

INFORMATION

EDUCATION - YOUTH

European University Institute to be set up ("European University") 19/72

After more than 15 years' debate, Florence will finally have its "European University". On April 19, 1972 the six member states of the Community signed a convention, in Florence, creating an "European University Institute". The governments of the four new member states have already expressed their willingness to participate in the Institute. Pending ratification of the convention by the European Parliament, the Institute will open its doors at the beginning of the 1973-74 academic year.

Located in the Villa Tolomei and occupying 20 hectares of land, the Institute will accommodate 250 students and researchers in its first year, expanding to 650 when it reaches full size two years later. University graduates and researchers will be able to pursue their fields of study in four departments : history and civilization, economics, law, social science and politics.

Strictly speaking, the Institute will not be a university but a post-graduate institute. But, after so many years of talk about a "European University", it would be difficult to deny it that title. The Institute's mission is to contribute to the development of Europe's cultural and scientific patrimony, respecting both its unity and its diversity.

Most of the Institute's activities will be carried out in seminars or small research teams. The delicate language problem has been solved pragmatically. The Institute's official languages will be those of the present European Community (German, French, Italian and Dutch) plus English. At the beginning of each course, two working languages will be chosen, the choice being determined by the knowledge of the people involved.

The Institute's academic activities will be run by three official bodies :

- 1) The Superior Council, (le Conseil supérieur), composed of representatives of the member states (two from each government), will be responsible for the general organization and operation of the Institute. The Council presidency will be rotated among the governments, each delegate holding office for one year;

- 2) The President of the Institute will hold office for three years. He will direct the school, supervise its administration, ensure that it has proper legal representation, and appoint department heads and professors. He will be assisted by a Secretary General;
- 3) The Academic Council will have general control over research and teaching. It will consist of the President, the Secretary General, department heads, professors attached to the Institute, and representatives of the graduates. Its main responsibility will be to work out the Institute's programme of study and research.

Students who have studied at the Institute for at least two years and have completed an original research project will be eligible for the title Doctor of the European Institute at Florence (in law, political science, etc.).

Financing of the Institute - a point of contention in the negotiations - will be shared among the member states as follows :

Germany, France, Italy	28% each
Belgium, the Netherlands	7.9% each
Luxembourg	0.2%

This is an interim arrangement and will be changed in January 1978. A new basis for financing will be fixed during a study to be started in January 1977. By that time the principle of the Community having its own budgetary resources will be well established, and direct Communities financing of the Institute may well offer a viable alternative.

Although the apportionment of the cost of running the Institute is based on the principle of Article 200 of the Rome Treaty, the Community itself is not involved. Its role is limited to having one representative of the European Commission, without a vote, on the Superior Council. Although the Institute was born in a climate of cooperation among the six member states, it is not a Community organ.

The governments were not unanimous on this point during the negotiations. Commission Vice-President Carlo Scarascia-Mugnozza echoed the sentiments of some of them in his speech at Florence on the occasion of the signing of the convention, when he said :

"I would be less than candid if I did not emphasize that this new and original cultural institution appears as a product of the member governments rather than as a Community enterprise, as would have been demanded by the spirit of the 1969 Hague summit, during which the starting point from which European unity has developed and taken its course."

Those remarks touch at the heart of an almost theological debate underlying the entire question of European education today. The idea of a European University is hardly new. (Italy first advanced it at Messina in 1956 and bought the Villa Tolomei in 1960 for that purpose. Moreover, meetings of education ministers of the Six have been called for more than 10 years. The first was held in Brussels on a Belgian initiative in November 1971; it cleared the way for the signing of the Florence convention.) But the nature of that institution and the general direction European education should take remain undefined. The member states are still seeking common ground for cooperation.

Thus the Florence Institute is important because it is a first tangible accomplishment. But it is also only a first step. Still under study is the three-year-old proposal by French Education Minister Olivier Guichard to establish a European Centre for the Development of Education, and the creation of a true European University has yet to be agreed upon in anything but principle. Like the Institute, European education can be either the product of intergovernmental cooperation or a function of the Community. The decision has yet to be made.

During the Luxembourg meeting in April 1972 in preparation for the summit of the Ten in October 1972, Italian Foreign Minister Aldo Moro proposed that the heads of state seek a common position on cultural development in general and education in particular. What this position will be remain to be seen.

Commission Vice-President Scarascia-Mugnozza opted for Community control in his Florence speech. "The problem (of European education) can no longer be put aside. A policy of education and culture must be instituted as soon as possible within the Community. I am sure this theme will be discussed in the near future, and I hope it will be taken into account at the Paris summit next October", he said.

Education lies at the heart of the concept of European unity. In Signor Scarascia-Mugnozza's words, we cannot "define the role of an economically and politically united Europe in the absence of a spiritual foundation of which genuine cultural ties form a part".

The Florence Institute can play an important role in this debate, for it can be a crucible for the ideas of a generation now living in a Europe in transformation.
