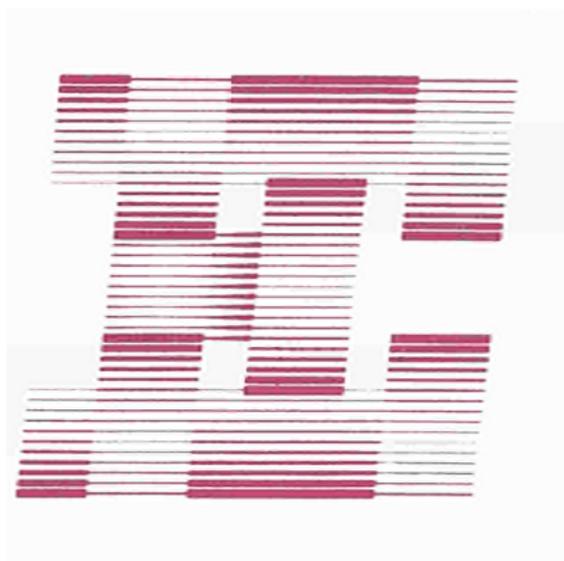


Eurydice
The Education Information
Network in the
European Community



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**Eurydice European Unit
Rue Archimède 17/Bte 17
1040 Brussels
Tel. 230.03.82 - 230.03.98
Telex 65398 eurydi b
Telefax 230.65.62**

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The network

3

In February 1976 the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Education adopted an Action Programme in the field of education. They agreed on the need to increase and improve the circulation of information about educational policy developments within the European Community, and EURYDICE was set up to meet that need.

In accordance with their own distinctive education structures, each Member State has designated at least one National Unit to participate in the network. With the collaboration of the European Cultural Foundation, the Commission of the European Communities has set up a European Unit of EURYDICE, which administratively and technically supports and animates the network's operation.

The EURYDICE Units are generally located within, or closely linked to National Ministries of Education, and their Heads meet regularly with the Commission. EURYDICE acts on the mutual cooperation of the National Units and the European Unit.

In its first phase of working EURYDICE has developed a capacity to support specific projects set up under the auspices of the European Community Education Action Programme and at the same time to facilitate the process of mutual enquiry between Member States which can enhance their individual capacity to produce national reforms in the light of a wider European awareness of policy developments.

Priority themes

- 4 Enquiries from policymakers in the European Community have clustered around the following themes:
- Transition of young people from education to adult and working life;
 - Education of migrants and their families;
 - Policies and conditions of admission of students to higher education;
 - Teaching and learning of foreign languages;
 - Cooperation in the field of higher education leading to the COMETT (Community action programme for Education and Training for Technology) and ERASMUS (European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) proposals;
 - The introduction of the new information technologies in education;
 - The education of handicapped children and their integration into ordinary schools;
 - The fight against illiteracy;
 - Equal opportunities for girls and boys in education;
 - Measures to improve the European dimension in education;
 - Improvement of the quality of education which leads to the development of topics such as: teachers' conditions of service, employment, initial and in-service training, the school calendar, systems of inspection, evaluation and assessment, the core curriculum, school size, pupil-teacher ratios, budgeting, and demographic trends.

Access to EURYDICE

Regarding direct access to the EURYDICE enquiry service through the National Units, all Member States have agreed that choice of which decision makers may be allowed to propose enquiries should be decided on a national basis.

5

Since the education structures of the Member States and the capacities of their National EURYDICE Units are different, the user group definitions show some degree of variety: some Member States have given access to policymakers at national, regional and local level; others have restricted users to policymakers at national level.

Further precise details may be obtained from National EURYDICE Units.

Access to EURYDICE via the European Unit is restricted to the Community institutions, and associations and organizations interested in surveys which relate directly to present or planned European Community development in the education field.

The possibility of access to EURYDICE for the support of policy studies conducted by Member States' experts or by the Commission is decided on a case by case basis.

In addition to the enquiry service for the restricted group of policymakers, by means of an active communication policy drawing on, inter alia, the products of the Community's Education Action Programme and those publicly available surveys generated by the direct enquiries of the policymakers, EURYDICE's products become available to an increasing proportion of the 100 million Europeans responsible for, and in receipt of education, throughout the Community.

Ways of working

- 6 EURYDICE provides two types of service. One is an enquiry system for policymakers, enabling them to gain direct access to information from other Member States on education policy issues. The other is an analytical and documentation service, which assists in providing European-scale analyses and data both to underpin the education programme and for occasional events, such as major Community conferences in the education field.

The enquiry system

National users should address their requests to their National Unit. Policymakers of the Community institutions should make their requests to EURYDICE through the Education Service of the Commission. The task of the EURYDICE Units is to receive requests from their users and channel them into the network as well as to receive requests from other Member States to which they provide replies.

The European Unit relays questions and supplies help with the translation of requests and replies.

In dialogue with the National Units the European Unit assists in making sure that a balanced flow of requests and answers within the network is maintained.

In answering information requests, the European Unit and the National Units have access to and work in close cooperation with specialized national and European centres, such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) in Berlin.

Arrangements made with the Statistical Office of the Communities permit EURYDICE to draw upon the data and experience of that Office and its associated network of Member State Statistical Offices to furnish replies to the statistical elements of requests.

Speed of response

EURYDICE Units are building up documentation systems in which answers to requests and material from other sources are stored. In the framework of the network operation access to these documentation systems is available to all EURYDICE Units.

The data bases of many of the EURYDICE Units, including the European Unit, have been computerized, when the amount of information requested and stored justified this.

The majority of the National Units, with the assistance of the European Unit, have compiled national dossiers covering key features of their Member State's education system.

The European Unit has put together a Community dossier on the main aspects of the Community action programmes. These dossiers when exchanged allow each participating unit to answer questions of a factual nature on basic structures quickly, without formal channelling between units.

When, however, new data has to be assembled from all Member States, translated, analysed, and presented in a form acceptable to the user, a delay of some 4 to 8 weeks must be expected.

Analysis and communication

In addition to responding to the formal requests, many EURYDICE Units take the opportunity to exploit their growing stock of comparative information on education policy issues by selective dissemination of processed data in the form of overviews, analyses and thematic dossiers. The European Community Education Action Programme with the documentary assistance of the European EURYDICE Unit organizes information seminars, special meetings of experts on themes of common interest, exchanges of teachers and administrators, and issues topical papers aimed at providing policy information on matters currently important to EURYDICE users.

- 8 This involves the increasing use of video, film, and the electronic storage and communication of data.

Since each National EURYDICE Unit is embedded in the structure of its national education system and administration, it will have its own cooperation with other organizations which are also active in the area of education information, documentation and administration.

In several Member States established national education policy information networks feed data to and disseminate news coming from the National EURYDICE Unit.

The EUDISED Thesaurus

EURYDICE is outward looking. The Commission's links with the Council of Europe in Strasbourg encourage the flow of education information between the Community and other States in Europe. They also ensure the jointly managed automated development of the Eudised Thesaurus, now available in all Community languages, an instrument for information processing in the field of education, which provides the Member States of both organizations with a regularly updated tool to facilitate the exchange of education information.

Management of EURYDICE

The management of EURYDICE is assured by regular meetings of the EURYDICE Steering Group, bringing together the Heads of the National EURYDICE Units and the European Unit under the chairmanship of a representative of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Education.

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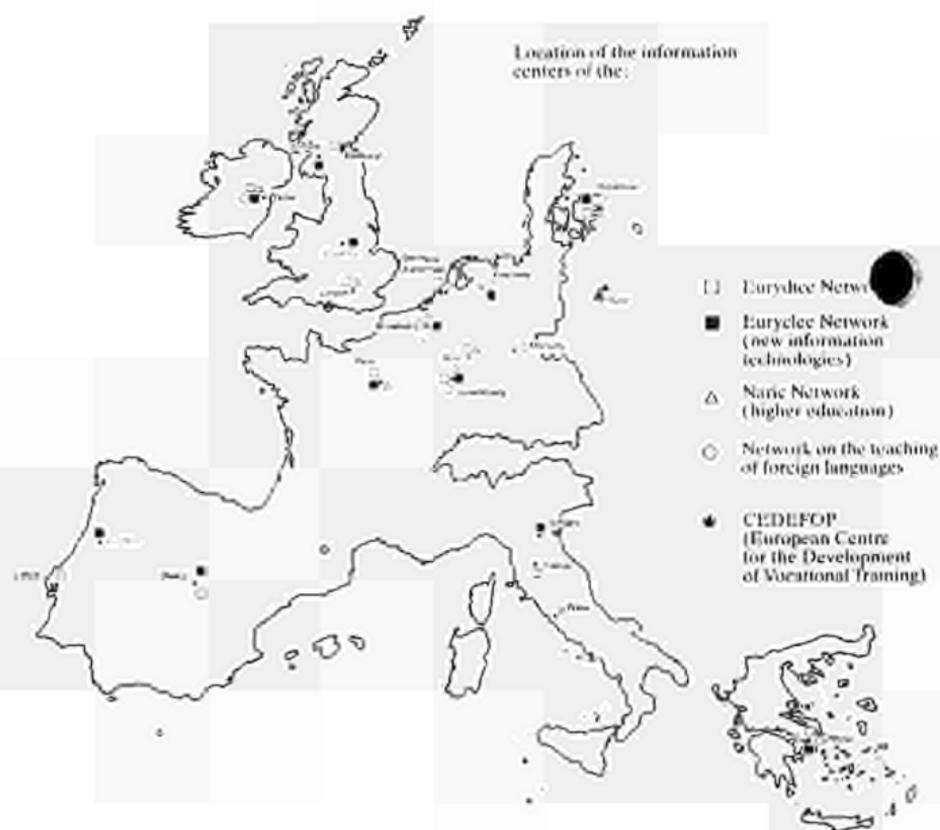
The European Unit prepares for and organizes these meetings.

The Education Committee of the European Community oversees the general development of EURYDICE.

Specialized education information networks for practitioners covering data on the introduction of the new information technologies, the teaching of foreign languages and academic recognition

- 10 Specialized information services on these themes designed to serve practitioners have been established. Focal points have been designated in each Member State, supported and activated within the framework of the European Community Education Action Programme with the technical assistance of the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels. Unlike the original EURYDICE Units, these focal points are not usually within the Ministries, but based on specialized expertise in existing established centres and services in close contact with their practitioner users.

The setting up of the specialized networks within a Community framework allows EURYDICE to draw on their expertise as well as opening information channels for teachers and students in all Member States.



Educational cooperation in the Community

11

The education systems in the twelve Community countries vary considerably and this variety, which is the result of historic and cultural factors, itself constitutes a great wealth which should be preserved. On the other hand it is in the interest of everyone to draw benefit from the experiences and projects of partner countries within the Community.

One of the main objectives of the Community Education Action Programme from the outset has been to extend mutual understanding of Member States' education systems, the similarities or differences in basic structures, legal and administrative, as well as of the major changes arising from new policy initiatives and governmental decisions in the various Member States. A deliberate effort to this end has been made through the programme of activities sponsored by the Education Committee of senior education officials of the Member States meeting monthly with representatives of the Commission, to improve the collective capacity to learn about and from each other. This pooling of information is essential since the historic connections of some member countries individually have not always been primarily with those who are now their partners within the European Community.

The growing collective understanding of each others' systems and structures of education provides the basic foundation on which a wide variety of practical projects of collaboration can be established in the education field. It forms an essential part of the long-term effort required through partnership between the different Member States and the Commission to encourage a multiplicity of exchanges, joint projects and pooled endeavours on themes of mutual concern.

- Eurydice's kontorer
Eurydice - Informationsstellen
Eurydice Information Units
Unités du Réseau Eurydice
Unità di Informazione Eurydice
Eurydice Informatiediensten
12 Μονάδες του Δικτύου Πληροφοριών
Ευρυδική
Unidades de la Red Eurydice
Unidades da Rede Eurydice

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Eurydice European Unit
Rue Archimède 17/B 17
B-1040 Brussels
Tel.: 230.03.82/230.03.98
Telex: 65398 eurydi b
Telefax: 230.65.62

BELGIQUE/BELGIE

Unité francophone d'Eurydice
Ministère de l'Education Nationale
Organisation des Etudes
Boulevard Pacheco 34
B-1000 Bruxelles
Tel.: 219.45.80 (poste 199 + 102)
Nederlandstalige nationale dienst van Eurydice
Ministerie van Onderwijs
Informatie- en Documentatiedienst
Departement van Onderwijs
Koningstraat 172
B-1000 Brussel
Tel.: 219.41.67

DANMARK

Eurydice's Informationskontor i Danmark
Undervisningsministeriet
Frederiksholms Kanal 25 D
DK-1220 København K
Tel.: 92.52.01
Telex: 22275
Telefax: 92.55.47

BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND

Eurydice Informationsstelle beim
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft
Heinemannstrasse 2

D-5300 Bonn 2

Tel.: 57.21.91

Telex: 885666

Telefax: 57.20.96

Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz
der Kultusminister der Länder

Nassestrasse 8

D-5300 Bonn 1

Tel.: 50.12.70

Telex: 886587

ESPAÑA

Unidad Nacional de Eurydice
Centro Nacional de Investigación
y Documentación Educativa

Ciudad Universitaria s/n

España - 28040 Madrid

Tel.: 449.66.81/449.77.00

Telefax: 221.37.75

FRANCE

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice
Ministère de l'Education Nationale

I.R.I.

110, rue de Grenelle

F-75007 Paris

Tel.: 45.39.25.75 (poste 3799 + 3585)

Telex: 270925

Telefax: 45.44.57.87

HELLAS

Evrydiki

Ypourgio Paidias ke Thriskevmaton

Diefthinsi Evropaikis Kinotitas

Mitropoleos 15

GR-10185 Athens

Tel.: 323.74.80

Telex: 216270

14 **IRELAND**

National Eurydice Unit
Department of Education
Room 210
Marlborough Street
IRL-Dublin 1
Tel.: 74.02.07
Telex: 31136
Telefax: 72.95.53

ITALIA

L'Unità Nazionale di Eurydice
Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione
Biblioteca di Documentazione Pedagogica
Palazzo Gerini, Via Buonarroti, 10
I-50122 Firenze
Tel.: 241.187/241.188

LUXEMBOURG

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice
Ministère de l'Education Nationale
Boulevard Royal, 6
L-2440 Luxembourg
Tel.: 46.802.551
Telex: 3311 MENJ LU

NEDERLAND

Nationale dienst van Eurydice
Centrale Directie Documentatie
Ministerie van Onderwijs en Wetenschappen
Postbus 25.000
NL-2700 LZ Zoetermeer
Tel.: 53.19.11 (poste 3497)
Telex: 32636
Telefax: 51.26.51

PORTUGAL

Unidade Nacional de Eurydice
Ministério da Educação e Cultura
Gabinete de Estudos e Planeamento
Av. Miguel Bombarda, 20
Portugal - 1093 Lisboa Codex
Tel.: 73.60.95/76.20.66
Telex: 63553 GEPMEC P
Telefax: 73.45.38

UNITED KINGDOM

Eurydice Unit London
National Foundation for Educational Research
The Mere, Upton Park
GB-Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ
Tel.: 74.123
Telefax: 69.16.32

Eurydice Unit Edinburgh

Scottish Council for Research in Education
15 St John Street
GB-Edinburgh EH8 8JR
Tel.: 557.29.44

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