



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE



9.10.2009

CONTENTS

1. ... *Parliament*
 - *The Irish Referendum*

2. ... *Commission*
 - *Gender Inequalities in Education*

3. ... *Eurostat*
 - *Youth Unemployment*



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... from the Parliament

The Irish Referendum

The Irish referendum result was "a great day for Ireland and a great day for Europe", said EP President Jerzy Buzek this week as he opened the plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels. "The Irish people have sent a clear message that they wish to remain at the heart of our united Europe", he added.

In Mr Buzek's view, "The Irish guarantees went a long way to convince the Irish public that the Lisbon Treaty is a good treaty for Ireland". He pointed to the passionate support of business, trade unions and other sectors of society that had helped pass the referendum.

Mr Buzek said he also firmly believed the ratification process "will be crowned with success in the two remaining Member States". He added "I have received assurances from the Polish President that he will sign the Treaty as soon as possible now that the Irish referendum has passed". He hoped that President Vaclav Klaus would do the same once the Czech Constitutional court had ruled on any outstanding concerns.

"The purpose of the Lisbon Treaty is to equip the European Union to meet the challenges of the 21st Century", he went on. "We must continue to dispel the fears of our citizens about energy issues, rising unemployment, and immigration."

The president nevertheless stressed that "we should not forget those who chose to say No. It is our custom to think about all Europeans and respect their views, including dissenting opinions".

Fredrik Reinfeldt, on Wednesday addressed the MEP's and answered their questions on how the Presidency will continue to lead the EU in institutional matters.

"I am pleased to have the opportunity to come here so soon after the Irish referendum. It is a good decision for Ireland and a good decision for Europe. We in the European Council are united in our wish for the Treaty to enter into force before the end of the year, provided it has been ratified by all Member States", said Fredrik Reinfeldt in his speech.

"It is the work of all three EU institutions to prepare for the transition to the new Treaty – the Commission, the Council and Parliament. It is important that we cooperate to get it into place. I am looking forward to this cooperation."

Fredrik Reinfeldt was clear about the need to get the Lisbon Treaty into place as soon as possible. And he was supported by most of the group leaders in the European Parliament, as well as by the President of the Commission.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

The President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso said: "All EU Member States have already ratified the Treaty, through their parliaments or through referenda. In a democratic sense, the Treaty has already been ratified, but we now must conclude the formal process as soon as possible by the signatures of the Polish and Czech Presidents. I am ready to start the work on getting a new Commission into place as soon as the legal provisions are made".

In his speech, EPP group leader Joseph Daul, called on the Polish and Czech presidents to sign the Lisbon Treaty as quickly as possible and said that Ireland's strong yes in Friday's referendum should send a clear message to the two presidents.

S &D group leader Martin Schulz agreed with the previous speaker and pointed out that a lot is at stake if the Treaty does not enter into force soon. Otherwise, he stated, Europe will be divided and the global voice of the EU will be silenced at a time when the EU must stick together for the world to be able to meet the greatest global challenge of our time.

"It has taken us eight years to get here. The Lisbon Treaty and Europe has the strong support of EU citizens. Now we must move on. We cannot afford to wait", said the ALDE group leader Guy Verhofstadt.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... Commission

Gender inequalities in education persist

Despite progress in recent years, gender differences and inequalities persist in education in terms of subject preferences and performance, and in cultural aspects of the education and training experience. This is a key message from a new independent expert report on gender and education issued by the European Commission. The authors also point out that gender differences in education are closely interlinked with other factors such as social class, ethnicity and minority status and call on policy-makers to take this into account.

The issues addressed in the report, entitled "**Gender and Education (and employment) - lessons from research for policy makers**", include the following:

- How are gender inequalities created or reproduced within and around contemporary schools, in employment and in wider society?
- Why do boys drop out of school more often than girls?
- Why do girls and young women not identify with maths, science and technology subjects and related careers?

The Report was drafted by **NESSE**, the independent **Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education & training**, and summarises key findings from international research on gender and education and highlights their implications for policy development and implementation. The report reviews evidence and concrete recommendations that can be useful to policy and decision-makers in the field of education and in related fields of public policy.

Key findings

Researchers point out that social class, ethnicity and minority status all contribute to a complex picture from which it is difficult to isolate gender differences and inequalities in educational performance. Consequently, they argue, policies should not treat women and men, girls and boys, as homogenous groups in policy terms.

Reading: The research reveals that reading attitudes and behaviour are determined to a great degree by gender. Evidence suggests that it is boys from working class backgrounds in all ethnic groups and cultures who are the most likely to have literacy difficulties and to leave school early.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Fields of academic study: The report reveals that gender continues to be a factor in certain fields of academic study, with men dominating science, construction and engineering, and women dominating the arts, humanities and care-related disciplines.

Role of parents and peers: The research shows that parents and peers are both powerful players in the gender game; they can and do reinforce gender-stereotypical expectations and behaviour. It also emerged that the attitudes of teachers and teacher educators are crucial in facilitating change.

Academic streaming: The report demonstrates that countries with highly selective academic streaming can be disadvantageous to girls and women in mathematics and science, and to boys in that they may be disproportionately placed in lower streams.

What can be done?

The authors of the report point out that gender equality does not happen by accident. They suggest that promoting gender equality in education involves promoting equality in the culture and processes of schooling. Evidence shows that a caring, non-hierarchical and respectful school system not only reduces early school leaving for both boys and girls, it also promotes positive attitudes to learning that sustain people educationally in adult life - it encourages lifelong learning.

The research shows that the more equal societies are in economic and social terms, the greater the likelihood there is of having gender equality in education.

The report argues that gender inequality is difficult to understand and to challenge in isolation from other cultural, political, economic and affective injustices. It suggests that gender inequality can most effectively be addressed in a wider equality and social justice context.

Copies of the report will be distributed and discussed at the forthcoming conference on gender and educational attainment organised by the Swedish Presidency in Uppsala in November 2009, to be attended by a large number of national policy makers.

To know more

The full report: "[Gender and Education \(and employment\) - lessons from research for policy makers](#)"



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

... Eurostat

Recent data on youth unemployment

In August 2009, the youth unemployment rate (under 25 years) was 19.7% in the euro area and 19.8% in the EU27.

The numbers have increased. In comparison, one year ago in August 2008 it was 15.6% and 15.5% respectively. The lowest youth unemployment rate was observed in the Netherlands (6.3%), and the highest rates in Spain (39.2%) and Lithuania (31.2% in the second quarter of 2009).

The general unemployment rate is continuously increasing. The euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 9.6% in August 2009, compared with 9.5% in July. The numbers were lower one year ago: 7.6% in August 2008. The EU27 unemployment rate was 9.1% in August 2009, compared with 9.0% in July. It was 7.0% in August 2008.

For the euro area this is the highest rate since March 1999 and for the EU27 since March 2004.

More information: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-01102009-AP/EN/3-01102009-AP-EN.PDF