

Equity and Diversity in Lifelong Learning: Intercultural Waldorf school, Mannheim

In December 2008 the European Civil Society Platform for Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL), in which ECSWE is a member organisation, organised a public hearing about 'Access, Equity and Diversity in lifelong learning: How to successfully integrate populations of migrant background in Europe?' This was following an important Green Paper published by the European Commission in July 2008 on 'Migration and Mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems'.

The first contribution to the public hearing was from the Intercultural Waldorf School in Mannheim, which represented ECSWE. Albert Schmelzer illustrated how Waldorf education is particularly suited to the great challenge of integration. He underlined the importance of language and arts in the curriculum. The Mannheim school has been successful in integrating pupils of different ethnicity into the education system and was the subject of formal evaluation by Christiane Hemmer-Schanze of GAB München. Her reflections on the debate then followed and were well received by the audience. She underlined that GAB didn't find any systematic differences in learning behaviour between children of German and migrant parents, or between children of academically educated parents and children of non academically educated parents.

She spoke about a successfully realised social and cultural integration and about equity of chances in everyday life, in which the diversity of pupils and teachers is felt as enrichment and as an advantage to the school and to society. She felt that the following points are essential elements of the Intercultural Waldorf School in Mannheim and were key ingredients to a successfully integrated education system:

1. A good balance between children from a migrant background and children from the host country in the classes (50 : 50 in this school);
2. More teachers from a migrant background;

3. All day school;
4. Integrative concept of learning the host language with lively activities like poems, songs, theatre during the lessons;
5. Comprehensive schools;
6. Lessons in "Cultural Encounter", where children from migrant backgrounds act as experts in their language and culture;
7. Migrant language as second foreign language at school;
8. Festivities taking place on school grounds, integrating the parents and families of children with and without migrant backgrounds.

This is an important issue throughout Europe and the European Commission has organised a public consultation on the 'Green Paper on Migration and Mobility'. The ECSWE/GAB contribution is available from ECSWE office: (email: ecswe@waldorf.net)

The Green paper is available on line at http://ec.europa.eu/education/school21/com423_en.pdf and opens the debate on how education policies may better address the challenges posed by immigration and internal EU mobility flows.

The presence of significant numbers of migrant children has substantial

implications for European education systems. Key issues are how to prevent the creation of segregated school settings, so as to improve equity in education; how to accommodate the increased diversity of mother tongues and cultural perspectives and build intercultural skills; how to adapt teaching skills and build bridges with migrant families and communities.

According to both international and national data, many migrant children in the European Union suffer from educational disadvantage in comparison to their native peers: early school leaving is more common among them and enrolment in higher education lower. Even more worryingly, in some countries, second generation migrant pupils show lower school performance than first generation. This indicates that the social divide may deepen over time. At the same time, there are clear signs that tendencies towards segregation along socio-economic lines intensify, as socially advantaged parents tend to withdraw their children from schools with high numbers of migrant pupils. Disparities between schools are therefore on the rise and need to be addressed.



ECSWE Council members returning to the meeting in Lillehammer

Pre-primary education versus Early Childhood Education and Care?

In February 2009, the Second Stakeholders Forum on EU Cooperation in Education and Training was held in Brussels at the request of the European Commission. The Forum was organised by EUCIS-LLL Platform and was attended by Christopher Clouder and Werner Govaerts from ECSWE.

The key questions were:

- 1) An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (see Newsletter n° 13);
- 2) Suggestions for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation.

An official report of the Forum has been published by EUCIS-LLL together with a shorter document of Key messages from the Forum (see www.ecswe.net). The report is expected to be an important input for the final text of the updated strategic framework, which should be endorsed by the European Council in May 2009.

Christopher Clouder was "Rapporteur" for Workshop n° 2.

One important issue raised again at the Forum was the inappropriate use of "pre-primary education". Mr. Lars Lynge Nielsen, the President of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) repeated the ironic comparison that Christopher Clouder made more than a year ago in the First Stakeholders' Forum: "Why don't we speak about our pre-retirement activities when we speak about our work? Why do we speak about pre-primary education, while meaning a time of life that has its own rights and characteristics?"

Pre-primary is not just an adjunct of primary education (with all implied consequences of academic pressure etc). It should be referred to as Early Childhood Education and Care. From the debate which this raised, we can see that the issue is more and more recognized as an important one in the European debate

World language teachers in Waldorf Schools

With more than 300 members (as of Feb/09) from all over the world, this FREE site <http://wlwaldorf.ning.com/> is for World Language Teachers who work in Waldorf schools to network, share ideas, ask questions, suggest study materials, etc. Many teachers also reconnect with old friends from conferences and workshops or make new friends. Teachers can find many discussions on several topics in the main Forum and Blogs. They can also interact with colleagues in specific language groups.



on education and that the European Commission is beginning to take notice of our contributions on the subject of 'pre-primary' education. A small but very important achievement for the safeguard of a healthy early childhood education!

Werner Govaerts

Please support the ELIANT campaign: The petition for cultural diversity in Europe



At present, 10 associations including ECSWE, working across the EU are running a petition campaign to support the Charter of the European Alliance for Initiatives of Applied Anthroposophy / ELIANT. The aim of the campaign is to achieve a million signatures and submit them to the European Commission as envisaged under the terms of the Lisbon Treaty. The petition relates to fundamental issues affecting all citizens and their future within the European Union. To our great pleasure more than 710,000 people have now shown their support by adding their signatures.

Add your signature too,
for DEMETER quality baby and infant food without the addition of artificial vitamins,
for availability of anthroposophic medicines in Europe
for freedom of choice for parents in the sphere of education, in a culturally diverse Europe.
By this means you can help to ensure that ELIANT can help create legal conditions in Europe that benefit legitimate minority interests,
that ELIANT can, with strong democratic back-up, develop contacts with partners with similar aims in the fields of culture, business and politics,
that ELIANT can become an effective and culturally influential civil society force for Europe.

Your voice counts! Help to ensure that DEMETER foods, freedom of choice in education and free availability of specifically anthroposophic medicines receive the legal foundations they need to survive!

Tell people in your personal or professional surroundings about the campaign. The simplest way to do so is to collect signatures on suitable occasions or use your email address list, electronic newsletter or internet platform and draw people's attention to the online petition at: www.eliant.eu

Information material and petition lists are available from:

ELIANT campaign,
Rebgasse 37, 79540 Lörrach, Germany;
Fax +49 7621 168 18 63; email info@eliant.eu

If you can support financially, please do so via the **donation account**

with the charity
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The views expressed are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of ECSWE.

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