

T A S K   F O R C E  
H U M A N   R E S O U R C E S  
E D U C A T I O N  
T R A I N I N G  
Y O U T H



# **EURYDICE**

## **The Education Information Network in the European Community**



Commission of the European Communities





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**EURYDICE**  
**The Education Information Network**  
**in the European Community**

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Education is a key issue for debate among the Member States of the European Community and has a higher priority than ever before. The education systems of the countries of the European Community are striking in their diversity, yet this very diversity is a source of cultural richness. If Member States are to have the best possible understanding of each other's education systems, the provision of information is vital and presents a major and inescapable challenge.

## ★ The Network : it aims and operation

The EURYDICE network provides a means of exchanging information in relation to both the systems of education and educational policy at national and Community level. It thus helps to reinforce cooperation between the Member States of the European Community.

When the first action programme for co-operation in the field of education was adopted in 1976, the Ministers agreed that there was a need for increased and improved dissemination of information on educational developments in the European Community. The EURYDICE network, which became operational in 1980, has been recognised by the specific Resolution on EURYDICE adopted in 1990 as the principal instrument for providing information on national and Community structures, systems and developments in the field of education.

According to their individual education structures, the Member States have each designated one or more National Units to participate in the network. The Commission of the European Communities has established the EURYDICE European Unit which coordinates and stimulates the network and provides it with administrative and technical support.

Most of the EURYDICE National Units are located within the Member States' education ministries; the others maintain close links with theirs.

The heads of the EURYDICE Units meet twice a year under the Chairmanship of the Commission. Training seminars on the education systems, study visits on information

and documentation techniques and specialised working parties are organised regularly among the EURYDICE Units.

## ★ **Types of information**

During the network's early days, information was exchanged on the topics defined in the Community's framework for co-operation in the field of education, with priority given to information on the education systems and the national reforms in the Member States. Community activities in the field of education have subsequently influenced the nature of the information exchanged, which now covers two principal fields:

- information on the education policy of each Member State and on the organisation of its education system;
- comprehensive information on Community policy in the areas of education, training and youth.

NOTE: Specific information relating to European Community programmes such as ERASMUS and COMETT is chiefly the responsibility of their respective national and Community agencies.

## ★ **The services**

The network provides two kinds of service:

- an enquiry service aimed at providing reliable information for national and Community authorities;
- the preparation of analyses, reports and summaries on priority subjects of common interest.

Following the 1990 Resolution, it was decided to strengthen these services.

## ★ **Eurydice Users and Access to the Network**

The national authorities determine the organisation of their National Unit(s) and define the arrangements for access to the network's services in consultation with their Unit(s).

The EURYDICE enquiry service is directly available to the authorities responsible for education.

Analyses, studies and general reports are specifically prepared to meet the needs of policy makers. However, the resulting publications are made available to a wider public.

## ★ Dissemination of Information

### Data bases

A textual data base outlining the structures of the various education systems is currently being developed. All the EURYDICE National Units are preparing information dossiers according to common criteria. The EURYDICE European Unit is in overall charge of collating the information in computerised form and ensuring continuous updating. The data will be sent on diskette to the National Units for incorporation into their information systems.



Some EURYDICE Units, including the European Unit, have organised their own **bibliographical data bases**. These involve the computerization of bibliographical references to the documentation available in their offices. About 60% of the references on the EURYDICE European Unit's database comprise documents originating from European Community institutions; the other references relate to documents received from Member States or published by international bodies active in the field of education. A list of the latest additions to the data base is distributed by the European Unit periodically on request.

It is intended to make the information in these data bases more widely accessible in future, in particular in collaboration with public or private data management services.

## Publications

The **themes of publications** include Member States' education policies and general information on Community activities and programmes.

- Publications on the **education systems** deal with, inter alia, administrative structures, education reform, compulsory education, the school year and topics of interest to several Member States, e.g. teachers' conditions of service, equality of opportunity.



- The EURYDICE network also contributes towards the drafting of background for the meetings of Senior Officials which are convened by the President of the Education Committee of the Council.

- The production and distribution of **comprehensive information on general aspects of the Community's actions and programmes in the fields of education, training and youth** are undertaken by the European Unit on an ad hoc basis at the request of the Commission.

The EURYDICE European Unit has also produced other information materials, such as communiqués, practical guides to EC programmes, posters and so forth.

Since 1985, several EURYDICE Units have on their own initiative exploited replies provided within the framework of the enquiry service to produce comparative analyses setting out basic information about all 12 Member States on subjects reflecting national priorities.

Since 1989, the Commission has provided financial support for the production of transnational analyses on topics of common interest to Member States. These analyses have been carried

out by one or more EURYDICE Units or by outside consultants.

## Organisation of Dissemination

Publications are mainly disseminated through the network's Units.

EURYDICE Units provide information for officials at ministerial or regional level, wherever possible using local or national computer networks. Some Units also contribute to the preparation of articles and official announcements on education policy.

When the opportunity arises, EURYDICE Units disseminate information at European, national and local exhibitions and conferences organised in their own countries.

Wherever possible, the Units provide links between the different agencies providing information services concerned with national education policies and structures, and the European Community's education programmes (ERASMUS, COMETT, LINGUA and so forth).

The EURYDICE European Unit is responsible for coordinating the production of all the network's publications and for their distribution to the Community institutions. It regularly produces a list of new publications which is sent to the Units in the network and to a number of persons regarded as policy-makers and/or potential «multipliers» of the information.

Currently the network is targeting cooperation with outside bodies so as to achieve a wider dissemination. Joint publication agreements with public and private publishers should also contribute to reaching a wider public.

## ★ European and International Partners

### CEDEFOP

EURYDICE and CEDEFOP - the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - are complementary bodies whose role includes the dissemination of information in the fields of education and training. Collaboration between them takes

tangible form in their joint terminological work and ongoing exchanges of information. There is also close cooperation in the development of the data bases and publications.

## International institutions

The network is in continuous contact with a number of international institutions. There are standing arrangements for the exchange of information between EURYDICE and the Council of Europe. They are joint managers of the **European Education Thesaurus** for which the EURYDICE European Unit, as terminology co-ordinator, provides technical expertise on behalf of the Commission.

The outcomes of conferences, seminars and other work in the field of education, undertaken by international organisations such as UNESCO, OECD and the ILO, help to enrich the EURYDICE data bases. These international organisations also receive EURYDICE publications.

## ★ Future Challenges

EURYDICE has, since 1980, been recognised as the main source of information on education in the European Community.

Cooperation based on the principle of active and collaborative subsidiarity has already produced tangible results.

During ten years of operation, the network has built up a considerable information base. EURYDICE has demonstrated the interest in and the importance of its role in the dissemination of information on education to political decision-makers and to a wider general public.

Although the EURYDICE network has adapted as far as possible to the growth and diversification of demand, the acceleration of policy development in Europe in recent years is generating new demands for information and this calls for further modifications and adjustments.

## The European Community and Education

The inclusion of education in the Treaty on European Union, signed at Maastricht on 7 February 1992, brings EURYDICE to a turning point.

The Treaty states that *«The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity».*



*Salon de l'étudiant, Brussels*

The targets of the Community's action will include, amongst others, *«developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States».*

This recognition of the importance of, and the European Community's role in, the exchange of information presents a considerable challenge to EURYDICE.

The experience of EURYDICE's first ten years provides a useful basis to be taken into consideration in the context of progressive development towards an overall information system, an effective node in the exchanges to be developed at European, national, regional and local level.

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