

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1983-1984

25 May 1983

DOCUMENT 1-356/83

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mr SASSANO, Mr BEUMER, Mr PEDINI, Mr HAHN,
Mr GHERGO, Mr BROK, Mr del DUCA, Mr HABSBERG,
Mr NARDUCCI, Mr MARCK and Mr MACARIO

on behalf of the EPP Group (CD)

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on freedom of teaching in Europe

The European Parliament,

- A. referring to the International Congress of the CEEC (Comité Européen de l'Enseignement Catholique) held from 13 to 15 April 1983 at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg,
- B. believing, as affirmed by the CEEC, that freedom of teaching applies not only to the Catholic community but to all religious communities: Protestant, Jewish, Muslim as well as the non-denominational organizations whose concern is to provide a specific type of education for young people,
- C. recalling that Catholic schools in Europe, freely chosen by thousands of families, are attended by over ten million pupils,
- D. convinced that the monopoly wielded by the public authorities in the field of teaching is contrary to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Convention against prejudice and discrimination in the field of education and the European Convention on Human Rights,
- E. acknowledging that the role of the public authorities in the field of teaching should be:
- (a) to ensure the right to education for all young people, to redress any wrongs and curb any abuses that may occur in the exercise of this freedom,
 - (b) to guarantee the standard of teaching, cooperation between all those in charge of schools, respect for religious freedom and freedom of conscience and the right of parents to freedom of choice,
- F. aware that a healthy democratic society demands respect for human rights in their entirety, that formal freedom of teaching cannot be effective without the material means needed to provide it and that this freedom cannot be dissociated from other fundamental freedoms;
1. Calls for the genuine application of human rights in the field of education;
 2. Is convinced that freedom always involves having the material means to ensure its observance and that freedom of teaching is indissociable from other fundamental freedoms;

3. Considers that pluralist education involves eliminating in all the member countries of the Community the financial obstacles which prevent parents from exercising their right to freedom of choice in the field of education;
4. Reiterates that no discrimination can be tolerated in the Member States through granting public funds on the basis of differences in administration or between parents, pupils and teachers;
5. Calls for the different social groups engaged in teaching to be involved in the preparation of national and Community policies on education;
6. Proposes that the European Convention for the safeguard of human rights be supplemented to include explicit references to these fundamental demands;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the governments of the Member States and to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (Doc. 1-1085/82)
tabled by Mr HORGAN pursuant to Rule 47
of the Rules of Procedure on multi-denominational education

The European Parliament.

- A. believing that the cause of European integration can effectively be furthered by the adoption of policies and measures designed to reduce intra-Community and sectarian tensions where these exist,
- B: concerned that community and sectarian tensions tend to increase under the pressure of the current economic recession,

Calls on the Commission

1. To report on measures and initiatives in the various Member State devised specifically to promote multi-denominational education;
2. To develop criteria for financial aid to such initiatives;
3. To notify the Parliament and the governments of the Member States of their proposals in this area.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH, CULTURE, EDUCATION,
INFORMATION AND SPORT

Draftsman: Mr BEUMER, committee chairman

On 14 October 1981, the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport was asked to deliver an opinion for the Legal Affairs Committee on the motion for a resolution by Mr VIE on the freedom of education in the Community (Doc. 1-585/81). On 12 January 1983 it was asked to deliver an opinion on the motion for a resolution by Mr HORGAN on multi-denominational education (Doc. 1-1085/82) and on 6 June 1983 on the motion for a resolution by Mr SASSANO and others on freedom of teaching in Europe (Doc. 1-356/83).

At its meeting of 25 November 1981, the committee appointed Mr FAJARDIE draftsman.

The draft opinion was considered at the meeting of 1 and 2 December 1983.

At the latter meeting, the compromise text proposed orally by the draftsman, which was submitted in the form of a revised text (PE 85.136/rev.) at the request of the committee, was rejected by 8 votes to 5 with 2 abstentions. The original text (PE 85.136), incorporating the amendments (PE 85.136/Am.), was subsequently adopted by 9 votes to 4. The draftsman having asked to be relieved of his duties, Mr BEUMER, the chairman of the committee, was appointed to replace him.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Beumer, Mr Fajardie, Mr Schwenke, Mr Beyer de Ryke, Mr Brok, Mr Dalsass (deputizing for Mr Gerokostopoulos), Mr Hutton (deputizing for Miss Brookes), Mr Patterson (deputizing for Mr Cottrell), Mrs Pery, Mr Van Aerssen (deputizing for Mr Hahn), Mr Vandemeulebroucke (deputizing for Mr Bøgh), Mrs Viehoff and Mr Von Hassel (deputizing for Mrs Gaiotti de Biase).

The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport was asked to deliver an opinion for the Legal Affairs Committee on various aspects of the freedom of education, and in particular the education of the young.

Over the past few decades, discussions in educational circles worldwide have increasingly stressed the need to do away with the concept of schools as state institutions, to exploit society's intrinsic resources, to establish a flexible, decentralized structure and to extend parents' involvement in the management of education.

This confirms the value of pluralism in education which forms the basis for independent schools. An increasing number of experiments are being organized in many countries involving cooperation between parents, communities and groups whose aim is to assume - within the framework of the law - direct responsibility for their children's education. The freedom to open schools and run them now forms part of a general movement towards promoting flexibility, controlled experiments and the relationship between school and society.

The existence of a variety of schooling systems, set up and maintained by social, cultural and religious groups, far from limiting the state's responsibility for ensuring that all citizens have the right to education on an equal footing and to monitor the forms and methods adopted, actually increases it.

This underlines the importance of control and the formulation of general objectives in respect of direct management as part of the state's function. This is a positive development taking account of the enormous increase in the number of children in our schools and the need for flexible and varied approaches which would be impossible under a centralized administration.

Parents are responsible for their child's upbringing until he becomes independent. This responsibility also relates to the choice of the type of education and the school: the choice must be as broad and free as possible, based on their outlook on life, and should not be unduly influenced by material and financial concerns.

A system of education which takes its sole inspiration from one religious creed should not be regarded as intolerant or dogmatic simply for that reason. Like any other system, it develops a critical approach, trains young people for research, enhances awareness, encourages a dialogue with other cultures and instils respect for the varied choices made by individuals.

It is a safeguard against education which is limited to the spread of information and technical knowledge. This is confirmed by the experience gained in countries which have an unbroken tradition of pluralism in education.

Considering it our duty to respect above all else the interests of the child, and most fundamentally his freedom, we do not believe that the question of freedom of education should be allowed to obscure the vital issue, namely that of determining which is the best possible education that can be given to children, the one that will enable them, from school age, to offer a lucid and selective response to the society in which they are to live and develop.

In addition, it should be pointed out that the situation of education in each of our countries is the result of a long historical process and hence the reflection of philosophical and cultural evolutions.

It should be noted that, in the interests of democracy, we must prevent a situation in which denominational schools can only survive, owing to lack of financial support from the state, by restricting their intake to pupils from families in high income brackets who can afford the fees, thus becoming pockets of social privilege.

In conclusion, the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport asks the Member States to recognize free schools and enhance their status in national legislation, to provide a legal framework creating favourable economic conditions, ensuring independence for their administration and teaching methods and the recognition of diplomas needed for their active integration into an overall policy on education.

