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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL,
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Annual Report on the Operation of the Third Phase
of the Tempus Programme in 2006**

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1. FOREWORD

The Tempus III Programme (2000-2006) focuses on the development and modernisation of higher education in the 26 partner countries of the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean region and Central Asia. Higher education institutions are considered to be of particular importance for the social and economic transition process in the partner countries. Higher education institutions are also pools of expertise and centres for the development of human resources. They provide for the training of new generations of leaders both in the EU and the partner countries. In addition, people-to-people exchanges as promoted by the Tempus programme contribute to enhancing mutual understanding between the European Union and the partner countries.

Since its inception in 1990, the Tempus programme has contributed successfully to promote the reform and modernisation of higher education in the partner countries. Higher education institutions are key players for the successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. Higher education institutions are important factors of growth and competitiveness, and play a crucial role in the reform agenda of both EU Member States and the partner countries. The modernisation of higher education has been acknowledged as a core condition for the success of the Lisbon Strategy which the European Union launched in March 2000 and which aims at restructuring the economic and social systems within the EU. At the same time, the Tempus programme has assisted partner countries in reforming their higher education systems in line with the principles of the Bologna process such as the new degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. The Bologna process, which the European Commission actively supports, is a common reference point for both EU Member States and partner countries.

In 2006, Tempus was funded through three external cooperation regional programmes: CARDS (Western Balkans); MEDA (Eastern and Southern Mediterranean) and Tacis (Eastern Europe and Central Asia). The Tempus budget in 2006 amounted to € 53.45 million broken down as follows between the three regions: Tacis: € 18.25 million, CARDS: € 17.2 million, MEDA: € 18 million.

A detailed description of the Tempus programme can be found at the following URL:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/tempus/index_en.html

The present annual report is presented in accordance with Article 11 of the Council Decision establishing the Tempus programme (OJ L 120 of 8 May 1999).

2. IMPLEMENTING TEMPUS IN 2006: THE MAIN ACTION LINES

The implementation of the programme in 2006 was guided by the following priorities:

- (1) reinforcing the dissemination and exploitation of project results;
- (2) strengthening field monitoring activities;
- (3) consolidating the role of National Tempus Offices;

3. REINFORCING THE DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF PROJECT RESULTS

In 2006, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) launched a number of initiatives to increase the visibility of Tempus across the partner countries, starting with simple tools like guidelines on visibility rules, producing a DVD showing "Tempus in action", a new leaflet, new promotional material, up to thematic events such as the conference on university-enterprise cooperation in Amman and the related study "linking the worlds of work and education through Tempus". The conference in April 2006, which was hosted by the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the study raised awareness among universities, businesses and education officials, on the importance of promoting cooperation between universities and enterprises to enhance graduate's employability and open new opportunities both for universities and enterprises. Examples of innovative practice from Tempus projects were presented at the conference, and described in the study.

In November 2006, a training session on communication, dissemination and exploitation of projects results was organised for the National Tempus Office's coordinators. During the annual grant-holders' meeting which took place in January 2006, a specific session dedicated to visibility and dissemination was organised.

The Directorate-General for Education and Culture launched a series of regional studies to illustrate the impact that Tempus has had on higher education institutions, individuals and systems in its partner countries since its inception, through a number of direct interviews and a large e-survey of key actors involved or informed about Tempus operations in their country. A total of 940 questionnaires were sent out. The studies were carried out by external experts (both from the EU and the partner countries) who visited all partner countries in May-July, and held individual and group interviews of university management and staff, teachers, students, employers, NGOs, regional and national education authorities.

For the vast majority of people interviewed for the impact studies, Tempus is seen as an essential door to the European academic world that has greatly helped building cooperation with European universities. Through its true European dimension, Tempus has provided opportunities to work with more than one EU country and to strengthen regional cooperation. Tempus is the only programme that deals with all aspects of higher education, while other donors usually cover only single element of the system. It is appreciated for its continuity, for having generated a "critical mass", thanks to which approaches and attitudes have been positively influenced. These positive changes have been recognised by national education authorities in most partner countries. The results of the impact studies will be used for the discussions on the future design of Tempus.

Tempus National Contacts Points in the Member States continued to play an important role in the programme implementation facilitating the involvement of EU higher education institutions through information activities and assistance in partner searching. In 2006, Tempus information days were organised in most partner countries as well as in a number of EU Member States.

4. STRENGTHENING FIELD MONITORING ACTIVITIES

In 2004, DG EAC adopted an overall policy for field monitoring of the Tempus programme, which comprises two complementary groups of activities:

- field monitoring carried out jointly by the European Training Foundation (ETF) and desk officers in DG EAC which targets approximately 10% of running projects (30 projects per year). The second campaign took place in autumn 2005 and spring 2006.
- field monitoring carried out by National Tempus Offices (NTOs) which targets in principle all ongoing projects in their country (Joint European Projects and Structural and Complementary Measures). This activity started at the beginning of 2006, after a specific training delivered to the National Tempus Offices.

A total of 44 projects covering all regions were visited during the 2005-06 monitoring campaign by desk officers in DG EAC/ETF. 80 projects were visited by NTOs.

The overall findings about the areas of investigation are positive despite some marginal weaknesses. Many projects are sound with good results. The needs analyses are generally well outlined and projects usually match faculty or university strategies which have been developed in the framework of national priorities. Moreover active participation of consortium members, mobility plans, support by institutions and recognition of results are among the strong points of the projects. However, there are still a number of less successful projects and areas which are generally weaker. Limited involvement of wider target groups or end users which affects impact and sustainability, lack of internal monitoring of changing needs and assumptions as well as lack of staff capacity building can be considered as examples of weaknesses. These issues have started to be addressed more intensively. All projects visited receive a feedback letter after the monitoring visits, including recommendations on corrective measures and areas for improvement.

The launch of field monitoring by National Tempus Offices is a positive development which provides a new opportunity to enrich the Tempus monitoring system, but also represents a challenge in terms of harmonisation of practices and overall coordination. It is crucial to secure a smooth and coherent integration of various inputs from different actors (project grant holders, desk monitors, EAC, ETF and NTO field monitors) into a single system. Such a system was designed in 2006, comprising in particular some guiding criteria to grade projects' performance, a grading processor and guidelines to follow up on NTOs' monitoring visits.

"Preventive monitoring" also plays an important role in the programme implementation system. In this respect, in January 2006, a grant-holders' meeting was organised in Brussels, focusing on projects management issues.

5. CONSOLIDATING THE ROLE OF NATIONAL TEMPUS OFFICES

The efforts to consolidate the role of National Tempus Offices (NTOs) continued in 2006, through a number of key initiatives, such as their active involvement in field monitoring activities. After the development of a strategy for the involvement of NTOs in field monitoring, and a specific training session delivered to them in October 2005, all NTOs started to monitor Tempus projects in their countries. Around 80 projects were visited for this first monitoring campaign carried out by the NTOs. The initial training was followed by a review of NTO monitoring practices and a more practical training on reporting techniques in November 2006.

The role of NTOs in project selection was reinforced, with a formal role given to them in the assessment of Individual Mobility Grants.

Two meetings involving NTOs from the partner countries and National Contact Points from the EU were organised in Brussels in May and November, addressing issues such as communication, visibility, project selection and monitoring.

Tempus information campaigns were carried out in all the partner countries where calls for proposals were organised in 2006, jointly with the ETF.

New grant agreements for the period July 2006 - June 2007 were concluded with Jordan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The NTO of Tajikistan was temporarily closed down.

6. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Five selection procedures were concluded during 2006. This comprises the selection rounds for Joint European Projects (deadline of 15 December 2005), Structural and Complementary Measures (deadlines of 15 October 2005 and 15 February 2006) and Individual Mobility Grants (deadlines of 15 February and 15 October 2006). The number of applications per selection round has remained consistently high, which means that the programme continues to attract the interest of the academic community. In particular, the number of applications for Structural and Complementary Measures is increasing and their content is more strongly focusing on horizontal issues which are of importance for the reform and modernisation of higher education in the partner countries. The detailed results of the selection procedures concluded in 2006 are available on the programme's website.

- Joint European Projects (JEPs) selected in 2006: 103 for a total amount of € 43.1 million. JEPs involve higher education institutions in the EU Member States and the 26 partner countries.
- Structural and Complementary Measures (SCMs) selected in 2006: 95 for a total amount of € 11.7 million. SCMs target higher education systems and focus on strategic issues.
- Individual Mobility Grants (IMGs) selected in 2006: 156 for a total amount of € 0.66 million. IMGs provide academic and administrative staff from higher education institutions with the opportunity to benefit from limited mobility periods abroad.

The selected Joint European Projects fall in the areas of curriculum development (70%), university management (15%) and institution-building (15%). Curriculum development projects cover a wide range of areas such as applied sciences, technology, business administration and social sciences. Institution building and university management projects support reforms related

to quality assurance, teaching quality or the financial management of universities in the partner countries. In a majority of countries, the selected Structural and Complementary Measures are clearly linked to the action lines of the Bologna process. The selected projects under this programme component typically concern issues such as the design of quality assurance systems or the introduction of credit transfer mechanisms. Projects also focus on the modernisation of university operations and services, including the updating of training programmes, the use of information and communication technologies and the strengthening of international relations. The selected Individual Mobility Grants concern mainly retraining and study periods (79%) followed by preparatory activities for Joint European Projects (13%) and participation in specific conferences and seminars (8%). Globally speaking, it can be observed that the submitted projects are increasingly in line with the national priorities established by the partner countries. Almost all selected projects adhere to national priorities.

At a general level, during 2006, commitments and payments under Tempus proceeded in line with the established planning. Certain grant agreements could not be dispatched according to the foreseen timetable due to the late adoption of financing decisions or due to delays in the signature of financing agreements by partner countries.

Other financial commitments in 2006 included:

- Grants to National Tempus Offices: 5 amounting to € 0.31 million.
- Grant to the European Training Foundation's Tempus Department that provides technical assistance to DG EAC: € 0.87 million.
- Conferences and seminars: € 0.63 million.

Work on the elimination of the Tempus litigation files has progressed consistently throughout 2006. So far, 164 litigation files could be closed from EAC's point of view (corresponding to 69% of all cases). The closed files include 81 cases, where the litigious amounts were written off in compliance with the Financial Regulation, 61 cases where the beneficiary reimbursed the requested amounts directly to the Commission and for 22 cases, debit notes were sent to the beneficiaries. A total amount of € 1.1 million was recovered in 2006 either through direct reimbursement or through the offsetting procedure.

7. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Tempus programme in 2006 was guided by a number of strategic objectives which have all been satisfactorily achieved. The continuous dialogue with national authorities and their close involvement in the definition of priorities and the selection of projects ensures that funded activities are relevant to the country's needs and in line with national reform objectives. This ensures ownership by national governments and increases the impact of the programme's interventions. National Tempus Offices in the partner countries have been further reinforced and play an important role in liaising with national authorities and other stakeholders. Feedback from national authorities and the results of the field monitoring have confirmed that Tempus continues to be a highly relevant programme for assisting partner countries in reforming and modernising their higher education systems.

TEMPUS 2006 – FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Tempus 2006 - Amounts committed per region in €			
	CARDS	Tacis	MEDA
JEP	13.043.103	16.959.989	3.164.222
IMG	71.300	114.760	114.940
SCM	2.848.398	5.919.744	1.140.609
NTO	0	262.093	49.898
ETF	255.000	328.000	287.000
Other	190.500	273.977	171.611
Total	16.408.301	23.858.563	4.928.280

Tempus 2006 – Projects selected per region/Amounts awarded in €		
	CARDS	Amount awarded to selected projects
JEP (deadline of 15 December 2005)	32	13.043.103
SCM (deadline of 15 October 2005)	5	650.001
SCM (deadline of 15 February 2006)	18	2.198.397
IMG (deadline of 15 February 2006)	16	71.300
IMG (deadline of 15 October 2006)	22	106.320
Total	93	16.069.121

Tempus 2006 – Projects selected per region/Amounts awarded in €		
	Tacis	Amount awarded to selected projects
JEP (deadline of 15 December 2005)	42	17.256.709
SCM (deadline of 15 October 2005)	24	3.112.606
SCM (deadline of 15 February 2006)	34	3.927.775
IMG (deadline of 15 February 2006)	35	128.250
IMG (deadline of 15 October 2006)	32	138.810
Total	167	24.564.150

Tempus 2006 – Projects selected per region/Amounts awarded in €		
	MEDA	Amount awarded to selected projects
JEP (deadline of 15 December 2005)	29	12.831.132
SCM (deadline of 15 October 2005)	8	990.609
SCM (deadline of 15 February 2006)	6	829.906
IMG (deadline of 15 February 2006)	30	114.940
IMG (deadline of 15 October 2006)	21	99.640
Total	94	14.866.227

- JEP: Joint European Project; SCM: Structural and Complementary Measure; IMG: Individual Mobility Grant; NTO: National Tempus Office; ETF: European Training Foundation.