

# Information for Members

June 2006

*effe*

European  
forum for  
freedom in  
education

## Dear Members,

We have returned from beautiful Finland where the *effe* colloquium took place this year!

The congress centre – surrounded by woods and water – was a beautiful place for the 117 participants from 14 countries to work, discuss and relax. It was by the way the same place at which for 15 years the *effe* colloquium: “Freedom and Equality, Diversity and Concord” – took place. It is a historical location because here the Helsinki Declaration on the Human Right to Educational Freedom has been adopted. There were several participants at this year’s colloquium, who already supported the aims of *effe* back in 1991 and were now in Helsinki for the second time.

On the walls of the auditorium you could see the Austrian *effe* banner which had reached Finland during the presence of the Finnish Minister of Education on June 8, 2006. (See also [www.effe.at](http://www.effe.at)).

Before the actual colloquium started the meeting of the board members (for 2 days) and of the country representatives took place. The themes discussed here were the exchange of information, perspectives of our mutual work and agreements.

The colloquium itself dealt with the question: „Education in Finland – The best in Europe?” I think the lectures, the discussions in the working

groups and the international exchange of experience and information during the breaks helped everyone to determine which development is still required in their own country and which conditions are necessary to guarantee sound education. Most certainly some participants were able to recognize that positive developments in their country are well on their way now.

Additional highlights of the congress were the visit of the Strömberg School which works based on Freinet’s ideas and the Snellmann College, an Institute for Teacher Education based on Waldorf pedagogy.

As always we also held our annual general meeting. In spite of the excellent alternative programme, 38 members attended the meeting. The minutes will be sent to our members in due time. I would, however, like to mention the election of Birte Fanoe Lund from Denmark as a new member of the board. She replaces Erling Thøgersen, who did not stand for election again. I would like to thank Erling Thøgersen once again for the good cooperation in all these years and at same time would like to welcome Birte Fanoe Lund.

One conclusion of the colloquium dealt with the question of a possible re-orientation: To what extent should *effe* represent itself, being a forum for the broad

exchange of pedagogical concepts, affected by the philosophy of the well-being of the child and of supporting it in becoming an adult? How should changes in the educational field be effected: through teaching, research, presence in the media, lobbying? According to good *effe* tradition everyone will have to answer this question for themselves. It is obvious, however, that every personal decision to act in whatever way will always be a political act!

All in all it was a successful meeting and I have a lot of respect for the members and organizers of *effe* Finland. You can find pictures under the following web address:

<http://s74.photobucket.com/albums/i275/trendman/>

On these pictures you can see a lot of serious and concentrated faces, but I can assure you we also had fun!

Barbara Ziegler-Fonck

## Good News from Germany

1. The Football World-Championship puts the country in a fantastic atmosphere....

2. The Robert Bosch Foundation and the Heidehof Foundation in co-operation with the weekly magazines Stern and Spiegel are discerning for the first time the „German School Award“. The award is meant to encourage the people and to show that there are also good schools in Germany. The aim is “to give wings to learning“. It honours excellent schools in Germany and promotes the spreading of good

practise. 481 schools have applied for the price, 18 made it into the short list. One of them is the Grundschule Harmonie (public elementary school) in Eitorf. We would like to congratulate the principal Walter Hövel (a long-standing *effe* member), his team and his students for their achievements so far and wish him all the best for the trip to Berlin in autumn this year. Go and get the cup!

### **EU-Summit. Brussels, June 15 – 16, 2006**

In Brussels, the month of June is traditionally the month of the European Council, the EU-Summit of the heads of state and government. The subject this year: The stand-off of the European Constitution. The heads of state and government had granted themselves a year of reflection after the “non” and “neen” to the constitution last year.

The actors of civil society also debated about the future of the EU and the Constitution in a conference organized by ECAS (European Citizen Action Service), Friends of Europe, Journalists@YourService and EurActiv.com.

### **Future EU Conference, Brussels, June 7, 2006: „Plan D and the citizens’ right to know“**

The conference took place in the European Parliament and there were about 300 participants. The debate aimed at benchmarking the national and European contributions to the Commission's Plan D and to review the state of play after

the one year "period of reflection" on the failed ratification of the Constitutional Treaty.

Overall the conference pleaded for more participatory democracy, although the participants were well aware of the fact that "More participation is not always better participation". In a long debate the EU Commission had to deal with the criticism that its initiatives were springing up like mushrooms, but altogether ineffective.

But there were also positive reactions: As one could also regard the refusal of France and the Netherlands as “first signs of an emerging European Public Sphere”. Maybe it was all just about asking the wrong question: the citizens DO support the European project, but not THIS European project. Therefore it was rather the future vision which was missing.

In a final reaction to the discussion, **Commissioner Wallström** reconfirmed her ambition to involve European citizens more in the debate on the future of the EU. She furthermore emphasized the positive aspects of her “Plan D”. Some countries, she said, had already organized debates with their citizens and the special internet page of the Commission had gotten over 8000 contributions. She said it would no longer suffice to engage only a small political elite in the debate.

It was, however, this small elite of heads of state and government who met in Brussels a week later to come to an agreement about their

next steps. As expected the only outcome was to prolong the reflection period.

The new schedule now looks as follows: The new revival is to start under German Council Presidency in the first half of 2007. End of June the up-to-date state of the discussion is to be evaluated and the governments are to decide how the process of the Constitutional Treaty can be continued. Only end of 2008 under French EU- Presidency there will be a final decision concerning the future of the Constitutional Treaty. A new treaty, however, then has to be ratified again, which might take another 2 years...

Only a few weeks ago, in Klosterneuburg, Austria, the EU-Ministers of Foreign Affairs had agreed to aim at a new Constitution taking effect in 2009 – which is also the time of the European Parliament election. Now it looks more as if it will be 2010.

2010? Isn't that the date aimed at for the Lisbon Agenda? And perhaps the name of the new treaty should no longer be Constitutional Treaty, but Lisbon Treaty. With this new tool for a more easy decision the EU will most certainly become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy of the world”, won't it?

Just to mention – as expected – the EU summit did not question the subject of the EU-Parliaments seat (the monthly move of the European Parliament – see our May Newsletter). So, we are stuck with that strolling circus. At the time of the summit the parliamentarians had already collected more than 500.000 signatures for a permanent office in Brussels.

Lies Feron

## **E.M.I.E. Meeting in Brussels on May 31, 2006**

The EMIE or European Meeting of Independent Education is a type of platform where organisations which stand up for independent education meet and exchange views and information. *effe* is part of this platform even though we regard ourselves responsible for the support of all types of educational institutions including also public schools or home schooling. This was the first EMIE meeting in nearly three years.

EMIE was convened in Brussels some five years ago by Carlos Diaz Muniz of ECNAIS (The European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools). At the time of the European Convention, the platform had dealt with the articles for education and had achieved - by coordinated actions - a contribution to the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Afterwards, it became quiet around the EMIE. Until this new meeting.

First, experiences were exchanged and balances were drawn: Has the situation of the independent schools improved or has it gotten worse? What are the major challenges for the future? Is there room for cooperation on the EMIE platform?

We all agreed that for an effective lobby, expert knowledge is required today, especially in Brussels. Therefore, some people were more in favour of deeper reflection. *effe* on the other hand saw no contradiction in expert knowledge, reflection and focussed activism and presented the new revision of the *effe* atlas. The atlas is to

be comprised of expert knowledge about freedom in education in Europe and is to be used as an effective instrument in discussion with politicians, media and experts. On this occasion *effe* had positive reactions from OIDEL (L'Organisation pour le Droit à L'Éducation et la Liberté de l'Enseignement) the international organisation for the right to education and freedom in education. Already in the nineties we had good co-operation with this organisation which is mainly active in Southern Europe. This cooperation is about to be revived in the future.

At the end of the meeting it was decided that the associations would benefit from the further existence of EMIE. For this reason a yearly meeting of EMIE was agreed upon as well as the establishment of mutual exchange of actions undertaking. For the future the establishment of a website will be taken into consideration.

Lies Feron

### **Country Report Czech Republic**

One and a half years ago the new Educational Law No. 561/2004 with the new Chapter for Curricula Reforms became effective (valid since January 1, 2005). Based on this law every kindergarden and every compulsory school until September 2007 is obliged to formulate an individual school programme for each educational phase and to teach accordingly. Local conditions as well as the new educational goals (Key Competences) have to be taken into consideration.

Since this law is in effect the following changes in the Czech educational policy have occurred and have led to vivid discussions:

1. Every Czech school and educational institution now has the right and the possibility to develop a project and to apply for financial support from the European Social Funds or European Structural Funds. It can count on the assistance of the state, which coordinates project applications. Most of the projects so far are projects in the field of intercultural and multicultural education, resistance against socio-pathological phenomena in society (drugs, crime, aggressiveness, intolerance, and racism), ecological education, effective teacher training, sport projects and cultural projects, etc. To this date there are more than 200 schools and educational organisations who could realize their projects.

P.A.U. (Friends of dedicated education) in which EFFE-CZ works on behalf of foreign cooperation is also participating with two projects. One project is about self-evaluation in school, a project that could make the plans of the state to introduce tests for all 5, 9 and 12 graders redundant. The second project deals with effective teacher training, as to provide teachers with the knowledge and the ability to develop school programmes with individual profiles.

2. Because of the new educational goals there are intense discussions about the future of the Gymnasia (upper High Schools). The state wants to increase the number of highschoools by a third. The Employers' Association as well as the Association of Vocational Schools opposes this. They argue that the present job market requires mainly graduates of the

various vocational schools. This is due to the very slow progress of technological implementation. The politicians working in education on the other hand claim that – according to the Czech socio-economic outlook – a lot more generally educated young people will be needed in about 15 years.

The EFFE-CZ holds the view that it is now more sensible to strengthen general educational topics in the existing vocational schools and not to establish new Highschools, as they are actually only missing in Prag and Ostrava.

3. In the scope of the new extension of the educational opportunities the fourth Waldorf Highschool could be opened in May. Now there are Waldorf schools in Ostrava, Pribram, Praha and Semily. In Jablonec n.N. and in Pardubice new Montessori classes were opened in September 2005. These are Montessori classes that are integrated in regular public schools and receive the same financial support. More and more schools (former state schools, now municipal schools, but also some private schools) integrate ideas of the so-called open schools, project schools and communicative schools in their own programme. It is generally popular to take up the ideas of the reform and alternative schools. The Dalton Schools make very good process. They offer educational courses in the Czech Republic twice a year, as well as the Montessori society and the Association of the Waldorf Schools.

4. All schools consider it a big problem that there is almost no

support for teachers and schools in the field of “effective service” (class assistants, school and social psychologist or tutors and leisure educationalists). Help is urgently needed here. But our numbed structures change very slowly and besides only very few of the new experts want to take up these very stressful jobs, which pay relatively little money.

5. Another problem is the financing model of the school system. The previous model (a fixed sum per head and age of the child.) often brings small village schools big problems. Especially the fixed class quota (minimum number of pupils per class) implies closing a lot of village schools. But in reality it is exactly these smaller schools that can comply a lot more effectively with the new educational goals because of their non-anonymous character.

6. In early June 2006 there were Parliamentary Elections. The result led to a tie between socials and liberals. Now there are very hard and maybe long coalition discussions. It is not visible who will be the head of the Education Ministry. But one thing is obvious. The new, very good and promising Curriculum Reform will be maintained.

Karel Rýdl

## Notes

The Association of the French Waldorf schools is organising a five day international meeting to discuss the following subject: **„Intuition within the educational relationship“**. It will take place in **Paris** from **August 21, to 25 this year**. This meeting called **Kolisko** is an international conference which travels around the whole world. In Europe, however, it will only take place in Järna, Sweden (August 6, to 12, 2006) – and in Paris.

If you are interested you can find the programme in the internet: [www.kolisko.net](http://www.kolisko.net).

As previously announced we have placed two book recommendations on our Homepage. Please have a look at our website.

## **Dear Members,**

We are leaving! Not for good, of course! We are making a summer break. For this reason you will get our July/August edition at the end of August.

Until then we wish you: Splendid Holidays with beautiful weather – but without a sunburn – and a lot of time to read and to relax!

Editorial:

Lies Feron

Barbara Ziegler-Fonck

[contact@effe-eu.org](mailto:contact@effe-eu.org)

[www.effe-eu.org](http://www.effe-eu.org)