rationale of this study is that participation takes many forms and that access to information not only supports participation but is also a method of taking part

in the programme in its own right – i.e.: making use of the SOCRATES programme's information products as a form of participation. This line of argument, linked to the associated argument that participation also includes employees within the SOCRATES programme gives rise to the need for this evaluation study to carefully examine the work of the Eurydice and Naric information units.

During 1999, 1.95% of the ex-post budget (4.3 million Euros) was allocated to information. A proportion of this is used by the DG itself; some is also allocated to the National SOCRATES Agencies on promoting the programme (although it should be noted that some of the promotional costs for SOCRATES come via the Complementary Measures actions).

Aspects of information provision within the National Agencies and DG Education and Culture is considered in section 6.7 as part of overall programme management. This section looks at work of two key structures of information provision within SOCRATES and their role in implementing the mainstreaming principle by maximising access to information for people with disabilities.

The Eurydice and Naric surveys focused upon issues to do with an understanding of the principle of mainstreaming and how it was applied within the work of units, their products and services. Specific questions on the participation of people with disabilities within the individual units and how information products and services were made accessible to people with disabilities were included. Some of these questions had been identified as a result of the initial analysis of questionnaire data from mobility and project action participants. Each of the two questionnaires was slanted towards specific aspects of the Eurydice or Naric units work in supporting the SOCRATES programme.

The questionnaires asked for a mix of quantitative and qualitative (opinions and comments) data. An overview of all data is presented below in a commentary that provides overview information presented under three headings:

- Practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle
- Knowledge about users
- Accessibility of information

Observations on the data are provided at the end of each section, but overall conclusions are presented as a separate section (6.6 (iii)).

### 6.6 (i) Eurydice

The Eurydice network is made up of units established by each of the participating countries co-ordinated by a European Unit in Brussels. The purpose of the network is to produce and disseminate information on systems, reforms and the results of research and innovation in the field of education. The sorts of information activities covered by the network are:

- Preparation of comparative studies on priority topics and the analysis of trends in the field of education
- Collection of qualitative data, production and continuous updating of basic information on education systems and policy
- Preparation of information designed to enhance comparability of information on education systems;
- Regular publication of statistics and indicators of interest at European level dissemination of this information by means of appropriate channels and networks
- Development of databases promoting the gathering, updating and distribution of current information on educational system.

The Eurydice National Units are mainly based in Ministries of education or in organisations closely related to National Ministries. They do not exist as independent structures and this has an impact upon recruitment policies, staffing, integration policies for people with disabilities etc, that needs to be noted here. (This fact may go part way to explain why several units felt it difficult to answer issues passed in the questionnaire).

The function of the Eurydice network's European Unit is to act as a central resource and information centre, making available documents and qualitative data on the educational systems and policies of countries participating in the SOCRATES programme, as developed by the Eurydice network.

The Eurydice network plays a key role in information collection, processing and dissemination within SOCRATES. Its audience is diverse – the Commission itself, National bodies, local or municipal level educational authorities, organizations and individuals who work within those organizations. This brief was examined within the evaluation in terms of the account taken of the mainstreaming principle; in relation to employees in the units, the content of material and most particularly the formats information materials are produced in.

The questionnaire (a full copy of which can be found in **Appendix Six A**) was sent to all named persons in the 29 countries participating in SOCRATES. Replies were received from 15 countries – Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, UK (England and Wales), UK (Scotland), one anonymous - and also one from the European unit in Brussels. An email letter with some information was sent from Denmark.

Two of the 16 respondents were male. Of the 13 respondents who replied, all but two (Finland and Iceland) acted as Heads of the Units. These respondents identified themselves as expert and advisor respectively. None of the respondents had a disability.

Of the total 49 staff working in the units, one had a disability because of a sensory (hearing) impairment, and one person was known to have mental health problems (although this is not a form of disability covered by this study).

The products and services of the units centred around two main roles:

- Provision of country education data and statistics to the central Eurydice unit as contributions to comparative studies such as Key Data and EURYBASE publications,
- Providing information (via reports, publications and enquiry services) to a range of audiences within their home countries including educational policy makers.

Poland and the Czech Republic specifically mentioned their work in contributing to Chapter 10 of Key Data “Special Education”.

Some units obviously had more tasks to fulfil in providing and producing information to educational audiences within their own countries. The range of products and the intended audiences therefore appeared from replies to be quite diverse. All information for products at a European level was centrally co-ordinated and managed by the European unit. Where appropriate below, special attention will be paid to the products and services of the European level information coming from the entire network.

#### *Practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle*

13 of the units stated that they did not have a policy referring to the implementation of the mainstreaming principle. The UK (Scotland) unit stated that the work of the unit was covered by the Scottish Executive equal opportunities statement. Similarly, the UK (England and

Wales) unit operated under the equal opportunities statement of the host organisation (NFER). The Greek unit stated that there was an implicit policy, but this was not written.

Three units gave examples of how mainstreaming was practically applied within the work of their units: Slovenia suggested through the employment of people with special needs; Lithuania and Poland both suggested through their work in providing information and advice to teachers of pupils with special needs. When asked what mainstream awareness raising had been completed within the unit and with users, three countries and the European unit replied. Poland identified the specific provision of information on mainstreaming in education. Lithuania identified contributing information on a School for All seminar to a Nordic Council of Ministers meeting. Sweden highlighted the collection of information regarding special education and its and comparative information dissemination within the country, particularly to education decision-makers. The European unit identified the emphasis put on information publications and products that focus upon special education (chapter 10 of EURYBASE and Key Data).

Outcomes of this awareness raising were listed as definite use of comparative information on special education taken into account when educational reforms are being considered (Sweden); a growing interest in special education, particularly integration and inclusion, on the part of education policy makers (Poland); production of specific material for dissemination (Lithuania); a better understanding of various practices in the countries and an “important demand” for special education products and information (European Unit).

#### Knowledge about users

When asked how users were thought to find out about the units' products and services all the possible options (information from work colleagues; via educational institutions, Ministries and educational authorities; information from professional and support associations; information family and/or friends; the media; unit's publicity material; publicity from the European Commission) were highlighted across the units. In addition, information from the Internet, the European Parents Association, and National SOCRATES Agencies were highlighted. All units identified at least three methods that users were perceived as using to access information about products.

10 units were able to estimate the percentage of their users who were likely to have some form of disability. For Latvia and Luxembourg and the UK (Scotland), this was identified as none. For the Czech Republic, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, and the

anonymous contribution identified less than 10%. 14 units stated they had no direct feedback on how easy their products were to access by people with different disabilities (Denmark and Italy were non-respondents to this question).

Accessibility of information

None of the units have a specific budget for specialist product or services for people with disabilities. However, a few units were able to produce material in different formats. The European Unit reports produce a high contrast electronic version of the special education chapter from Key Data that was a “big success”. Greece, Italy, Slovenia, UK (England and Wales) and the European Unit report producing less than 10% of their products and services in formats suitable for people with disabilities. Luxembourg reports all products are in different formats.

A number of types of formats are given as examples: hard copy, CD Rom, Internet. The UK (England and Wales) unit is clear that none of the formats made available is specifically designed to make the information more accessible to people with specific difficulties. Although the European unit highlights using fonts, colours and presentation formats to make information legible and attractive, none of the units identified presentation formats that would specifically promote or support access to information for people with particular types of disabilities.

The publicity of material for or relating to people with disabilities occurred via the co-operation with the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (European Unit and Greece), through specialist national networks (UK England and Wales) through press releases and leaflets (Czech Republic) and through the National Ministry network and newsletter (Denmark).

Units were asked to comment on what factors they felt supported or limited access to their products and services. The European Unit pointed out that there was usually no charge for products and that this was a definite supporting factor in widespread access. Responses were given from Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and UK (England and Wales). A summary of their responses is presented in **Table 15** below:

**Table 15** Factors supporting access to services (Eurydice)

	Limit Access	Support Access
Cost of products to the user	1	1

<b>Availability in different languages</b>	3	2
<b>Availability of suitable formats</b>	3	2
<b>Publicity in suitable formats for people with different disabilities</b>	2	1
<b>Availability of specific equipment and resources needed to meet a disability or special need</b>	2	1

These opinions are from a very small sample and are somewhat contradictory which seems to suggest that the factors are perceived as either supportive or prohibitive depending upon the wider situation and expectations of users in the country.

When asked to rate their units' ability to implement the mainstreaming principle in relation to certain aspects of Eurydice's work (see **Table 16** below), 13 units responded. Some were incomplete, with specific replies missing. The Czech Republic and Luxembourg did not address this question.

**Table 16** Implementation of Mainstreaming (Eurydice)

<b>STATEMENTS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Participation of disabled people in the work of the Unit		5	2		4
Information regarding disabled users and their needs	2	4	3	2	1
Number of disabled users	1	2	3	1	3
Accessibility of products and services	3	3	3	3	1
Ability of your unit to implement the principle of mainstreaming as it relates to people with disabilities in the best possible way	2	2	3	1	2

Six units made comments and gave suggestions for the general improvement of the implementation of the mainstreaming principle in their work. A summary of their contributions is presented below:

- There are no barriers to people with disabilities working within the unit; equal opportunities policies applicable to the work of the unit would mean any candidate would be appointed on qualification and merit (Sweden, UK, England and Wales)
- An openness to find out and learn from what other colleagues across Europe are doing (Portugal)
- If visually impaired people tried to access information from the Eurydice network, they would encounter difficulties (Sweden)
- Some Eurydice network products should be made available in formats that catered for the needs of users with different disabilities (UK England and Wales)
- Closer co-operation with professional associations for disabilities and special education. Developing existing links – such as those with the European Agency – and strengthen ability to produce specific information in this area (Slovenia, European Unit)
- Give someone the specific task of co-ordinating work in this area (Slovenia)
- Use the collaboration on existing special education products (Key Data Report - chapter on special education and Chapter 10 on special education in the Eurydice database, Eurybase) as a forum for sharing knowledge and ideas on good practice (Finland).

Whilst not representative of the entire network of units, these comments highlight specific concerns some unit staff have and seem to reflect issues raised throughout the surveys: there is not enough concrete information about users with disabilities to base judgements for changing products and services. The feeling is that there is a lack of flexibility and that steps should be taken to make products available in different formats. That said, there appears to be a willingness to develop services and products as much as possible in order to meet users' needs. Establishing links with specialist associations and making use of existing network collaboration opportunities in order to share good practice were seen as means of facilitating the practical tasks of considering accessibility issues.

In relation to the production and dissemination of information on the diversity of special education systems in Europe it should be recognised that Eurydice has made real progress in the recent years. Concrete steps have been taken through publishing information relating to special education in schools via Eurybase and through the biennial publication of the European report of education indicators (Key Data on education in Europe) that includes a chapter on special education, now jointly prepared with the European Agency. Such developments demonstrates an increasing awareness of disability and special needs issues that provides a sound basis for futures work in addressing information provision and accessibility issues.



### 6.6 (ii) Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (Naric)

The Naric network is made up of national centres within countries, which are responsible for providing institutions and individual people with information on higher education systems and qualifications, with a view to aiding the recognition of qualifications in other Countries. The Naric network units pass on information to individual students or educational institutions regarding academic equivalency of qualifications and in the case of specific query, direct students to specific sources of information (possibly held by universities themselves). Their role within SOCRATES is therefore as a specialist information source for students and university staff. This specialist role was the focus of the investigation here.

The survey was sent to 26 countries. Only a very small return rate was achieved and so drawing firm conclusions from the data is very difficult. In response, seven complete (Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Slovakia, UK) and one largely incomplete (Poland) questionnaires were returned. Also received was an email stating that the Naric unit for Germany has no “special task in caring for disabled people” and would therefore not be returning the survey.

The 7 full questionnaires were completed by Heads of unit, three of whom were male and four female. None of the people completing the questionnaires had special needs due to a disability and there were no other staff – from a total of 34 across the seven units – had a disability.

#### *Practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle*

Whilst none of the units had any policy statement with regards to the implementation of the mainstreaming principle, two of the units (Iceland and the UK) had policy documents referring to equal opportunities within the work of the Unit. These two units were able to provide information about examples of the implementation of mainstreaming, mainstreaming awareness raising activities conducted within the work of the unit and outcomes of both of these.

The Icelandic unit had special arrangements with other institutions and organisations in order to take disability issues and special needs in to consideration. This same unit had a specific budget for product and services for people with disabilities although it did not specify the percentage this was of the overall budget of the unit.

Both the Austrian and Icelandic units listed examples of strategies for recognition of special educational needs in their consideration of university curricula, although it must be said that an examination of these strategies can be more easily interpreted as a list of strategies for supporting students with special needs directly, rather than accounting for their needs within a consideration of their study achievements.

### Knowledge about users

The way users were thought to hear about the work of the Naric units varied considerably. Most units listed information from educational institutions as the main source. When asked what estimated proportion of the users of services had disabilities resulting in special educational needs, the units for the UK and Iceland did not respond; the units for Hungary and Ireland stated none and the units for Austria, Denmark and Slovakia estimated the figure to be at less than 10%.

### Accessibility of information

There was a range of printed and electronic media products and services from the work of the units, however, only one unit (Iceland) produced information products (less than 10% of its total product list) in formats suitable for people with different disabilities.

Six of the units stated that they had no feedback on how accessible their material was for people with disabilities. The UK unit is in the process of obtaining such information

In relation to specific arrangements with teachers, administrators and student associations in order to take disability issues and special needs into consideration, Iceland and Slovakia did not respond whilst the remaining units stated they had no such arrangements.

Units were asked which factors appeared to them to either support or limit users' access to their products and services. Five possible factors were listed as options: costs to users; availability in different languages; availability in different formats for people with different disabilities; availability of specific equipment and resources to meet needs in order to access information (plus an other option). Only three units responded to this question. Slovakia highlighted the costs, availability in different languages and availability of specialist support equipment as perceived limiting factors. Denmark and Hungary identified the same pattern of supporting and limiting factors: cost and availability in different languages as support factors, whilst all other options were identified as perceived limiting factors.

Units were finally asked to rate their ability to implement the mainstreaming principle in relation to certain aspects of their work. Six of the units (all except Ireland) replied to this. **Table 17** below presents an overview of their responses (please note not all units responded to all statements).

**Table 17** Implementation of Mainstreaming (Naric)

STATEMENTS	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Participation of disabled people in the work of the Unit (*)		1		1	3
Information regarding disabled users and their needs	1	1	2	1	1
Number of disabled users (**)		1	2	1	1
Accessibility of products and services	1	1	3	1	
Ability of your unit to implement the principle of mainstreaming as it relates to people with disabilities in the best possible way		3	3		

\* - no response from Iceland

\*\* - "no information available" Hungary

The assessments in the table above of the units' abilities to implement the mainstreaming principle are very mixed. Most units are concerned about the participation of people with disabilities in the work of their unit. Information about and numbers of users with disabilities gets a balanced response across the spread of options whilst accessibility of products and services and an overall ability to implement the mainstreaming principle gets a far more positive response.

The information presented in this table is quite interesting when compared with the responses to earlier questions relating to the same issues. Units are generally happy with accessibility to their services, but only the Icelandic unit stated it provided products in different formats and no units were able to provide feedback on the accessibility of their products for users with disabilities. Some units (Hungary, Slovakia, Denmark) were obviously quite self critical about their abilities to implement the mainstreaming principle, but others (Austria, Iceland) were far more positive. It could be that the self assessment of abilities presented in table 17 is at times an estimation of the units' potential to meet the needs of

users with disabilities, rather than a reflection of the reality of the work being conducted at present.

Only one unit (the UK) provided suggestions as to how the ability of their unit to implement the mainstreaming principle: “There should be more dialogue between users and service providers in order to identify the needs of disabled users”. This seems to be a useful summation of the situation of the majority of the units.

### 6.6 (iii) Conclusions

An overall assessment of the information provided from these both the Eurydice and the Naric units would tend to suggest that there is very limited participation of people with disabilities within the work of the units. There is also very little information about the respective users with disabilities and their needs available to the units replying. This most probably results in the fact that (apart from in a few cases) there are very few steps being taken to provide information products in specific formats that could be accessible to people with different special needs.

There appears to be a willingness across the units to enter into dialogues – with other professional associations, users with disabilities and each other – that would help their work in terms of implementing the mainstreaming principle in general and making information products more accessible specifically.

The nature of the work of the Eurydice units means a great deal of their work is concerned with providing information on special education practice which gives them insights into the needs of users that the Naric units may not have. This general awareness of learners who have special needs in the education systems of countries (the compulsory school sector perhaps more than other sectors) is an obvious starting point for further development. A particular stage in development would be to give more specific attention to the accessibility needs of the potential users of their products and services. A willingness and awareness to do this is quite clear from the survey responses – both from the European Unit and the individual country units replying.

An awareness of the potential range of serve users’ special needs within Naric units is not as obvious and this – general awareness raising of some of the needs of students with disabilities across Europe - may be an area of address as a first step to later development. It could be argued that developments in this area for the Naric units would need to be closely

tied in with developments related to the Erasmus action and activities and universities participating in this action. Any specific initiative to promote the participation of students with disabilities within the action should fully include Naric staff and their work.

However, it is important that the work of both the Eurydice and Naric units needs to be examined in relation to the expectations placed upon them by programme managers – particularly in terms of the expectation to actively implement the mainstreaming principle as it applies to information dissemination in their respective areas across Europe. This point will be returned to in section 6.7 (iii).

## **6.7 Programme managers**

The management structure of the SOCRATES programme is fully described in chapter 2. Rather than repeat information here, a specific point from the Guide for Applicants (1998) will be highlighted with respect to the two main elements of programme management structure:

The Commission and the National Agencies... take into account the need to ensure that the SOCRATES programme contributes actively to the implementation of Community policies of a transversal nature. These include notably initiatives for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men, and for the integration of disabled persons respectively (page 25)

The role of the National Agencies and the Commission – specifically DG Education and Culture units responsible for the programme and its actions – in promoting, monitoring and practically implementing the mainstreaming principle is central. The DG units have the central task of steering the programme so it fulfils its own objectives and meets the requirements of community policies. The National SOCRATES Agencies have the function of translating those objectives into practice within the National context, taking account of the National and local level initiatives and situations.

The information from the respective questionnaires (both quantitative and qualitative) has been collated under a number of themes:

- Promotion of mainstreaming
- Services for users with disabilities
- Mechanisms for monitoring
- Participation of people with disabilities

### 6.7 (i) National Agencies

National Agencies for SOCRATES are designated by the Member States. They have specific responsibilities relating to the selection of projects and the distribution of grants under certain Actions, as well as related monitoring and financial duties. In addition, the Agencies carry out a number of important tasks in relation to the dissemination of information, providing assistance in finding suitable project partners, giving guidance and advice on the submission of applications and providing feedback to the Commission on the way the programme is functioning.

Within the brief of this evaluation study, the survey sent to the National SOCRATES Agencies was designed to examine the totality of their role with respect to the implementation of the mainstreaming principle and the participation of people with disabilities within different aspects of the programme and their work. Only specific information collection and dissemination functions were looked at in depth.

In total 58 questionnaires were distributed across the countries to each named SOCRATES Agency person. 18 responses were received from: Czech Republic, Belgium (Flemish Community), Estonia, Finland (x 2), France, Germany (x 2), Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands (x2), Norway, Portugal, Sweden (x2). The 19 respondents covered the following actions: Erasmus 5; Comenius 10; Lingua 8; Adult Education (Grundtvig) 5; Arion 6.

12 respondents were female and 6 male (one respondent did not answer this question). The roles within the Agencies of respondents who completed the questionnaires were diverse: Head 3, Director 4, International Project Officer 1, Senior Executive Officer 1, Programme co-ordinator 1, Desk Officer for Lingua, Erasmus and Arion 1, Lingua co-ordinator 1, Senior adviser for Comenius 1, Socrates co-ordinator 1, Erasmus Officer 1, Responsible for Grundtvig action 1, Staff member for National Agency 1, Responsible for decentralised actions 1. Of these 18 respondents, only one reported that they had special needs because of a visual impairment requiring glasses (Iceland).

The numbers of staff working in units totalled 128. Of these, people with disabilities worked in the Agencies in Germany, Iceland and the Netherlands. The different roles fulfilled by people with disabilities within the Agencies were: Head of unit 1; Senior management 1; Administrative 2; Other 2 (1 is glasses wearer).

Promotion of mainstreaming

Four units identified that they had a mainstreaming policy: Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Ireland. However, mainstreaming awareness raising has been conducted within more units: Belgium stated this was a regular item for staff meetings and - along with Finland - that in selecting projects, priority was given to those involving pupils with special educational needs; Germany stated mainstreaming was followed as a general principle; Ireland described how the equal opportunities legislation of the country dictated their work; in Sweden the development of the mainstreaming policy occurred within the wider work of the Ministry; Denmark reported n going dialogue about inclusion; Finland reported that whilst “nothing special” had been done, questions of special needs were dealt with on a case by case basis; in Norway the National regulations and recommendations are publicized and followed by all staff; in Sweden, an information meeting had taken place.

Services for users with disabilities

Three Agencies stated they held a specific budget for *specialist* products and services for people with disabilities: Iceland (amount not specified), Ireland (75,000IRP in association with the Higher Education Authority), Belgium around 12%. Only one Agency, Finland had any feedback on how easy it is for users with disabilities to access their products and services. This information suggested that availability information in suitable formats and publicity in suitable formats for people with different disabilities were both supporting factors to participation.

11 Agencies stated they produce different media and formats for products and services. Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland (x 2), Germany, Greece, Iceland, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden. The different formats used for products and services are presented in **Table 18** below.

**Table 18** Different formats for products and services (National Agencies)

Item and number of units using this format	Print	Audio	Large print	Digital (web, files)	Modified digital	Braille	Other
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Website/ Homepage (3)				3		1	
Not identified (1)	1	1		1			
Guidelines (1)	1			1			
Application Forms (2)	2			2			
Information Leaflets (1)	1			1			
Offer our services for auditory impairment (1)							1
Comenius handbook (1)	1						
Brochures (2)	2			1			
Posters (1)	1						
Books (1)	1						
Newsletter (1)	1			1			
Reports (1)	1			1			
Visual Impairment (1)		1					
All Documentation (2)	2			2			

Four Agencies had methods of publicizing the availability of products and services designed and produced specifically for people with disabilities. These methods were: via the National Agency action plan (Iceland); contacting responsible people within relevant institutions (Estonia); use face to face discussion as a means for highlighting priorities (Finland); via periodical leaflets that are sent to schools (Czech Republic).

The proportion of documents making specific reference to support and services offered to people with different disabilities or special educational needs was identified by the Agencies as: none = 7; less than half = 2; about half = 5; all = 4.

In relation to the estimated numbers of users of products and services having recognised disabilities or special educational needs 12 of the agencies suggested this was below 10%; one stated between 10 – 30% and four that this figure was not known.

Of the 14 Agencies supporting transnational projects, the majority (12) estimated that below 10% of the projects supported included a clear special needs element. Two units felt it to be between 10 and 30%. In terms of rejection of projects with a special needs element, the 14 respondents identified this as none (7); below 10% (2); between 10 – 30% (1), not known (5).



16 Agencies stated they supported individual mobility. Eight estimated the number of participants applying in the last year having special needs resulting from a disability as being below 10%. Two thought it was none; one between 10 – 30% and six were not able to tell. The approximate rejection rate of people with disabilities was identified as none within nine Agencies with eight others not knowing.

#### *Mechanisms for monitoring participation*

Six Agencies (Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Sweden) take special actions in monitoring applications for involvement in the SOCRATES programme in order to identify and support the participation of people with disabilities or special educational needs. These measures include direct contact with disability groups, work with the country's Working Partner for the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education; a request for all institutions making additional mobility requests to send these direct to the National Agency; special information and invitations to apply are sent to special education institutions; involvement of schools including special education in international promotion seminars. From these responses, four Agencies stated that they had evidenced effective outcomes from these strategies. Suggestions for alternative strategies included: identifying people with disabilities and contact them directly and more frequent direct contact with participants.

15 Agencies stated that they had no mechanisms in place for monitoring the possible effect or impact of actions upon people with disabilities or special educational needs who have participated in the programme. The three that did take action (Belgium, Czech Republic and Ireland) identified sources of information as being: student report forms completed by students on their return to the home institution; meetings, evaluation reports and self evaluation; monitoring the results and progress of the school/institutions concerned in our monitoring seminars; special educational needs are discussed during the field monitoring visits at universities. All three Agencies stated these methods were effective.

#### *Promoting the participation of people with disabilities*

Six Agencies have specific co-ordination arrangements with other organisations, in order to take disability issues and special needs into consideration (Belgium, Finland (x 2), Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands). Denmark stated that co-operation with a range of organisations was entered into as necessary.

Of the three Agencies identifying that they had a disability reserve within their budget (Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia), none used it all in the previous year. The reasons were identified as being insufficient or no applicants. The proportion of Agencies overall budget supporting the participation of people with disabilities or special education projects was: none =2; below 10% = 13; between 10 – 30% = 1; not known = 2.

Agencies were asked to rate the levels of participation of people with disabilities and special educational needs (either as individual applicants or as member of a project) in work of Agency. 16 relies were received as follows:

Excellent	1
Good	1
Average	6
Limited	8
No participation	1

It was pointed out here that it was not possible for Agencies to identify participation in projects managed centrally By the DG Education and Culture.

The potential reasons for the participation levels of people with disabilities and special educational needs within their work were identified as:

Lack of information	5
Not relevant to study/work area	5
Difficulties in completing/submitting applications	3
Language difficulties	2
Insufficient finances to meet personal needs	7
Difficulties in making additional arrangements	10
Specialist support not available	7
Other: Few students and teachers with severe disabilities	1

(Please note, respondents gave more than one answer from the options).

All of the Agencies gave their opinions (**Table 19**) about the levels of information they had regarding users with disabilities and special education projects.

**Table 19** Implementation of Mainstreaming (National Agencies)

STATEMENTS	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Participation of disabled people in the work of the Unit		2	4	1	4
Information regarding users and their needs		3	6	5	3
Numbers of users with disabilities		2	3	7	3
Accessibility of products and services		4	5	3	2
Ability of your Unit to implement the principle of mainstreaming as it relates to people with disabilities in the best possible way		4	5	2	3

Overall, the information represented above suggests that some National Agencies are ahead of others in relation to their thinking and practical implementation with regards to participation and mainstreaming. It seems that, generally, National SOCRATES Agencies are not satisfied with the level of information they have about their users with disabilities. They do not rate the participation of people with disabilities as being above average. It is interesting to note that the possible reasons given for non-participation by National Agencies are very much in line with what participants and non-participants identify (see earlier sections) as limitations within the programme. The implication here is that most National Agencies are well aware of possible issues and difficulties within the programme with respect to involving people with disabilities.

Strategies for promoting and monitoring participation are only in place in a few of the countries. In those countries where strategies are being used, they are viewed as very helpful and positive. This could point to the need for more sharing of information on this point and a need of a centralized means of disseminating information on actions taken in the Agencies to promote participation. A number of Agencies used this survey to make clear suggestions as to how the ability of the unit could be improved with respect to mainstreaming. Suggestions such as: clear mechanisms for identifying potential participants with disabilities (Estonia); having different practical strategies for people with disabilities (Finland); establishing and maintaining contact with specialist organizations in the field (Denmark); increasing the levels of targeted funding (Iceland and Ireland); improve the promotion of SOCRATES in special education centres (Iceland and Belgium); use

information and promotion products in a more targeted way (Finland); add a section to the application forms where the participation of people with disabilities is clearly highlighted (Czech Republic); encourage participation through examples of good practice (Germany).

A very interesting observation is made by one of the respondents from Finland. It is given in conclusion here as a quote that seems to summarize the fact that many of the Agencies feel they are at the beginning of the process of truly implementing the mainstreaming principle in their work: “This is the first time I have seriously thought about the work of the National Agency from the viewpoint of)disabled people. In general, we have a lot of things to do.”

#### 6.7 (ii) The Commission

The responsibility for the overall implementation of the SOCRATES programme rests with the European Commission. The Commission is assisted by the SOCRATES Committee and two sub-committees, in the fields of higher education and school education. The day to day management of the programme is conducted by responsible desk officers within different units of the Commission who are also supported by the Technical Assistance Office (TAO). It was to each of these responsible desk officers and the TAO that a questionnaire was sent (in total 12). The questionnaire followed the same pattern and line of questioning as for the National Agencies – again it was developed from the same rationale as all questionnaires within the study and specifically covered issues raised by participants directly.)

Replies we received from 5 desk officers responsible for Grundtvig-Adult Education; co-ordination of Comenius 1 and Lingua E; School education, Comenius Actions 2, 3.1 and 3.2; Unit for Higher Education, Socrates-Erasmus, specifically co-ordination and supervision of the Erasmus student mobility and interface with the SOCRATES/Erasmus National Agencies; Unit A1, co-ordination for equal opportunity matters in education. Erasmus institutional contracts activities, Lingua actions A to D, Open and Distance Learning, Exchange Activities, SOCRATES information activities and the TAO were not represented in this sample.

The presentation of the information (quantitative and qualitative) from these questionnaires follows the same pattern of themes as for National Agencies: promotion of mainstreaming; services for users with disabilities; mechanisms for monitoring; participation of people with disabilities.

Four women and one man answered the questionnaires. Of the five respondents, one had a disability due to visual impairment. 58 staff were identified as working across four of the units. Of these, only one person – a respondent – was identified as having a disability. This person worked in senior management.

The main products and services of the Units were described as: supporting European co-operation projects that encourage the European dimension of Lifelong Learning, as well as preparatory for transnational activities; administration of the Comenius and ex-Lingua school actions; ensuring the implementation of Erasmus and in co-operation with national authorities, the academic world and all interested partners (student associations, federation of Rectors, etc); promoting studies and analysis, co-ordination with other community policies, co-ordination with Education Committee.

#### Promotion of mainstreaming

Each of the units was asked whether they had a policy or mission statement regarding the practical implementation of the mainstreaming principle within the unit's work. The Erasmus and A1 Policy unit replied they had working policy documents. All other units replied in the negative. With regards to mainstreaming awareness raising being carried out with different people in the units, the respondent for unit A1 (the unit in charge of the aspects of coherence with other policies EC) outlined how this was achieved via information to others colleagues during meetings of National Agencies and the SOCRATES Committee via the distribution of documents relating to awareness raising on issues of mainstreaming within the programme. The Adult Education unit respondent suggested that there was a consensus about the necessity of financing projects in which the participation of disabled people is reinforced.

#### Services for users with disabilities

Only one unit (Erasmus) had a dedicated budget for specialist products and services for people with disabilities. This totalled 2% of the overall student mobility budget. The respondent from Unit A1 stated that they had a budget, but not as within part of the SOCRATES programme itself.

Units A1 and for Adult Education and Erasmus suggested that less than 10% of their overall budgets was directed to supporting projects or individual participants with disabilities. The two Comenius units were not able to make such estimates although it was pointed out that approximately 4.5 % of funded

Respondents were asked whether they had any feedback regarding how users with disabilities found it to access SOCRATES products and services. The Erasmus and A1 unit gave positive responses, both suggesting that publicity in suitable formats for people with different disabilities was a limiting factor; availability of suitable formats and availability of specific equipment and resources required to meet a disability or special need were also identified as limiting factors by the respondent from unit A1.

Four of the units made SOCRATES documentation available in different media and formats. For unit A1 all materials were produced in print formats only. The different formats made available for each of the key information documents produced by the units is indicate in **Table 20** below:

**Table 20** Implementation of Mainstreaming (DG Education and Culture)

Documentation	Print	Audio	Large print	Digital (web, efiles)	Modified digital	Braille	Other
All	1			1			
Guidelines	3			3			
Application forms	2			2			
Project compendia	1			1			
Course catalogue	1			1			
Self-evaluation checklist for EEPs	1			1			
Application forms	1			1			
Information material	1			1			
Site on the Internet	1			1			
Specific guidelines on the access to the special reserve for supporting disabled students addressed to NAs and HEIs	1			1			

The publicity of the availability of products and services designed and produced specifically for people with disabilities was accomplished through: different reports that emphasise this

dimension; the work of National Agencies in the dissemination of services and products; via a yearly mail to the Erasmus National Agencies who have to inform partner universities and raise awareness about extra support offered to students with disabilities; left to the responsibility of projects promoters supported. Neither of the Comenius units responded to this question. One pointed out that this was not applicable as the material they produced was not in formats especially for people with disabilities, but just happened to be in more flexible formats.

When asked what proportion of SOCRATES documents make specific reference to support and services offered to people with different disabilities or special educational needs, the Units for Adult Education and A1 stated: all (including the Council decision, and the Guide for Applicants). The Erasmus unit suggested about one third; the Comenius units identified the guidelines for applicants and applications forms as making specific reference to support for people with special needs in terms of prioritising their participation and providing for increased grants.

Respondents were asked about the type of support they provided and about the levels of participation and support for people with disabilities and projects with a special education theme. Three of the respondents were involved in the provision of support for transnational projects within SOCRATES. The proportion of projects during the last year having a clear special needs focus or element was estimated by the Adult Education unit as being between 10 – 30% with below 10% of project applications with a clear special needs focus being rejected. For Comenius 2 and 3.1 the support rate was below 10%, with an estimated rejection rate of below 10%. The unit responsible for Comenius 1 reported that this figures were not known for decentralised actions.

Of the two units providing support for individuals to participate in the SOCRATES programme, Erasmus identified the proportion of participants applying in the last year as having special needs resulting from a disability to be below 10%. It was stated that the rejection rate could only be identified by asking Erasmus National Agencies directly. The rates of support and approximate rejection rates for Comenius 1 and Lingua E were not known as these were decentralized actions. However, it was possible to identify that 2 % of teachers participating in Comenius 3.2 courses come from institutions providing special needs education.

#### *Mechanisms for monitoring*

The estimated proportions of the users of the units' products and services who have recognised disabilities or special educational needs were given as follows:

Adult Education, between 10 – 30%; Comenius (both units), not known; Erasmus, above 30%; unit A1, not known.

Units were asked whether they took special actions in monitoring applications for involvement in the SOCRATES programme in order to identify and support the participation of people with disabilities and special educational needs. The Adult Education and A1 units stated they did and identified the ensuring an equitable representation of projects which address the needs of adult learners who are disadvantaged because of disability and general advice, with research and input by experts in the framework of the projects' selection/evaluation, as being strategies that were effective and marginally effective respectively. It was pointed out by the unit responsible for Comenius 1 that there was no systematic follow up of these issues from the start of SOCRATES for decentralised actions. The respondent from unit A1 suggested that the better organisation of specialist resources on a case-by-case basis and providing accurate criteria for project evaluation concerning the participation of people with disabilities was required.

In relation to mechanisms being in place for monitoring the possible effect or impact of actions upon people with disabilities or special educational needs who have participated in the programme, the adult education and Erasmus units identified that the National Agencies as well as the Education Committee follow the implementation of the mainstreaming principle within educational actions and that the student report to his/her sending institution and the National Agency report to the Commission on the implementation of the Erasmus mobility were strategies.

The effectiveness of the Educational Committee's monitoring was agreed upon. The respondent from the Erasmus unit stated that she had never received copies of the reports from students with disabilities. Only an indication of the numbers of severely disabled students was sent. No qualitative information was given. As an alternative, this respondent suggested that the Commission should request from NAs a specific qualitative report on the participation of students with disabilities in Erasmus and elicit feedback from former Erasmus students associations. The respondent for Unit A1 suggested that the intervention of experts groups supporting respectively the evaluation of projects and assisting the Socrates Committee and sub Committees would be one method of monitoring more effectively.



Specific co-ordination arrangements with other organisations, institutions or departments in order to take disability issues and special needs into consideration were in place for units A1 (UNESCO and OECD); Adult Education and Erasmus (with the person in charge of the co-ordination of transversal issues within DG Education and Culture). Also for Erasmus, liaison with the following colleagues was maintained: the National Agencies dealing with the applications of students with disabilities wishing to study abroad; from the European Agency for the development of special needs education; from institutions having special services for students with disabilities.

Participation of people with disabilities

The levels of participation of people with disabilities or special educational needs (either as individual applicants or as member of a project) within the work of the units was rated as:

Excellent	0
Good	1
Average	0
Limited	3
No participation	0

(Not known for decentralized actions)

Various potential reasons for the non-participation of people with disabilities and special educational needs in work of the units were identified:

Lack of information	2
Not relevant to study/work area	
Difficulties in completing/submitting applications	1
Language difficulties	1
Insufficient finances to meet personal needs	1
Difficulties in making additional arrangements	2
Specialist support not available	2

The respondents opinions about the levels of information on users with disabilities and special education projects is presented in **Table 21**. All five respondents completed this chart although not all addressed every statement.

**Table 21** Implementation of Mainstreaming (DG Education and Culture)

STATEMENTS	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
Participation of people with disabilities in the work of the Unit					2
Information regarding users with disabilities and their needs		1			4
Numbers of users with disabilities			1	2	2
Accessibility of products and services			1	2	2
Ability of your Unit to implement the principle of mainstreaming as it relates to people with disabilities in the best possible way				4	

Far more qualitative information on the participation of people with disabilities was provided by the respondents than was in evidence from other programme managers (i.e. the National Agencies). This was clearly evidenced in the following question - ideas about what could be done to practically improve the availability of information needed. Each of the unit respondents replied. There comments are summarised here:

- For decentralised actions a proper monitoring system has to be put in place from the start of the second phase of SOCRATES to allow for proper data collection and analysis
- Have more resources, which would allow better monitoring and more targeted information dissemination about special needs education
- Make use of the specific evaluation information.
- National Agencies have to be much more pro-active as far as feedback from the universities to them and from them to the Commission is concerned.
- Reserved financial support and more disability and special education expert support at the levels of both the Commission and Members States (National Agencies) to prepare adequate information documents and undertake awareness raising focusing upon participants with disabilities and their representatives.

The suggestions made to improve the participation of people with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme were both extensive and comprehensive. They were also extremely specific. A summary is provided here:

- More finance and expert support at Community and Member States levels for the establishment of selection criteria and methodology
- More awareness raising and training of staff officers (Commission/TAO or National Agencies) to improve their ability in this field.
- National Agencies should develop a complete strategy in order to inform and encourage people with disabilities to participate in the Actions
- Meetings could be organised, so good projects involving people with disabilities could be shown as good examples of practice.
- More specific information is needed about the actual participation, the needs of participants and the obstacles they face. On that basis it should be possible to make recommendations or maybe even earmark funds to be used for people with disabilities.
- Improve the Commission's knowledge of the situation of students in their home institutions in general and as far as their application to Erasmus is concerned, in particular. Find the necessary expertise to support the Commission's and National Agencies' efforts in promoting the access of students with disabilities to Erasmus.
- Create a network of specialists who could provide useful advice to the Commission (policy level) and to the National Agencies (implementation)

Overall, these comments can be seen to reflect openness to development and improvement of the programme. They can also be seen to indicate a general willingness to work with existing networks of colleagues in new ways and involve new networks of people in their work.

### 6.7 (iii) Conclusions

It is interesting to note the general level of consensus on some issues between the National SOCRATES Agencies and the Desk Officers from the Commission. There were however, some differences that also require consideration. The first point of similarity to note was that very few units for Agencies had a specific policy on mainstreaming. Those that did, indicated that it was linked to organisational or national policies. Whilst there may not be a call for a full policy for each unit on mainstreaming, given the clarity of the various Council Communications and references in Decisions, it could be argued that a written policy *statement* on how the principle was practically implemented within unique situation of each of the units (Commission or country based) could be expected. The development of such statements would act as an aid to awareness raising in itself. They would also be a useful central co-ordination tool for programme managers.

Policy statements could possibly act as a starting point for mechanisms for monitoring the possible effect or impact of actions upon people with disabilities or special educational needs who have participated in the programme – the statement would be an indication of intent that could then be observed in relation to specific criteria in terms of actual implementation.

Both National Agencies and Commission units identify that the monitoring of participation is a problematic area. Different stages of monitoring – initial applications, final reports, outcomes and products – were all mentioned. An important link must be made here with outcomes of the programme participants' surveys (please refer to sections 6.3, 6.4 and 6.8). Information from programme participants with disabilities suggests that they feel information about their involvement and their needs in particular is lacking and that mechanisms to pass such information onto decision makers are very much needed. From the National Agency survey, it is obvious that a small number of countries are taking initiatives in this area. The information about and from these initiatives needs to be collected and disseminated centrally if all programme managers are to learn from colleagues.

In relation to the point above, an aspect that is generally considered weak by all programme managers is access to specific information on users and their needs and how this fits in with wider information on the population of education sectors. If monitoring and feedback mechanisms are put in place within the programme – as requested by a number of programme managers – they need to be complemented with accurate statistical data on the specific populations of people with disabilities in the countries. This is the only mechanism for accurately monitoring the changes or satisfactory nature of participation. A specific role is envisaged here for Eurydice. A number of units make mention of Key data chapter 10. The focus of this could be usefully extended so as to provide the necessary range of country baseline data required by programme managers.

There is different practice evident in the National Agencies in relation to the provision of information in formats suitable for people with different types of disabilities. Some National Agencies may have particular expertise in this area that requires dissemination and more widespread application – even to the Commission's own information sources.

The potential reasons for perceived low levels of participation of people with disabilities within the programme is agreed upon by both National Agencies and Commission units as being the practical difficulties faced by people with disabilities in making arrangements to be involved in the programme. Interestingly, the perceptions of rates of participation are better for National Agencies as opposed to the Commission's representatives' perceptions. The

possibility that National Agencies have more direct information than the Commission cannot be overlooked, but a more likely explanation may be found in a difference of expectation. The Commission may hold different views on acceptable levels of participation than some of their National Agency colleagues. These differences of expectation require further clarification. Such clarifications need to be considered in relation to country contexts - countries have very different ideas about what are acceptable levels of participation given their legal and social definitions of disability and access – with some countries' expectations possibly exceeding those of the Commission. Expectations also need to be considered in relation to the work of Naric and Eurydice.

The implementation of the mainstreaming principle, if it is to be made a reality, requires some form of practical grounding in terms of what units are expected to do within the context of their work. Guidance on what aspects of practical work in mainstreaming need to be carried out – policy statements; identification and monitoring; information accessibility; prioritisation – are present in some aspects of the Commission's work as programme managers, but they do not appear to be consistent within and across actions. If the Commission itself could take a stronger lead on providing practical guidance on what is expected in relation to the concrete application and implementation of the mainstreaming principle, it is argued here that there is a general willingness to follow these guidelines in order to support the participation of people with disabilities within the programme.

## **6.8 Case study analysis**

### 6.8 (i) Rationale for the analysis of case study information

As has been previously mentioned (chapter 5) all the case studies are presented in full in **Appendix Fifteen**. This is considered an important element of the study as it has been the open intention of the evaluators throughout the project to – alongside the presentation of empirically based information on participation issues - provide through the data collection, analysis and preparation of this report an opportunity for participants with disabilities to have a voice; an opportunity to express opinions and describe experiences to other actors within the SOCRATES programme.

The case studies in effect present *stories* of some individuals' participation within the programme and as such they can be read in full to give unique insights in to the problems

and successes encountered by people with disabilities and their representatives within SOCRATES.

Points raised are presented without an indication as to the situation or background of the person. Comments from participants with disabilities and representatives of organisations supporting people with disabilities are integrated within the framework of emerging ideas. The analysis also presents points taken from the frank case studies of two programme managers of SOCRATES. Their ideas are presented as an integral part of this analysis as nowhere was it found that their perspective in any way clashed with the perspective and experiences of programme participants.

The aim of the analysis of these case studies is to present a coherent overview of the information available within each of these “stories”. The strategy taken here was to identify common themes and patterns emerging from the information. This is a completely different method of analysis from that taken with regards to the questionnaire data – here questionnaires were written with the framework of concepts to be used in the eventual analysis clearly in mind. For the analysis of case study information, the only prior concepts were those underpinning the open-ended questions used as a guide for interviews (e.g.: access; potential supporting and hindering factors etc). In the analysis presented here, the concepts identified in relation to trends and patterns emerged from the information itself.

A first step to the analysis of this qualitative data was to see what general themes seemed to be apparent. Nine theme areas were highlighted as aspects that case study respondents touched upon consistently:

- Personal situation of participants
- Preparation for visits
- Working conditions during participation
- Practical organization
- Funding
- The role of National Agencies and the DG Education and Culture
- Information access
- Professional help
- General feedback about the programme

Within these areas different *types* of comments and observations were raised by respondents:

- Positive points
- Negative points
- Recommendations
- Other, general observations.

Below is a presentation of each of these nine areas of concern with exemplars (not direct quotes unless indicated by the use of “”) of the sorts of statements made by respondents. These statements have been interpreted within the light of the entire case study “story” and categorised as in line with the four types of comment described above.

#### 6.8 (ii) Personal situation of participants

**Positive points** mentioned were:

- “The programme provided an opportunity to get to know myself”
- There was a great deal of unexpected learning from the culture differences between pupils of different countries
- There is open communication with people with similar problems but different cultures
- Important Human relationships are formed
- It is an opportunity for a great development to one’s of self-confidence
- “There was the possibility to have with me a support student from my home institution”

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- Finding partners with the same expectations and professional goals in similar situations and taking account of the amount of work they are able and willing to invest
- Language barriers– working language was English, but the use of dialects and accents in second language speakers is difficult to understand
- Lack of time, including time wasted on administrative procedures as compared to the time allocated to educational matters. High degree of freedom in own job necessary for preparations and participation.
- Different social and cultural environment of inclusion of students with special needs causes difficulties
- The “synergy of having a disability *and* having to communicate with someone in a second language” overseas
- Problems of self-presentation and confidence for people with disabilities can be underestimated by people without disabilities. It takes a lot to overcome these problems whilst travelling
- Basic mobility in a foreign place can be a threatening situation

- The lack of particular mechanisms to support people with disabilities led to a lack of knowledge about what is available

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- Sign language and Braille should be considered as methods of presenting all the important information in the programme
- Language preparation activities (i.e. for hearing and visually impaired people) could be provided
- Some form of “psychological preparation for people with disabilities” should be considered

**In summary:**

Personally targeted preparation for participants with disabilities is a strong theme and recommendation. Language, emotional, personal mobility and social preparation could be very useful in supporting participants to integrate more easily into an exchange situation. This line of thinking can also be applied to mainstream education classes where teachers often do not know how to meet the needs of children with special educational needs they meet during exchanges and projects.

#### 6.8 (iii) Preparation for visits

**Positive points** mentioned were:

Key players in Erasmus are the international officers and academic staff of the institution. Their: knowledge, attitudes, time, involvement are more important to the success of an exchange than resources

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- Parents of pupils worry that the needs of their children will not be met
- Information not available in Braille (or other more accessible formats)
- Applications from people with a disability should not be financially underestimated
- The mainstream school system in all countries is not yet ready /flexible enough to meet the needs of pupils with special needs included in all projects
- Different ideas about priorities between partners

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- Mobility support (helpers, transportation, travel costs for able bodied aides etc) should be fully covered



- Better preparation from home institutions (university) is needed
- More language preparation, with specialist language preparation for sensorial impaired participants
- Provide more information and preparation activities for professional helpers
- Application form is very difficult; simplify it
- Have a mechanism where you can find the correct partner with the same “disability” philosophy
- Early identification of additional support requirements should be encouraged
- Minimum levels of expected specialist support to be negotiated and worked towards by all countries
- Use the guidelines for applicants more to promote participation and outline support available etc

**In summary:**

Many participants ask for a more preparation and more support, not only in relation to the administrative tasks, but also by proposing better preparation at home with the organisation of specific help such as language courses, signing and Braille reading. There appears to be a need for a more careful integration and collation of all information on specific situations relevant to participants with disabilities that could be used as a central reference point.

6.8 (iv) Working conditions during participation

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- The increased workload
- Lack of time
- Too many administrative tasks
- No time for sitting back and reflecting upon what has been learned
- Administrative workload

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- Networks should meet regularly, outside visits
- Warn future participants about the extra work
- Cut down on the administrative tasks and focus on educational outcomes

**In summary:**

For project participants in particular, too much time is perceived as being spent on administrative and not educational activities. It should be noted that this same comment is raised by participants without disabilities via the questionnaire survey.

#### 6.8 (v) Practical organization

**Positive points** mentioned were:

- Social contacts were possible with the help of the support of peers
- “A helper in the university!”

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- No real help given by the National Agency. No advice on the practical managing and monitoring of the project
- Difficulties in following courses because of a hearing impairment; there are too many oral information sources (the same problem at home)
- Transportation, lack of flexibility
- Difficulties in finding accommodation suitable for students with physical disabilities because of architectural barriers
- Difference in sign languages (USA, UK, Au etc) – unified methodology of spoken and written and signed languages could be proposed
- Visiting other countries with children with disabilities is full of problems
- Channelling students to specific institutions that can support them takes away their freedom to choose where to go
- “Because of timescale of (university) programmes, we loose out on potential (targeted) funding”
- Students with special needs have to fight their way through and often don’t know how to get into the support systems when they are overseas
- Difficulties to place (in classrooms) pupils with special needs appropriately
- Difficulties in organization, if students with special needs change courses to ones that require Erasmus placements at short notice
- Different social and cultural environments for the integration of pupils and students with special needs
- There are different problems faced in relation to pupils in mainstream or special educational settings
- Literature and courses in Braille are not always available
- Liaison officers are not always available
- Problems of taking personal equipment abroad

- “No one knew how to use the Braille printer”
- People with disabilities are afraid they will not find the same quality of service abroad

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- Both sign language and Braille support needs to be readily available
- Co-operative learning groups with those who support people with disabilities need to be a possibility
- Longer study visits are needed for participants with disabilities who require more time to “acclimatise” and set up personal networks of support
- Every institution should have a certain criteria to work towards in the future. There should be a minimum standard that all public institutions should be expected to meet in terms of services and support for people with disabilities.
- Minimum levels of facilities and specialist support should be negotiated and set. Every student should have a minimum service level guarantee
- For teachers working in different sectors (mainstream and special, there could be exchanges of teachers within the project

**In summary:**

This area presents what appear to be quite critical points in relation to the programme. In reality, they can be seen to reflect the very real practical problems encountered by people with different disabilities if they want to participate in programmes such as SOCRATES. These negative points should be read in light of the clear practical suggestions that are made as suggestions for developing the programme in future.

The concept of minimum standards for support is raised many times here. The idea that host institutions which are publicly funded should be expected to provide a reasonable minimum level of support is seen as a starting point for improved participation by respondents from a number of situations: universities, schools and support. It should also be pointed out that similar sentiments were expressed in the case studies of programme managers.

6.8 (vi) Funding

**Positive points** mentioned were:

- Special grants are available from National Agencies for students with disabilities
- Case by case considerations for extra funding are possible
- The National Agency covered the costs of half board and lodging for the helper
- Not totally funded by Erasmus (possibility to combine funding sources)

- Funding for a sighted guide

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- Financial support is not enough
- Insufficient funding-financing is the root of all the problems
- No extra funding for people with disabilities within certain actions
- “Is the money targeted properly? .... no clear answer can be given to the student with a disability”
- More funding is needed if the promises are to come true
- Funding is available, but must be asked for very much in advance
- Problems of insurance costs, liability issues, general health and safety
- Grants go to applicants who are good at making applications instead of to good educational projects
- Additional funding that is available is not sufficient
- Estimation of costs many months before the departure of the student is not realistic
- A grant as received from the NA one year after the student’s stay abroad ended
- Clearly guidance on what the special needs are covered by additional funding
- Projects with people with disabilities should be granted a higher award
- Support includes part of the total amount required before departure
- Provide funding for students who can act as partners and mentors for people with disabilities
- Find out if there is a real audience of people with disabilities who wish to study abroad before making major decisions about changing funding
- Duration of visits and financing should be extended in certain situations

Other general **observations**:

- “Which amounts have to be invested per student to stay equitable?”

**In summary:**

It is clearly felt that additional funding should be allocated to participants with disabilities, allowing them to cover the extra costs of their participation, but this is qualified by some respondents by the need for more clarity in what expenses can be covered and by how much. Clearer answers on funding issues need to be given. The idea of minimal standards to be guaranteed for participants with disabilities should be linked to funding. A great number of participants think that projects including people with disabilities should have extra entitlement to funds. It can also be envisaged that there could be a mechanism of an “emergency

reserve” used to more flexibly to finance needs arising within the course of project following an unforeseen accident or disease at the time of the initial presentation of the project

#### 6.8 (vii) The role of National Agencies and the DG Education and Culture

A **Positive point** mentioned was:

- Help provided by NA with the application form

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- No real help by NA. No advice on the practical managing and monitoring of the project
- Erasmus system is too bureaucratic
- SOCRATES contracts not available in Braille
- NA and Commission are not aware enough of the minutiae of individual cases
- Support centre not eligible for participation in Comenius 1
- The commission lacks the necessary information from the users with disabilities because of decentralization
- NA and the Commission itself - each expects the answers to issues to come from the other
- European definition of institutions that can participate needs clarification

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- There is a clear need to separate out thinking about individuals’ participation and project participation if disability issues are to be fully addressed
- It would be very useful for the commission to have relevant statistical information
- The commission must learn about the real problems of people with disabilities if it is to change the system in order to meet real needs

Other general **observations**:

- Does the Commission really know its audience? The user what do they really want / need from the system, terms of time, money, help?
- Application forms are OK, but only because of past experience (Helios). “Use the language they are looking for, or you’re rejected”

**In summary:**

A number of key issues seem to be evident here – firstly, the conflicting information from different participants seems to support some participants perceptions that the systems and support offered by programme managers is not equitable. This maybe a perception, but it certainly requires redress through clear information dissemination.

A further point centres upon the flow of information – participants with disabilities ask whether the programme managers know them (the “audience”). Programme managers express the need for relevant statistical and first hand information regarding users with disabilities.

This point links into a third issue that seems to underpin these other two – that there is not a system that allows communication between the different actors in the programme which satisfies everyone’s needs for information from the others.

#### 6.8 (viii) Information access

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- Lack of information for many students with disabilities that the opportunity does exist for them to participate in Erasmus
- The information easy to get, but difficult to select what is relevant to you
- It is difficult to find out, what is available and where - relevant information is not easily accessible
- Programme information “makes a good selling job and doesn’t go to the difficulties”
- “SOCRATES documentation uses format and text sizes and colours a visually impaired person cannot follow”
- The website is not accessible for people with visual disabilities; “there is not even an effective search tool. It is difficult to navigate, very unfriendly, inaccessible”
- The tables in written documents – electronic and print – are in formats that are impossible to reverse in colours for visually impaired people
- No feedback is collected from participants on what their needs for information formats are
- For students with disabilities, nothing at the end of participation is mentioned, examined, or questioned (in the final report) so the programme managers never get detailed feedback
- There is no systematic information, on how an institution deals with students with disabilities available
- No reliable information on host school opportunities
- Disability is mentioned in the guidelines, but not in the final report “there is no question there on disabilities, how did this affect your participation”
- The commission lacks of necessary information from the users with disabilities
- There is no real invitation to talk about your experiences

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- “Start with the simplest thing: information available (which is) accessible for everyone”
- There is a need for an accurate guide on existing sources of information for people with disabilities: “it seems to exist, but does not really work”
- There is a lack of information about facilities in other countries provide more information
- More information on problems and solutions from “peers”
- More targeted official information from National Agency
- Find out what information people with disabilities really need
- Networks should meet regularly, outside visits
- Dissemination of information is crucial and should be more of a priority in this area

**In summary:**

A lot of the participants criticize the information policy actually in use in Europe concerning this programme. Three forms of criticism are levelled: the content of the information not being specific enough to meet the needs of people with disabilities; the information is generally presented in a complex way which makes it inaccessible to new-comers or the “uninitiated”; the information is presented in ways which are inaccessible to people with certain disabilities (particularly those with visual disabilities).

These criticisms are made with regard to all sources of documentations – print and electronic; publicity material through to end reporting forms.

All of the criticisms are countered with extremely concrete recommendations on what could practically done to improve the access to information. The message seems to be: open a mechanism for feedback and then listen to what people with disabilities are saying in terms of necessary content and the methods need to present that content.

6.8 (ix) Professional help

**Negative points** mentioned were:

- No website dedicated to issues of disability provided within the programme
- A lack of particular mechanisms for people with disabilities which means they lack necessary knowledge and information

**Recommendations** mentioned were:

- Need for a central structure for the evaluation of the situation
- Real need to organize systematically the consultancy offered by professionals in order to make available knowledge on education and special needs, to advise applicants, help

them to prepare applications and projects and to identify and match proper project partners

- A central organisation and presentation of an overview of relevant sources of information for people with disabilities
- A mechanism that monitors whether the real needs of people with disabilities are being met
- It would be very useful for the commission to have more focussed statistical information

**In summary:**

Many participants with disabilities feel lost in the organisation of SOCRATES programme and there were specific requests for specific mechanisms that were dedicated to supporting them. Suggestions for some form of specialist consultancy from people who have detailed knowledge of the programme, but also of disability issues in education and special needs generally to advise applicants came from a number of respondents – both those with disabilities and people representing them.

The types of specialist information and advice suggested are varied, but information on problems and solutions offered by different institutions for supporting people with disabilities; examples of support and support structures; a guide of sources of information for people with disabilities and a specific website dedicated to issues of disability within the SOCRATES programme are highlighted as possible areas.

6.8 (x) General feedback about the programme

**Positive points** mentioned were:

- Being part of a European network
- Importance of social contacts with teachers abroad
- Benefits of networks and contacts
- Good source of learning about learning methods and skills
- Dissemination of idea of integration across Europe is good
- Working on a European curriculum is rewarding
- The special teamwork is a good experience
- This evaluation (for disability issues in particular) is encouraging
- Crucial to learn about different education systems through visits
- Demands for information from home-colleagues are enormous
- Information exchange outside the formal project is good



**Negative points** mentioned were:

- Support centres not being eligible for participation in Comenius 1
- Absence of strategic data concerning universities/students
- This school system is not yet ready/inflexible for mainstreaming
- “Educational tourism unless the visits are properly staged with agreed objectives”
- Not enough study time, stay too short, no time for discussion and reflection with colleagues

**Recommendations** mentioned were::

- Define clear content of the visit
- Participants should have comparable professional background facilitating synergy
- Project activities should be clearly linked to daily education and situation
- Have the correct partner with the same “disability” philosophy
- Mobility guarantee for disabled teachers and students in schools through Europe
- All actions must be accessible to all persons
- Prolonged time / deadlines difference
- Creation of National Committees with National Agency, liaison officers who know about disability issues
- Appropriate preparation in other fields for participants with disabilities
- Physical and study material accessibility- priority for all disabilities-minimum standard for any university receiving Erasmus students
- Institutional contracts not flexible enough for students with disabilities
- “Join in – do it” encouragement to participate, especially for new teachers

Other, general **considerations**:

- The balance between protecting the student’s privacy whilst preparing the host institution for facing possible additional difficulties of the student
- No one is required to declare whether he is disabled or not, even for mobility visits
- Definition problem: “what do we mean when can we talk about someone being a disabled person?”
- How can we identify people with disabilities and then support them effectively?

**In summary:**

Even if the participants welcome the existence of the SOCRATES programme as a form of a European educational networking that –potentially - has an important role to play in helping disseminate the idea of inclusion, many participants think that the education system in

general has to become more flexible in order to ensure the principle of mainstreaming is implemented.

In practical terms, it seems that effective professional networking only develops when partners have the same disability philosophy and comparable professional background situations to facilitate synergy between them. This could mean that SOCRATES is not fulfilling its potential to promote inclusion and mainstreaming in areas where it is not already happening.

Different participants refer to the fact that there are no specific activities or actions in the programme that are specifically reserved for people with disabilities. As a minimum, it is suggested that there should be within all actions a participation and mobility guarantee for all teachers and students throughout Europe. This reflections lead to the recommendation for National structures being created including members of National Agencies and other liaison members who would monitor and report on participation.

#### 6.8 (xi) General conclusions.

It can be observed that the comments and observations made by case study respondents give an overall impression of far more critical comment and negative experience than can be obtained from considering the data presented by the analysis of the questionnaires. Overall, questionnaire data appears to be far more positive and supportive of the programme than the opinions and suggestions expressed in the case study analysis.

A number of possible reasons for this can be put forward. However it is the opinion of the evaluating team that as case study respondents were in the main self selected (i.e. volunteers) they made a conscious decision to get further involved in the study as they had particular views and opinions they wished to express. Case study participants were told that this evaluation was a genuine opportunity to provide personal feedback to programme decision makers. A number of the case studies refer to this being a feature of the programme that they feel is missing. It can be inferred that case study participants were quite highly motivated to use an opportunity to provide feedback about issues they felt strongly about.

The possible issues with such a “weighted” sample of respondents aside, the validity of the feedback and comments made cannot be totally dismissed – case study respondents were all SOCRATES participants with either personal disabilities or responsibilities for supporting people with disabilities. Barton and Clough (1995) argue that the “stories” (first hand accounts) of people with disabilities are an essential element of any research in the field. If

the actual needs of people with disabilities are to be addressed, then it is essential for them to have an individual and a collective voice which can be heard by decision makers who are in a position to effect change. The emphasis placed upon direct accounts from people with disabilities who have participated in the study is an attempt for the evaluation to:

Take the voice (of people with disabilities) seriously, listening to them, exploring their lived experiences in particular contexts. (Barton and Clough 143, 1995)

It is the conclusion of this analysis of the case study information that by listening to the voices of participants with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme, the programme can be developed and improved in ways that will meet the needs of all users, not just those with disabilities.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, an attempt is made to address the original questions posed as the basis of this study in the light of all the information gathered. These questions were:

- Do people with disabilities and special needs participate in the Socrates programme?
- Which factors support or hinder the participation of people with disabilities and special needs?
- Based on the evaluation what recommendations and suggestions can be formulated?

In the following sections, these questions are covered in turn. To begin with a few points of reflection regarding the methods and procedures used in the study need to be made in order to set the conclusions and recommendations into a correct context.

### 7.1 Reflections upon methods used in the study

It has been the intention of this evaluation study to work to the maxim of evaluating what is important rather than making what is easy to evaluate important. This has meant that - whilst appearing quite simple and straightforward - the questions and subsequent aims and objectives pursued in this evaluation study were not always straightforward to address.

Many of the conceptual difficulties faced in the study (i.e. problems of definition of key terms such as disability and participation) have been covered previously and will not be repeated here. However, two main issues regarding data collection have had direct bearing upon the results and subsequent conclusions and they must be clearly identified. It is also important to highlight these issues as potential problems that may be faced by any group or organisation attempting to act upon the evaluation study findings.

Firstly, collecting the specific baseline data required from the countries to accurately pinpoint figures of potential and actual participation has been for some countries and in relation to some questions, very problematic. The nature of the data to be collected is very sensitive, both for individual people concerned and also when considered within the social and political situations of different countries. It has been difficult to collect data for some questions and not possible for others. Sources of data are not always comparable between countries as understandings for even commonly used categories of people or resources vary

considerably. Different types and possibly incomplete data makes comparisons between countries very problematic - resulting conclusions therefore tentative.

Secondly, the difficulties in identifying a representative sample of people with disabilities within the SOCRATES programme have had a direct impact upon all results and conclusions of this evaluation. Identifying mobility and project participants with disabilities and projects focussing upon special educational needs has not been straightforward. People with disabilities are – for a number of reasons - not formally identified – both in their organisations of work or study or within the SOCRATES programme. General or specific projects focusing upon special education or disability issues are not recorded as a matter of course in the programme. These facts and the difficulties they present to a study such as this can be interpreted as reflections of a wider issue: the differences and the implications of these differences, between the understanding and implementation of the principle of mainstreaming for people with disabilities evident at the three levels of actors within the programme - local, National and European. These differences cannot be overstated.

## **7.2 General Conclusions**

### 7.2 (i) Levels of participation

The first question for the evaluation needs to be looked at in line with the rationale for the study. Do people with disabilities participate in mobility actions and are people with disabilities or special needs involved in project-based actions?

From a consideration of the findings and sample here, in relation to individuals participating within mobility all person actions (Erasmus, Lingua and Arion), the first response is not to the extent expected. The number of people with physical and sensory disabilities identified in the evaluation study was very much below what could be considered as in line with the general population - even if the arguments for generally very low participation rates in the various education sectors across Europe are taken into account.

Some qualifications must be made however. If some comments and observations from case study material are examined, there is a suggestion that more people with disabilities than were identified here actually are involved in the programme. The low number may therefore be a result of the methodological problems already identified. However, it is also interesting to note the difficulties faced in the study when trying to identify potential programme

participants with disabilities. This seems to suggest that the participation of people with disabilities in certain sectors of education, either as learners or employees, is generally (although not uniformly across Europe) low and the difficulties found here reflect a wider issue in European society.

If it is later decided that the need to monitor the participation of individual people with disabilities more closely with statistical indicators compared with wider population figures is taken, then the findings of this evaluation would suggest that the emphasis will be on SOCRATES programme managers to set up the necessary Europe-wide systems for identification, recording and monitoring as it not be possible to use existing sources of information satisfactorily.

In relation to the participation of people with disabilities within project-based actions, again it is not possible to make reliable comparisons of the numbers of projects involving people with disabilities and general population estimates. Only for the Comenius action are the population figures accurate enough to suggest that between 3 and 15% of learners participating in projects should have some form of special educational need. From an examination of the data, it appears that the actual number of learners with special educational needs within SOCRATES falls into the lower end of that range.

The numbers of projects reporting a special educational element does appear on the surface to be encouraging – between 30 and 75% depending upon the action – but a consideration of special needs issues does not necessarily mean that people – learners or staff – with special needs actually participated in projects. The numbers of projects reporting a focus upon special needs issues was far higher than the corresponding number of projects stating learners with special needs were actually involved in the project. Reports of no learners with special educational needs participating in projects ranged from more than 50% (Lingua) of projects to less than 20% (Adult Education) again depending upon the action. Over 25% of all projects surveyed had no learners with special educational needs involved. Most projects had between 10 and 30% of learners having special educational needs. As can be expected, the Comenius action has the highest percentage of projects with high numbers of learners with special educational needs within projects.

A point of note here is the obvious differences *between* actions with respect to the two issues of focus upon special educational issues or actual involvement of learners with special needs. A suggested finding is that there are more differences in levels of participation between actions than there are between countries. The recommendation here would be that

this requires further detailed analysis, but a possible means of explaining this finding would require not only an examination of the features and structures of the actions concerned – their strengths and weaknesses in relation to supporting learners with special educational needs – but also a close examination of the target audience and the general participation rates of learners with special needs in that sector of society across Europe. Low participation rates in some project-based actions seems – operating on findings here – to be reflective of low participation rates in the target educational sectors concerned, although structural factors within actions cannot but help compound the difficulties faced by some learners and their representatives.

One specific finding in relation to project participation was the higher number of people with disabilities who were identified as participating in projects – 12% of projects identified at least one staff member as having a disability. This is a far higher figure than was found in relation to individual mobility participation although it does correspond with anecdotal case study evidence. A possible explanation can be put forward: project participation involves a far higher degree of support for individuals than mobility participation. Even if participants are involved in some form of study visit abroad, they have the organisational (and social?) support of their own institution to draw upon. The possible implications arising from this appear to be that for people with disabilities, involvement in project participation where high degrees of familiar support is possible could be a stepping stone to later participation in individual mobility actions. Secondly, the features of organisational support within project participation need to be examined carefully and an analysis of how these factors can be replicated – as far as possible - in the support systems offered to mobility participants made.

#### 7.2 (ii) Support for and barriers to participation

The second question posed addresses the possible factors influencing participation. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the premise that all participants are active decision makers who have clear motives for participation – identifying these motives would be an element of identifying supporting and hindering factors within the SOCRATES programme.

The general conclusion of the study is that the motives for participation of both mobility and project participants with and without disabilities is consistent. All people participate as they see the programme as a real opportunity for personal and professional development. There are some specific differences in motives evident between actions, but these can be seen to be due to the nature of the education sector the target audience is drawn from.

This similarity in the motives for participation between participants with and without disabilities continues in terms of their perceptions of the disadvantages – hindering factors – of participation. Funding levels and the difficulties in making practical arrangements – and very often the effect the former has on the latter - were viewed by mobility and project participants as the factors limiting their participation most significantly. For all participants with disabilities, the difficulties in making practical arrangements were paramount and it must be reiterated that this factor is seen by non-participants in the programme as the biggest potential disadvantage of participation. The complex and often highly individualised difficulties faced by a person with disabilities in making practical arrangements for travel, accommodation, basic mobility and functioning on a day to day basis are not always appreciated by people without disabilities. Such difficulties can only be overcome with additional support in terms of time, flexibility in systems and access to information as well as appropriate material support.

Many of the participants with disabilities involved in this study suggest that the difficulties faced by lack of finance can be minimised if related issues are resolved: flexibility within the programme management in relation to timescales and deadlines for applications for additional funding and a broader consideration of eligible support costs would not change “figures” but may change the distribution of funds. In relation to individual participation within the Erasmus action, there is the added restriction of having to choose a host organisation from within institutional contract partners. Whilst there are possibilities for universities to change partners, the procedures and requirements are often too complex and time consuming to be carried out in order to meet the needs of one student or staff member with a disability. More flexibility in relation to such restrictions would be advantageous.

Support for making practical arrangements was felt to be an area where significant improvement could be made quite easily within the programme. The factor mentioned most often - by both mobility and project participants with disabilities – was access to information that allowed decision-making and practical arrangements to be made. Individual participants and their organisational representatives all suggested that information in terms of content and quality within the programme was not sufficient to meet their needs. These needs were most significant in relation to the practicalities of organising study visits. Individual participants with particular special needs suggested that the format information was available in also acted as a hindrance to their participation. Limited or no access to important information because it was not accessible was a real barrier for some individual participants. Both the limited appropriate content and also the lack of suitable formats to meet individual needs was perceived as many participants and non-participants as evidence of an attitude



and understanding of their situation that was interpreted as being contradictory to the principle of mainstreaming that the SOCRATES programme attempts to promote.

Reported experiences of both individual mobility and project participants with disabilities was in the main positive. It must be noted however that all such participants went to great lengths to stress that fact that they had engaged in what they saw as additional, “proactive” activities in order to ensure their participation would be a success. Project participants acting as representatives of learners with special educational needs also highlighted the fact that far more time and effort is expended in projects where learners with a variety of special needs are involved than those where they are not. The perception is that this fact is not always understood, appreciated by or accounted for by programme managers.

The points above directly relate to a constant potential supporting factor for participation – one that was in evidence in some quarters, but definitely not across the board. This factor is the possibility to communicate needs directly to programme decision-makers in order to assist their understanding of personal needs and make effective judgements based upon sound information. A significant number of participants with disabilities stated that they felt there was no mechanism for making their individual or collective requirements known to the programme actors who could make a difference in the future. Genuine opportunities to provide feedback on experiences within the programme can be seen as the way to address the perceived issues of lack of understanding of the situation of people with disabilities. It could be suggested that the successful implementation of the mainstreaming principle can only be achieved when the opinions of the people it is intended to support are clearly taken into account.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

The overall recommendations and suggestions formulated are presented here in line with the structural elements considered in the evaluation study: mobility participation, project participation, provision of information and programme management.

There is obvious diversity of expectations among programme actors interested in the conclusions and subsequent recommendations of the specific evaluation. A guiding principle in the preparation of these recommendations has been not been to compare rates of participation (between countries, actions or activities) but to identify learning points relevant for all programme actors.

Recommendations are presented in terms of positive points for potential action. They are not presented in any particular order of priority although a natural progression and logical prioritisation of actions may be apparent to readers.

### 7.3 (i) Developing participation in individual mobility actions

1. For participants in mobility actions, more information on potential organisations to be approached for placements is required. Detailed and uniformly presented information through and upon which comparisons of suitability and decisions about next steps can be made is necessary. The need for **more systematic information on the organisations and the support they can offer is particularly needed for students with disabilities** who are eligible to participate in Erasmus actions, but it also applies to teachers and other educational staff who are eligible for Erasmus, Lingua and Arion actions.
2. The possibility of using existing mechanisms – such as the European Credit Transfer scheme - for identifying and **monitoring indicators of quality provision for people with disabilities in institutions** should be investigated. This should be linked to an indication of a minimum criteria of support that should be expected for learners and staff with disabilities. This minimum standard could be seen as a long term plan, its starting point being the clear identification of what types and levels of support are available for participants with disabilities and the widespread dissemination of this information to all programme actors and potential participants. Whilst this recommendation is applicable to all mobility actions, it is felt that the nature of the Erasmus student mobility activities makes this suggestion particularly pertinent.
3. A general **review of the administrative procedures that must be followed by participants for the programme in light of clear information on requirements** flexibility in timescales and funding decisions so as to meet individual needs is a further positive step. The application stage procedures and their implementation in different countries in particular need to be examined in terms of their ability to respond flexibly to meet individual applicants' needs. A person with a disability who wants to participate in the SOCRATES programme needs to be far more proactive than their non-disabled peers. Very often, they are used to this course of action in their daily lives, but there is a real need for practical and attitudinal support from programme systems and implementers to allow them to be proactive.

4. Providing practical information in the form of **a collection of examples of good practice in supporting the mobility of people with disabilities** would be a further positive step to take. The collection of such information would open a dialogue between National Agencies and institutions involved in the programme which in itself would raise awareness of the steps needed to promote the involvement of people with disabilities within actions.

### 7.3 (ii) Developing participation in project based actions

It can be argued that the points made above are just as applicable to project participants as to individual mobility participants. As has been previously noted however, the nature of project participation – for people with disabilities or those who represent learners with disabilities – minimises some of these aspects whilst presenting other, different issues.

1. Most respondents reported that participation involved an un-proportional amount of paperwork and administrative tasks in relation to the educational focus or outcomes of their involvement. In line with the recommendation for a review of administrative procedures in relation to mobility actions, **a review of administrative procedures from the perspective of requirements placed upon project participants** seems appropriate. One specific element of this is must be linked to here is of accessibility to information (please refer to the next section). Such a review should include a consideration of the formats and ease of access all compulsory paperwork is available in and whether this is supportive or prohibitive to participants with different disabilities.
2. One mechanism to actively promote the participation of more learners with special needs and their representatives into activities is to **disseminate information on examples of special education projects within all the actions more widely**. There are many National and European level initiatives for sharing information outcomes from projects – some of these are themed or subject based. None have clear special needs elements or are solely focused upon disability issues. Having clear special education themes within existing mechanisms for disseminating project outcomes (i.e. compendiums of projects; website action sheets etc) is a positive step to take. Establishing a targeted source of information about and from projects looking specifically or generally at issues of special education across the actions could be another.

Real need to organize systematically the consultancy offered by professionals in order to make available knowledge on education and special needs, to advise applicants, help them to prepare applications and projects and to identify and match proper project partners

### 7.3 (iii) Improving access to information

Many services or public bodies work to the “right of access” in terms of information. The European Commission’s principle of transparency is one objective in line with this principle. Its further aim to make information available in as many community languages as possible is another aspect of its intention to make access to information a right for its citizens. Within the mainstreaming principle, this right of access is implicit. However, giving a right of access to information cannot in itself guarantee accessibility. There is a need to remove barriers (physical and social) that are faced by people with disabilities by considering what forms of communication support will allow full access to all of the programme information for all potential and actual participants, no matter what their disability.

The SOCRATES programme is essentially an information programme: it aims to share and disseminate information about good practice in education. It includes specific activities of systematic information collection and dissemination (EURYDICE AND NARIC). It is dependant upon effective information collection, processing and dissemination systems for its operation. Yet, within all elements and at all levels of the programme, access to information for people with disabilities is considered – if it has been considered at all – as a marginal concern.

The possibilities for accessing the information provided within the programme at a European level was described by more than one visually impaired participant as “discriminatory”. Within a number of National contexts, some of the information provision within the programme – particularly that provided via the DG education and Culture website - actually contravenes National disability discrimination guidelines and in some cases, even laws. National level programme managers have, in some instances, completed a lot of additional work in order to ensure they are complying with equal opportunities legislation in their country whilst working within the constraints of the structures and demands of the programme.

1. It is argued that a ***policy of accessibility to information for all should be adopted*** and implemented at a European level within the programme. Such a policy should be used as the exemplar for information accessibility in all participating countries.

2. The implementation of such a policy within the programme can obviously not occur immediately – steps need to be taken to make such an aim a reality. A **first step could be to conduct a systematic analysis or audit of documentation the programme makes available to participants**. What is there; what formats are available; where are the gaps in terms of the meeting access needs of certain groups of people with particular disabilities?
3. Guidelines for methods and standards of accessibility are available on a National and international level for all print, electronic and visual/audio media are available (for example the W3C, World Wide Web Consortium that seeks to set standards by which the coding used to create web pages is determined). Such **guidelines could be used as the basis for the identification of minimum standard set of SOCRATES information accessibility guidelines** proposed and implemented by the DG Education and Culture itself to be worked towards by those participating countries and individual organizations that do not as yet meet such minimum requirements.
4. **Awareness raising of the principles of accessibility and practical information on how to put these principles into practice** would be a vital component of any such initiative. Here the strengths in this area obvious in some countries could be drawn upon and models of good practice in accessibility from National Agencies, information provision units, project outcomes and individual participants could be drawn together in a systematic way in order to promote further good practice.

### 7.3 (iv) Developing programme management

It would be naïve to under estimate the complexity of the management structure of the SOCRATES programme or the impact this complexity has upon the possibility for drawing out conclusions and recommendations that are acceptable to all programme actors. A number of specific points in relation to the main groups of programme managers – National Agencies and DG Education and Culture – have already been highlighted. The five areas presented below refer specifically to issues that impact upon the entire management structure of the programme, at National and a European level.

1. The first issue can be phrased by way of a question: to what extent do the users of the SOCRATES programme have a voice? More specifically, to what extent do the users who have disabilities have a voice within the programme. Users - the active decision making participants of the programme - perceive SOCRATES as a top down programme;

there is limited opportunity for feedback from participants to be passed to programme managers (please refer to 7.2 (ii) above).

Access to information has already been raised as an aspect deserving action. However, access to information can be seen within a dynamic programme such as SOCRATES as needing to be a two way process. There needs to be ***a more effective and open – transparent – mechanism for information from programme users with disabilities to be fed back into the decision making structures of the programme.*** A real opportunity for development within the next phase of the programme would be to establish and clearly promote the use of a means for information to flow from users – with or without disabilities – to programme decision makers and back again. Such a flow would provide the necessary information programme managers need to base their decisions regarding all other developments (such as those proposed above) upon.

2. Within both project and mobility actions, ***raising awareness of the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the programme via promotional and support information needs to be considered.*** Such awareness raising needs to occur within the Commission structures, National Agencies and eligible institutions. In particular, the need to adequately prepare the human, administrative and logistic environment in order to support participation should be an aspect directly raised with promoters of projects and participating institutions by the National Agencies in co-ordination with the Commission.
  
3. The 1997 working paper on **Mainstreaming Disability Within Employment and Social Policy (DGV)** suggests that Member States should also be encouraged to undertake systematic research when appropriate data is lacking on the number, specific problems, needs and geographical distribution of people with disabilities. It is the clear outcome of this study that the necessary sources of data required in order to effectively monitor the implementation of mainstreaming within SOCRATES do not presently exist in the countries. Some form of ***systematic monitoring of the participation of people with disabilities within the programme is required*** in order to make sure positive action to make mainstreaming a reality is being taken.

As a precursor to the principle of mainstreaming being naturally implemented by all programme actors – a situation that will need more time, more awareness raising and more positive action – the clear identification of people with disabilities who could potentially or who are already participating in the programme is necessary in order to

direct assistance in terms of resources, specialist information and support, to those who need it most.

4. In a number of different ways, but from all of the different programme actors, the suggestion that ***a mechanism for centrally co-ordinating and directing disability related initiatives and action*** was made. Some actors suggested the need for a specific action dedicated to disability issues. Whilst attractive in its potential completeness, this would rightly be seen by many as a retrograde step in terms of implementing the principle of mainstreaming. A separate action would have the potential to encourage segregation rather than integration of people with and without disabilities.

A further suggestion was for some form of disability working party or observatory looking across the programme. The aim of such a working group would be to monitor, integrate and direct initiatives at local, National and European level. Part of the brief of such a working party could be to co-ordinate the forms of specialist information asked for by a number of programme actors: information agents; National Agencies; project and individual mobility participants.

It is felt that one of the main unanticipated outcomes of the evaluation study is that that this exercise has in itself raised awareness of the participation of people with disabilities within the programme. Programme managers should note the number and urgency of requests for further information and support received from universities, information agents suppliers and National Agencies as well as individual project and mobility participants. There is an obvious need for a mechanism to monitor, and respond to such requests in a co-ordinated way.

Such a mechanism could be established through a disability working group that included representatives from all the SOCRATES programme actors – managers, information agents and users – as well as potentially representatives of disability and special education advisory organisations.

5. Although a tentative conclusion, it is suggested by evidence from this study - and others - that for some of the sectors of education in across Europe that the SOCRATES programme covers, the numbers of learners and employees with disabilities is extremely low. An example of this would be within the foreign language-learning field covered by Lingua; a further example would be the numbers of students with disabilities within the higher education sector covered by Erasmus. A deduction from this evidence would be

that promotion of participation in sectors where the participation of people with disabilities is low maybe a fruitless exercise. It could be argued that if the SOCRATES programme is to truly promote participation within actions, it must also ***work towards promoting the participation of learners and employees with disabilities within all sectors of education generally.***

Two means within the programme itself can be highlighted for working towards an aim of promoting participation in education generally: firstly, priority could be given to activities that worked towards or practically implemented the aim of participation of people with disabilities in education sectors where they are under represented. Secondly, actions could be used in a developmental way: Comenius could offer priority for projects and activities designed to promote the later participation of young people with disabilities within the higher, vocational or adult education sectors.

The challenge for the DG Education and Culture is to live its vision of mainstreaming by promoting the participation of people with disabilities in education generally, through using programmes such as SOCRATES as an inspirational source of good practice. The use of the mechanisms of the programme needs to be co-ordinated with use of every avenue and initiative for promoting participation of people with disabilities in all education sectors wherever possible.

6. The SOCRATES programme is unique in its coverage of all sectors of educational provision across Europe. It is therefore in a unique position to potentially act as a model of good practice in relation to promoting the participation of people with disabilities within education. SOCRATES and the way it is managed and promoted by the DG Education and Culture could potentially be ***a model for what all agencies and organisations associated with the programme should do in terms of supporting participation*** by making the programme accessible to all learners and educational employees.

The DG Education and Culture is unlikely to be able to insist that all National and local level actors in the programme follow an agreed set of procedures regarding participation and access to the programme. They can however, consider identifying and instituting a minimum set of standards – in line with the recommendations set out above – which they themselves work to as a model of good practice. The SOCRATES programme has the potential to be a model programme for promoting the participation of people with disabilities within education, but for this potential to be achieved it is necessary for the



DG Education and Culture to take the initiative and itself act as a European level role model for promoting all forms of participation.

#### **7.4 Final comment**

Whilst it is acknowledged that the principle of mainstreaming can be interpreted as meaning that equity of treatment should be given in all respects, it is argued that practically, if a priority area for support – such as the participation of people with disabilities and special educational needs – is not visibly and openly given support and active promotion, it will not be perceived as being any such priority. A clear case can be made to suggest that the positive promotion of inclusion and participation of people with disabilities within the different elements of the programme will be needed before such participation is seen by all actors as the norm and true mainstreaming in terms of equity of treatment for all can be applied in principle and practice.

Positive and proactive attention and support appear to be the necessary precursors to equality of opportunity within the SOCRATES programme. The information collection, analysis and recommendations presented here all lead to the conclusion that there are real opportunities for the programme to be a model of mainstreaming in action. Many positive steps have been taken within the first phase of SOCRATES to make this happen. It is hoped that some of the suggestions in this report can help in taking that development further so that the real potential of fully including people with disabilities and special educational needs within the community action programme SOCRATES can be fulfilled.

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