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## **Negotiations on the new Treaty: ETUCE "No trade with education"**

Heads of states missed an agreement on a new European Constitutional Treaty at the summit in Rome on the 12 to 13 December. The enlargement process will continue despite that, but no one really knows how and when the next attempt to reach an agreement can be expected.

Before the summit ETUCE tried to draw the attention of the Commission and Governments to problems with the proposed text concerning possible trade with education.

ETUCE discovered a possible contradiction / lack of clarity between article I –12 and 16 and article III –217 concerning Common Commercial Policy and trade in services. The clear exception in the Nice Treaty concerning education was missing. This could actually present a possibility to decide by simple majority in the Council on trade with education. The ETUCE Executive Board decided in September 2003 that the current text of the Nice Treaty in this area would be preferable. Later the ETUCE General Assembly in the beginning of December stated in a resolution from the meeting:

"ETUCE demands a change. Education is a public responsibility and governments in EU should once and for all recognise this. The current negotiations on a new GATS agreement should not in any way be given the possibility of a Community mandate taken by a majority vote.

ETUCE notes that also members of the European Parliament, The Committee of Regions as well as some governments have expressed concerns. In this relation attention should also be given to a proposed change to Article 217-III from the Finnish government in which future decisions on education in commercial policies has to be taken unanimously.

ETUCE calls upon governments and education minister to take action and retain the current text from Article 133 on education in the proposed Constitutional Treaty.

ETUCE urgently calls upon all member organisations to take actions to ensure governments are confronted with this demand."

Since an agreement on a new Treaty is not hammered out yet ETUCE will still try to influence on the European level. ETUCE at the same time encourage member organisations to take new contacts with governments.

### **A new ETUCE Project: ELFE – European eLearning Forum for Education**

In the context of the activities planned in the ETUCE Action Programme (2004-2006) concerning new technologies and distance learning, ETUCE has been successful and has received 299.600 € in funding from the European Commission to develop a project on eLearning and the use of ICT in education.

The project is called ELFE (European eLearning Forum for Education) and it intends to explore the pedagogical and social effects of using ICT in education and to create a wide European debate on the appropriate use of new technologies in the education field. Concretely, it aims at:

1. Analyse and share good experiences and identify good practices in different countries implementing eLearning methods in their education systems.
2. Study the possibilities to transfer these good practices to other European countries and the way this transfer could be done.
3. Create a wide debate on how the European eLearning Policy and Policies on the use of ICT in Education should be.

Five ETUCE member organisations from different countries are taking part in this project:

- Utdanningsforbundet. Norway
- Gymnasieskolernes Lærerforening (GL). Denmark
- National Union of Teachers (NUT). UK
- Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft Nordrhein-Westfalen (GEW)
- Federação Nacional dos Sindicatos da Educação (FNE)

ELFE's implementation and management will be carried out by a Steering Committee (SC).

In addition to the SC meetings, ELFE's performance will consist of “go and study visits” by teachers and experts and two conferences. Different schools developing pilot projects will be visited in the five participating countries. After the first implementation part of the project, around November 2004, a Launching Conference will be held in Brussels.

We will present the Network to the participants. From this phase of the project, unions from other countries will be able to join the project. At the end of the project we will hold a Follow up Conference in UK, in order to disseminate the pedagogical conclusions. ETUCE political guidelines regarding ICT in education will be set up.

ELFE's web site will be launched from the beginning of the implementation period, and it will be developed through the project.

ELFE will be an interesting experience, which will give us the opportunity to answer questions such as: *How can the existence of virtual lessons influence the learning process? What are the pedagogical and social costs? What would be the indicators to evaluate European education policies? Is there an ideal regarding the number of subjects to be taught by eLearning methods? How can eLearning influence the normal schedules at schools? What kind of new training is necessary for teachers? What physical requirements are needed in schools to implement eLearning systems?*

We expect to create a wide debate on the European Policies on ICT in education, as well as to set up political ETUCE guidelines that will influence these policies in order to respect the teacher's role for the benefit of a better education for the European society.

### **Erasmus Mundus – opening up Europe's universities to the world**

The new EU higher education programme, Erasmus Mundus, seeks to open up Europe's universities and higher education establishments to students throughout the world. The programme will cover a five-year period from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2008.

The programme aims to enhance quality in European higher education and promote intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries. Erasmus Mundus will function as a supplement to the already existing EU-programmes within higher education.

One of the basic elements of the programme is Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses. These courses involve study at several higher education institutions in different Member States, and a European label will distinguish them. Studies will result in two or more degrees recognised or accepted by the participating institutions. The idea is to create approximately 90 inter-university networks and to provide 250 Masters Courses by 2008.

The Commission aims at promoting Erasmus Mundus Master Courses as an attractive and prestigious education in Europe focusing on intercultural dialogue and linguistic competence seen from an international perspective.

Moreover, students from third countries have the possibility to apply for scholarships for two years to undertake Erasmus Mundus Master Courses. Researchers can apply for scholarships if they are to participate in teaching or research courses for a period of three months.

The idea of partnership projects is also included in the Erasmus Mundus programme. By making projects between Erasmus Mundus Master Courses and the most developed universities in third countries, it is the intention that the profile of European higher education should be more visible to the world in general.

On Monday the 29 September 2003 the Erasmus Mundus programme was carried unanimously in the European Parliament in the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport. The final step of adoption will be taken when the education ministers meet at their next Council meeting the 24-25 November 2003.

### **EURES<sup>1</sup> has launched job mobility portal**

On 19 September 2003 Anna Diamantopoulou, Commissioner for employment and social affairs, officially launched a European website for job mobility.

The website is based on EURES' network and former website. The European Job Mobility Portal will be an electronic gateway to information on living and working conditions, labour market conditions and job vacancies in all Member States of the European Union. It will give those looking for a job the opportunity to post their CVs online and it will provide information on education and training throughout the EU.

In accordance with the employment guidelines adopted by the Council in July 2003, all job seekers in the EU will have access to all available jobs advertised at the member countries' job centres before 2005.

The website is available at: <http://europa.eu.int/eures/index.jsp>

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<sup>1</sup> EURES: European Employment Services

## **Berlin Summit on Higher Education 18-19 September 2003**

During their summit in Berlin on 18-19 September, education ministers from 33 European countries met to discuss the future of the European Higher Education Area.

The summit in September was the second reunion of the evaluation process referring to the Bologna Process. The first evaluation meeting took place in Prague in 2001, where the education ministers discussed the joint objectives decided in the Bologna Declaration.

At this year's summit, seven new countries decided to join the co-operation of the Bologna Process: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Vatican, Serbia and Montenegro, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Russia.

Furthermore, the ministers agreed to speed up the development concerning the following issues:

- set a 2005 deadline for promoting effective quality assurance systems, adopting a system essentially based on two main cycles (bachelor-master) and improving the recognition system of degrees and periods of studies.
- secure closer links between European higher education area and the European research area by including the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process.
- reaffirm that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility and that the social dimension of the Bologna Process is important.
- take the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants.
- stress the involvement of university and student organisations.

As declared in the Bologna Declaration the ministers of education will meet every other year to evaluate the progress of the joint objectives and draw up new political priorities if necessary.

The next higher education summit will be held in Bergen, Norway in May 2005.

## **Socrates projects database**

ISOC (Interactive Socrates Catalogue) is the name of the new catalogue containing information about almost 200 European projects and networks.

Hereby, it should have become easier to get information on content and results concerning projects and networks, which the European Commission has funded through Socrates since 1995.

The ISOC catalogue contains information on centralised co-operative education projects within Socrates, moreover projects within Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Lingua and Minerva. Furthermore, the catalogue provides information about associated partners and co-ordinating partners in the various projects, results and outputs of the projects, and events related to the projects.

The ISOC database provides several options for searching e.g. themes, title, partners, country, and language.

The database is developed and maintained by the Centre for International University Co-operation, SIU, in Norway and supported by the European Commission under the centralised actions of Socrates.

The ISOC-database is found on: <http://www.isoc.siu.no>

## **Launching the ETUCE Legal Experts Network**

The new ETUCE Legal Experts Network was launched in a Seminar that took place in Florence from 31 October to 2 November 2003. The main purpose of this Network is to stimulate the dialogue between legal officers from teachers' unions from the EU/EEA member states and EU acceding countries concerning EU legislation in the field of education.

Legal officers from the different organisations were present in Florence in order to:

- Train themselves in the use of First Class, the software of the Network
- Point out the relevant legal problems that teachers are facing in their national countries

Regarding the content to deal with in the Network, several topics were highlighted:

- Discrimination on grounds on sex, sexual orientation and religious and ethnic origin and the way to fight

- against it by implementing the European anti-discrimination Directives;
- Occupational stress and exchange of “solutions” provided by the different legal systems, as well as the importance of making use of the EU Health and Safety Framework Directive to tackle this problem;
- Fixed-term contracts and the ;
- Mobility;
- Religious symbols in schools and the possibilities to deal with the problem.

The last day of the Seminar, the participants divided themselves into different working groups in order to establish a “nettiquette” or way of properly communicating through the network.

Wiebke Duvel and Graham Clayton, the animators of the Network, did an excellent job and succeeded in motivating the participants to work closely in the future by exchanging own experiences and legal information. They have already started to organise the different folders within the network and a meeting between the participants will be held in London the 27<sup>th</sup> November to launch the first discussions through the net.

ETUCE would also like to thank Maria Irace, the software expert, for her excellent contribution in explaining the participants the practical use of First Class in a very friendly and simple way.

### **Meeting in the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport**

On the 4 of November 2003 ETUCE participated in the meeting in the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport in the European Parliament.

One of the main issues to be discussed was safeguarding cultural diversity. The hinges in this debate were the development of a legal instrument on cultural diversity in which UNESCO’s important role was emphasised.

The other main issue of the meeting was a follow-up discussion on the White Paper on New Impetus for European Youth. The members of the committee discussed ways of further involvement of young people in the political debate. Among the suggestions was an upgrading of the youth policy in the Union, a permanent “European Youth Week” and a European year against violence from 2006. The final report on the subject is expected in March or April.