



### Advocacy Work In Brussels

As part of the advocacy work in Brussels the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE), together with the Austrian MEP Karin Resetarits, has founded a working group in the European Parliament on the Quality of Childhood. This group will meet every two months to discuss issues related to its remit, starting on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006, with Toxic Child Syndrome that has been so prominent in the British media recently. Six other NGOs and two university representatives from Denmark, Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland and Belgium have joined ECSWE to support this initiative under the umbrella of Alliance for Childhood – European Network Group.

*Christopher Clouder, UK  
ECSWE  
From SWSF newsletter*

### ECSWE in new EU project

Towards the end of October, the first meeting of a three-year EU-funded Comenius Project took place in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, a vibrant country tucked away in a tranquil corner of Europe between Italy, Austria, Croatia and Hungary. The European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE) is a partner in this project, along with colleagues from 21 institutions of higher education from 12 European countries. Working alongside these European universities, there is a Polish non-governmental organisation working on behalf of children and the ECSWE, representing the network, or family of 630 Steiner Waldorf schools throughout Europe. A broad east-west, north-south group of countries is taking part - from Portugal to Poland and from Norway to Greece.

The Project has set itself a fundamental and demanding task: to enquire what a teacher in Europe in the twenty first century needs to be, to have and to become in order to meet the needs and situations of learners in our times.

One of the starting points shared by participants to the project is that various sets of standards and requirements for teacher qualification and 'teacher quality' have been set down by governments and agencies over the last 20 years, with very little reference to the views and ideas of

teachers themselves. Standards that are designed, developed and implemented by politicians and bureaucrats are likely to be abstract, or even contrary to the needs of learners, unless the voices of teachers are heard.

At a European level, these issues of 'teacherly' qualities are also exercising the European Commission. The aims and work of the project seem to resonate with activities on a broader political stage. The activity in this project is aiming to focus on the notion that education is a cultural activity and cannot be reduced to fit narrow, political-economic agendas, without harming the needs and aspirations of children and students. A view was expressed by many participants that there is an increasing gap between the idea of teacher quality and the conditions under which teachers work. Calls for professional autonomy, reflective practice, innovation, inclusion and independent learning tend to sit uncomfortably with notions that education is largely concerned with the efficient delivery of prescribed content, via teachers, who are viewed as vessels to receive information.

The work now begins and there is plenty to do before the next meeting in March 2007, in Lesvos, in Greece.

*Trevor Mepham, UK. ECSWE,  
From SWSF Newsletter*

### Report of activities in Lyon, 13-09-2006, Conference on non- formal education (EUCIS-LLL\*)

The Conference started with a speech by Mrs Olof Olafsdottir from the European Council (which is not the EU!). I learned that this organisation has many activities concerning (formal and non-formal) education, especially about education to citizenship (remember the Swedish research that was presented to WREN in Järna May 06).

They are aware that you can't teach citizenship like another matter, and therefore they lay a great accent on the teacher education. The most interesting point was her plea for democratic governance of schools. When she was asked to define a democratic school, she gave all the characteristics of a Steiner school! (And some more, e.g. real influence of pupils on the school program and even on the choice of teachers.) In

2007 the European Council will publish a manual or a portfolio about this subject. I think it's worth to follow this.

To understand the rest of the day, it is useful to know that 90% of the attendees were French. Heated discussions followed about the difference, collaboration, complementarity etc. of formal and non-formal education. Apparently, it is an important current subject in France (in Flanders, it isn't).

In the workshop 'Education and Family', where I had the opportunity to speak about the attention for and protection of early childhood, especially concerning television and computers, the atmosphere was completely different: authentic testimonies from people who told about their experiences and problems with school, newly arrived immigrants etc. Most agreed with me about the danger(s) of electronic screens for

young children, even those people who expressed to have a certain reticence towards Steiner schools.

Afterwards people expressed that they were grateful that I had spoken about this "taboo" subject, one even asked me for a written text (which will be published in the review *Revue Silence*).

The final part of the day was a talk by a member of parliament (and at the same time mayor of Rennes), who had been very supportive of the whole conference! Unfortunately his analysis was very political and even nationalistic: his central point was that we should never forget that "we" were all at the service of the Republic.

*Werner Govaerts, Belgium*

*EUCIS-LLL = European Civil Society – Life Long Learning  
ECSWE is a founding member of this platform in Brussels which promotes the concept of life long learning in a European Context.*

## Report about the Kassel meeting (3-6-05-06)

### "The spiritual dimension in the training"

A large part of the meeting was the vast amount of information regarding the "trinal method", building on the three pillars: Theory, Practice, Art. This method has been acknowledged by the European commission in its originality and is now a research action program, called Leonardo da Vinci.

The training in curative education has much in common with the teacher training in Steiner Waldorf Education, particularly all aspects which have to do with the role of art in self education which is one of the basic indications of Rudolf Steiner for the teachers.

The fact that this method is recognized as a serious training-method is an important step for all trainings based on an anthroposophy.

Art is a media for living spirituality; it is the basis for creative imagination which is the main research of Steiner-Waldorf Education.

During the Conference, many workshops lead by practising students of the Leonardo project showed how the research is guided.

Some examples:

How can "story-telling" be a part of self-training for the educator himself, how can it be a moment of educational relationship.

Eurythmy as a social art : how to deal with time and space, being aware of what is happening between the people who are practising together. How to reflect with words an experience made in moving together. Self education through the point of view of the partners.

Singing as a process of going beyond one's own limitations.

In trying to weave art, theory and practise, the whole human being is involved, which is the main of Steiner Waldorf Education too.

*Isabelle Ablard-Dupin, France  
On behalf of ECWSE*

*CESTE NET = Curative Education and Social Therapy network. Supported by EU Comenius Funding to develop training for trainers of Steiner inspired care therapy in Europe*

## 2008, European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

### In October 2005, the Commission proposed that 2008 be declared the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

With a budget of €10 million, the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue will present a wide variety of enriching practical projects that will be implemented in the framework of EU programs and other Community actions. The Year of Intercultural Dialogue will encourage the mobilisation of civil society and actors at the European, national and local levels. Culture, education, youth, sport and citizenship are the main implementation fields.

*This initiative will mainly concentrate on areas where intercultural dialogue is more likely to contribute to "better living" among people living in the European Union. The ever-increasing cultural diversity of our societies means that we need more and more intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue must involve all dimensions of this cultural diversity existing inside and between Member States. The Year 2008 should focus on the youth and should involve as many individuals as possible. The challenge consists in introducing the dialogue where it matters most; in schools and education or training fora, at work but also in leisure, cultural, sports centres and civil society organisations.*

*From EAEA Newsletter*

## Learning early?

### Member States should include at least two foreign languages from a very early age in their school programs, says the Culture and Education Committee.

MEPs in the committee acknowledge that it is difficult, in particular for those whose mother tongue is English, to maintain sufficient interest and motivation in becoming proficient in other European languages, which would underpin mutual understanding and empathy across Europe.

In adopting a non-binding report originally drawn up by Christopher Beazley (EPP-ED\*, UK), the committee also stressed the importance of school curricula providing support measures for the European dimension. All education systems in the EU should ensure that, by the end of their secondary education, their pupils have the knowledge and competences they

need to prepare them for their role as future EU citizens. The "European dimension" has two aspects: firstly, access to information about the EU, its institutions, methods and practices, and, secondly, the development of linguistic skills, with learning the languages of neighbouring peoples being especially important.

The committee also recommends an exchange of best practice between all Member States with regard to language teaching and the inclusion of European content in education. Members suggest the promotion of teacher training courses to provide the necessary understanding of European issues, so teachers can complement their teaching of national and local issues with European ones.

*From EAEA Newsletter*

*\*EPP-ED = Christian Democrats and European Democrats in European Parliament. They make up 37% of the total Parliament.*

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*The views expressed are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of ECSWE*