

Conference minutes

«Europe Tomorrow?»

Summary of the work done by
180 Scottish, French and Italian young pupils
gathered in the premises of Liceo Scientifico «T. Patini»
at Castel di Sangro
on May 25, 2006

1- What are for you, so far, the positive aspects of the construction of a united Europe?

Europe means **peace** after the disappearance of wars.

Europe makes the respect of **Human Rights** possible. For example, Respect between the peoples regardless of their creeds and differences as well as the development of a European Justice.

Since 1957, after a period of 50 years of unification one can observe a greater « oneness » of the continent, a greater closeness among the different states, and **a progressive integration of the countries**. The implementation of European Institutions, such as the European Parliament, the Brussels Commission have allowed progress towards closer regulations.

Enlargement is considered as real progress, as is financing the development of applicant countries and recent members through the introduction of European policies such as ACP. Unified Europe has made possible **social progress**, improvement in the standard of living, adoption of common consumption standards and a better environment-awareness.

The difference in ideas allowing debate and mutual enrichment, the sharing of one's culture, is considered as another positive aspect connected to the **opening of the Schengen zone borders** and awareness at others. It also encourages a change in the mentality of people. We believe that **more and more people feel European while they still keep their own identity**.

The recently published school book of contemporary history common to Germany and France has been mentioned by one of the groups.

The **common currency** makes travelling abroad and meeting people much easier and the CEB allows better management of the economy.

The **free exchange of goods** and better integration in the world economy lead to an improvement in trading performance in the face of other economic blocks (US and Japan); competition makes delocating firms to Eastern European countries possible, although this may lead to tensions in and between the first country members of the Union. However, these differences should lessen in the long term.

United Europe promotes **scientific, technical, and industrial progress** too. Programs such as Socrates, Erasmus, Voltaire, Bologna Process, along with the opportunity to study in any other European country. **European Diplomas**, equivalence for the diplomas, educational, cultural, linguistic school exchanges drew the seminar participants' attention.

2- In your view, what are the main failures in the building of Europe?

After highlighting the positive aspects, the participants showed they were aware of the limits of the process of European unification.

In the institutional field, **the failure of the ratification of the project of a constitutional treaty** (rejected by France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) makes life at 25 more difficult, considering the present texts had been written for a maximum of 15 members. The text of the constitutional treaty was far too complicated for the citizens and should have first been adopted by the Parliaments, considering the Members of Parliament know what they deal with, whereas an ordinary citizen lacks the necessary information on the treaty. The participants regretted the political disagreements caused by internal problems.

According to us, the European Parliament does not have enough power when compared to the European Commission. Decision making will not be easy with 25 country members who still bear in mind the defense of their own national interests. The failure of a common defense, and a common foreign policy is a perfect example of the situation (lack of a common policy regarding the war in Iraq).

All in all, the **permanent 'euro pessimism'** is worrying (France and the Constitution; The UK, Denmark and Sweden as regards the Euro, « nobody should refuse the Euro », every country is still not a member of the Schengen zone). Furthermore, the students underline the absence of personal conviction of the supporters of European integration when dealing with countries who fear the loss of their cultural identity. Finally the lack of clearly defined borders for Europe has also been underlined in so far as it increases the fears.

The rise in the cost of living, mainly since the switch to the Euro, even though wages have remained stagnant, as in Italy for example, has been noted together with the fact that **economic Europe has been given a too important place**, and more specifically monetary Europe. «If the Euro collapses, everything will collapse».

The economic problems of the leading countries such as France and Germany have been noted; the access of Eastern countries will be a heavy burden on the budgets of richer countries, first it will cause unemployment, but within a few decades the development of the countries who became members in 2004 will be underway and the balance will be restored. The economic levelling of the newcomers will not be an easy task mainly when internal differences are so important (as between the North and the South of Italy for example). This difficult levelling up, allowing the entrance of countries which are so different may lead to more corruption, black market, and all sorts of traffic. Finally, the CAP which encourages mass production, of a lesser quality, by distributing aids that are not always fair, has been denounced; a CAP which absorbs too large a part of the European budget.

Finally, **the still existing linguistic gap** is worrying, for the everyday use of a real language of communication is too scarce, school systems are not yet standardised (curriculum, school hours...), « we think of ourselves as French citizens before feeling Europeans ». Too few people feel they are Europeans, **and more attention should be given to scientific research. Furthermore, there is not yet any global agreement to validate the diplomas delivered by every country.**

3- How do you picture Europe in the coming years?

Europe should widen its horizons so as to create a true European mind, but at the moment the goal should be: **strengthening Europe before opening the borders to other countries.**

European policies of integration should be studied more thoroughly, and if needed by stages, so that each country can progress at its own rhythm and the integration of the newcomers can become a success.

A Europe for everyone, a Europe in which travelling, studying in a school or university of another country will be easy, a Europe in which the delivery of **a diploma accepted in every country** will make **employment possible anywhere.**

A Europe in which everyone will easily understand the others speaking a **common, well mastered communication language.**

A Europe of **greater scientific research.**

A Europe in which each country, each region will keep their own custom, traditions, values: **A Europe of peoples, a confederate Europe.**

A European government with lasting institutions, a common international representation and a common army.

An economically and socially balanced Europe, sticking together.

A Europe integrating minorities, migrants as well.

A Europe in full economic growth, with reduced unemployment, thriving exchanges and a currency that will be a real common currency.

A Europe respectful of the environment, organising **humanitarian actions** and **promoting peace.**

A Europe which is a model country.

A powerful Europe faces to a powerful USA.

4- What concrete means can you think of to implement the construction of Europe as you imagine it ?

Programs for developing **exchanges between countries** were put forward by the participants so as to build up a kind of European culture without eliminating local ones. Setting up **meetings between young European citizens** in order to help them know one another too (of UCAPE youth seminar type).

Young people should be involved in building these programs. For example, **elaborating an educational program dealing with the knowledge of Europe** at school as part of the syllabus. This would allow setting up projects together with other young Europeans, in order for them to discover and have a better knowledge of Europe. Human Rights would be a central part in this program.

Diplomas recognised at a European level, will help to bring about equality between Europeans. **Language learning from a very young age** should be improved, especially a communication language to make exchanges and tourism easier. Finally, **harmonising our different school systems** is also a need.

From the institutional point of view, we can imagine the **establishment of a European Confederacy** with a constitution including institutions which will be thoroughly explained. To make this constitution more democratic, we think there should be a European government having one World Representative such as a Foreign Minister and Europe should also have a European army with humanitarian aims, and secure the respect of Religious freedom at every level: social, political, educational...

In order to promote a **well-adapted social policy**, wealth should be redistributed by means of a minimum European salary, a pro-birth policy, family assistance, and the integration of the disabled.

In the future, the UK should be more closely integrated. Aid programs for disadvantaged areas or countries should be extended. **Forthcoming enlargement must be well prepared** and ratified by every country (Turkey). The aid programs for the disadvantaged countries in Europe will selectively help those in need in order to allow them to reach the level of more developed ones and have the advantage of a better standard of living.