

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

9551/91 (Presse 213)

1537th Meeting of the Council
and the Ministers for Education

Brussels, 25 November 1991

President: Mr Jo RITZEN
Minister for Education
and Science
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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Italy:

Mr Antonio RUBERTI

Minister for Scientific Research and
Technology

Mr Beniamino BROCCA

State Secretary for Education

Luxembourg:

Mr Marc FISCHBACH

Minister for Education

Netherlands:

Mr Jo RITZEN

Minister for Education and Science

Portugal:

Mr Diamantino DURÃO

Minister for Education

Mr Emilio GIL SANTOS

State Secretary for Education

United Kingdom:

Mr Kenneth CLARKE

Minister for Education and Science

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Commission:

Mrs Vasso PAPANDEOU

Member

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INFORMAL MEETING WITH MR E. DNEPROV, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION OF THE RUSSIAN
REPUBLIC

Before the start of the official meeting of the Council, the Ministers for Education of the Twelve held an informal meeting with the Minister for Education of the Russian Republic, Mr E. DNEPROV. The Minister for Education of the Russian Republic took the opportunity of stressing the essential role that education and vocational training are bound to play in the democratization process and economic reforms currently taking place in Russia.

The Minister also reaffirmed the importance that the Russian Republic attached to international co-operation, especially with the European Community and its Member States, in the field of education. The delegations confirmed their readiness to consider such co-operation.

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HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The Ministers welcomed the Commission memorandum entitled "Higher education in the European Community", trusting that it would give rise to wide-ranging discussion within all interested circles on the future of higher education in the Member States and at Community level, in particular on questions related to the challenges of the internal market.

The Ministers agreed to re-examine these issues at a forthcoming meeting.

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

The Council and Ministers noted with interest the Commission memorandum on open and distance learning, emphasizing the importance of this means of education and training.

They also took note of a suggestion by the Italian and Spanish Ministers to integrate certain Community programmes and features of open and distance learning; finally, they noted that the Commission could make proposals in this area if necessary and without creating new structures.

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The Council and the Ministers adopted the following Conclusions and Resolutions:

CONCLUSIONS
OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE MINISTERS FOR EDUCATION
MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

on quality assessment in higher education

Improving the quality of teaching in higher education is a concern shared by each Member State and by every institution of higher education within the European Communities. The increasing importance of the European dimension in general and more particularly the introduction of a single market will widen the range of interested parties concerned with quality in higher education in all the Member States.

In line with recent conferences at Community level on higher education (Leuven in 1989 and Siena in 1990) and recognizing that a significant debate is being launched by the Commission memorandum on higher education in the European Community, arrangements for quality assessment in higher education on a national level could be examined at Community level, with a view to reinforcing national quality assessment systems and to providing a way to improve the mutual recognition of diplomas and periods of study.

Given the diversity of method used for quality assessment on the national level, national experience could be complemented by European quality assessment experience, without affecting existing responsibilities and powers in the Member States and the autonomy of higher education institutions.

It would accordingly be useful for the methods at present used in the Member States for quality assessment in higher education to be investigated in a comparative study. This study could assist examination of the feasibility of developing a limited number of pilot projects aimed at co-operation in this area and possible instruments for strengthening this co-operation at European level, taking into account practical experience of international quality assessment, such as the method of peer review visiting teams. Participation by institutions

in any Community arrangements would be on a voluntary basis. Work should be undertaken in close contact with other institutions and organizations such as the OECD.

The Commission is invited to undertake this study on the basis of information to be provided by the Member States, within the resources available to it and in consultation with a working group composed of representatives of the Member States and of relevant European organizations active in higher education. The study should be presented to the Council and the Ministers of Education by the end of 1992.

CONCLUSIONS
OF THE COUNCIL AND THE MINISTERS FOR EDUCATION
MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

on co-operation for the reinforcement of mobility in
higher education

In line with the conclusions of the Council and the Ministers for Education of 2 June 1983 concerning the promotion of mobility in higher education and the subsequent Council Decisions establishing the COMETT, ERASMUS and LINGUA programmes, there has been a strengthening of co-operation between institutions of higher education in the Member States, and mobility among students and staff has been increasing steadily.

Practical experience of this trend and the results of conferences at Community level on higher education (Louvain in 1989 and Siena in 1990) have brought into focus a number of obstacles to mobility among staff and students on which short-term action could be taken. While recognizing that significant debate on this issue is being launched by the Commission memorandum on higher education in the European Community, the Council and the Ministers for Education consider that action could meanwhile be taken to reduce these obstacles.

Academic credit transfer and educational modules

One step would be to intensify the use of academic credit transfer systems and educational modules among the higher education institutions of the Member States. The widest possible use of systems which are clear, are relatively easy to implement and as far as possible produce similar results in similar cases, could make a contribution to increasing student mobility. In this connection the

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Commission is invited to present an interim report on the working of the European Credit Transfer System (part of Action 3 of the ERASMUS programme) as soon as possible after the academic year 1991-1992.

Commencement of the academic year

Another step worth considering might be a move towards convergence in the date of commencement of the academic year for higher education institutions, which could also facilitate some synchronization of sessions within the academic year.

The Commission is accordingly invited, in co-operation with the relevant authorities and with European organizations active in higher education, to study the dates of commencement of the academic year by the higher education institutions of the Community and to examine the feasibility of suggesting a convergence period which the institutions or other competent authorities could take into account in their decision on the starting-date of their academic year. It should report back as soon as possible to the Council and the Ministers.

Development of a computerized register at European level

A third step would be to improve information on courses in higher education in the Member States by developing computerized data bases and networks. The Commission is invited to intensify activities leading to the development of a data base for student information purposes, containing a compendium of courses offered. It could base these activities on existing networks and initiatives including the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) and the Student Handbook, as well as utilizing data provided by relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. It is invited to make a progress report by December 1992.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE
COUNCIL AND THE MINISTERS FOR EDUCATION
MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

concerning a pilot action
for multilateral school partnerships
in the European Community

The Council and the Ministers for Education, meeting within the Council, point out that the success of the internal market will depend to a large extent on the creativity of young people and on their capacity for taking initiatives and for working together across frontiers. They consider that co-operation between secondary schools of the Member States plays an important role in developing these qualities.

In line with their Resolutions of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education and of 24 May 1988 on the European dimension in education, as well as the Resolution of the European Parliament of 20 November 1987 in support of school co-operation activities in the Community, they are concerned to promote contacts between pupils and teachers from schools of different Member States.

They note the significant efforts which Member States, relevant organizations and schools within Member States have made in that regard.

In this connection the Council and the Ministers for Education welcome the Presidency's proposal to launch a limited pilot action - in which Member States will participate on a voluntary basis - with up to 40 multilateral school partnerships, covering the school years 1992-1993 and 1993-1994.

The objectives of this pilot action are:

- to encourage partnerships between schools in the Community in order to strengthen the European dimension in education;
- to use these partnerships for improving linguistic proficiency and for gaining knowledge and experience of educational, cultural, scientific and technical matters;
- to improve the methods used in school partnerships and school exchange programmes by evaluating these activities thoroughly.

In regard to criteria, they agree that the selected partnerships should be:

- multilateral (schools from at least three Member States to take part in each project);
- multidisciplinary;
- reciprocal and ongoing;
- valid from an educational point of view (including, if possible, innovation in teaching and the development of curricula and teaching materials).

They may include various kinds of co-operation, such as:

- teacher exchanges;
- correspondence between pupils (e.g. through electronic mail);
- pupil exchanges.

The Member States taking part in the pilot action would propose appropriate schools for participation (which may already be taking part in bilateral or multilateral partnerships or may not yet have partners).

They would ensure that:

- the schools concerned are provided with the necessary information or advice for the successful running of their partnerships;
- the development of partnerships is followed;
- contacts with the Commission are maintained in order to co-ordinate the activities and information exchanges.

In addition the Member States would facilitate the partnerships in the context of national educational policy and within the limits of available resources.

The Commission is invited to:

- facilitate, in consultation with the Education Committee, the composition of the multilateral school partnerships;

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- co-operate with the Member States in the development of the scheme and provide the link between the different exchange activities in this area already organized at Community level, particularly the exchange of teachers.

The Education Committee is invited to present a report on the pilot action by the end of 1994.

RESOLUTION
OF THE COUNCIL AND THE EDUCATION MINISTERS

on education research and statistics
in the European Community

THE COUNCIL AND THE EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Noting the need for a solid foundation of information, adequate statistics and comparative research to enhance the education co-operation which they instituted in their Resolution dated 9 February 1976;

Whereas, to that end, it is desirable to:

- continue the exchanges of information and documentation, and exchanges of experts, already taking place under the EURYDICE Education Information Network, the activities of which were defined in their Resolution of 6 December 1990, and the ARION visits programme;
- step up efforts to establish adequate and comparable statistics on education in the European Community;
- make the best use of national research on education on subjects of value in European co-operation, and intensify comparative research in this area;
- facilitate the implementation of educational research projects for the promotion of co-operation at Community level and the dissemination of the results obtained;

Taking into account education research already carried out not only at national level but also by international and European organizations, both governmental and non-governmental;

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A. Education research

ENCOURAGE wider dissemination in Europe of the results of the research projects at the level of the Member States and the Community and of international and European organizations on subjects which are of value to the Member States' education policies and which fall within priority areas for co-operation;

WELCOME the establishment of closer co-operation between research institutes, higher-education institutions and independent researchers engaged in research on education;

ENCOURAGE the organization of joint research projects in a number of Member States and of comparative research covering the whole Community, in priority areas for co-operation such as the enhancement of the European dimension in education and the learning of foreign languages;

CALL ON the Commission to collaborate in stepping up these three activities and to report back on the initial results before 30 June 1993;

B. Education statistics

ENCOURAGE the continuation and improvement of the Commission's action, notably that of EUROSTAT, in close co-operation with the relevant departments in the Member States, the OECD and UNESCO. Where the existence of national statistics permits, this action could be devoted more particularly to the study of indicators and to the gathering of statistics in priority areas for education co-operation.

EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

The Council and Ministers took note of the interim report from the Education Committee on the implementation of the Resolution of 24 May 1988 on the European dimension in education.

They asked the Education Committee to submit a final report for the first half of 1993, being the end of the four-year period covered by the Resolution.

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QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE PROFESSION OF TEACHER

On the basis of a note from the Presidency the Council and Ministers held an exchange of views on questions concerning the profession of teacher. They acknowledged that several questions deserved examination at Community level and invited the Commission to study the matter with a view to submitting proposals for action in the course of the coming year.

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CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS FOR EDUCATION

The Ministers took note of the interim report from the Presidency on the draft Convention on the Statute of the European Schools.

MISCELLANEOUS DECISIONSMeasures with regard to Yugoslavia

As the European Parliament had given its assent on 20 November 1991, the Council adopted the Decision denouncing the Co-operation Agreement between the EEC and Yugoslavia. This Decision supplements the measures taken by the Community and its Member States with regard to Yugoslavia in the light of the discussions of the Twelve in Rome on 8 November 1991 (see Press Release No 9132/91 Presse 200).

Relations with Mongolia

The Council authorized the Commission to negotiate an agreement on trade and economic co-operation with the Mongolian People's Republic and adopted the relevant negotiating directives.

The aim of the future agreement will be to promote relations between the Community and Mongolia, in particular by

- stepping up and diversifying trade;
- strengthening economic co-operation, including the amendment of instruments;
- providing development aid.

Relations with Jordan

The Council adopted the Community implementing regulations for two Decisions adopted on origin by the EEC-Jordan Co-operation Council on 4 November 1991.

Relations with Malta

The Council:

- endorsed draft Decision No 1/91 of the EEC-Malta Association Council (with a view to its adoption by the Association Council) amending Annex III to Protocol No 2 concerning the definition of the concept of "originating products" and methods of administrative co-operation. This draft Decision aims to restore the preferential situation for certain women's and girl's embroidered outer garments;

- adopted the Regulation fixing the provisions for the implementation of the joint declaration appended to Decision No 1/89 of the EEC-Malta Association Council. The purpose of this Regulation is to invest the Commission with the authority to adopt the Community's common position in all instances of application of the declaration.

Romania - ECSC

The Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the ECSC, meeting within the Council, authorized the Commission to negotiate with Romania an agreement on ECSC products, intended to complete the general agreement on trade and commercial and economic co-operation already linking the Community to Romania following the extension of the PHARE programme. They also approved the negotiating directives necessary to that end.

Community membership of the FAO

In the light of the amendments to its Constitution and Rules of Procedure adopted by the United Nations Conference for Food and Agriculture (FAO/OAA) on 18 November 1991, the Council decided to apply for Community membership of the FAO.

A letter was forthwith sent by the Presidency to the FAO, officially notifying it of that decision, on which the FAO Conference, currently meeting in Rome, should act within the next few days.

The Council's decision to apply for Community membership of the FAO is an important act, taken after a complex negotiating process in the course of which it was possible to arrive at terms of accession satisfactory to both the Community and the FAO.

Textiles

The Council adopted the Decision on the conclusion of the Protocol maintaining in force the Multifibre Arrangement (MFA) until 31 December 1992, as agreed by the GATT Textiles Committee on 31 July 1991.

Anti-dumping

The Council:

- took note of, without opposing, the Commission Decision accepting an undertaking given by a Thai exporter in connection with the anti-dumping

proceeding concerning imports of gas-fuelled, non-refillable pocket flint lighters originating in Japan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. By accepting that undertaking, the effect of which should be to increase export prices to a level such as to end the dumping that occurred, the investigation into the importer in question is terminated and that importer will not be liable to an anti-dumping duty;

- adopted the Regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of gas-fuelled, non-refillable pocket flint lighters originating in Japan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and Thailand and definitively collecting the provisional anti-dumping duty;
- adopted the Regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of oxalic acid originating in India and China. The rate of duty will be 4,4% for imports originating in India and 20,3% for imports originating in China.

Customs Union

The Council adopted the Regulation suspending from 1 January to 30 June 1992 the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on certain industrial products (in the microelectronics and related sectors).

Research

The Council adopted its common positions on the conclusion of bilateral co-operation agreements between the EC and:

- Austria, Finland and Norway, on Science and Technology for Environmental Protection (STEP);

- Iceland and Sweden, on research and development in the field of the environment: Science and Technology for Environmental Protection (STEP) and European Programme on Climatology and Natural Hazards (EPOCH).

Appointments

The Council:

- appointed
 - = two members of the Advisory Committee of the Euratom Supply Agency
- renewed the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training
- replaced
 - = a member of the Advisory Committee on Medical Training
 - = an alternate member of the Advisory Committee on Nursing Training
 - = a member and an alternate member of the Administrative Board of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Bruxelles, le 25 novembre 1991

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NOTE BIO(91) 379 AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE-PAROLE

PREPARATION DU CONSEIL EDUCATION DU 25 NOVEMBRE 1991

Les deux mémoranda récents de la Commission sur l'enseignement supérieur dans la Communauté (voir P-79) et l'apprentissage ouvert et à distance (voir P-82) seront les principaux sujets des débats au Conseil Education du 25 novembre 1991.

On s'attend par ailleurs à l'adoption de conclusions sur l'évaluation de la qualité dans l'enseignement supérieur. Ces conclusions invitent la Commission à entreprendre en 1992 une étude comparative pour analyser les méthodes d'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur utilisées dans les Etats membres.

Des conclusions seront aussi adoptées au sujet du renforcement de la mobilité dans l'enseignement supérieur par lesquelles la Commission sera invitée à faire rapport sur le système européen de transfert d'unités de cours capitalisables (qui existe dans le programme ERASMUS).

Une action-pilote de partenariats scolaires transnationaux dans la Communauté sera également examinée ainsi qu'un projet de résolution sur la recherche et les statistiques en matière d'éducation. Cette résolution vise à favoriser une coopération plus étroite entre les instituts et centres de recherche en matière d'éducation, ainsi qu'à encourager l'organisation de recherches comparatives couvrant la Communauté.

Un rapport sur l'avancement des travaux concernant la Convention sur le statut des écoles européennes complète l'ordre du jour.

La session du Conseil sera précédée d'un échange de vues entre les Ministres de l'Education et le Ministre de l'Education de la Russie, M. DENEPROV qui exposera la situation actuelle de l'éducation en Russie.

Amitiés,

C. STATHOPOULOS

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NOTE BIO(91) 379 (SUITE 1 ET FIN) AUX BUREAUX NATIONAUX
CC. AUX MEMBRES DU SERVICE DU PORTE-PAROLE

CONSEIL EDUCATION DU 25 NOVEMBRE 1991

UN DEBAT APPROFONDI SUR LE MEMORANDUM CONCERNANT L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR ET UN BREF ECHANGE DE VUES AU SUJET DU MEMORANDUM SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE OUVERT ET A DISTANCE ONT ETE LES POINTS IMPORTANTS DE LA REUNION DES MINISTRES DE L'EDUCATION DANS LA MATINEE DU 25 NOVEMBRE 1991. LES AUTRES POINTS DE L'ORDRE DU JOUR (RESOLUTION SUR LA RECHERCHE ET LES STATISTIQUES EN MATIERE D'EDUCATION, CONCLUSIONS SUR L'EVALUATION DE LA QUALITE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR, LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA MOBILITE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR, UNE ACTION-PILOTE DE PARTENARIATS SCOLAIRES TRANSNATIONAUX DANS LA COMMUNAUTE) ONT FAIT L'OBJET D'UN ACCORD SANS DEBAT.

LE MEMORANDUM SUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR A ETE BIEN ACCUEILLI. TOUTES LES DELEGATIONS ONT EXPRIME LEUR ACCORD AVEC LES GRANDES ORIENTATIONS DU DOCUMENT, CHACUNE A ESQUISSE LES MESURES PRISES AU NIVEAU NATIONAL POUR LA PROMOTION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPERIEUR. LE SUCCES D'ERASMUS A ETE RECONNU, MEME SI CERTAINES DELEGATIONS ONT SOULIGNE QUE LE VRAI SUCCES DU PROGRAMME ARRIVERA QUAND, A CAUSE D'UNE COOPERATION ACCRUE ENTRE LES DIFFERENTS ETABLISSEMENTS, ERASMUS NE SERA PLUS NECESSAIRE.

QUANT AU MEMORANDUM SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE OUVERT ET A DISTANCE, DEUX DELEGATIONS (I. E) ONT DEMANDE A LA COMMISSION DE REFLECHIR SUR LA POSSIBILITE DE PROPOSER, A L'INSTAR D'ERASMUS, COMETT ETC., UN PROGRAMME COMMUNAUTAIRE EXPERIMENTAL DANS CE DOMAINE.

LA SESSION DU CONSEIL A ETE PRECEDEE D'UN ECHANGE DE VUES ENTRE LES MINISTRES COMMUNAUTAIRES ET LEUR HOMOLOGUE RUSSE, M. E. DENEPROV. LE MINISTRE RUSSE A ESQUISSE LES GRANDES LIGNES DE LA POLITIQUE DE LA RUSSIE EN MATIERE D'EDUCATION :

- DESETATISATION DE L'ECOLE;
- HUMANISATION DU SYSTEME EDUCATIF;
- RENFORCEMENT DU FEDERALISME ET DE LA REGIONALISATION DANS L'EDUCATION;
- ENSEIGNEMENT OUVERT, CAR 'L'HOMO SOVIETICUS COMPRENAIT DIFFICILEMENT LES VALEURS LIBERALES'.

LE PASSAGE VERS L'ECONOMIE DU MARCHÉ DEMANDE AUSSI UNE EDUCATION APPROPRIÉE ET UN PROGRAMME DE TRANSITION DE 2-3 ANS A ETE ELABORE EN RUSSIE A CET EGARD. M. DENEPROV A SOULIGNE L'IMPORTANCE D'AVOIR DES LIVRES D'ETUDES TENANT COMPTE DES NOUVELLES VALEURS. L'EXISTENCE D'UN SEUL EDITEUR Y FAIT OBSTACLE ET UN APPEL A ETE LANCE POUR QUE LES ETATS MEMBRES SUIVENT L'EXEMPLE DE L'ALLEMAGNE, DES PAYS-BAS ET DE LA NORVEGE QUI ESSAIENT DE S'ENGAGER DANS CE DOMAINE EN RUSSIE.

UN AUTRE DOMAINE IMPORTANT, LA FORMATION DES AGRICULTEURS, EST AUSSI D'UNE IMPORTANCE PRIMORDIALE, CAR IL CONDITIONNE LE SUCCES DE LA PRIVATISATION DE L'AGRICULTURE. REpondant AU MINISTRE RUSSE MME PAPANDREOU A FAIT REFERENCE A L'EXPERIENCE POSITIVE DE TEMPUS ET SUGGERE D'ETABLIR DES PROGRAMMES-PILOTES DE COOPERATION. PLUSIEURS MINISTRES ONT QUALIFIE COMME HISTORIQUE LA RENCONTRE AVEC M. DENEPROV ET SOULIGNE LA NECESSITE DE DONNER UN DROIT D'INITIATIVE AUX ENSEIGNANTS ET D'ADAPTER LES SYSTEMES D'EDUCATION AUX VRAIS BESOINS DES ENFANTS.

AMITIES,

C. STATHOPOULOS

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