

European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education

Submitted to the attention of the members of the Convention

Summary

CITIZENSHIP, EUROPE AND STEINER EDUCATION

The EU should promote inter-operability of educational systems and horizontal subsidiarity in Europe

Education's task is to assist children and young people in finding their own paths in freedom, giving them the tools to develop their own values within a framework of tolerance, trust and interest in the other. They should be enabled to respect and celebrate a wide diversity of culture, while perceiving the common humanity in all people. This goal should include teaching at least two foreign languages from an early age, as the European Council agreed, in principle, in Barcelona on March 15th and 16th 2002¹ and as Steiner Schools, around the world, have pioneered.

The basic principle of universal access² is often difficult to accomplish due to inadequate funding for schools not directly run by the state. Genuine mobility should include geographical mobility as well as increased permeability between the teaching and other professions. This must include increased recognition for non-formal learning in gaining qualified teacher status. This development is indispensable for an opening-up to the wider world³.

Schools imbued with a European ideal need to be encouraged to work across national boundaries and endeavour to foster a civil society that is truly trans-cultural, without discrimination or prejudice.

Children are the citizens of the future and deserve due regard during their education in accordance with the vision of a Europe peopled by citizens able to live together in harmony and tolerance.

The task of education professionals should be recognised and supported beyond national interest and commercial gain. This includes the right to teach a creative and integrated curricula, the right to schools' self-governance within agreed levels of accountability and provision of quality care, and the right to consistent and non-intrusive financial support. Within a policy of pluralism, financial support should also be available for schools which do not follow national curricula, if they are striving to

¹ Cp. Presidency Conclusions, doc. SN 100/02 ADD 1, paragraph 44

² Cp. Presidency Conclusions, doc. SN 100/02 ADD 1, paragraph 43

³ Cp. Presidency Conclusions, doc. SN 100/02 ADD 1, paragraph 33 and 43

accomplish the inter-operability of educational systems and methods at the European level and are genuinely inclusive.

In order to achieve these aims, we would welcome that the Community be invested with a limited but well balanced authority in the educational field. We support the proposals of the European Forum for Freedom in Education (EFFE) to this effect⁴. We also agree that horizontal subsidiarity in education (innovative education options and methods which are a result of private initiatives and civic involvement) should be an objective on the European level.

ECSWE supports integrating the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the constitutional treaty. Article 14 of the Charter stipulates the right "to receive free compulsory education". This right should extend to all schools of this kind, respecting "the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions", "with due respect for democratic principles".

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⁴ Cf. their contribution addressed to the European Convention entitled "In support of added European value in educational policy"