

International youth organisations and their EU grants

Ex-post evaluation of budget line A-3029 in 1999 and 2000, as assigned by unit D1 of the Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Final Report

Résumé française

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1 Summary

1.1 Summary of the evaluation

1.1.1 Assignment

On assignment of the European Commission DOCA Bureaus has carried out an evaluation of EU grants to international non-governmental youth organisations. These are grants that were awarded to them in 1999 and 2000 on the basis of budget line A-3029. In 1999, 107 organisations, and for 2000, 89 organisation received such grants. This grant system has its roots in the resolution of the European Parliament of 14 June 1991 on “Community policies and their effects on young people”.

DOCA Bureaus is a small and independent research unit established in Lepelstraat, the Netherlands. It applied several research methods to undertake a pertinent evaluation so as to answer the Commission’s questions concerning the implementation of the grant system. These evaluation questions regarded operational, efficiency-related aspects, the specific outcome that were realised by the organisations with the help of the EU- grants and the global effects that can be related to the grant system. The latter regarded e.g. the promotion of youth participation in society and the enhancement of the idea of Europe as a civil society. In the next paragraph we will discuss the stronger and the weaker points of the evaluation model we applied. These questions can be found in attachment 1 of this report.

Since the Commission expected also recommendations based upon the evaluation results, we made a global assessment of the political context of the grant system. The most important issue in the political context appeared to be the up-coming budget system of the EU. The new budget system is known as the Activity Based Budget system, which will be in operation from 2004 onwards. This budget system might exclude further grants for international youth organisations as they are now awarded under budget line A-3029.

This final report presents the outcome of the evaluation and our recommendations, taking into consideration the stronger and weaker points of the evaluation model that was applied. In particular, it should be taken into consideration that our conclusions concerning the global effects of the grants and our recommendations were based on expert opinion of a rather restricted group, both in numbers and profile. Thus, these conclusions and recommendations do not represent hard evidence, as opposed to the conclusions and recommendations concerning operational aspects and specific outcomes. Therefore, they are to be seen as a modest but fair contribution to the political debate on future EU-grants for international youth organisations.

In chapter 3 the outcomes are summarised in short statements concerning:

- * Rules and procedures,
- * Operational aspects and efficiency,
- * Specific effects,
- * Possible global effects.

Chapter 4 will present our modest but fair contribution to ongoing political debate.

Then, Chapter 5 will show our detailed summary and recommendations, the five most pertinent of which we would like to mention here. For each recommendation we may briefly refer to the stronger or weaker evidence that supports them.

1.1.2 Five recommendations

First recommendation

We would strongly recommend that the European institutions continue their support for international youth NGOs that need and deserve a grant due to their performance.

This recommendation is strongly justified beyond serious doubt by the findings concerning the needs of all applicant organisations as well as concerning the operations and performance of most organisations having received grants. The recommendation is further supported by the opinions of a majority of consulted experts. They were convinced that youth organisations and the grants they received have had an impact on more global aims, such as youth participation in society and the promotion of the idea of Europe. Careful examination of the applications remains necessary, however, particularly for organisations that do not surpass a critical mass in terms of staff. In this respect a questionable performance was observed among organisations that employed less than one full-time staff member.

Second recommendation

We recommend that the Commission harmonise the rules concerning the representation of youth organisations in EU Member States and that in candidate countries as soon as possible.

From several meetings our observers reported broad and sincere participation from the EU's candidate countries. Besides, 46% of all granted organisations in 1999 and 2000 referred in their application explicitly to the aim to increase their membership and participation in the candidate countries. We may conclude that the interest in the enlarged European Union is well represented among the organisations. In the rules applicable to the grants, the candidate countries held a rather ambiguous position, together with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway that belong as EFTA-countries to the European Economic Area. The applicant organisations were allowed to compensate under-representation in EU Member States by extra-ordinary representation in candidate countries, Nor-

way, etc. The norm was representation in eight EU Member States, but representation in six Member States could be compensated by representation in six candidate countries, Norway, etc. In 2000 the Commission applied the rules of representation in a rather strict sense. Only two organisations were awarded a grant on the basis of the compensation rule and their wide representation in the candidate countries of the EU, Norway, Switzerland, etc. In the light of the nearby enlargement of the EU the adaptation of the rules will be necessary. Taking into consideration most expert opinions, we recommend to harmonise the representation rules for the whole region covered by the enlarged EU, Romania, Bulgaria, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the European Economic Area and Switzerland. They all symbolise the idea of Europe in a certain sense that is to be enhanced by the youth organisations.

Third recommendation

From a prospective of consistency we recommend that the European institutions make long-term grants possible for international youth organisations that need and deserve such funding.

The EU has awarded grants to European youth organisations since 1990. While it usually supports an average of 110 organisations per year, only 87 organisations received grants in 2000. Among these 87 were 19 organisations (21% of the total) that have already obtained funding since the beginning in 1990, and for almost 50% of them, follow-up funding was awarded after a first grant in the early nineties. The grant system showed a strong long-term perspective with regards to the element of continuity. In terms of its legal and operational logic the grant system had an obvious short-term perspective. Its legal basis consisted of yearly budget decisions of the European Budget Authority as taken in January each year. This was followed by a call for proposals in the same month, which could be changed on a yearly basis. Every year, the applicant organisations had to reapply before the end of February. Since the grant had always to be used for the current year and the grant decision fell in May-June they were obliged to spend their grant before the end of the year. Most organisations complained that this time frame laid high pressure on their limited staff resources, their short-term planning for each year and their long-term strategy. A number of organisations stated that some operational changes as introduced with the so-called EU's grant vade-mecum in the late nineties had somewhat improved the situation. Further operational changes such as the recently introduced applications in November may also relieve the pressure. However, these changes do not accommodate the long-term perspective of most grants and the need of the organisations to improve their strategies and planning accordingly. These organisations would be better served with the possibility of long-term funding. This alternative however, is excluded by the present legal frame of the grants.

Fourth recommendation

We would recommend for the Commission to present a proposal for another legal basis of the grants to international youth NGOs in the very near future.

Long-term budget allocations in the EU are possible, on the condition that the allocation regards activities arising from the EU Treaty. Budget allocations to other activities such as administrative activities of the European institutions are only possible on the basis of yearly decisions of the European Budget Authority. The grants to international youth NGOs do not follow directly from the EU Treaty. Therefore, long-term budget allocations are presently not possible. For this to be possible, European institutions would have to decide that they form a European programme of activities, or part of a programme, during a certain number of years. It should be a programme stemming from the Treaty, such as presently the YOUTH Programme, that follows from the last and general article of the Treaty.

Many experts stated that the change of legal basis for the grants is particularly urgent with regards to the introduction of the Activity Based Budget System in 2004. In the framework of this 'ABB' the EU intends to concentrate its budget allocations on activities. The experts stated that within that framework grants could only be awarded if the organisations and their activities were treated as administrative units of the EU, or if their grants were embedded in a EU programme with the above mentioned legal basis. Most experts from European youth organisations stated that they would be in favour of a special programme for funding youth organisations, which should cover the grants both to the Youth Forum and to international youth NGOs.

Fifth recommendation

We would recommend that the Commission, the Youth Forum and the subsidised organisations take a joint initiative to increase public awareness of the quality and performance of the latter, particularly among young people that benefit from these organisations. The low visibility of international youth organisations may be a weak point that could undermine the legitimacy of the grants in the long run.

In a pilot project of the present evaluation we were discouraged from carrying out direct research among national and regional authorities concerning their appreciation of the international organisations. As knowledge of them was obviously limited, reliable appreciation data were not expected (see also the methodological discussion below). Some of our observers reported a reasonable level of public and press contacts in meetings, particularly from authorities and media in their own domain. Other observers reported the difficulties organisations had experienced with press contacts, even in very news-worthy domains such as international environmental politics. The issue of visibility is directly or indirectly related the legitimacy of the grants and should therefore be increased as much

as possible, both by the Commission and by the youth organisations as well as the Youth Forum.

1.2 Strong and weak points of the evaluation model

1.2.1 Strong points

The evaluation and its conclusions were based upon a mixed model of appropriate quantitative and qualitative research methods. Therefore, the model is to be seen as a strong point of the evaluation.

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The model included file analyses and surveys on the quantitative side. On the qualitative side, open questions, expert interviews, observations and an invitational conference were applied. These methods included eighteen case studies on organisations that received a grant in 2000.¹ In these case studies, we selected and approached organisation stakeholders and active participants in meetings or other activities that we attended and observed. Many important conclusions were derived from these case studies and the surveys.

The combination of a file analysis, a survey among the applicant organisations, the case studies and the survey among stakeholders has given a strong empirical base to the evaluation, particularly as far as operational and specific effects were concerned. Specific effects are related both to rules and procedures and to the organisations' performance in realising its work plan with the help of the EU-grants in 1999 and 2000.

We were confronted with serious obstacles regarding the analysis of *global effects* of the grants. Generally speaking possible and welcome global effects regarded the contribution of the youth organisations and their grants to European youth participation. Unavoidably, the measurement of global effects is almost always dependent on qualitative research methods and analyses. There is almost never hard proof for the conclusions and assessment. Yet, the evaluator is challenged to apply the best set of qualitative methods. In this case we have applied case study analysis, open interviews with a wide range of experts and stakeholders, observations, and an invitational conference where policy makers and key organisers discussed our preliminary findings and recommendations. In debate with each other they elaborated their recommendations for the future of the grant system, thereby helping us with our task to come forward with recommendations for the future of

¹ Plus one case in which we only could trace the key organiser. We have interviewed this key organiser extensively, but he was unable to help us further with the full case study. Our conclusion that an organisation needs a minimal critical mass was partly based upon this experience.

grant system. Moreover, the set of qualitative methods that we applied for the analysis of the global effects of the grants and as the basis of our recommendations are to be seen as strong points of the present evaluation. However, this should be considered in the light of its weak points as discussed below.

1.2.2 Weak points

We could not apply the best methods of evaluation to a number of points. It would certainly have been ideal to have applied methods that could lead to hard conclusions for the effects of the grants, i.e. to quantified conclusions for effects. For the global effects and the future of the grant system these conclusions were definitely not obtainable, as argued above. Thus, we have no hard conclusions and recommendations at this point, the conclusions and recommendations being based on the opinions and recommendations of the widest range of experts that we could establish.

A particular weakness is to be discussed in this respect. The Commission lacks feedback from national and regional authorities concerning the added value of the grant system. A pilot project made clear that there were no conclusive reliable opinions from national or regional authorities with this regard. This is due to the fact that international federations were unknown to national or regional funding agencies or other authorities. It appeared to be their issue of lesser concern. Also the national or regional lists did not match with the European lists of youth organisations that received grants in 1999 and 2000. The major problems were obvious language differences with regard to names, e.g. in The Netherlands and Flanders. Therefore, we have not been able to give a direct answer to the Commission's question whether the right organisations were funded in the eyes of national and regional authorities.

As a solution for this point we have tried to extend the circle of the organisations' stakeholders as far as we could. We have asked the staff members of the 18 case studies to give us the names and addresses of a list of twenty stakeholders. Preferably the list should include national and regional representatives and authorities as well as the most important funding agents, apart from the Commission. The later stakeholders were supposed to give a more independent opinion on the relevance and performance of the organisation than stakeholders who were directly involved in the organisation. We have received a list of stakeholders from the eighteen case studies. We assumed that they all included the widest range of stakeholders. For some case studies we are sure at this point. However, for privacy reasons we could not make a full validity check on the range of stakeholders. Indirectly we were assured that the range was reasonably wide, because the number of stakeholders with direct involvement in national or regional youth policy making is rather high. For example, 19% of the stakeholders was directly involved in national policy making and 29% in regional policy making. We see this solution as a fair

but modest alternative for the national and regional appreciation of the relevance and performance of specific international youth organisations.

A rather weak point to be discussed too regards the response of the organisations' key organisers to the survey. 35% of the organisations gave no sign at all. Half of the non-response occurred because 22 organisations had moved from the most recent known address, or had ceased operations. If we assume that all organisations which had moved and which we could not trace, had ceased operations since 2000, then there was a non-response of 27% of organisations that received grants, and of 59% of rejected organisations – see table 1.

Table 1. Response to the organisations' survey .*

	Granted organisations		Rejected organisations	
Response	59	73%	23	41%
Non-response	22	27%	33	59%
Total	81	100%	56	100%

* * Excluded from this table are those organisations that we could not trace because they had moved or had ceased operations since their application in 1999 or 2000. This concerns eight granted organisations and fourteen rejected organisations.

This leads us to believe that the 59 responding organisations that received a grant were representative for all granted organisations in 1999 and 2000, e.g. as far as the performance in 1999 and 2000 was concerned. We also assumed that the 23 responding organisations that were rejected, were representative for all rejected organisations that nevertheless continued operations. For the assessment of a possible grant effect we have compared the performance of the organisations which received grants with that of the rejected organisations that continued operations, using that of rejected organisations as a non-granted control group. The nil-hypothesis for this comparison read that there is no grant effect if there is no apparent difference between the granted organisations and the rejected organisations that had continued operations, or if the difference is in the wrong direction.

2 Questions and problems

2.1 Questions to be answered

In its call for restricted tender² the Commission formulated the following terms of reference for the evaluation of its grants to international youth organisations³ under budget heading A-3029.⁴ The Commission wished “to obtain descriptions, analyses, conclusions and recommendations on the activities of international non-governmental youth organisations funded under budget heading A-3029 for the period 1999-2000, in order to verify the extent to which this funding has contributed to the objectives laid down in the European Parliament Resolution of 14 June 1991 on Community policies and their impact on youth.” The Commission also wished to analyse the various activities in order to make them more relevant, effective and efficient. The Commission would like to evaluate this activity so as to set future objectives in this area.

The objectives of the evaluation were to analyse:

“The direct impact: to what extent has the Community funding made a determining contribution to the performance of the activities of the NGO concerned? To this end, the evaluation will have to include a detailed description of the organisation’s results, the resources used (organisational set-up, staff training, human resource availability, etc.), the results obtained (respect for deadlines, cooperation with the national authorities, etc.) and the features of the networks established by the various operators.

The indirect effect: the impact of these NGOs’ activities on young people in relevant areas, such as mobility, information, etc., and the groups of young people concerned. So far, the evaluation must include a description of the projects,⁵ broken down by thematic group, as well as a profile of the type of youth organisations benefiting from funding, the frequency of their participation and their operational capacity.

Future objectives, in particular with regard to young people’s participation in the society.

The evaluation will therefore have to provide specific answers to questions such as:

² For the full text of the terms of reference, see attachment 1 to this report.

³ Official terminology is ‘international non-governmental youth organisations as the grants are restricted to organisations that are non-governmental and non-commercial. So, where we refer to youth organisations, international youth organisations or European youth organisations we refer to NGOs, unless it is otherwise stated.

⁴ Letter of 8 October 2001 unit D of DG EAC for contract number DG EAC/66/01. The contract was signed between the Commission and DOCA Bureaus on 31 December 2001.

⁵ Because the funding does not regard the funding of specific projects as carried out by international youth organisations, but its ‘overhead’, we have read ‘the organisations and its activities during the year(s) of funding’ for ‘project’ and ‘projects’ in the terms of reference.

1. Is the activity really justified?
2. Does it provide real Community added value?
3. Would other types of activity be more effective?
4. Are the overall objectives still relevant?
5. Have the optimum partners been found?
6. Are the implementation mechanisms effective?

The evaluation of the impact of the project funding must take the following into account:

1. The way the organisation is perceived by other operators in the field of youth work and the national and/or regional authorities;
2. The European added value of the projects performed by these youth organisations;
3. The efficiency (in relation to the resources consumed, including operational resources) and effectiveness of the projects.

Working on the basis of the above objectives, the evaluator will present conclusions and proposals for the future of this Community activity.”

The terms of reference specified further that analyses and conclusions were to be made on the grant applications and allocations in the budget years 1999 and 2000.

At briefings and via correspondence representatives of DG EAC⁶ have specified and clarified these objectives to some extent. For the direct and the indirect objectives the terms ‘specific’ and ‘global’ objectives were suggested, where the specific objectives referred to expected results on behalf of the organisations and the global effects referred to more general wishes concerning the role and impact of youth organisations in society. Besides, the term operational objective was suggested as the reference for all possible means that support the maintenance and the output of the organisations.

In addition to the indirect or global objectives and the future objectives we were briefed that there is a direct relation to general budgeting policies and principles of the EU. At this level there are obvious frictions between principles and practice. In practice, the A-3029 budget line offers the opportunity to international NGOs for long-term funding,⁷ without a direct relation to an EU programme. In principle, such funding is only possible for objectives that have a legal basis in the European Treaty and the programmes that are agreed upon by the European institutions and the Member States. Thus, there is a certain friction between principles and practice.

Another applicable principle could be in contradiction with the practice of budget line A-3029 too. It regarded the decision of the European institutions and the Member States that

⁶ In particular Mr. Philippe Cova, deputy head of unit D1, Mrs. Gabriella Amoruso, officer responsible for the A-3029 grants, Mrs. Monique Leens-Ferrando, head of unit evaluation, and Mr. Mascagna, unit evaluation.

⁷ But it does not guarantee long-term funding, as each organisation is obliged to apply for a grant each year after the general budget of the EU has been established by the end of January.

from 2004 onwards the EU should only allocate funds to activities. The principle is called the Activity Based Budget system. On its basis the Commission will not be allowed to allocate grants to NGOs for their fixed and running costs, as is now the case with the grants for international youth organisations. During the evaluation the Commission, the European Parliament, the Youth Forum as well as other institutions and interested bodies were involved in debate concerning the consequences of the Activity Based Budget system on budget line A-3029 as well as other A-30 budget lines.⁸

Therefore, political questions were to be raised and deserved an answer. These questions regarded the most appropriate legal framework for the grant system and its compatibility with the Activity Based Budget system. As far as possible we will give an answer to these questions, in addition to our answers to questions related to operations, performance and global effects.

2.2 Grants' management and framework

2.2.1 Objectives and selection criteria

A-3029 grants are intended primarily to help cover operating costs of international non-governmental youth organisations associated with the organisation and execution of programmes of activities in a European context (Call for proposals, 31-12-1999,⁹ article 2). Eligible are those applicant organisations that fulfil a number of formal criteria (legal status, NGO, non-profit, co-financing, deadline, exclusion of double funding) and that:

1. Are primarily intended to benefit young people.¹⁰ Thus, the target group and the primary aims are specified,
2. Have member organisations active in at least eight Member States of the European Union.¹¹ Thus, the representation in Europe is specified,

⁸ These include budget lines for e.g. the NGOs of the European movement, the European Interuniversity Centre in Fiesole, the Youth Forum, etc.

⁹ Each year there is a new call and a new package of forms that have to be used for the application, with greater or smaller changes compared to the call and the forms of the preceding year. In a formal and legal sense there is no relation between the calls and the forms of successive years, as each call and form is legally only related to the EU's budget decision for one special year, such as 1999, or 2000, or 2001, or 2002.

¹⁰ "organisations not working solely for young people but whose programme of activities includes youth activities may be considered, provided the grant contributes to the maintenance and development of these youth activities" (call, article 4.1, forth dot).

¹¹ This rule applied for 2000 and all preceding years. Since 2001, there is a certain acknowledgement of representation in other European countries, particularly in the candidate countries of the EU. The rules since 2001 were as follows: "or six Member States and six further European countries from the following:

- * EFTA members of the EEA: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway;
- * applicant countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Rumania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey.

3. Themselves organise (or actively help to organise) activities in a European context of benefit to young people (including activities other than international competitions),” (Call, article 4.1).

In addition, the applicant has to prove its technical and financial capacity. Difficulties in using the grants in earlier years can be seen as a contra-indication against a new grant (Call, article 4.2).

Whether a grant may be awarded depends then, on criteria such as:

1. The quality and scale of the programme of activities (number and type of activities, benefit to young people, publications, languages used, etc.),
2. The involvement of young people in the activities,
3. The involvement of leaders/people in charge of groups of young people,
4. the European dimension and multiplier effect, i.e. the number of European countries in which the organisation is represented, the number of young members active in those countries and the probable impact of the programme of activities on the target groups,
5. Organisations that received a grant in 1999 should prove the quality of their performance on behalf of their activity report and their financial statement on 1999,
6. Budget estimates and grant need should be reasonable.

The call further specified in the article on the awarding criteria (article 5) that the awarding of the grants also depended on the budgetary resources available to the Commission.

¹²

Priority was given to organisations that proposed individual or group mobility activities for young people, or youth information activities, particularly with regard to European integration and the opportunities stemming therefrom for young people as well as activities of benefit to the community.¹³

From a formal point of view, representation in EU Member States, EU candidate Member States or EFTA countries could not be regarded as equal until now, because neither the candidate countries nor the EFTA countries participate financially in the A-3029 grant scheme. In strict terms the eligibility rule offers a kind of free ride to non-EU participants in international youth organisations.

Although the may exceed the time frame of the present evaluation, being 1999 and 2000, we concluded that there are both empirical and political arguments to recommend to the Commission to harmonise the representation rules for all European countries. The harmonisation should regard the representation rules candidate countries of the EU and the Member States in particular.

¹² The point is elaborated in article 6.3 on financial conditions.

¹³ “... in particular, any project promoting, directly or indirectly, messages which are contrary to the Union's policies, or associated with a negative image, will be rejected” (Call, article 5, second dot).

2.2.2 The EU's vade-mecum on grant management

In November 1998, the Commission issued a vade-mecum on grant management. The rules and guidelines that were included in the vade-mecum apply to all grant schemes of the Commission, including the A-3029 scheme. Most important part of it regarded the calculation system of the grants as awarded and as balanced for a later date.

2.2.3 The yearly time frame

The A-3029 scheme followed strictly the EU's budget year. The call was published after the agreement of the European institutions on the budget for a specific year in January. The reason is that only at that moment the Commission is assured of the assignment of a budget for the A-3029 scheme and its total amount. The budget and therefore all grants are to be spent on expenditures for the same budget year. For the applicant organisations it means that they could cover operating costs for 1999 with the grant awarded to them in that year, and for 2000 with the grant that was awarded to them in 2000.

As to make the latter possible the procedures became less cumbersome in the late nineties. The deadline was fixed quite shortly after the call, i.e. by the end of February. It is the Commission's intention to take its decisions as soon as possible. Actually, the decisions are communicated to the applicant organisations in May-June.

2.2.4 The scheme's history

The scheme has been in operation since 1990. It has its legalised basis in the European Parliament's Resolution on Community policies and their impact on youth (OJ C 183 of 15.7.1991). The Parliament expressed its explicit endorsement for operational support for European youth organisations. Since 1990 a number of organisations have received such operational support from the Commission and since the beginning, 24 organisations have received a grant without interruption.¹⁴ There were 30 organisations that received their

¹⁴ MIJARC–Mouvement international de la Jeunesse Rurale Agricole Catholique. AEGEE–Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe. ICYE/EYCI–Association of the International Christian Youth Exchange in Europe. YMCA–European Alliance of YMCA's. ECYC–European Confederation of Youth Club Organisations. YFU–European Educational Exchanges-Youth for understanding. EFIL–European Federation for Intercultural Learning. ESIB–European students Information Bureau. YWCA–European Young Bar Association. EIE–Experiment in Europe-European Association of the Experiment in International Living. FIMCAP–International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements. IUSY–International Union of Socialist Youth. IYNF–International Young Naturefriends. JEE–Jeune Entrepreneur Européen. JECI-MIEC/IYCS-IMCS–Jeunesse Etudiante Catholique Internationale/MIEC. MI–Mobility International. SCI–Service Civil International. WAGGGS–World Association of Girl Guides and Girls Scouts. WOSM/OMMS–Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout -Région européenne du Sud. YAP–Youth Action for Peace. MADRESELVA–Asociacion Juvenil Madreselva. EYE–European Youth Exchange. IFM-SCI–International Falcon Movement-Socialist Educational International. OCFE–Office Commun de Formation Européenne.

first grant before 1996.¹⁵ In 1999 there were twelve newcomers that received a first grant,¹⁶ and in 2000 six.¹⁷

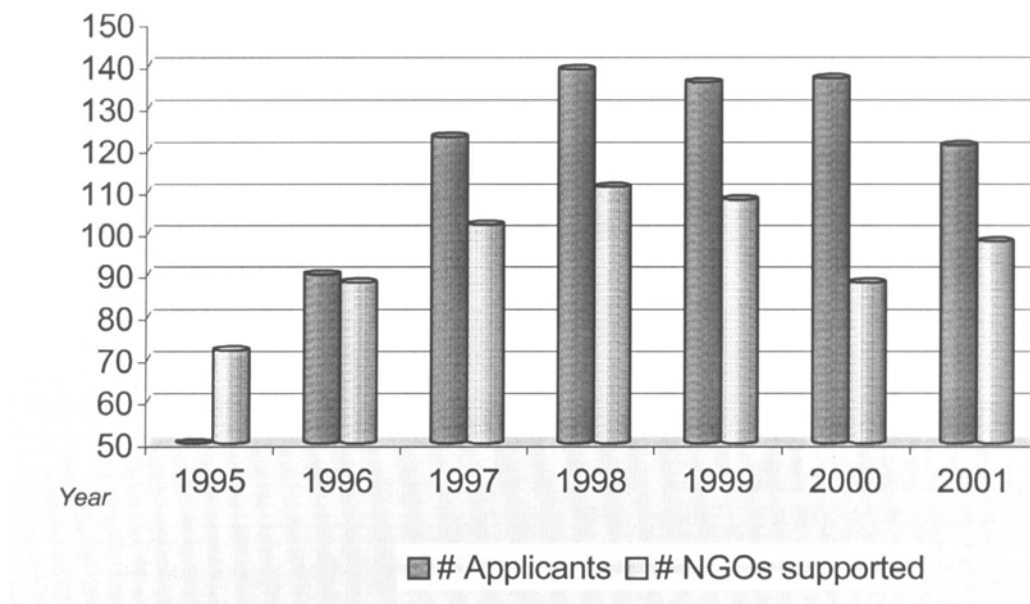
The budget available for the scheme has increased steadily between 1991 and 1996/1997, up to 1,2 MEURO. Then it dropped rather sharply during the budget years 1998 and 1999 (our first year of evaluation), down to 1,0 MEURO. In 2000 and 2001 the budget was re-established (more or less) at the same level as before, i.e. 1,2 MEURO in prices of 1995. These data were derived from the Youth Forum's publication 'EU support to international non-governmental youth organisations – figures and more, 1995-2001' from which we have copied the graphs below.

¹⁵ These plus ELSA–The European Law Students' Association. EPA–European Playwork Association. IAAS–International Association of Agriculture Students. YEU–Youth for Exchange and Understanding. ATD–Mouvement International ATD Quart monde Jeunesse. MUSICALES–Union des Jeunesses Musicales d'Europe. CCISV–Coordinating Committee for international Voluntary Service. DEMYC–Democrat Youth Community of Europe. EYFA–European Youth Forest Action. IFLRY–International Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth. AIESEC–Stichting Association Int. des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales. WSCF–World Student Christian Federation. FJEE–Fédération des Jeunes Ecologistes Européens. SYNDESMOS–The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth. ASEED–Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development-Europe. IGLYO–International Lesbian and Gay Organisation. OBESSU–Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions. UNITED–United for Intercultural Action – European Network against Nationalism, Racism, Fascism and in support of Migrants and Refugees. YEE–Youth and Environment Europe. EYCE–Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe. ECYF&4H–European Committee for Young Farmers' and 4H Clubs. EFYSO–European Federation of Youth Service organisations. IMFSA–International Federation of Medical Students' Associations. IFSA–International Forestry Students Association. YEN–Youth of European Nationalities. CIJOC–Coordination Internationale des Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne. JOC–Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne International. ARC–Mouvement International des Journées Arc-en-Ciel. UIGSE–Union Internationale des Guides et Scouts d'Europe. EYBA–European Youth Card Association.

¹⁶ EMCY–European Union of Music Competitions for Youth. ALEPH–ALEPH-European Network of Youth Against Racism and Exclusion. ESN–Erasmus Student Network. ETUC–Etuc Youth. EFCF–European Federation of City Farms. EGTYF–European Good Templar Youth Federation. EPSA–European Pharmaceutical Students' Association. FICE–Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives. ISCA–International Sport and Culture Association. YES–Yes for Europe. AIJMV–Asociación Internacional de Juventudes Marianas Vicencianas. AEJM–Association Européenne de Jeunes Médiateurs.

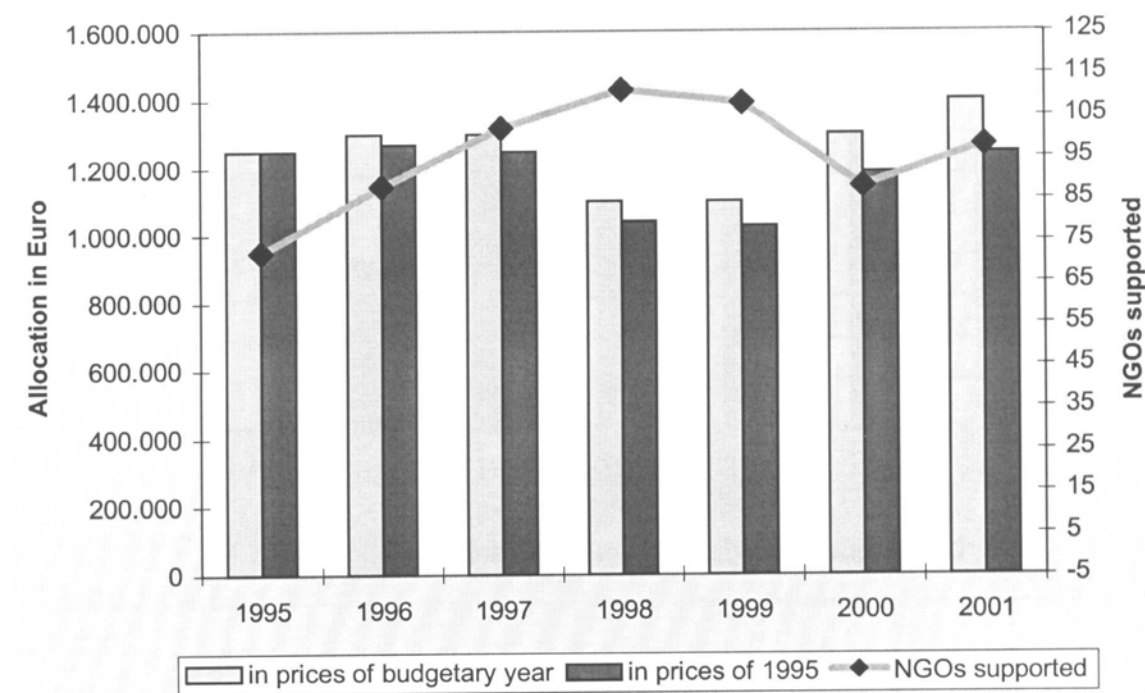
¹⁷ EOE–European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential learning. ERIC–European Rotaract Information Centre. IFDMYE–International Forum of Decision makers on Youth Exchange. EUROTERNNET–Red Europea de los Jovenes Gitanos. YOUROPE–The European Festival Organisation. FEAP–Forum Européen des Associations pour le Patrimoine.

Graph 1. NGOs applying for A-3029, 1995-2001*



* Youth Forum: EU Support to international Non-Governmental Youth Organisations – figures and more: development of budget line A-3029 and of grants from budget line A-3029, 1995-2001 (s.l, s.a).

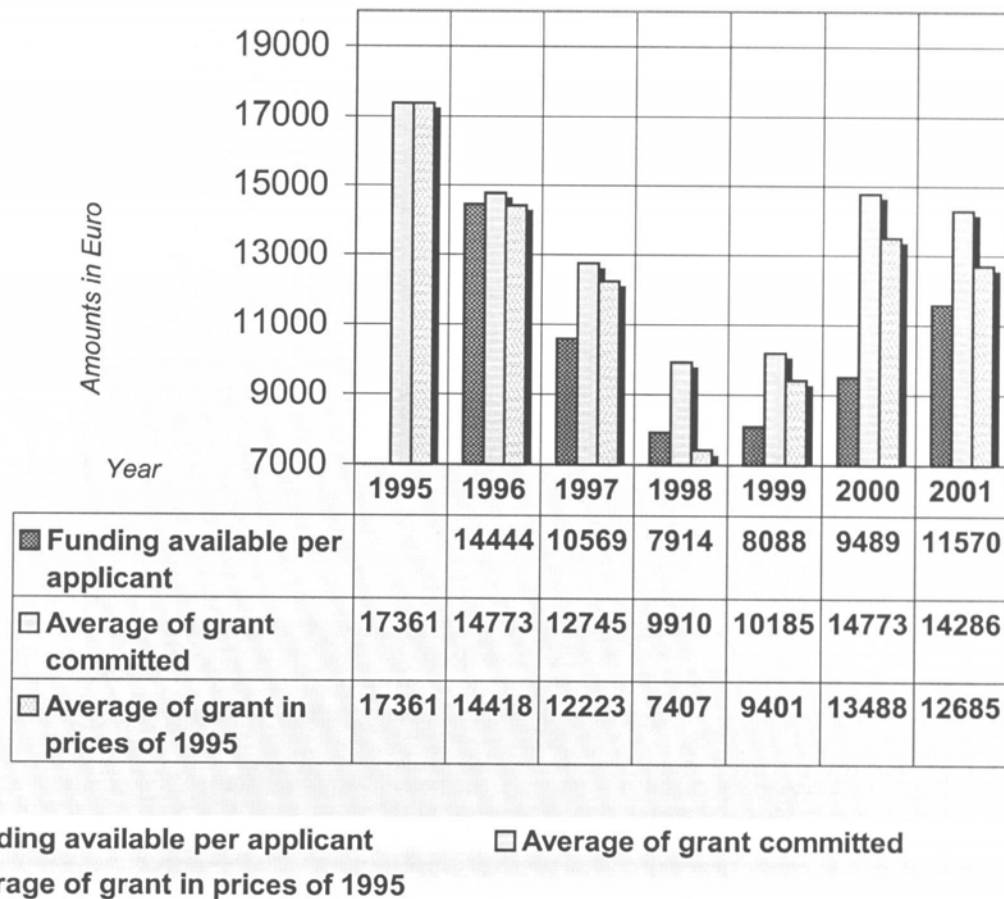
Graph 2. Overview: development of budget line A-3029, 1995-2001*



* Youth Forum: EU Support to international Non-Governmental Youth Organisations – figures and more: development of budget line A-3029 and of grants from budget line A-3029, 1995-2001 (s.l, s.a).

The number of applicant organisations rose from 90 in 1996 up to 135 in 1999 till 2000, and dropped in 2001 to 120. In 1997 till 1999 100 à 110 organisations received a grant. In 2000 this number was considerably lower, i.e. 87. In 2001 the number rose again to almost 110. As grants are related to the available budget the average grant was comparatively low in 1999 and 2000, with an average of €11,000 in 1999 and €15,000 in 2000. Herewith, the average was back on the level of 1996, although not in purchasing power.

Graph 3. Average grants under budget line A-3029, 1995-2001*



* Youth Forum: EU Support to international Non-Governmental Youth Organisations – figures and more: development of budget line A-3029 and of grants from budget line A-3029, 1995-2001 (s.l, s.a).

In 1997 the Commission carried out an internal evaluation of the scheme. In addition to the trend figures of those years, the response on a questionnaire was discussed. The questionnaire was sent to all organisations that were awarded a grant in 1997. Half of the organisations returned the questionnaire. From the answers it was concluded that the grants were primarily used to cover the expenditures for a European secretariat, for administrative work and international co-ordination, for (electronic) equipment, for information activities, for public relations and network development, for the benefit of local and na-

tional member organisations. A snowball effect was observed, particularly towards Central and Eastern Europe. The grants also reinforced the credibility of the organisation vis à vis other funding agents.

2.3 Evaluation plan

For the methodology the guidelines of the call have been followed. Therefore, several methods have been applied in the frame of the present evaluation. Together they form a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodology.

2.3.1 File analysis and organisations' survey

First, we have applied methods that describe in quantified terms the activities of the applicant organisations in 1999 and 2000. To this end the EU files of the applicant organisations have been coded, using entries such as locus, membership and structure, aims, publicity and communications, activities, budget and A-3029 grants. As a reliability check the organisations were invited to check their record. In addition they were asked to give a rating for their performances in 1999 and 2000: was their performance for their specific aims and actions beyond, at or under the expectations? In response to open questions they could reflect upon operational questions (procedures, forms, time schedule, etc.) and on global effects and meaning of the youth organisations and their grants. In particular they could focus on their suggestions for specific and operational improvements.

For this method all applicant organisations of 1999 and 2000 were coded and surveyed. Half of the applicant organisation reacted.¹⁸ The questionnaire, the counts and crossing as well as the overview of open answers are included in attachment 2 to this report.

2.3.2 Case studies and stakeholders' survey

Second method as applied consisted of case studies. We have selected 21 organisations as a possible case study using an extreme type model. Those organisations were selected

¹⁸ We received 83 questionnaires back from the 159 applicant organisations, or 52%. The response among organisations that received a grant was considerably higher than that among the rejected applications, i.e. 66% against 34%. We have applied the following steps to improve the response rate:

- * A letter by the deputy head of unit D1,
- * Direct mail and e-mails to the organisations,
- * Approach by telephone by a specialised office for tele-interviewing with the capacity of holding the call in any EU-language.

Effectively, 21 were returned to us as being addressed to non-existing or false addresses, without the finding of a new address (13%) and one was returned because the organisation had ceased operations since 2000. From 55 key organisers or 35% no reaction was received.

that were comparatively extreme in terms membership and EU-relation. Eighteen organisations were ready and able to co-operate with us fully, and one only for a special interview.

The case studies had two major aims. One aim was to analyse in more detail and depth what subsidised organisations did or could do in terms of reaching young people, deploying activities and communications. To this end we have made interviews with representatives of staff and board, and we have made visits to meetings and offices.

The other end was to come into contact with the widest circle of experts associated with a subsidised organisation. In keeping with the above, the experts should help us with the assessment of the global effects of the organisations and their grants. We have invited the organisations to send us their list of stakeholders from their widest circle, referring to staff, volunteers and board members, as well as former board members, active participants in meetings, representatives of funding agencies, national and regional policy makers, etc. At some of the meetings we have visited we could add further stakeholders to the lists that were sent to us. Effectively, we have been in contact with 263 stakeholders of 18 subsidised youth organisations. These stakeholders have responded to a questionnaire with questions of their appreciation of the organisation (communications, activities) and their appreciation of global, specific and operational effects. The specific effects are indicated by their ratings for the importance of the organisation's communications and activities, and that for reaching young people in Europe or reaching special target groups among young people in Europe. The global effects are indicated by their ratings for the promotion of the idea of Europe and the enhancement of debate and civil society. The operational effects are indicated by their ratings for the organisation's 'value for money'. In addition, the stakeholders who answered to the survey as well as others who were interviewed during the meetings we visited gave open answers to open questions concerning their assessment of global effects and their suggestions for possible improvements of the grant scheme.

The questionnaire, the counts and crossings and the overview of open answers are included in attachment 3 to this report. Attachment 4 includes a set of source files concerning the nineteen organisations that have contributed to the case studies.

2.3.3 Expert interviews and invitational conference

A third method was applied with the aim of assessing global effects and finding feasible improvements of the grant scheme, its aims, its efficacy and its effectiveness. We held open expert interviews with expert member of the European Parliament, Commission's experts, the Youth Forum, and others. We have also organised a so-called invitational conference where twenty experts representing different positions and opinions discussed the preliminary findings of the evaluation and where they discussed policy considerations as well as feasible improvements. The invitational conference was held in Brussels on 18

June 2002. The list of experts who were consulted and the report of the invitational conference are included in attachment 5 and 6 to this report.

3 Operational aspects and specific objectives – facts and considerations

3.1 Aims and plans – specific objectives

In 1999 107 organisations received a grant. In 2000 this number was 89. It regarded organisations that differed in terms of type or identity, although they almost all share a number of general aims. Table 2 gives the break down for type or identity.

Table 2. Type or identity of youth organisations that received a grant in 1999 and/or 2000.¹⁹

Type or identity	1999		2000	
Anti-exclusion	15	14%	12	13%
Culture, education	9	8%	9	10%
Environmental organisation	5	5%	4	5%
Interest organisation	9	8%	6	7%
Political organisation	6	6%	8	9%
Religious organisation	10	9%	7	8%
Scouting, kids organisation	10	9%	8	9%
Student organisation	18	17%	12	13%
Voluntary services	8	7%	6	7%
Youth exchange	17	16%	17	19%
Total	107	100%	89	100%

However different the subsidised organisations are at the level of type or identity, almost all share the aims²⁰ of:

4. Networking and co-operation between European youth organisations (99%),
5. Giving information and realising information services for their membership and the wider community (98%),
6. Setting international standards for appropriate behaviour and good practice, enhancement of norms and values (94%),
7. The educational function that an organisation can have for its membership and the wider community (82%).

This is shown in table 3.

¹⁹ We have followed another coding system than the Commission at one point, by introducing the category of ‘cultural organisations’. Besides, some organisations have changed their code via the survey. Therefore, the numbers do not coincide fully with those of the Commission’s files

²⁰ Application forms and files are rather ‘open’ concerning the aims of the organisations. There is not a checklist for the aims we coded and their comparative importance for the organisation. Therefore, the organisations refer mostly in rather general terms to their aims, only being specific for aims that are directly related to their type or identity (being a student body, being involved in environmental actions, etc.). Also in direct interviews staff and board members who represent the organisations referred in the same general terms to the aims of their organisations. We think that the Commission should introduce a check list at least for some aims such as the enhancement of the idea of Europe and the targeting of specific groups of young people and the targeting of young people in certain countries, where the organisation is under-represented. We shall elaborate upon this recommendation in chapter 3.

Table 3 The aims of subsidised youth organisations, 1999-2000.*

Type or identity	1999-2000	
Influencing specific policies	33	37%
Networking and co-operation between European youth organisations	88	99%
Advancement of the idea of Europe, involvement in EU-policies	44	49%
Education	73	82%
Information, information services	87	98%
International standardisation, norms and values	83	93%
Youth exchange	87	98%
Student bodies and exchange	20	22%
Religion	12	14%
Targeting specific groups	28	32%
Targeting specific EU-countries	30	34%
Targeting specific ascending countries	41	46%
Targeting specific other third countries	41	46%

* Each organisation pursued a wide mixture of aims. Therefore, the total number of aims in the table is obviously higher than the number of subsidised organisations in 1999 and 2000. The table states that 37% of all subsidised organisations pursued the aim of influencing certain (European) policies, that 99% pursued the aim of networking and co-operation between European youth organisations, etc.

To these aims the aim of reaching a considerable number of young people in EU countries can be added to these four general aims. All subsidised organisations referred to reaching young people in a sufficient number of EU countries, i.e. eight or more, and most mentioned a considerable number of young people they reach. Without these numbers they would not have received a grant.

Almost all organisations referred also to other general objectives, but none of these had a portion beyond 50%. These other general objectives were:

1. The advancement of the idea of Europe, involvement in EU policies (49%),
2. The targeting of young people in the candidate countries of Europe (46%),
3. The targeting of young people in other third countries, i.e. countries that do not belong to the EU and that did not apply for EU membership, such as countries in the third world (46%),
4. Exerting influence of specific EU policies, e.g. environmental policies or human rights (37%),
5. The targeting of young people in specific EU Member States, e.g. with the aim of ascertaining sufficient reach among young people in EU (34%),
6. The targeting of special groups such as handicapped young people, young women, disadvantaged kids, young people at risk, etc. (32%).

Although the organisations received their grant for 'being there', they had to prove that they were committed to an ambitious plan of activities for the year to come and that they realised an appropriate action plan in the year before (if they have received a grant for that year). The applications included long lists of planned activities, and the yearly reports included these for the year before. There were also long lists for communication

plans and realisations. We have coded these long lists as far as possible. The coded plans of activity and the communication plans are included in table 4 and 5 below.

Table 4. Plan of activities of the subsidised organisations in 1999 and 2000.*

Activities	1999		2000	
Conferences, board meetings	57	64%	63	71%
Seminars, work shops	71	80%	77	87%
Exhibition(s), festival(s), camp(s)	35	39%	44	49%
Youth exchange(s), placement of vol-unteers	21	24%	48	54%
Other activities	49	55%	60	67%
Total	107	100%	89	100%

* Each organisation planned a wide mixture of activities. Therefore, the total number of activities in the table is obviously higher than the number of subsidised organisations in 1999 and 2000. The table states that 64% of all subsidised organisations in 1999 planned to hold a conference or a board meeting, that 71% planned seminars or workshops in that year, etc.

Table 5. Communication plan of the subsidised organisations in 1999 and 2000.*

Media of communication	1999		2000	
Electronic media	83	78%	69	78%
Newsletters	88	82%	73	82%
Magazines	53	50%	41	46%
Internal media, correspondence	31	29%	27	30%
Books reports	83	78%	70	79%
Other media, such leaflets, flyers, etc.	60	56%	48	54%
Total	107	100%	89	100%

* Each organisation intended to communicate via a wide mixture of media. Therefore, the total number of media in the table is obviously higher than the number of subsidised organisations in 1999 and 2000. The table states that 78% of all subsidised organisations in 1999 stated that they would use electronic media, that 82% intended to distribute a newsletter, etc.

It is to be observed that the communication plans of the international organisations appear to be more ambitious than their plans of activities. We have used the coded plans as the basis for the organisation's assessment of its own performance (see below, paragraph 3.5).

3.2 Needs and resources – operational objectives and demands

3.2.1 Grants as needed and grants as received

Grants as needed

In 1999 and 2000 there were 135 youth organisations²¹ that were aware of the opportunity to receive a grant from the Commission for organisational costs and that needed such a grant. It was the combination of the two factors that made the organisations decide to apply for a grant, following the call for proposals of the Commission as launched in January 1999 and January 2000. These organisations thought that they would be eligible given the

²¹ Both lists are not fully the same.

criteria of the Commission and their mission as well as their (expected) performance. There may exist other eligible organisations in European Member States, but:

1. They may have missed the general information on EU-grants for international youth organisations, that is available from the Commission's information services and e.g. the Youth Forum,
2. They may have missed the specific call,
3. They may not need the money, or
4. Their estimate of the balance between application effort and the chance of winning a substantial grant was negative.

Ten percent of the applicant organisations were either extremely self-confident concerning their importance and mission, or they were not sufficiently familiar with the rules and the procedures, e.g. as newcomers in the field. They did not answer to decisive questions in their application form, e.g. those concerning membership, plan of activities or budget. Therefore, the Commission had to reject their application.

In 1999 there were 120 organisations that needed a specific sum. They applied for an average grant of €18.600, with a minimum of €1400 and a maximum of €70.400. The grants as needed represented 3 to 100% of the organisations' budget. The average total budget was €114.000, with a range from €3000 up to €701.000. In 1999 there were 22 newcomers who specified their grant need.²²

In 2000 these figures were an average application of €18.200 for 119 organisations, with a range from €2500 to €49.500. These sums also represented percentages between very low (i.e. 2%) and 100% of the budget. The average total budget was €114.000, with a range from €6700 up to €1.000.000 or more. In 2000 there were 19 newcomers who specified their grant need.²³

The data are summarised in table 6.

Table 6 Grant applications in 1999 and 2000.

	Number of requests	Number of specified requests	Number of unspecified requests	Average request*	Range of the requests*	Average total budget*	Range of the total budget*	Requested percentage of the total budget*	Range of the requested percentage*
1999	127	120	7	€18.600	€1400 - €70.400	€114.000	€3000 - €701.000	16%	3% - 100%
2000	137	119	18	€18.200	€2500 - €49.500	€114.000	€6700 - €1.000.000	16%	2% - 100%

* Specified requests only.

Grants as awarded

In 1999 there were 107 organisations that received a grant. They received an average grant of €10.000, with a minimum of €1400 and a maximum of €25.000. The grants as

²² Six did not specify their grant's need.

²³ Eight did not specify their grant's need.

allocated represented 3 to 45% of the organisations' budget. Among the 22 newcomers 10 were rejected. The twelve accepted newcomers received a grant between €3000 and €7000, with an average of €4900.

In 2000 these figures were an average grant of €18.200 for 88 organisations, with a range from €2500 to €25.000. These sums also represented percentages between very low (i.e. 2%) and 49% of the budget. Among the 19 newcomers 12 were rejected. The seven accepted newcomers received a grant between €3800 and €23.000, with an average of €10.800.

The data are summarised in table 7.

Table 7 Grants as awarded in 1999 and 2000.

	Number of awarded grants	Average grant	Range of the grants	Average total budget	Range of the total budgets	Requested percentage of the total budget	Range of the requested percentage
1999	107	€10.000	€1400 - €25.000	€114.000	€1400 - €25.000	9%	3% - 45%
2000	89	€18.200	€2500 - €25.000	€114.000	€6700 - €1.000.000	16%	2% - 49%

3.2.2 Human resources, commitment and other resources

Budget line A-3029 has as its aim the support of the infrastructure of international youth organisations. It is unique in this respect among all EU grant schemes. The allocated budget is to be used for the payment of staff members, for board meetings, for office and office equipment, etc. With this critical mass in terms of resources the organisations should be able to co-ordinate international projects and activities in their domain. The main argument is that youth organisations are unable to find sufficient resources for their critical mass and their infrastructure from other resources, such as subscription fees of members and member organisations, small overhead percentages on project funds, sponsoring, commercial activities, etc.

However, the budget as allocated did not cover all these costs – it did so only for a comparatively small percentage.²⁴ Therefore, the organisations still had to charge fees to their members and member organisations and they had to invest in further fund raising. Beyond that, they had to prove that they offer value for money via an ambitious, attractive and convincing plan of activities and progress reports. Therefore, those involved directly or indirectly in the organisation had to show a high level of commitment with running the organisation, its activities and its communications.

We have 'measured' the critical mass of the subsidised organisations in terms of staff and volunteers.

²⁴ Twenty percent for established youth organisations and 50% for small organisations that are fully run by volunteers, as maxima.

The subsidised organisations could dispose of a professional staff of 2,2 FTE in 1999 and 2,6 in 2000. Around two of them were employed full-time, and the rest part-time. These are averages between a few organisations without any professional staff and some with a staff of fifteen and more. Besides, the organisations mentioned that they could rely on 188 volunteers in 1999 and 171 in 2000, as averages. The data are presented in table 8.

Table 8 Staff resources of subsidised youth organisations, averages, 1999-2000

	1999	2000
Full time	1,8	2,1
Half time	0,6	0,9
Little time	0,1	0,2
Total staff	2,2	2,6
Volunteers	188	171
Total number of subsidised organisations	107	89

Approximately three quarters of the human resources were (rather) young persons, both among professional staff and volunteers: 25% answered that all are young people and 50% that most of them are young people. In 25% of the organisations half or less than half consists of young people. These can be non-young organisations for youth services such as student exchange, youth cards, etc. The data are presented in table 8.

Table 9 Age of staff and volunteers of subsidised youth organisations, 1999-2000

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
All were young people	14	25%
Most of them were young people	27	49%
Half of them were young people	8	15%
Less than half of them were young people	6	11%
Total	55	100%
Unknown, no answer	1999	52
	2000	34

We have assessed commitment via the survey among stakeholders and via visits to organisations and their activities. And in the answers to open questions both organisers and stakeholders expressed their commitment with their organisation.

The conclusions can be the following:

1. Commitment and appreciation among stakeholders were apparently high. They felt committed to the organisation, they participated regularly in meetings and other activities,²⁵ and they used the communication media that were issued by the organisation, particularly their electronic media and web-sites. So, 94% of all stakeholders found the activities of their organisation very important, and 77% found their media very important. Our observers reported that the atmosphere during the meetings they

²⁵ In meetings, however, particularly, and less in activities such youth exchanges, comings together, etc.

visited ranged from extremely efficient and sincere knowledge based working groups to more open and cosy encounters of people from all parts of Europe.

2. An organisation with a rather small office of one or two or three staff members, either part time or full time, was apparently able to fulfil the expectations in terms of activities and communications, certainly if there was sufficient involvement of board members and volunteers.
3. Very small organisations with no professional staff member, or with only one or two volunteers running the organisation during a long period of time could apparently not fulfil the full expectations concerning activities and communications. Our observers were confronted in some cases with volunteering organisers who were difficult to trace or with whom communications was all but easy. In such cases we were also confronted with postponed or cancelled meetings, e.g. due to too low numbers of international participants.²⁶

3.3 The organisations' grants management – operational problems and the realisation of operational objectives

3.3.1 Time frames

Following the remarks and complaints of a considerable number of key organisers who responded to our questionnaire, it appeared that the time frame of the grant was apparently no help for the fulfilment of plans and expectations. The factors that determined the time frame arose from EU rules and procedures. These factors are:

1. The beginning of the procedure was after the establishment of the EU's yearly budget by the European Budget Authority in January 1999 and January 2000 respectively,
2. Each year the call included other and new elements or requirements compared to preceding years, whereas the total budget remained unknown until the call was launched,
3. Final decisions on behalf of the Commission were communicated to the applicant organisations in May-June,
4. The Commission's requirement that the grant had to be spend before the end of year, independent of the late moment on which the above-mentioned decision was taken,²⁷
5. The time horizon of the grants was fixed to one year.

²⁶ In one case our observer had already left for a meeting before we could inform him concerning such a cancellation. His travel was still worthwhile, however. To our advantage he could make interviews with the local organisers, their ambitions and the reasons of the cancellation.

²⁷ In addition organisations mentioned other time frame problems too. So, they referred to the problem to show an accountancy report on the year before in February, as requested. To many applicant organisations the accountants delivered their accountancy reports in March (particularly in Belgium, where many international youth organisations are located), i.e. after they were needed for the application. Student organisations complained that they operated within the academic year for their yearly budgets, plans and reports.

Many organisations complained with strong arguments that both financial and operational planning as well as substantial and strategic planning was difficult through these factors, with strong arguments. The call was launched and the applications were open during two months in the beginning of the year. That was apparently a rush time for the organisations and their organisers. Then organisations had to wait for a decision and were often forced to postpone planned activities as long as the decision remained unclear and the contract was not yet signed. Banks and other agencies did not like to allow loans on behalf of an application, and the strong record of yearlong subsidies was no argument for them to become lenient in most cases. The respondents wrote that the organisations themselves did not dispose of sufficient reserves to make considerable prepayments themselves, other than those for absolutely necessary costs such as office rent and salaries.

However, as soon as the decision was communicated to the organisation in May or June the organisation should be able and ready to realise all (postponed) activities during the rest of the year. So they had to guarantee the realisation of the plan of activities and the communication plan that were announced in the application. Therefore, many organisers complained that they had to work in a hit and run fashion.

The Commission has changed time frame for A-30 grants, including A-3029, for 2003 onwards. The procedure will start in autumn with decisions and contracts in April. This time frame appears to take away part of the problems and complaints. Its announcement during the invitational conference received therefore wide support.

The last point of the fixed time horizon for the grants represented another problem. The grants are part of the yearly budget of the European Union as it is established each year in January by the European Budget Authority. In that frame the EU is allowed to allocate short-term grants for one year or shorter to e.g. youth NGOs. Long-term grants are only allowed if there is a legal basis for the grant in the frame of a programme that follows from the European Treaty.

However, in the eyes of most organisations and many experts we consulted long-term grants should be possible. This was also strongly recommended, because many organisations received their grants for years already, as was explained in chapter 2. Organisations and experts expected that the grants would be continued in the future too, because the same organisations will still need and deserve them. Besides, long-term funding would encourage the organisations that need and deserve long-term grants, to improve their long-term strategies and planning, e.g. with regard to staff, communications, activities and performance.

In policy documents the European Parliament, the Youth Forum and the European Commission have taken standpoints on this issue. It was also discussed at the invitational conference.

The discussion has become rather complex and has become quite urgent in relation to the Activity Based Budget System that will come into operation in 2004 for the whole EU. A

grant for fixed costs of youth organisations would then no longer be possible, except when the grants have a legal basis of their own in a long-term EU programme, or when they are seen as administrative expenditures of the Commission. The latter option was proposed by the rapporteur of the Committee on Budgets of the European Parliament, Mr. Terence Wynn. He reported that grants such as the A-3029 grants to international youth organisations can be seen and should be seen as administrative expenditures of the Commission (Working Document of the European Parliament 'Subsidies: options for the future', 10 January 2002).

Among youth organisations and participants in the invitational conference there was no support for this 'administrative' standpoint. It was argued that most activities of the youth organisations are all but administrative action of the Commission to be covered from administrative expenditures. Only in rare case youth organisations fulfilled administrative tasks of the Commission. An example was direct and public information on certain EU programmes such as the YOUTH programme, by which members and others could be encouraged to participate in the programme. Another example was the implementation of youth exchange projects and that of volunteers under the European Volunteers' Scheme EVS. Most organisations do not carry out these Commission services, or it only regards a tiny part of the total work plan. As far as relevant, however, the youth organisations could conclude a contract with the Commission for these and similar services.

The youth organisations themselves and the other experts we have consulted did not support the option. For them the activities of the youth organisations should not be seen as administrative expenditures. In their opinion the organisations and their activities should find a legal basis in the European Treaty, allowing the EU to allocate (long-term) grants to them, if necessary. The Youth Forum has proposed that the EU will decide upon a long-term programme for youth organisations on the basis of which both the Forum and the youth organisations could receive (long-term) grants. Another option could be a 'youth organisation' or NGO-paragraph in a programme such as YOUTH. The EU's environmental programme includes such a paragraph for environmental NGOs. A third option may follow from the proposal of some policy makers and others in the field of civil society concerning a special EU-programme for civil society in the near future. It does not yet exist, notwithstanding the EU's obvious commitment to human rights and civil society. It could be an umbrella for the youth organisations that have general objectives related to civil society as well as for other organisations and their grants that cannot find easily an umbrella in the existing set of EU programmes.²⁸

We will come back to the above mentioned time factors and discussions on the legal basis for the grants in the final chapter with our conclusions and recommendations.

²⁸ E.g. budget line A-3021 of the Secretariat General and budget line A-3024 of DG Education and Culture.

3.3.2 Forms and procedures

There is no grants' application process without a lot of work for both the applicant organisations and the funding agent. The funding agent will need detailed and controllable information from the side of the applicant organisations, including yearly reports, financial reports, plans of activities and (balanced) budget proposals. The burden was acknowledged and respected by both the applicant youth organisations and the Commission. It was even acknowledged and respected by a number of long-term applicant organisations that the forms and procedures for A-3029 have been enlightened to a certain degree in the past years, among others in relation to the introduction of the vade-mecum on grant management by the Commission in 1998.

Nevertheless, another number of representatives of the youth organisations, both newcomers and long-term applicants,²⁹ reported that the filling out of the forms was quite difficult for them and that they had not found the information and support they needed in an easy way.³⁰ Some experienced representatives of youth organisations who have filled out the successive forms during a number of years stated that it was becoming a rather boring and redundant job, because they had to copy text from old to new forms, with minor changes as appropriate. They thought that it should be an easy thing for the Commission to fill their application form out as far as possible with the entries of preceding years. In that sense they felt a need for intelligent application forms and intelligent application management. Intelligent as they were they had automated their answers to a high degree by saving soft copies from previous years.

3.4 Representation and eligibility

3.4.1 Countries

Table 10 lists the number of EU Member States that were represented by the subsidised youth organisations.

²⁹ Each year the form can be filled out by another official, who has no previous experience with the forms and the procedures. For some youth organisations such as student bodies yearly personnel changes are more the rule than the exception.

³⁰ Actually, an officer is available at the Commission for support and advice. The Commission has tried to improve the information services concerning the grants steadily during the past years, including 1999 and 2000, among others in co-operation with the Youth Forum. The Commission maintained a web-site for the grants and the applications, in which e.g. the name, the e-mail address and the telephone number of the officer was included. To our experience the web-site was not easily found on the former EUROPA web-site until September 2002, particularly not for those who searched it freely without knowing the exact URL. Since the last improvement of the EUROPA web-site in October 2002 the site can be traced much easier via the site of DG Education and Culture, where it is now included in appropriate pop-up menus.

Table 10. Number of EU Member States represented by subsidised youth organisations, 1999-2000.

Number of EU Member States	1999		2000	
6	6	6%	1	1%
7	9	8%	2	2%
8	7	7%	9	10%
9	11	10%	9	10%
10	10	9%	9	10%
11	11	10%	14	16%
12	16	15%	11	12%
13	15	14%	12	14%
14	11	10%	12	14%
15	11	10%	10	11%
Total	107	100%	89	100%

The rule was that the subsidised organisations should have member organisations in at least eight EU Member States. In 1999 86% of the subsidised organisations complied with this rule. In 2000 that regarded 97%.

Organisations with member organisations in six or seven EU Member States could be subsidised too in the following cases:

1. The applicant organisation was a newcomer and committed itself to finding member organisations in a sufficient number of European countries,
2. Organisations whose mission did not enable them to be represented in a sufficient number of European countries.

Both exception rules were applied only with extreme restriction and precaution. Among the rejected organisation were 16 organisations with member organisations in six or seven EU Member States. In 1999 seven organisations were rejected with comparable representation figures.

On the average the subsidised organisations had member organisations in a considerable number of ‘third countries’, namely 14 to 15, with a maximum 75. The very large organisations as well as organisations with a clear north-south mission appear not to be primarily oriented towards Europe, although they may represent member organisations from all or almost all EU Member States and wider Europe.³¹

In year plans and mission statements of a number of youth organisations we have identified specific aims either to extend the number of member organisations in EU Member States (34%), in candidate countries of the EU (46%), or in ‘third countries’ (46%) – see paragraph 3.1.

The political priority of the issue was underlined in a number of open interviews we have hold with staff and board members of e.g. political youth organisations. At their meetings

³¹ With regard to the ‘South’ the EU is committed to development policies and special relations with many APC-countries, as the youth organisations with a north-south mission are committed to ‘international co-operation’. In that sense the north-south mission of a number of youth organisation represents European policies and European ideals.

our observers have noticed wide and intensive participation of young people from the candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe,³² and they have interviewed them as stakeholders of the organisations.³³

3.4.2 Numbers and target groups

Among the criteria for awarding grants were several criteria that referred directly or indirectly to the number of young people and target groups among young people that will benefit of the organisation's activities in European countries. In the application form the organisation was requested to specify the number of young people they reached via national and regional organisations in EU Member States and in other countries. Then it was also requested that the organisations gave their prognoses of EU and non-EU participants in their activities.

According to the response in the following observations could be made:

1. 10% of the subsidised organisations was unable to specify how many young people in EU countries they represented. Their explanation appeared to be satisfactory for the Commission, however, because they were awarded a grant.
2. The lowest number that was mentioned was 40, and the maximum was far beyond 1 Million. The average was 432.000 in 1999 and 488.000 in 2000. Average and maximum are to be seen as being in line with the Commission's expectations concerning the young people to be reached.
3. No special attention was paid by the Commission to the number of young people reached in EFTA countries, in candidate countries of the EU or in other 'third' countries.
4. Target groups were directly related to the mission and identity of the organisations and extension strategies. The target groups therefore represented a wide variety of groups among young people. The organisations referred to kids, boy scouts, girl scouts, students, religiously denominated young people, young people with a physical handicap, young people with a high interest in politics and parties, environmentalists, young musicians, mobile young people or young people looking for international experience, etc.

³² Two meetings we have observed were scheduled in candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe, namely in Hungary and in Romania.

³³ Among the total number of stakeholders that have responded to our questionnaire the number of stakeholders from candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe was not disproportionately high, on the contrary. One reason could be that part of the organisations is not directly interested in membership from the candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe – they may be typically EU-oriented or north-south oriented. Another reason could be that persons from these countries did not yet reach the status of stakeholder in the organisation.

5. Participation prognoses were rather incomparable and it was difficult to process them reliably. We assume that the Commission has used them in a rather qualitative way, as one of the indicators for a general assessment on the quality of the work plan.

3.4.3 Stakeholders

In response to our request eighteen selected organisations have send us lists of their stakeholders. These stakeholders were affiliated to the organisations as (former) board members, staff members and former staff members, representatives of national members, active participants and volunteers, as well as representatives of funding agents and national or regional authorities. In addition, we have contacted stakeholders actively participating in three meetings that took place in April and May 2002. 261 Stakeholders have responded to a short structured questionnaire. The questions regarded:

1. Their background – nationality, age, gender, function and relation to youth policies (European, national and regional respectively) and youth work,
2. Their appreciation of the specific performance of the organisation as indicated by communications and activities of the organisation,
3. Their rating of global effects of the organisation – creating awareness of Europe, value for money, reaching young people and reaching target groups among young people, enhancement of debate, exchange and dialogue.

They were also asked to elaborate upon their appreciation of the organisation via an open question.

The background data of the stakeholders are presented in table 11 to 16.

Table 11 Functions of the stakeholders of eighteen youth organisations.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Academic, student	35	14%
NGO, volunteer	53	21%
Information services, ICT	10	4%
Education, training	27	11%
Youth work	45	18%
Culture	8	3%
Health, welfare	3	1%
Agriculture and food	23	9%
Government, public sector	4	2%
Political function	4	2%
International relations, affairs	8	3%
Professional, staff, consultant	8	3%
Commercial, financial sector	7	3%
Environment	10	4%
Technician, industry	3	1%
Total	248	100%
Unknown, no answer	15 stakeholders	

Table 12 Stakeholders' relatedness to European, national and regional youth policies.

	Relatedness to European youth policies		Relatedness to national youth policies		Relatedness to regional youth policies	
	Absolute numbers	Percentage	Absolute numbers	Percentage	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Directly related	34	13%	48	19%	72	29%
Indirectly related	113	38%	117	46%	96	38%
Not related	109	62%	89	35%	83	33%
Total	256	100%	254	100%	244	100%
Unknown, no answer	7 stakeholders		9 Stakeholders		19 Stakeholders	

Table 13 Stakeholders' involvement in youth work or practice.

	Involvement in youth work or practice	
	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Directly involved	200	80%
Indirectly involved	35	14%
Not involved	14	6%
Total	249	100%
Unknown, no answer	14 Stakeholders	

Table 14 Average age of the stakeholders of eighteen youth organisations.

Average age	32
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Table 15 Gender distribution of the stakeholders of eighteen youth organisations.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Male	156	60%
Female	102	40%
Total	260	100%
Unknown, no answer	3 stakeholders	

Table 16 Country of residence of the stakeholders of eighteen youth organisations.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
EU-country	204	78%
Candidate country	29	11%
Other European countries (West and East)	18	7%
Non-European country	12	5%
Total	263	100%
Unknown, no answer	No stakeholders	

The results can be summarised as follows:

1. Three-quarters of the stakeholders were apparently very familiar with the information media of the organisations. The others were 'rather familiar' with these. Most important media were the electronic media, the web-site and (yearly) reports. Three quarters expressed the highest appreciation for these media, stating that these media were 'very important' to them. The data are presented in table 17 to 19.

Table 17 Familiarity among stakeholders with the media of their organisation.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Very familiar	198	77%
Rather familiar	54	21%
Not (so) familiar	6	2%
Total	258	100%
Unknown, no answer	5 stakeholders	

Table 18 Media that were seen by the organisation’s stakeholders.*

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Electronic media	152	58%
Newsletters and bulletins	88	33%
Magazines	94	36%
Internal media	32	12%
Book, reports, publications	126	48%
Leaflets, posters, other media	92	35%
Total	251	100%
Unknown, no answer	12 stakeholders	

* Stakeholders could mention more than one medium.

Table 19 Importance of the organisation’s media as rated by the stakeholders.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Very important	196	69%
Rather important	55	22%
Not (so) important	3	1%
Total	254	100%
Unknown, no answer	9 stakeholders	

2. Eighty percent were apparently very familiar with the activities of the organisation. The others were rather familiar. They participated predominantly in conferences, meetings and seminars, i.e. the more formal comings together. More than ninety percent expressed the highest appreciation for the activities, saying the activities were ‘very important’ to them. The data are presented in table 20 to 22.

Table 20 Familiarity among stakeholders with the activities of their organisation.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Very familiar	206	80%
Rather familiar	49	19%
Not (so) familiar	2	1%
Total	257	100%
Unknown, no answer	6 stakeholders	

Table 21 Activities in which stakeholders participated.*

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Conferences, official meetings	187	71%
Seminars, workshops, training courses	123	47%
Coming together: festivals, camps, expositions	45	17%
Youth exchange	5	2%
Other activities, such as a project, a demonstration	31	12%
Total	263	100%
Unknown, no answer	No stakeholders	

* Stakeholders could mention more than one medium.

Table 22 Importance of the organisation's activities as rated by the stakeholders.

	Absolute numbers	Percentage
Very important	235	94%
Rather important	16	6%
Not (so) important	0	0%
Total	251	100%
Unknown, no answer	12 stakeholders	

3. Therefore, in the eyes of the stakeholders the specific objectives of the youth organisations were fully reached or almost fully reached.
4. Stakeholders found that the youth organisations realised a very good or a rather good performance with regard to the global objectives of grants. They rated the performance for creating European awareness among young people as being good up to very good. The rating for reaching young people and reaching special target groups among young people was beyond good on the average. The global aim that they should do that with as much value for money as possible was rated little under good on the average, as was the global aim of enhancing debate, exchange and dialogue. The ratings are presented in table 23.

Table 23 Stakeholders' ratings of five global objectives of their youth organisation

	Average rating*
Creating European awareness among young people	4,4
Value for money, efficiency, efficacy	3,8
Reaching large numbers of young people in Europe	4,2
Reaching special target groups among young people in Europe	4,2
Political dialogue, debate and opinion making	3,8
Total number of stakeholders	263

* The stakeholders could give the following ratings:

0=No points, very low, 1=Low, 2=Very moderate, 3=Moderate, 4=Rather high, 5=High or very high

5. Thus, in the eyes of the stakeholders the global objectives were met at a very appropriate level, and it can be assumed that the grant was appreciated as a positive factor in this respect. This opinion was underlined in most open statements made by stakeholders.
6. Our observers confirmed the positive appreciation of stakeholders they interviewed during meetings and site visits.

3.4.4 Representatives of European, national and regional authorities

Among the stakeholders were also those representatives of national and regional authorities. We have explained in chapter 2 that we would like to interpret their opinions and appreciation as the best indication we can offer the Commission whether the right organisations were granted. It regarded 44 stakeholders who were directly related to national youth policies, and 66 stakeholders who were directly related to regional youth policies. These stakeholders representing national and regional authorities were at least as positive in their appreciation of specific performances (i.e. communications and media, activities) and global effects as all stakeholders were or as stakeholders who were more directly involved in the organisations and in youth work. On one point their opinion was comparatively most positive. This regarded the enhancement of debate, exchange and dialogue. The comparative ratings of national and regional authorities among the stakeholders are presented in table 24.

Table 24 Comparative ratings on global objectives as given by national and regional authorities among the stakeholders.

	Average rating of all stakeholders	Average rating of national authorities	Average rating of regional authorities
Creating European awareness among young people	4,4	4,6	4,5
Value for money, efficiency, efficacy	3,8	3,9	3,6
Reaching large numbers of young people in Europe	4,2	4,2	4,3
Reaching special target groups among young people in Europe	4,2	4,2	4,2
Political dialogue, debate and opinion making	3,8	4,4	4,2
Total number of stakeholders	263	44	66

3.5 Performance – the achievement of specific objectives

The first proof of the good performance of granted youth organisations follows from the above: stakeholders expressed their appreciation of the specific performances, i.e. the performances in the field of communications and activities.

In addition our data allowed for the conclusion that the performance represented a grant effect or that it is apparently a likely grant effect. The conclusion was drawn from the

comparison of those applicant organisations that received a grant and those that were refused a grant. In chapter 2 we have argued why we could take the rejected organisations that still continued operations as a control group for specific grant effects with regard to communications and activities. With these rejected organisations as a control group we had to test the nil-hypotheses that there would be no grant effects if there would be no clear difference or a wrong difference between subsidised and non-subsidised organisations that still continued operations. We could reject the nil-hypotheses for both communications and activities, since subsidised organisations were stronger than non-subsidised organisations that still continued operations.

3.5.1 Publicity and communications

In 1999 and 2000 almost all organisations having received grants either realised all their communication plans or went beyond that. In 1999 that percentage was 79% and in 2000 92%. For the rejected organisations the same percentages were 64% and 56% respectively. The differences were considerable and pointed at a likely grant effect. The differences are presented in table 25 and 26.

Table 25 Communications' performance of subsidies organisations compared to that of non-subsidised organisations that still continued operations, 1999.

	Subsidy		No subsidy	
	Absolute numbers	Percentage	Absolute numbers	Percentage
More than planned	9	16%	1	5%
Fully or almost fully	35	62%	13	59%
Not all of it	10	18%	6	27%
Major plans could not be realised	2	3%	2	9%
Total	56	100%	22	100%
Unknown, no answer, ceased operations	52		29	

Table 26 Performance on activities of subsidies organisations compared to that of non-subsidised organisations that still continued operations, 2000.

	Subsidy		No subsidy	
	Absolute numbers	Percentage	Absolute numbers	Percentage
More than planned	13	22%	2	10%
Fully or almost fully	42	70%	9	45%
Not all of it	5	8%	6	30%
Major plans could not be realised	0	0%	3	15%
Total	60	100%	20	100%
Unknown, no answer, ceased operations	29		51	

3.5.2 Activities

In 1999 and 2000 almost all granted organisations having received grants could realise their plan of activities or even more than that. In 1999 that percentage was 87% and in 2000 88%. For the rejected organisations the same percentages were 71% and 58% respectively. The differences were considerable and pointed at a likely grant effect. The differences are presented in table 27 and 28.

Table 27 Performance with regard to activities of subsidies organisations compared to that of non-subsidised organisations that still continued operations, 1999.

	Subsidy		No subsidy	
	Absolute numbers	Percentage	Absolute numbers	Percentage
More than planned	10	18%	2	10%
Fully or almost fully	39	70%	13	62%
Not all of it	7	12%	4	19%
Major plans could not be realised	0	0%	2	10%
Total	56	100%	21	100%
Unknown, no answer, ceased operations	51		31	

Table 28 Performance with regard to activities of subsidies organisations compared to that of non-subsidised organisations that still continued operations, 2000.

	Subsidy		No subsidy	
	Absolute numbers	Percentage	Absolute numbers	Percentage
More than planned	16	27%	0	10%
Fully or almost fully	36	61%	11	62%
Not all of it	7	12%	4	19%
Major plans could not be realised	0	0%	4	10%
Total	59	100%	19	100%
Unknown, no answer, ceased operations	30		51	

3.6 Operational aspects and specific objectives – conclusions

We may conclude beyond reasonable doubt that most subsidised youth organisations fulfil their promises. They show a level of performance on their specific objectives that meet with the standards the Commission laid upon them, awarding the grants. These objectives regard the realisation of communications plans and plans of activities.

With regard to this general conclusion it is to be taken into consideration that we found several indications that very small organisations may be unable to carry out their plans fully. A certain critical mass of at least one paid staff member seems to be a necessity.

Beyond that level the organisations showed to be able to carry out their plans as well as all other operational actions, such as fund raising, making applications, management and internal governance, maintenance of an office, etc. The grants supported obviously the operations of most subsidised organisations, as it was intended.

At the level of rules and procedures some changes and improvements have been introduced in the past years, e.g. in relation to the introduction of the vade-mecum on European grant management. Furthermore, the information and support functions by the Commission were reinforced step by step. The Commission's unit for the management of the grants has improved its helpdesk and information function. Recently, the web-site of the grant system, which had already been available since a number of years, can now be approached via a much easier route than before.

However, it became clear from complaints and suggestions that were expressed by stakeholders and key organisers that progress was still desirable on a number of operational points. These points regarded particularly the time frame of EU-grants, which forced applicant organisations and subsidised organisations to considerable hit and run

policies. One practical cause of hit and run policies, being a call for proposals in January leading to grant decision in May-June, may have lost much of its hardness. From this year onwards the call will be launched in November, leading to grant decisions in April. Thus, the budget year, in which the grants must be awarded and the plans must be carried out, has been prolonged by two or three months.

The existing time frame remained however the budget year, although it will now count 14 à 15 months instead of 11 à 12 months as before. Therefore, it still excludes long-term funding beyond the duration of one year. This point was said to hinder the long-term planning of strategies and activities. Particularly organisations that maintained a long-time funding relationship with the Commission were in favour and were thought to deserve long-term funding for longer than one year. Experts stated that the grant system would need the legal basis of a European programme for such long-term funding.

4 Future policies and political considerations – contributions to ongoing discussion and debate

In this chapter we intend to present our findings and conclusions with regard to future policies in the field of EU-grants for international youth organisations. Herewith, we intend to touch upon a rather vague set of concepts and policy options, compared to concepts and indicators for global effects, performance and operational aspects, which were the subjects of the preceding chapter. For our findings and conclusions on future policies we have to rely almost exclusively on the expert opinion of a rather small circle of European policy makers with direct interest in youth policies, civil society, or grant and budget policies. Therefore, our findings and conclusions cannot be seen as hard evidence for this or that phenomenon, but as our summaries, syntheses and interpretation of expert opinions. They are open to critique and discussion, and we hope and expect that they will prove to be valuable contributions to ongoing discussion and debate on the future of youth organisations and their EU-grants. We may hope and expect this for the summaries and syntheses we made as well as for the interpretations we will give. The latter interpretations may remain the most subjective part of the evaluation as a whole, whereas the summaries and syntheses should reflect more objective or inter-subjective elements and evidence.

4.1 Youth means future

Policy documents say so. Most experts we consulted repeated it in several ways and wordings. Many stakeholders underlined it in their own wording: Europe needs awareness and commitment from the side of young people for its future and for new talent in politics, government, education and research, management, business, etc. And both youth with special talents as well as young people at risk should be able to rely on European support, e.g. via the organisations that may help and represent them.

For these reasons there was apparent political commitment to A-3029 grants for European youth organisations.

The political opinion included more or less automatically the opinion that those youth organisations were awarded grants, which deserve them because of their position among young people in Europe and their activities. We have, however, also observed some political and administrative hesitance, particularly as far as implementation, effects, administrative burden, or with the rules and procedures of grant management and budgeting are concerned. Most hesitance appeared to be of little importance, but the points it regarded deserve careful attention and consideration. It regarded, among others: thresholds, representation, performance, public money, and the legal framework of EU grants such the A-3029 grants.

4.2 Thresholds and eligibility

Many organisations complained that they had to realise their objectives with a very small staff and office. They found that they were kept short by the system of small grants compared to the costs of staff and office. Most of them were however able to realise all objectives or more than that, as we concluded in the paragraphs 3.2 and 3.5. Only for very small organisations that were dependent on a yearly changing group of volunteers or on one or two ‘steady volunteers’ we might conclude that they were actually ‘under threshold’, among others on behalf of the reports of our observers.

Some external observers stated that the grant system attracted too many and too little organisations. They thought that the system would continue to do so because of its internal logic the needs among youth organisations. For reasons related to grant management in general they thought that a smaller number of bigger and more powerful organisations were to be preferred. In this sense they referred to higher thresholds and stronger ‘critical mass’, particularly in terms of staff and dedicated volunteers. However, if all other political consideration would be kept equal, it could be concluded that for the moment the threshold should not be a major concern for A-3029 grants. Only at the very lowest level of very small organisations that depend (almost) exclusively on volunteers some restrictions could be needed. Would long-term grants be considered higher thresholds in terms of staff and other human resources might be justified.

4.3 Representation and eligibility

The number of member organisations in EU Member States was apparently a decisive quantitative criterion for awarding a grant to an international youth organisation. In this respect the political remark was made that the candidate Member States of the EU played only a marginal or compensatory role for the decision. From a political perspective some experts expressed explicitly their preference for ‘equal treatment’ of membership in present and future EU Member States, in advance of the enlargement of the EU in the coming years.

4.4 Performance and eligibility

The performance of most youth organisations that received a grant was apparently quite good. Key organisers and stakeholders estimated and indicated that all plans were accomplished or even over-accomplished, both in terms of the specific objectives (communications, activities) and global objectives such as creating European awareness among young people. Those who were involved in youth policies and youth work and those who can be seen as stakeholders of the youth organisations expressed ex post their appreciation with the performances. They legitimised ex post the grants.

One remarks might be justified. It regards the external recognition of the performances and therefore the external effectiveness and legitimacy of the organisations, their publicity and their activities. The external effectiveness and legitimacy might to be low in comparison with internal effectiveness and legitimacy. Organisations gave only dispersed evidence of external reactions and follow-up on their publicity and activities. The participation from wider circles than the direct 'clientele' was not overwhelming, neither as visible in the documentation of the organisation nor as observed by our observers during meetings and site visits. At those occasions it appeared difficult for the organisations to attract the attention of general media, even during events with a high news value, such as a shadow conference on environmental affairs.

4.5 Tax payers' money

In most political interviews reference was made to the issue of public money: grants are to be paid from money as made available by the European tax payers, and therefore the principle of parsimony is to be applied on the grant system as sharply as possible. At one occasion during the invitational conference there was a clear and striking reference to the argument and its relevance for public debate. At that moment the representatives of the youth organisations repeated their complaints concerning the small amounts of money that were awarded to them as a A-3029 grant. They stated that these grants were small in comparison to the grants of e.g. (adult) European movement organisations that received grants from other A-30 budget lines. They also stated that their grants were small in comparison to the many tasks and obligations they had in their relation to the Commission. The more the internal parties of the grant system would give the impression that the grants are their bilateral affair, external parties such as the European Parliament and its committee on the EU's budget may have reason to show the tax payers' money warning card.

4.6 Administration, service or youth work

As already stated in earlier chapters the Committee on the Budget of the European Parliament has suggested that A-30 grants should be treated as administrative expenditures of the Commission. For A-3029 grants a small part of the activities of the subsidised organisations might consist of administrative EU activities. It might regard some specific tasks of the Commission, such as information campaigns for the EU to a wider (young) public, or the direct implementation of certain EU actions, e.g. in the field of youth and student exchange. Some organisations stated that they actually carried out such information services and action lines, e.g. in the frame of the European Voluntary Services action line or the ERASMUS and LEONARDO Programme for student exchange. Some of these organisations thought that they were even more important for the implementation of the action lines than national liaison or national organisation offices. These youth organi-

sations complained that they were supposed to deliver the services with the support of a small grant that only covered a small portion of the real costs related to the services. The position was defended that the youth organisations should be paid fully for direct services in the frame of EU action lines, and that the Commission should offer them the opportunity to tender for these services, e.g. in competition with national offices, professional and educational institutions, etc.

However, most activities and communications of youth organisations do not represent administrative tasks of the EU. These regard 'youth work' in a very broad sense, i.e. activities that are to the benefit of young people in Europe. Therefore, we did not observe further support to treating the activities and communications of youth organisations as administrative tasks and expenditures of the Commission.

4.7 Legal framework of EU grants

Herewith, the discussion on the legal basis of A-30 grants has become a most urgent issue. Without a legal basis they may become impossible by 01-01-04. A legal basis means that the EU is faced with an obligation to implement certain action lines in a certain field on the basis of the European Treaty. In practice, it means that the European institutions and the Member States have agreed upon a long-term action programme in a certain field, with reference to an article of the European Treaty including the last article that refers to all further fields of possible concern.

Several legal frameworks or programmes have been proposed in the meantime. The Youth Forum stated to be in favour of a special programme for European youth organisations. This programme should combine the present grant systems for the Forum and for the youth organisations, and its exclusive objective should be the support of the Forum and organised youth in Europe.

Another proposal regarded the embedding of the grants into the YOUTH Programme. The YOUTH Programme is a wide and long-term programme of the EU for EU co-financing of priority areas in European youth work. It includes e.g. the above-mentioned EVS. Structural support to youth organisations could be added to its priority areas. A similar embedding has been implemented for non-governmental organisations in the field of environmental policies and sustainable development, known as the ENVIRONMENT Programme. In case of need, comparable priority areas could be implemented in programmes for e.g. student exchange (ERASMUS, TEMPUS, LEONARDO) or in that for RESEARCH, CULTURE, etc.

It is further proposed to pay special attention to the over-arching concern of all or most A-30 budget lines and grants. Over-arching means that the grants should enhance the idea of Europe, human rights and Europe as a civil society. So, they may constitute an EU Programme for the enhancement of human rights and the European civil society in an embryo stage. A programme like this does not exist, but the European institutions and the

Member States could decide that it is needed. In that case there would be a solution for all A-30 budget lines, including A-3029 and the grants for international youth organisations.

4.8 Long-term or short-term

The legal basis would also solve problems related to the short-term cycle of the grants and the long-term perspective of the grants' practice. Now, all parties involved are obliged to keep to the one years' cycle for grants that are often awarded in the very long run. Were the grant system be embedded in a long-term programme such as YOUTH, grants could be awarded for the whole period of the programme as a maximum. In this case it would be six years, with interim-decision on the basis of progress reports. The new long-term perspective would be directly in line with the practice regarding the majority of funded youth organisations. It would however not be excluded, that a grant is awarded for the short period of one year, e.g. in case of new applicant organisations or in cases that a severe control on growth and quality appears to be appropriate. It would be possible to include a special treatment for new youth organisation, related to an experimental grant for one or two years.

Therefore, there would no longer be a friction between the obligatory short-term cycle and the long-term practice, but a mixture of both as appropriate.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Assignment

On assignment of the European Commission DOCA Bureaus has carried out an evaluation of EU grants to international non-governmental youth organisations that were awarded to them in 1999 and 2000 on the basis of budget line A-3029. In 1999 107 organisations received a grant, and 89 in 2000. The grants were rather extra-ordinary in EU-terms. They should cover running costs of the eligible organisations for staff and office, which is mostly excluded by other EU-grant systems. The grant system has its roots in the Resolution of the European Parliament of 14 June 1991 on “Community policies and their effects on young people”.

DOCA Bureaus is a small and independent research unit established in Lepelstraat, the Netherlands. It has applied several research methods as to answer the pertinent evaluation questions of the Commission concerning the implementation of the grant system, its operational effectiveness, the specific effects that were realised by the organisations and their grants and the global effects that can be related to the grant system. The latter regarded e.g. the promotion of youth participation in society and the enhancement of the idea of Europe as a civil society.

As the Commission expected also recommendations based upon the evaluation’s outcomes, we have made a global assessment of the political context of the grant system. Most important issue in the political context appeared to be the coming new budget system of the EU. The new budget system is known as the Activity Based Budget system, which will be set in operation from 2004 onwards. It might exclude further grants for international youth organisations as they are now awarded under budget line A-3029.

The methods that were applied are thought to be an appropriate mix for answering the evaluation questions. They included:

1. File analysis of all applicant organisations in 1999 and 2000.
2. A survey among all applicant organisations in 1999 and 2000. The survey was both used as a check on file codes and for collecting additional data, e.g. concerning the realisation of the year plans as announced in the applications.
3. Case studies among 19 selected organisations and their activities.
4. A survey among 256 stakeholders (board members and former board members, staff members, volunteers, important participants in activities, representatives of European, national and regional authorities, representatives of funding agents, etc.) with regard to their appreciation of the organisation and the (wider) importance of its activities.

5. Expert interviews.
6. An invitational conference where preliminary outcomes of the evaluation and policy option were discussed with a panel of experts.

It is an appropriate mix of quantitative and qualitative methods that is suited for the ex-post evaluation of the grants in 1999 and 2000. It is certainly appropriate as a basis for conclusions concerning the rules and procedures, the operational effects and the specific effects. We acknowledge, however, that evidence is weaker where we had to rely on limited samples among national and regional authorities, or where we could only apply qualitative methods. The latter was the case with the political assessment of the grants, which is based upon expert consultation in 'Brussels'. In that domain our conclusions and recommendations are far from hard evidence. These are meant as valuable contributions to ongoing political debate on EU-grants.

The materials from these methods are attached to the final report as its attachments 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Attachment 2 regards the materials concerning the applicant organisations. Attachment 3 presents the materials from the survey among stakeholders and attachment 4 includes the reports of the organisations that were selected as case studies. Then there is attachment 5 that includes the list of expert interviews. Attachment 6 includes the report of the invitational conference.

In the paragraphs below we will summarise point by point the outcomes concerning the rules and procedures, the operational effectiveness, the specific effects, the global effects and the political context. Then we will make our recommendation that were based upon these outcomes.

5.1.2 Outcomes concerning rules and procedures

1. Among the applicant organisations there was dissatisfaction with the rules and procedures of A-3029 grants. The complaints were both expressed by experienced applicants and by newcomers in the field. It was however acknowledged by a number of experienced applicants, that rules and procedures had become easier with the vademecum on EU grant management, and that the Commission has improved the rules and procedures of A-3029 grants in the course of recent years.³⁴
2. The time frame of the A-3029 grants was very constrained. It regarded a time cycle of one year from call (mid-January), via application (end of February) and decision (May-June) towards spending the grant (before the end of December). For many organisations it is too tight and leads to unbalanced year plans, in which major activities apparently are to be postponed until the second half of the year.

³⁴ Most recent improvements have been introduced with the call for 2003, which was launched a few days before we finished this report.

3. Rules and procedures regarded one-year grants, although the grant system functions as a long-term system for most organisations. In this sense there is an apparent contradiction between rule and practice.
4. Applications and procedures apparently took too much time of some organisations' staff. Experienced organisation thought that the procedures could be made easier for them, e.g. via a long-term grant system or intelligent ICT. Newcomers and less experienced applicants needed external advice or support, as was made available from the side of the unit responsible for the grants' management and on the Commission's web-sites.
5. The Commission's services on this point have been improved during the past years, up to the recent improvement of the route to the Commission's web-site for the grants.
6. Threshold factor for grant decisions was the representation of the applicant organisations in Member States of the EU. They had to be represented in eight Member States or more, with some exceptions. Other possible allocation criterions such as those related to the number of young people reached, human and operational resources, or quality and quantity of the planned played other functions in the selection and allocation process.
7. Apparently, the rules and allocation procedures did not anticipate directly upon the enlargement of the EU. Experts referred to the issue and half of the subsidised organisations referred to their aims and activities in relation to young people in the candidate countries of in Central and Eastern Europe or in the Mediterranean. Since 2001 a compensatory rule was applied for organisations with representation in less than eight EU Member States, and harmonisation of youth organisations from Member States and those from candidate countries was foreseen for 2003.

5.1.3 Outcomes concerning operational effectiveness

1. Most organisations that received a grant in 1999 and/or 2000 could maintain an office with two or three staff members. They were also able to realise an ambitious programme of activities including internal communications, board meetings and contacts with national branches and members.
2. Apparently and however small in absolute terms, these human and operational resources were sufficient for running an international youth organisation, particularly if this critical mass is extended by the contribution of volunteers and national branches or members. In this sense the grants were welcome and sufficient for realising their operational objectives.
3. Herewith it is not said that the organisations would not need stronger human and operational resources for running the organisation, but they could make ends meet.

4. It was clear that the subsidised organisations would not know how to continue operations would they lose their A-3029 grants for their human and operational resources.
5. We have also observed that under the level of one paid staff member the operations cannot be guaranteed. Some subsidised organisations without an office, with less than one or two professional staff members and organisations that relied almost fully on one or two 'standing volunteers', had to admit that they could not realise their targets for communications and activities. Our observers reported that with these very small organisations they had run the risk of attending a cancelled meeting or that the organisation's representative was very difficult to trace.

5.1.4 Outcomes concerning specific effects

1. Apparently, most subsidised organisations performed according to plan or better (see above for the exception of too small organisations).
2. It was argued that the performance is to be seen as a grant effect. The average performance of subsidised organisations was better than that of a control group, consisting of rejected applicants that continued operations.
3. Stakeholders' appreciation of the performance is high.
4. Also the stakeholders from wider circles including national and regional authorities expressed their full appreciation of the performance of the organisations.
5. Beyond the level of stakeholders of the youth organisations we could not ascertain recognition or appreciation of the performances of the subsidised youth organisations. Therefore, it is to be concluded that the performances were too low on visibility and public interest.

5.1.5 Outcomes concerning global effects

1. Global effects of youth organisations on youth participation in society are strongly recognised or even postulated by most European political experts and policy makers in the field.
2. Global effects are also strongly recognised and appreciated by stakeholders of youth organisations in general and those from wider circles around them, including national and regional authorities.
3. Experts and stakeholders who expressed some doubt related it 'public money' and 'public interest'. The latter doubt and concern reflected the same point as above, i.e. too low visibility and public interest of the performances of subsidised youth organisations. The first doubt and concern made clear that no grants are self-evident in their own, and that they are permanently challenged by debate on (great) value for (little) public money.

5.1.6 Outcomes concerning the political context

1. In line with the outcomes concerning the global effects of the grants there was clear political support for the international youth organisations and their grants among most consulted European experts. Those who may have their doubts in this respect could be convinced by the performance of most subsidised organisations as shown in the outcomes of our evaluation.
2. Strongest political problem for the grant system followed from the lack of legal basis for the grants. The grants have been allocated on a yearly basis in the frame of yearly budget decisions of the EU budget authority.
3. It is convincingly argued that the lack of a legal basis may cause even more severe problems in the near future with the coming Activity Based Budget system of the EU. The system may urge the European institutions to approach the activities of the international youth organisations as administrative actions of the Commission, or to let the grant system die out, would the grants still lack a legal basis in the European Treaty.
4. The Committee on Budgets of the European Parliament represented the position that grants such as those for international youth organisations should be approached as administrative actions of the Commission. Others stated that this is rather unimaginable because most activities of international youth organisations are all but administrative actions of the Commission.
5. As no consulted expert was in favour of stopping the allocation of grants to international youth organisations or to treat them as administrative actions of the Commission, most experts was proposed to find a sound legal basis for the grant system, with the side-effect that long-term grants may become possible.
6. Several options were formulated. First was a new EU-programme for the support of youth organisations. Second option was a special priority of within another appropriate EU-programme, such as YOUTH.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Subsidies to be continued

1. We may strongly recommend that the European institutions should continue their support for international youth NGOs that need and deserve a grant on behalf of their performance.
2. As long as youth organisations deliver EU services to (their) young people we recommend that the Commission should give them the opportunity to obtain a contract for such services, e.g. in competition with national agencies and liaison offices of the European Commission. Their contract should not lead automatically to a reduction of their grant.

3. We recommend that other activities not being such services should not be treated as administrative actions of the Commission, unless the grant system would otherwise die out with the Activity Based Budget system of the EU in 2004.
4. We may further recommend that a threshold criterion will be introduced for the human resources of youth organisations and their grants. We recommend that the applications of organisations with less than 1 paid staff members for administrative, operational and strategic support of the organisation, its bodies and its volunteers should be rejected, apart from special rules to be applied for newcomers during a pilot period.

5.2.2 Improved procedures

1. We recommend that the Commission should urgently harmonise the rules concerning representation in EU Member States and that in candidate countries.
2. We support to the Commission's decision to change the time frame of the grant system. As decided for 2003, the call should be opened in November, deadline for applications should be January, and decisions should be communicated to the organisations in April.
3. In a long-term perspective we recommend that the European institutions should make long-term grants possible for international youth organisations that need and deserve long-term funding.
4. Since the present legal frame (or the lack of it) excludes long-term grants, we may recommend that the European institutions will set up a new legal frame for the grants that would make the long-term option possible.
5. We recommend that the Commission should continue its efforts to improve the information support to applicant organisations via e.g. helpdesk-like functions and information services on its web-sites.
6. We recommend that the Commission will make use of the most intelligent software for grant forms, grant applications and grant management as has been made available on the ICT market.

5.2.3 Legal basis

1. In line with the recommendation above we recommend that the Commission should at short notice come forward with a proposal for another legal basis for international youth NGOs' grants.
2. Given the urgency we recommend that the Commission will propose that Youth-NGO priorities are to be added to the lists of priorities of EU programmes such as YOUTH, following the example of a comparable priority in the ENVIRONMENT Programme.
3. Would a legal basis not be implemented before the introduction of the Activity Based Budget system in 2004, we may recommend that the Commission will treat the A-

3029 grants as administrative actions of the Commission, however virtual this option will be.

5.2.4 Quality and performance

1. We may recommend to the subsidised youth organisations that they continue their efforts to guarantee quality and performance on the basis of high ambitions to the benefit of young people in Europe.
2. We may recommend that the Commission, the Youth Forum and the subsidised organisations take a joint long-term initiative to increase public awareness of the quality and performance of the subsidised organisations, particularly among young people that may benefit from the organisations, their performances and their grants.

6 Résumé française

6.1 Résumé de l'évaluation

6.1.1 Mission

La Commission européenne a demandé à DOCA Bureaus d'effectuer une évaluation sur les subventions européennes accordées aux organisations non-gouvernementales de jeunesse internationales en 1999 et 2000 sur la base de la ligne A-3029 du budget général de l'Union européenne. En 1999, 107 organisations ont reçu de telles subventions et en 2000 ce nombre est passé à 89. Ce système de subventions est issu de la résolution du Parlement européen en date du 14 juin 1991 sur « Les politiques communautaires et leurs effets sur la jeunesse ».

DOCA Bureaus est une petite unité de recherche indépendante établie à Lepelstraat aux Pays-Bas. Aux fins d'entreprendre une évaluation pertinente, DOCA a utilisé plusieurs méthodes de recherche pour répondre aux questions pertinentes de la Commission sur l'application du système de subventions. Ces questions concernaient les aspects opérationnels liés à l'efficacité, les résultats spécifiques obtenus par les organisations à l'aide des subventions européennes et les effets globaux issus du système. Ce dernier point a été considéré, entre autres, la promotion de la participation des jeunes à la société ainsi que le renforcement de l'idée de l'Europe formant une société civile. Dans le paragraphe suivant, nous discuterons les points forts et les points faibles du modèle d'évaluation mis en application. Ces questions sont présentées à l'annexe 1 du présent rapport.

Comme la Commission avait également demandé que nous donnions nos recommandations en fonction des résultats de l'évaluation, nous avons effectué une évaluation générale du contexte politique du système de subventions. La nouvelle présentation du système budgétaire de l'Union européenne nous a paru la question la plus importante sur le plan politique. Connu sous le nom « budget sur la base des activités » (BBA), ce système entrera en vigueur à partir de 2004 et pourrait exclure toutes nouvelles subventions pour les organisations de jeunesse internationales telles qu'elles sont actuellement accordées sous la ligne A-3029 du budget.

Ce rapport définitif présente les résultats de l'évaluation ainsi que nos recommandations, tout en tenant compte des points forts et des points faibles du modèle appliqué. Il faut, en particulier, noter que nos conclusions sur les effets globaux des subventions et nos recommandations consécutives sont fondées sur un sondage plutôt limité, du point de vue du nombre et du profil. Par conséquent, ces conclusions et recommandations ne constituent pas des preuves tangibles comme c'est, par contre, le cas pour celles qui concernent les aspects opérationnels et les résultats spécifiques. Elles doivent donc être considérées comme une contribution modeste mais équitable au débat politique sur le futur des subventions européennes pour les organisations de jeunesse internationales.

Au chapitre 3, les résultats sont résumés sous forme de brefs exposés sur les sujets suivants :

- Règlements et procédures ;
- Aspects opérationnels et efficacité ;
- Effets spécifiques ;

- Effets globaux possibles.

Le chapitre 4 présentera notre contribution modeste mais équitable au débat politique en cours.

En outre, le chapitre 5 présentera nos recommandations détaillées, dont nous aimerions préciser les cinq principales dans le présent résumé. Pour chaque recommandation, nous mentionnerons brièvement les constatations plus ou moins tangibles sur lesquelles nous nous sommes appuyés.

6.2 Cinq recommandations

Première recommandation

Nous recommandons fortement aux institutions européennes de continuer à soutenir les ONG de jeunesse internationales qui ont besoin de subventions et les méritent en raison de leurs performances.

Cette recommandation est justifiée de façon indubitable par nos constatations sur les besoins de toutes les organisations demandeuses et sur les activités et performances de la plupart des organisations subventionnées. Cette recommandation est également soutenue par la majorité des experts consultés en la matière. Ces derniers étaient convaincus que les organisations de jeunesse et les subventions accordées avaient eu un impact sur des objectifs plus généraux comme la participation des jeunes dans la société et la promotion de l'idée de l'Europe. Il est cependant nécessaire de continuer à examiner avec soin les demandes de subventions, notamment celles qui viennent d'organisations ne dépassant pas une masse critique en termes de personnel. A cet égard, nous avons observé des performances contestables dans les organisations employant moins d'un membre de personnel à plein temps.

Deuxième recommandation

Nous recommandons à la Commission d'harmoniser le plus rapidement possible les règlements concernant la représentation des organisations de jeunesse dans les Etats membres de l'UE et leur représentation dans les pays candidats à l'UE.

A la suite de plusieurs réunions, nos observateurs ont signalé une participation importante et sincère des pays candidats à l'UE. En outre, 46 % de toutes les organisations subventionnées en 1999 et 2000 ont mentionné explicitement dans leur demande de subventions qu'elles avaient l'intention d'augmenter le nombre de leurs membres et leur participation dans les pays candidats à l'UE. Nous devons donc en conclure que l'intérêt de l'élargissement de l'Union européenne est bien représenté dans ces organisations. En ce qui concerne les règlements applicables aux subventions, les pays candidats à l'UE occupaient une position plutôt ambiguë, de même que l'Islande, le Liechtenstein et la Norvège qui appartiennent à l'Espace Economique Européen en tant que pays de l'AELE. Les organisations demandeuses pouvaient compenser leur sous-représentation dans les Etats membres de l'UE par une représentation extraordinaire dans les pays candidats à l'UE ou en Norvège, entre autres. La norme consistait à une représentation dans huit Etats membres de l'UE, mais la représentation dans six Etats membres pouvaient être compensée par la représentation dans six pays candidats à l'UE ou en Norvège, entre autres. En 2000,

la Commission a appliqué les règles de représentation de façon stricte. Seules deux organisations ont reçu des subventions en tenant compte du règlement de compensation et de leur large représentation dans des pays candidats à l'UE ou en Norvège ou en Suisse, entre autres. En vue du prochain élargissement de l'UE, il sera nécessaire d'adapter ce règlement. En tenant compte de l'avis d'experts, nous recommandons l'harmonisation des règlements de représentation dans toute la région comprenant l'Union européenne après son élargissement, la Roumanie, la Bulgarie, la Communauté des Etats indépendants, l'Espace Economique Européen et la Suisse. Dans un certain sens, ils symbolisent tous l'idée de l'Europe, idée qui pourrait être renforcée par les organisations de jeunesse.

Troisième recommandation

Dans une optique de cohérence, nous recommandons aux institutions européennes de permettre l'octroi de subventions à long terme aux organisations de jeunesse internationales qui en ont besoin et les méritent.

L'UE accorde des subventions aux organisations de jeunesse européennes depuis 1990. Alors qu'elle aide, en moyenne, 110 organisations par an, seules 87 organisations ont été subventionnées en 2000, dont 19 (soit 21 % du total) avaient obtenu des aides financières depuis le début (1990) et dont près de 50 % avaient obtenu de nouveaux fonds après avoir reçu une première subvention au début des années 90. Ce système de subventions adoptait donc, dans de nombreux cas, une perspective à long terme en favorisant l'élément de la continuité. En termes de logique juridique et opérationnelle, ce système adoptait, au contraire, une perspective à court terme évidente, son fondement juridique étant établi sur les décisions budgétaires annuelles prises par l'Autorité budgétaire européenne en janvier de chaque année. Pendant le même mois, ces décisions étaient suivies d'un appel de soumission de propositions qui pouvant être modifié annuellement. Tous les ans, les organisations demandeuses devaient faire une nouvelle demande de subventions avant la fin février. Comme la subvention devait toujours être dépensée pendant l'année courante et que la décision d'accorder une subvention se faisait en mai ou juin, les organisations devaient ensuite dépenser leur subvention avant la fin de l'année. La plupart des organisations se sont plaintes de la pression intense qu'imposait un tel délai sur leurs ressources humaines limitées, leur planification à court terme pour chaque année et leur stratégie à long terme. Un nombre d'organisations ont déclaré que certains changements opérationnels introduits à la fin des années 90 avec le Vade-mecum sur la gestion des subventions avaient amélioré la situation. D'autres changements opérationnels avaient diminué cette pression, tels que l'introduction très récente de la soumission des demandes en novembre. Ces changements ne permettent, cependant, pas d'adopter une optique à long terme sur la plupart des subventions, ni ne pourvoient au besoin des organisations d'améliorer leurs stratégies et leur planification en conséquence. La possibilité d'un financement à long terme se montrerait plus avantageux pour ces organisations. Or cette solution est exclue dans le cadre juridique actuel des subventions.

Quatrième recommandation

Nous recommandons à la Commission de proposer, dans l'avenir proche, un autre fondement juridique pour les subventions destinées aux ONG de jeunesse internationales.

Les allocations budgétaires à long terme dans l'Union européenne sont possibles dans la mesure où elles concernent des activités émanant du Traité de l'Union européenne. Les allocations budgétaires concernant d'autres activités comme les activités administratives des institutions européennes ne sont possibles qu'à la suite de décisions annuelles de l'autorité budgétaire européenne. Comme l'octroi de subventions aux ONG de jeunesse internationales n'émane pas directement du Traité de l'Union européenne, les allocations budgétaires à long terme ne sont pas possibles. Elles le seraient si les institutions européennes décidaient de former un programme d'activités européen, intégral ou partiel, pendant un certain nombre d'années. Un tel programme devrait provenir du Traité, comme c'est le cas actuellement du programme JEUNESSE qui résulte du dernier article général du Traité. De nombreux experts ont déclaré que le changement de fondement juridique pour les subventions s'avérait particulièrement urgent vu d'un budget sur la base des activités BBA en 2004. Dans le cadre de ce nouveau système, l'UE a l'intention de concentrer ses allocations de budget sur des activités. Les experts ont indiqué que, dans ce cadre-là, les subventions ne pourraient être accordées que si les organisations et leurs activités étaient traitées comme des activités administratives de l'UE ou si leurs subventions étaient intégrées dans un programme européen relevant du fondement juridique susmentionné. La plupart des experts des organisations de jeunesse européennes se sont dits favorables à un programme spécial de financement des organisations de jeunesse couvrant les subventions versées à la fois au Forum Jeunesse et aux ONG de jeunesse internationales.

Cinquième recommandation

Nous recommandons que la Commission, le Forum Jeunesse et les organisations subventionnées prennent ensemble l'initiative de sensibiliser le public (notamment les jeunes qui en sont les bénéficiaires) à la qualité et aux performances de ces organisations. Le manque de notoriété des organisations de jeunesse internationales est peut-être une faiblesse susceptible de saper la légitimité des subventions à long terme.

Dans un projet pilote de la présente évaluation, nous avons été dissuadés d'effectuer une recherche directe auprès des autorités nationales et régionales pour leur demander de rendre compte des organisations internationales. En effet, comme les autorités en question n'avaient que des notions limitées sur ces organisations, on ne pouvait s'attendre à des données d'évaluation fiables (voir également la discussion sur la méthodologie ci-dessous). Certains de nos observateurs ont signalé des problèmes de contacts avec le public et la presse lors de réunions, notamment avec des autorités et médias opérant dans le même domaine. D'autres observateurs ont signalé les difficultés auxquelles doivent faire face les organisations pour avoir des contacts avec la presse, même dans des domaines engendrant un grand intérêt comme les politiques internationales sur l'environnement. La notoriété est directement ou indirectement liée à la légitimité des subventions et devrait donc être augmentée le plus possible par la Commission, par les organisations de jeunesse et par le Forum Jeunesse.

6.3 Points forts et points faibles du modèle d'évaluation

6.3.1 Points forts

Notre évaluation et nos conclusions ont été effectuées à partir d'un modèle mixte de méthodes de recherche quantitatives et qualitatives. Ce modèle doit donc être considéré comme un point fort de l'évaluation.

Ce modèle comprenait des analyses de fichier et des enquêtes, sur le plan quantitatif, et des questions ouvertes, des entretiens avec des experts, des observations et une conférence sur invitation, sur le plan qualitatif. Ces méthodes ont inclus dix-huit études de cas sur des organisations qui avaient reçu des subventions en 2000³⁵. Dans ces études de cas, nous avons sélectionné des personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation' ayant un intérêt ou une participation active dans les organisations et nous avons eu des contacts avec elles lors de réunions ou d'autres activités auxquelles nous avons assisté et pendant lesquelles nous avons joué le rôle d'observateurs. De nombreuses conclusions importantes ont résulté de ces études de cas et des enquêtes.

En associant une analyse de fichiers, une enquête auprès des organisations demandeuses, des études de cas et l'enquête effectuée auprès des personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation', nous avons produit une base empirique solide pour notre évaluation, notamment en ce qui concerne les effets opérationnels et spécifiques. Les effets spécifiques sont liés à la fois aux règlements et aux procédures ainsi qu'à la réussite des organisations à réaliser leur plan de travail avec l'aide des subventions de l'UE en 1999 et 2000.

Nous avons dû faire face à de sérieux obstacles dans le cadre de l'analyse des *effets globaux* des subventions. En règle générale, les effets globaux possibles et bienvenus concernaient la contribution des organisations de jeunesse et de leurs subventions à la participation de la jeunesse européenne. Les mesures d'effets globaux dépendent inévitablement d'analyses et de méthodes de recherche qualitatives, et les conclusions et l'évaluation en résultant ne présentent presque jamais de preuves tangibles. L'évaluateur se doit cependant d'appliquer les meilleures méthodes qualitatives possibles. Dans ce cas-là, nous avons utilisé des études de cas, des entretiens ouverts avec un grand nombre d'experts et personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation', des observations et une conférence sur invitation pendant laquelle les décideurs et les organisateurs principaux ont discuté nos constatations et recommandations préliminaires. Lors de débats entre eux, ils ont exposé leurs recommandations sur l'avenir du système de subventions, nous aidant ainsi dans notre mission qui consistait justement à présenter nos propres recommandations à ce sujet. En outre, le groupe de méthodes qualitatives que nous avons appliqué dans le cadre de l'analyse des effets globaux des subventions et à la base de nos recommandations doit être considéré comme un point fort de la présente évaluation. Ces forces doivent cependant être prises en considération à la lumière des points faibles énoncés ci-dessous.

³⁵ Plus un cas dans lequel nous n'avons pu retrouver que l'organisateur clé que nous avons interviewé de façon approfondie, mais il n'a pas pu nous aider davantage dans l'étude de cas intégrale. Notre conclusion selon laquelle une organisation a besoin d'une masse critique minimale est en partie fondée sur cette expérience.

6.3.2 Points faibles

Nous n'avons pas été en mesure d'appliquer les meilleures méthodes d'évaluation à un certain nombre de points. Il aurait été idéal d'appliquer des méthodes aboutissant à des conclusions incontestables sur les effets des subventions, c'est-à-dire des conclusions quantifiées pour les effets. Comme il a été précisé ci-dessus, il a été impossible d'obtenir de telles conclusions sur les effets globaux et l'avenir du système des subventions. Pour l'instant, nos conclusions et nos recommandations ne sont pas indiscutables, puisqu'elles sont fondées sur l'opinion et les conseils du plus grand échantillon d'experts possible.

Nous discuterons d'un point faible spécifique à cet égard. Il nous manque de commentaires de la part des autorités nationales et régionales sur la valeur ajoutée du système de subventions. Un projet pilote a démontré que ces autorités n'avaient fourni aucune opinion fiable conclusive à cet égard en raison du fait que les fédérations internationales étaient inconnues des agences de financement régionales ou autres autorités concernées. Cette question ne paraissait pas constituer pour elles une préoccupation majeure. En outre, les listes nationales et régionales ne correspondaient pas aux listes européennes d'organisations de jeunesse qui avaient reçu des subventions en 1999 et 2000. Les principaux problèmes étaient des différences de langue manifestes, comme aux Pays-Bas et dans les Flandres. Nous n'avons donc pas pu répondre directement à la question de la Commission qui voulait savoir si les organisations subventionnées avaient été sélectionnées avec justice aux yeux des autorités nationales et régionales.

Pour essayer de résoudre ce problème, nous avons essayé d'agrandir le plus possible le cercle des personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation', demandant aux organisateurs des 18 études de cas de nous fournir le nom et l'adresse de vingt personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation'. Cette liste devait inclure, de préférence, les autorités et les représentants nationaux et régionaux concernés ainsi que les agents de subvention les plus importants, à l'exception de la Commission. Nous avons pensé que ces derniers donneraient, sur la pertinence et les performances de l'organisation concernée, un avis moins partial que les personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation' intervenant directement dans l'organisation. Nous avons donc reçu une liste de personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation' pour les dix-huit études de cas. Nous avons supposé que ces listes comprenaient l'éventail le plus large possible de personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation', ce dont nous sommes sûrs dans certaines études de cas. Cependant, pour des raisons de confidentialité, nous n'avons pas pu effectuer de vérification de validité intégrale sur la variété des personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation'. On nous a garanti indirectement que l'éventail était raisonnablement large en raison du nombre relativement élevé de personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation' intervenant directement dans les décisions régionales et nationales sur la jeunesse. Par exemple, 19 % des personnes 'actionnaires de l'organisation' intervenaient directement dans le processus de décision national et 29 % dans le processus de décision régional. Nous estimons que cette solution est une alternative équitable, bien que d'une contribution modeste, pour l'évaluation nationale et régionale de la pertinence et des performances d'organisations de jeunesse internationales spécifiques.

Un autre point faible à mentionner concerne la réponse des principaux organisateurs des ONG à notre enquête. 35 % des organisations n'ont pas répondu du tout. Dans la moitié des cas, l'absence de réponse est due au fait que 22 organisations ont déménagé ou ont cessé leurs activités. Si nous supposons que toutes les organisations qui avaient déménagé, et que nous n'avons pas pu retrouver, ont cessé leurs activités en 2000, le taux

d'absence de réponse des organisations subventionnées est de 27 % et celui des organisations rejetées est de 59 % - voir tableau 29.

Table 29. Réponse des organisations à l'enquête*.*

	Organisations subventionnées		Organisations rejetées	
Réponse	59	73%	23	41%
Sans réponse	22	27%	33	59%
Total	81	100%	56	100%

* Sont exclues de ce tableau les organisations que nous n'avons pas pu retrouver car elles avaient déménagé ou cessé leurs activités depuis leur demande en 1999 ou 2000. Celles-ci comprennent huit organisations subventionnées et quatorze organisations rejetées.

Cela nous amène à penser que les 59 organisations répondeuses qui ont reçu une subvention étaient représentatives de toutes les organisations subventionnées en 1999 et 2000, en ce qui concerne leurs résultats en 1999 et 2000. Nous avons également supposé que les 23 organisations répondeuses qui ont été rejetées étaient représentatives de toutes les organisations rejetées qui avaient cependant continué à exercer leurs activités. Pour évaluer l'effet possible des subventions, nous avons comparé les résultats des organisations qui avaient reçu des subventions avec les résultats de celles qui avaient été rejetées mais avaient continué à exercer leurs activités, en utilisant le groupe des organisations rejetées comme le groupe de contrôle non-subventionné. Dans cette comparaison, l'hypothèse nulle est que les subventions n'ont aucun effet s'il n'existe aucune différence apparente entre les organisations subventionnées et les organisations rejetées qui ont continué d'exercer leurs activités ou s'il existe une différence dans le sens inverse.

Attachment 1. Terms of reference

Attachment 2. File analysis and organisers' survey

Attachment 3. Case studies of 18 youth organisations – comparative data and analysis

Attachment 4. Case study files

Attachment 5. Consulted experts

Attachment 6. Report of the Invitational conference on EU-grants for international youth organisations, Brussels, 18 June 2002.