



### Steiner Waldorf schools receive European Funding



At the end of August 2008 it was announced that 12 Steiner Waldorf Schools across Europe, with five national and regional federations, ECSWE and two British accreditation organisations (ASDAN and N-OCN), have been successful in a bid for European funding under the Lifelong learning programme - COMENIUS. The funding will allow the schools to take part in a two-year project called "**European Portfolio Certificate - EPC**", in order to explore the design of new qualifications pathways. The Project could enhance opportunities for students in further learning and employment.

This project was initiated by the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education and the German working group on Qualifications and Outcomes together with the Potsdam Waldorf School. The project coordinator is Thilo Koch of the Potsdam Waldorf School.

The group of 12 Steiner schools come from the following 8 European Countries:

#### Germany:

- Waldorfschule Potsdam (coordinator)
- Rudolf Steiner Schule Bochum

#### Belgium:

- Hiberniaschool

#### Czech Republic:

- Strední skola - Waldorfské lyceum

#### Denmark:

- Rudolf Steinerskolen I Aarhus
- Rudolf Steiner-Skolen I Odense

#### England:

- Michael Hall School
- Steiner Academy Hereford

#### Holland:

- Rudolf Steinerschool Haarlem Marecollege 7

#### Norway:

- Rudolf Steinerskolen i Vestfold

#### Slovenia:

- Waldorfska sola Ljubljana.

The partnership aims to create and implement a **European Portfolio Certificate (EPC)** for students who complete a Steiner Waldorf School education at the end of the secondary level, open to adaptation by other interested schools. The partnership will work on common criteria for a European Portfolio, taking into consideration the Europass framework for the transparency and transferability of qualifications and competences and the need to keep the individuality of each School locality.

The project will focus on:

- setting up common criteria for a EPC;
- creating a common folder for a EPC;
- editing guidelines for other schools interested in implementing the EPC in the future.

The EPC folder will contain:

- a final report;
  - certificates of portfolio work;
  - the student's own selection of individual learning outcomes.
- Each Portfolio Certificate could contain the following key elements:
- an abstract, by the student, of his or her portfolio work;
  - a description, by the student, of how the achievements were attained;
  - a self-evaluation of the student;
  - an external evaluation (by a teacher or other qualified person).

Portfolio Certificates can also be issued in relation to extra-curricular activities, sport, music, IT, etc..

They are not only a summative end product, but also cornerstone of an effective formative assessment process.

This project is part of a process that has been under way for over five years among Steiner Waldorf schools, the aim of which is to translate the benefits of project work, plays, work experience, concerts, multi-language activities and many other types of non-formal learning activities that flourish in a Waldorf upper school as well as informal learning from outside formal learning into input for a leaving certificate that gains the bearer access to Higher Education, Further Education or employment.

This variety of formal, non-formal and even informal learning outcomes have not yet been adequately acknowledged by vocational and academic training institutions, since documentation of learning outcomes has usually only covered the formal part of education, and these generally without making specific learning outcomes visible. The project partners believe that the development of a competence based portfolio will be beneficial not only to their own school but also to many other schools. The former "Gold Standards" of A-Level, Abitur, Baccalaureat, Maturita etc. are increasingly being called into question (many Universities already do their own testing) because:

- they often do not assess adequately of what is learned at school;
- they eliminate many candidates for Higher and Further Education by selection at course entrance level;
- there is a high drop-out rate among those who gain university access with old-fashioned "Gold standard" qualifications (in some cases as high as 30%).

The EPC will address these problems by focusing on the following aspects:

- recognition and increasing visibility of a far wider range of learning outcomes (formal, informal and non-formal);

- the students' own choice of some EPC components, and hence a greater sense of ownership of the certificate.
- pedagogical benefits on the students' part that come from years of portfolio/project work: students become accustomed to reflect on their own learning and to cogently present their work to others and to benefit from the resulting peer assessment;
- increased motivation resulting from this process, a boost in the quality of teaching (breaking with old habits) and consequent improvements in relationships

(student-student, student-teacher and even student-parent).

All institutions participating in the project have the backing of their national associations and/or federations of Steiner Waldorf Schools and of the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education.

At the beginning, half way and at the end of the Comenius EPC project, the Potsdam Waldorf School will host three European Conferences for all Steiner Waldorf schools and any other school interested in working with the EPC project. The first Conference was

held in Potsdam on the 16th of October 2008 and the next one will be in October 2009.

Anybody interested in receiving material or in participating, please contact Thilo Koch, Project coordinator (koch@ecswe.org) or Chiara Carones (ecswe@waldorf.net).

A EPC webpage is going to be set up at [www.ecswe.org](http://www.ecswe.org) very soon, with samples of Portfolio work and useful information about progress of the work.

*Chiara Carones, Thilo Koch and Detlef Hardorp*

## A vocational Steiner school in Flanders (Belgium)

In September 2008 the 8 Flemish secondary Steiner schools, which already form a recognised 'school cluster' ('schools community'), started a vocational **4 year** (9-12th class) vocational programme, separate from the 'general' programme. The first year of this programme is in place in **Lier**, a small town 20 km from Antwerp, starting with one class of 16 pupils. It provides a continuation after the pre-vocational stream (7th and 8th class) that was established from 2006 onwards in Antwerp-Berchem.

The **programme** is a compromise between the official educational regulations -that intensify the academic pressure in general education, formally separated from technical and artistic education- and a project of our own for more practical, '**craft**' ways of learning that has been the wish of many parents and pupils for a long time.

The vocational areas that provide an **integrated content** for class 9 and 10 – the first stage of vocational education is:

- **building**: sustainable finishing and maintenance of houses; a technical realm;
- **decoration**: an artistic dimension;
- **green** and nature: care for and maintenance; an ecological component;
- **care** for people: children and elderly; integration of social and

communicative attitudes towards training in these fields later (class 11 and 12).

As a specific programme, the **profile** that we strive for is:

- a broad and many-sided stage of training, giving wide chances on the labour market, being orientated towards specific professions as well as the cognitive and artistic;
- developing basic competences: generic as well as vocational;
- postponing more definitive choices for specialised studies or vocations;
- a contribution to individual growth, sustainability, ecological and social quality.

In Belgium vocational training is a part of the state-funded educational system, providing a civil certification after 4 years of schooling. With the class 9 we have now started the first half of this training. The initiative group is now planning the 11th and 12th class programme.

The **establishment** of this programme will need at least 4 years of investigation, inspiration out of the "Study of man", work on contents, organisational preparation, discussion with enterprises, official recognition of the curriculum in 2 stages, searching for capable teachers, and especially a 4 to 5 years pre-financing.

### The motives

The Belgian educational framework asks pupils to make a choice after class 8 from the three areas: vocational, technical or a general, more theoretical education.

In this situation comprehensive schools do not succeed in giving the right opportunities to all pupils. Until now, all secondary Steiner schools provided only a more theoretical and academic education.

To keep our right for state funds, the Steiner schools movement had to make a compromise with the authorities. For more than 10 years now the Steiner schools have been struggling with the ongoing state project of the 'attainment targets' ("eindtermen"): benchmarks and outcome standards that form a compulsory core curriculum. In 1996 we obtained derogations and since then we have formulated and negotiated our own, alternative attainment targets for primary and secondary education. As a result of this, we have to guarantee that our pupils reach certain standards after class 6, class 8, class 10 and class 12. The good thing is that we can evaluate them ourselves. We obtained the right to give the pupils a leaving certificate in class 12 that gives them the right to enter higher education.



The downside is that, each year, many pupils have to leave the Flemish Steiner schools, usually after class 6 or 8, but also after class 10, because they don't reach the standards. We have to let them go to other schools, where they can enter vocational, technical or even general education with lower theoretical attainment targets than we have agreed too.

Teachers feel very frustrated about the fact that they have to send pupils away, and parents and children are often very disappointed. Also the pressure on teachers due to increasing differences in learning styles and abilities grows constantly. Alternatives are necessary.

The first alternative we can offer now is this new prevocational and vocational Steiner education. However there's a hope that we can look for other alternatives in the future.

**A pre-vocational stream established**  
Supported financially by the Federation of Rudolf Steiner Schools and the new 'cluster' of secondary schools, the **Antwerp** school 'De Es' (Ash tree) started a pre-vocational class 7'B' and 8 'B', called 'De Wilg' (Willow tree), with children coming from 5 primary schools in the Antwerp region. "B" stands for 'beroeps' (Dutch for vocational). Most of the additional funds provided by the new cluster were needed to invest in the start of this vocational programme.

A specific instruction **method** was introduced: learning by doing e.g. starting the day with practical work and having main lessons afterwards and artistic work in the afternoon, and connecting academic learning with the practical projects (e.g. painting the classroom and mathematics, or gardening and language) Of necessity the learning processes are also more individualised.

Youngsters develop through very different **learning styles**. Some learn through thinking processes and afterwards act accordingly. Others learn by doing, by working, and reflect on their activities afterwards. Both ways of learning should

be dealt with as of equal value. For both, an education should be much more than dealing with knowledge or training.

We hope that in the future also other schools might follow by organising a 'B-stream' as well, adopting the specific curriculum, the know-how and experience developed in the Antwerp initiative. There's a big interest in doing so, but the main **obstacle** is financial.

## THE VOCATIONAL UPPER SCHOOL

### The preparation

The preparation for this programme required, among other things, a lot of liaison: talking to, writing to and discussing with umbrella organizations of the employment offices, entrepreneurs, school advisory services, pupil guidance services, the building trade, the social service sector, the ecological sector... etc. The initiative group negotiated with people in the Department of Education, the Minister's political advisors, the heads of the inspection for secondary education, and members of the Flemish Education Council.

We chose the school of **Lier** for beginning this vocational training. The school has building potential, is situated in the middle of a business area but still has a lot of green surroundings, has good public transport connections, is very enthusiastic and wants to expand its number of pupils. Moreover many individuals connected to the school support the preparatory work. However, the school depends on the financial support of all of the other schools and outside sources to be able to fund this in the future. The initiative group will also continue its supportive work for the years to come.

### Competences

As in the general upper school we strive for the development of **competences**. In our competence curriculum for the general stream we included three general competences: observation, thought and judgment; and six specific competence areas: research, artistic sense, design, spirit of enterprise (in the sense of taking initiative), team spirit, self-reflection.

For vocational education, research ability can mean fostering curiosity and discovery; artistic ability can mean to strive for quality and care but also to act within the situation as it exists; design ability can mean to plan as well as execute; enterprise ability can mean to take initiative and take decisions independently; team spirit involves respecting work agreements and deadlines; self reflection means being able to look back and adjust.

### Artistry

Special attention will be given to the development of artistic exercises and acting in an artistic way. In a modern economy with increasing automation there is a growing need for workers that can act flexibly, take the initiative and responsibility for adequate choices in open, unexpected situations, monitored by broad observation, aesthetic judgment, and non-violent communication. Research has proven that the creative competence of 'acting artistically' is an important quality in dealing with these situations, e.g. the experiences gathered by the GAB and Michael Brater in Munich.

### Fundraising

A lot of private financing will be necessary since state funding is only available the year after a class started. So fundraising is an important part of our work to make the vocational stream possible.

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