

**Thesepapier zur Europäischen Konferenz**  
der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung  
"NECE – Networking European Citizenship Education"  
23. bis 26. Juli 2004, Santiago de Compostela, Spanien  
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## **CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

### **ACTIVITIES OF THE DUTCH EU-PRESIDENCY**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sometimes, the English language is very helpful to find the first sentence of a speech. Maybe it takes a non-native speaker like me to think about the relation of the word “civil servant” and citizenship. “Civil” means, according to the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, “connected with the state, not with the army or the Church”, and also “relating to the rights of ordinary people, of citizens”. In this broad sense, every civil servant should be aware of the importance of citizenship.

For me, advising on citizenship education, this is all the more true. Our minister of Education, Culture and Science, Ms Maria van der Hoeven, was invited to deliver the closing speech of this conference. But because of her very busy schedule, she asked me to participate in this conference. I will not present to you a political statement on behalf of the Minister, but I will give you an overview of the main activities on citizenship education of the Dutch Presidency of the European Union that is taking place this second half of 2004. You can find the presidency programme as a whole at one of the tables here in the hall.

Minister Van der Hoeven started to put the theme on the political agenda even before the Dutch Presidency. In March, during the meeting of the Education Ministers of the OECD in Dublin, she set out her ideas and policy on citizenship education. It was also meant as a test: how would her colleagues react to this rather difficult subject? That turned out to be very

positive: every minister recognised the theme as important, but was wrestling to find the right approach.

That fitted very well in the overall motto of the Dutch Presidency: learning from each other.

In the informal EU-ministers conference in July in Rotterdam, Minister Van der Hoeven presented a survey<sup>1</sup> on citizenship education in EU Member States to her colleagues. This study shows that:

- Member States assign a key role to schools in strengthening citizenship education for social cohesion, including with regard to immigrants. Most countries have legislation on citizenship education and its goals, while few have laid down a prescribed course of action.
- Citizenship education appears as a separate subject in some countries; others prefer a more integrated approach or a mixed model.
- Member States display a wide variety of educational practices in citizenship education, while showing convergence as to the objectives and the underlying values pursued by it. Nevertheless, too little is still known about which methods are the most effective.
- Numerous initiatives have already been developed in the context of the European Union and the Council of Europe: promoting cooperation by exchanging knowledge and experience and developing common standards as a part of the Lisbon agenda.

To sum up: practices in the educational institutions of Europe can be characterised as rich in grass-roots initiatives, but with ample room for improvement when it comes to realising evidence based policies and practices.

On the basis of this study and of the very interesting discussion of the 25 Education Ministers in Rotterdam, the Dutch Presidency could conclude that they shared this view on the need to enhance social cohesion, for which citizen education is a powerful means. The link between

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<sup>1</sup> "Citizenship – Made in Europe: Living together starts at school", publication of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, The Hague, 2004.

citizenship and social cohesion means that we regard citizenship education as part of the Lisbon agenda. The first aim is to be the most competitive knowledge economy in the world; the second aim is to strengthen social cohesion.

In this approach, citizenship is relevant on several levels: in the schools themselves (pupils and teachers can be seen as *school citizens*), in the social environment of the school (*social citizens*), on the national (*national citizens*) and on the international level (*world citizens*). Citizenship education has a European dimension too. Within the Union, citizenship may no longer be defined solely through its national or regional context. Active citizenship should also be based on European awareness, on consciousness of shared history, values, chances and ambitions within a Europe which, at the same time, maintains its social and cultural diversity.

So in Rotterdam, there was this shared view that further efforts have to be undertaken in the years to come. And within the EU, we'll place these efforts in line with the principles of the "open method of coordination": every Member State is responsible for its own education system, but is willing to cooperate and learn from others in order to reach the common goals of the Lisbon agenda.

Fortunately, much has already been accomplished. Further action will be built on what has already been achieved. Although the process of decision making is still going on, I can mention some of the proposed further actions.

### *1. The European Education and Training Programme*

At present, fostering active citizenship is an objective in the European Education and Training Programmes. In the Commission's Proposal for an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning active citizenship will continue to be a specific objective. Ms Monika Oels of the European Commission will tell us more about the programme in her speech.

## *2. Exchange of experiences on citizenship education*

We propose that Ministers will monitor national developments to make it possible to learn from each other in a systematic way. We want them to encourage comparison in their education systems and stimulate the forming of networks to facilitate exchange, using organisations already active in this field as contact points. This monitoring can be seen as part of the broader monitoring process for the various objectives in the framework of "Education and Training 2010" and the Lisbon agenda.

## *3. The role of teachers and other stakeholders*

We propose that initiatives should be taken in every Member State to embed education for citizenship and social integration in teacher training programmes. And we propose that Ministers will seek active cooperation with parents, teachers and school leaders, social partners and other stakeholders in the civil society.

## *4. Measuring the effectiveness of citizenship education*

The Dutch Presidency will report at the end of 2004 the result of an analysis of the possibilities for developing indicators on this subject. Developing indicators for possible benchmarks on the added value of citizenship education has proven to be a difficult task. We would welcome suggestions from you, participants in this conference, on all aspects of measuring competences in the field of citizenship education. We want to bring together all the knowledge available on this aspect of citizenship education.

## *5. The European Year of Citizenship through Education 2005*

This initiative of the Council of Europe will provide ample opportunity for putting citizenship education in the spotlight again. Tomorrow we will hear more of this initiative in the speech of Ms Agneta Derrien of the Council of Europe.

As you see, it is our ambition to enhance the quality of citizenship education in the EU Member States by these further actions. Existing networks like the ones that are participating in this conference, can play an important role in supporting schools. Schools play a pivotal role in letting young people develop themselves as responsible citizens. But they can't succeed without the inspiration and knowledge of others in society.