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on initiatives to complement school curricula providing appropriate support
measures to include the European Dimension
(2006/2041(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on initiatives to complement school curricula providing appropriate teaching materials to include the European Dimension (2006/2041(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 149 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the Resolution for enhancing the European dimension in education which the European Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council adopted on 24 May 1988,
 - having regard to the Green Paper on the European dimension of education (COM(1993)0457),
 - having regard to the Commission's Communication concerning "A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism" (COM(2005)0596),
 - having regard to the joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe "Education and training 2010" The success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms (EDUC 43, Doc. 6905/04),
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0000/2006),
- A. whereas the European dimension has become in recent decades an increasingly important aspect of education, especially in national school curricula,
- B. whereas the European Parliament is already involved in this field, particularly with the Hearing on "The European Dimension in History Teaching" of 7 April 2004,
- C. whereas initiatives have already been taken by national authorities in Member States such as Austria, Germany, Portugal, the Netherlands, the UK, Slovenia and Spain on the subject of Europe's place in education,
- D. whereas the linguistic aspect appears to be fundamental in strengthening the European dimension, proficiency in foreign languages being a part of the basic set of skills of a typical European citizen living, studying, working and generally circulating in the European Union,
- E. whereas disparities exist between and within Member States,
- F. whereas the importance of COMENIUS and LINGUA programmes in this respect,
- G. whereas the information about Europe that is conveyed to pupils, teachers and students varies widely from country to country,

- H. whereas the main obstacles include a lack of coordination between initiatives, a lack of visibility and accessibility, as well as inadequate or unsuitable tools for carrying out these tasks,
- I. whereas there are many obstacles and difficulties which currently face teachers in order to implement the European dimension in their lessons,
1. Considers that all education systems should ensure that their pupils have by the end of their secondary education the knowledge and competences they need, as defined by their respective educational authorities, to prepare them for their roles as future citizens and members of the European Union;
 2. Stresses the importance of finding a clearer and uniform definition across the Member States of the meaning and scope of the "European dimension";
 3. Urges the European Council and the Ministers of Education to update the resolution passed on 24 May 1988, on enhancing the European dimension in education, in particular taking in to account the enlargements to the EU, which have occurred since then;
 4. Urges the Council to recognise the two different aspects of the European dimension: firstly access to information about the EU, its institutions, methods, practices, initiatives and secondly knowledge of Europe's cultural heritage, the development of linguistic skills, and a grasp of European current events, all of which may supplement national curricula;
 5. Insists on continued improvement in the provision of language teaching, recognising the particular difficulty for those whose mother tongue is English in maintaining sufficient interest and motivation in becoming proficient in other European languages, thus underpinning the level of mutual understanding and empathy across Europe;
 6. Suggests an analysis of where the Lisbon Agenda has so far failed to produce the intended results in this matter and the production of a list of measures considered essential for Member State governments to implement if the agreed economic improvements are to be brought about;
 7. Recommends an exchange of best practice between all Member States to ensure that the current initiatives, including those established pre-2004, are disseminated across the EU 25;
 8. Proposes that as an important aspect of ensuring the success of the last EU enlargement, adequate information, project, student and teacher exchanges should be arranged between the 10 new and the 15 more long term Member States;
 9. Calls on the Council to consider if useful and relevant teaching resources such as "European School net", learning co-operation and innovation and tools such as "Europe at School" require support with additional resources and whether teachers have sufficient guidance as to how to access the relevant information;
 10. Suggests that teacher training courses should be able to introduce the trainees to the necessary understanding of European related issues so that they may compliment their teaching of national and local awareness with the European dimension;
 11. Stresses the need to update existing documents in particular the 1996 non-exhaustive

Eurydice thematic bibliography;

12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, Commission and Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Mainly aiming to strengthen in young people a sense of European identity and make clear to them the value of European civilization, the European dimension in education has in fact been increasingly used by the European Union and the Council of Europe to denote some of their educational policies and initiatives.

There is widespread support for a European dimension in education today and therefore a variety and wealth of resources available. This is most apparent in subjects such as history, geography, humanities, economics and foreign languages.

Various resolutions are being or have been adopted all over Europe as part of local, national and international initiatives to further the concept of the European dimension in education.

More importantly, the linguistic aspect appears to be fundamental in strengthening this concept as the Communication from the Commission "A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism"(COM(2005)0596) illustrates. Proficiency in foreign languages should be to this respect the most visible and most developed example of the European dimension in education.

The challenge therefore is to produce initiatives capable of harnessing and organising this information in such a way as to make it available to every child, in every school across Europe.

Regulatory framework

Art 149 of the EC Treaty determines the basis of the initiatives adopted to support and supplement the work of the Member States in the area of education. This article expressly states that amongst the various initiatives adopted, the European Community must in future, whilst respecting the authority of the Member States, contribute towards the development of "the European dimension in education particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States".

Since Maastricht, other actions have reinforced the role of European dimension, such as COMENIUS, which is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and reinforcing the European dimension in education, particularly by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools or LINGUA.

The European dimension in education today

Member State initiatives

The information available in each Member State varies in both content and quality. Whilst some countries have supplied numerous illustrations and explanations, others have barely touched upon the subject of the European dimension in their education system. The non-exhaustive thematic bibliography published in 1996 by a Eurydice network team, provides an initial overview of pedagogical initiatives launched all over Europe to promote a more European approach in schools.

For several decades, and particularly since the creation of the European Community, Europe has become an increasingly prominent feature in national curricula. In some countries such as Austria, Spain, Portugal or Slovenia, the place occupied by the European dimension in a country's education system is well established, and may take the form of an obligation or

fundamental requirement.

In Belgium and the Netherlands, departments in charge of education even draft special documents for teachers, students or the general public aimed at raising awareness of the increasing internationalisation of teaching and the various benefits inherent in the study of foreign languages and school exchanges. At the same time, these publications also offer citizens information on certain decisions taken at European level and their implications for subjects taught at school.

In Portugal, in an even more formative context, actions aimed at enhancing the European dimension in education have been packaged together in a general "Programme for the European dimension of education", launched in 1989 by the national support units.

Key European initiatives

At European level, large-scale initiatives have also helped stress the importance of maintaining the European dimension in education across all Member States. The main initiatives in this regard are European Schoolnet, which includes a multilingual European education portal for teaching, learning, cooperation and innovation and tools such as eSchoolnet or the 'European Treasury Browser', and 'Europe at School', a transnational and intercultural initiative aimed at raising awareness about Europe among both teaching staff, pupils and students.

The European dimension in national school curricula

Clearly, reference to the European dimension in national school curricula in Europe is dependent on the individual structures. Yet it appears that three main subjects grant considerable status to the European dimension in education: geography, history and foreign languages. It is also present in many other lessons such as civic education and citizenship, music or art.

Teaching material

Education content and teaching methods vary from one Member State to another. Some teachers use the materials supplied to them, while others select their own resources. Specialist journals and magazines available on subscription or distributed by the authorities account for much of the material used. Henceforth, user-friendly and accessible websites play a similar and increasing role. In some Member States, such as Belgium, the national executives keep their teachers as well informed and equipped as possible via their "Vademecum", when European publications are released or when journals covering aspects that would help improve the way the European dimension is incorporated into lessons or curricula in Europe are published.

Special packs containing textbooks, brochures, videos or CD-ROM are also produced by the authorities and circulated to teachers and their students. In Malta, for example, one such pack known as "In search of Europe" is used for European studies.

Such initiatives exist but their impact and efficiency depend on the schools, the budget and the new information technologies available.

The role of the EU is therefore significant in this respect.

Limits and obstacles

The concept of the European dimension in education remains quite vague, and needs to be more clearly identifiable in order to be concretely and efficiently implemented in the teaching materials of the EU Member States. Although many lessons are intended to evoke the European dimension, they do not always have the desired result.

The European dimension poses crucial questions for the curricular systems of Europe: How can the national school curricula promote both national and European identities? How can the EU, while respecting the competence of Member States in education complement the national school curricula, especially in improving teaching materials available to teachers in order to reinforce the concept of the European dimension? Some obstacles and difficulties which currently face teachers are unique to a particular country, whilst others are linked to the need for coordination. In many countries, teachers do not always possess all the necessary skills and their financial resources are sometimes wanting.

The main obstacles include a lack of coordination between initiatives, a lack of visibility and accessibility, as well as inadequate or unsuitable tools for carrying out these tasks.

Suggestions and recommended measures

- *Facilitating the approach to the European dimension in education*, assisting teachers on how to incorporate the European dimension efficiently in their lessons.

- *Optimising the impact of European initiatives* by boosting the visibility, complementarity and coordination of initiatives in order to highlight any gaps and to fill them accordingly and improving conventional teaching resources which have already helped to strengthen the European dimension in national curricula.

- *Providing universal access to information on the European dimension* ensuring optimum access for all, and specifically teachers, to any information liable to concern them and encouraging an exchange of best practice between all Member States. It is particularly important that an understanding of Central and Eastern European issues be included in the national educational programmes of the pre-2004 Member States to offset the lack of information during the decades of Europe's post war division.