

European & External Affairs Committee

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Date: 10 May 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Title: Citizenship education on the European Union in Wales and the White Paper on a European Communication Policy

Purpose of the paper

1. As a result of discussions with the European Commission representative in Wales, Andy Klom, on improving communication on Europe, this Committee would like to pursue how citizenship education on the European Union in Wales' schools can be improved.
2. This is also one area identified by the European Commission in its consultation on a European Communication Policy as an area where action is needed.
3. This paper introduces other issues raised by the White Paper on a European Communication Policy. It also provides a brief overview of public access to information on the EU in Wales and European citizenship education in Wales and other countries. It invites the Committee to consider some options for action in relation to educating young people on the EU and the White Paper.

European Commission's White Paper on Communication

4. The European Commission published its White Paper on a European Communication Policy in February 2006. It is inviting comments by 1 July 2006 on its proposed communication strategy which aims to involve a wide range of players to work in partnership to help close the gap in understanding between the European Union and its citizens.

5. The White Paper is available on the European Commission's website:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/communication_white_paper/index_en.htm

6. It is related to the Commission's "Plan D for democracy, dialogue and debate", which is intended to involve citizens in the debate on the future of Europe. The European Commission office in Wales has launched a series of public meetings on topics of interest to the local area with the aim of "going local".

7. Improving civic education is one area for action identified in the White Paper. While recognising that

it is a national or regional responsibility, it suggests that the EU can play a role to "to ensure exchange of best practice and facilitate the development of common educational 'tools' so that the European dimension is reflected more effectively."

8. However, the Commission believes that citizenship education on Europe should go beyond teaching school pupils, that people of all ages should be helped to access information on EU policy and join the debate. It suggests transforming libraries into "digitally connected European libraries" that could work as information and learning centres.

9. For Members' information, Annex A includes a list of European information centres in Wales where the public and businesses can access information on the EU's activities, including the new Europe Direct Centres which are about to be set up in Wales.

10. Amongst the many issues it raises, the White Paper also invites comments on:

The citizens' right to communicate with the EU institutions in its own language. It is not clear however, whether the Commission is referring to all regional/minority languages, such as Welsh, or whether this point relates only to the EU's official languages.

How to improve the media coverage of European issues. It asks what role public bodies at the regional level can play in supplying the media with high-quality news material on EU issues.

What role regional authorities, political parties and civil society organisations can play in developing a partnership approach towards communicating Europe. "Local and regional authorities are well placed to engage in dialogue with citizens and to actively involve local communities in EU issues." For example, the Scottish Executive is working on a project with the Commission to "bring decisions closer to the people" through a series of two-way initiatives between citizens and institutions.

How to establish new forums or meeting places for public discussions of European issues. One example highlighted is Ireland's National Forum on Europe, which was set up in 2001 and promotes a national debate on the EU, its future and Ireland's role in it.

Whether the minimum standards for consultation could be reviewed to connect better with a wider range of interest groups.

European and International Citizenship education in Wales

11. The Committee has invited several organisations to present evidence on how the European dimension of citizenship is currently undertaken in Wales' schools.

12. In Wales, Citizenship is part of the statutory provision for Personal and Social Education (PSE). Citizenship is currently delivered via a Key Stage 1-4 (ages 5-16) of the Personal and Social Education

(PSE) Framework in Wales. Though PSE has been statutory in Wales since September 2003, the Framework is non-statutory. It covers attitudes and values, skills and knowledge and understanding and has ten "aspects" including social and community.

13. PSE has been designated by ACCAC as the main citizenship delivery vehicle and can be delivered through a variety of means including planned PSE sessions, projects and courses; existing subjects; interactive and experiential teaching and learning strategies; extra-curricular experiences; and pupil participation in decision-making.

14. "Wales, Europe and the World" is part of the learning core of the "Learning Pathways 14-19" which is the proposed wider learning for all young people in Wales from the age of 14 to 19 developed by the Welsh Assembly Government. See:

<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/pathways/welcome-e.htm>

15. The Welsh Baccalaureate for 16-19 year olds, which is currently being piloted, includes a compulsory core component on "Wales, Europe and the World". See:

<http://www.wbq.org.uk/index.cfm?method=content.model&GenericID=7>

16. The International dimension of citizenship education in Wales is covered in the ACCAC guidance document on "Teaching Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship" (2002). It is not treated as an additional subject but integrated within the existing curriculum. See:

http://www.esd-wales.org.uk/english/side/what_is.asp

How is European Citizenship taught in other countries?

17. The Committee requested information on how European Citizenship is taught in other countries. A comparative study on citizenship education at school in Europe has been undertaken by Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe.

18. This study, which covered 30 European countries, also includes a chapter on the approaches in different countries to the European dimension of citizenship dimension (pages 51 -58):

<http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/citizenship/en/CivicsEN.pdf>

19. The European dimension of citizenship education "generally takes the form of promoting a sense of belonging to Europe and of involvement. The Flemish Community of Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Norway refer to the international or global dimension, rather than the European dimension specifically, even though the specific content of some subjects may include references to Europe."

20. Only three countries offer courses focusing specifically on Europe - Estonia, Slovenia and Scotland. In secondary schools in Scotland, a growing number of pupils take optional courses in European studies.

21. "The specifically European issues of people's rights and duties as European citizens and the history of the EU integration process are part of the curriculum in around 10 and 20 countries respectively, mainly in secondary education. The rights and obligations of citizens are taught from primary level onwards in Latvia only, while the history of European nations and the process of European integration are covered at this level in eight countries."

22. Socio-cultural diversity and learning about European culture, literature and values is included in the curricula of virtually all countries. Pupils may also be offered different kinds of experience, including cultural exchanges, mock political activity, such as the European Parliament Youth Project, celebrations on Europe Day, or participation in European school clubs, etc.

23. The study looks at how teachers are trained on the European dimension. Almost all countries include the European dimension in teacher education, normally as part of their continuing professional development rather than in initial teacher education. Only eight officially recommend its inclusion in initial teacher education – the UK does not.

24. Eurydice has also prepared individual reports of how citizenship education is taught in primary and secondary education for 30 European countries including the UK. See:

http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/citizenship/en/Frameset_Citizenship.html

Action for Committee

25. In relation to the White Paper on a European Communication Policy, the Committee is invited to consider:

i. responding to the White Paper (deadline 1 July 2006);

ii. consider whether it would wish to explore any of the other aspects raised by the paper before it responds, at its next meeting, as listed in paragraph 9, for example:

The role of the media in explaining Europe.

Public access to information on Europe.

The role of the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government in explaining Europe.

The use of the Welsh language in communicating with the EU's Institutions.

What forums exist or could be developed for debating EU issues in Wales.

29. On the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee on how young people are educated and informed about the European Union, the Committee is invited to consider:

- i. making recommendations to the Welsh Assembly Government on how to improve citizenship education for young people about the EU in Wales' schools.
- ii. make its recommendations known to the Chairs of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee and Local Government and Public Services Committees (as it relates to its Policy Review on Electoral Arrangements in Wales).

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Annex A Networks of European information sources in Wales

1.1 European Documentation Centres (EDCs)

EDCs are always based in universities and research institutes, with the aim of helping them "to promote and develop education and research on European integration encouraging them to take part in the debate on Europe and to do what they can to make Europe more transparent by helping ordinary citizens to learn about the Union's policies".

The first EDCs were set up in 1963; today there are 600 centres across the world, 366 of which are in the EU. There are 34 EDCs in England, 4 in Scotland, 2 in Wales and 2 in Northern Ireland. Wales' EDC are located in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and the University of Wales, Cardiff.

1.2 Europe Direct Information Network

Five Europe Direct Centres are about to be set up in Wales. These will be part of a new network of 25 EU information outlets throughout the UK, joining an existing four hundred others in the other EU member states.

Europe Direct Centres provide answers to questions from the general public on Europe, their rights as EU citizens and access to information sources on policies, programmes and funding opportunities. They inform the media on EU matters at local or regional level and promote local and regional debate about

the EU. They also help in establishing cross-border partnerships and exchanges with other actors in European politics, giving the public the opportunity to send feedback to the EU institutions.

1.3 European Information Centres (EICs)

The EICs are focused on helping business to access information on areas including European Directives and Regulations, public sector contract opportunities, business opportunities, funding, and research and development initiatives.

The network was established in 1987 and there are now over 250 centres across the whole of Europe. It has a "privileged relationship" with the Commission; also, being part of "b2Europe" (an alliance of business support networks in the EU) EICs is able to put businesses in touch with other expert networks in specific fields.

The EIC network has 19 offices in the UK, of which 1 is in Cardiff (with a satellite office in Flintshire).