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EUROPE IN THE CLASSROOM:
SURVEYS OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL-LEAVERS

by

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1 Introduction:

This paper describes surveys of teachers and school-leavers undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) on behalf of the European Parliament Information Office in Dublin. The main aims of the surveys were to assess knowledge of the European Community (EC), and attitudes to European issues, including a European dimension in education and working in other European countries. The surveys also asked about the usefulness of teaching aids produced by the Community institutions.

In particular, prior to the survey, the European Parliament Information Office had sponsored a European Education project [the project] in association with the Irish Council of the European Movement. The aim of the project was to help teachers make optimal use of material, on the Parliament and the Community supplied by the Information Office, and to demonstrate the relevance of the Community in education. The survey was intended therefore also to draw out the attitudes to the project of those teachers whose schools had been involved.

2 Outline of paper

The aims of the surveys of teachers and school-leavers are described, followed by an account of the surveys and samples. The results of the surveys of teachers and school-leavers are given. The concluding section describes the implications. An annex describes the materials supplied by the information office and the European Education project.

3 The Surveys of teachers and school-leavers

In early 1988 the Parliament Office decided to conduct surveys of teachers and school-leavers, in order to establish some basic data on their attitudes to the "European dimension" in education, particularly in view of the current review of the curriculum for the junior cycle in post-primary schools. The survey of school-leavers was designed to provide information on school-leavers' knowledge of the Community and its institutions, and on the times in the educational cycle when they were exposed to information about the Community, and under what subject. It was also intended to elicit their attitude towards European integration, and towards the possibility of working in other EC countries.

The survey of teachers asked their attitudes to teaching about the European Community, and the need for a European dimension. It asked about the teaching materials required, and those already provided by the Community institutions, and it asked those teachers whose schools had been involved in the project to evaluate it. Finally, it asked about their attitudes to European integration, and how they had voted in the referendum on the Single European Act.

By including in the survey all teachers who had been involved in the project, and a control group of teachers who had not been so involved, it was intended to analyse the effect of the project.

4. Methodology and Samples of Both Surveys

The sample of teachers was selected in two parts:

- a. all teachers from those schools which had participated in the European Education Project
- b. a randomly selected control sample, matched by school type and location, from the remaining second level schools which had not been visited.

The sample size and response rate for this survey were

(%)	Target Sample	Achieved Sample	Response Rate
Visited Schools	209	159	76.1%
Not Visited Schools	127	94	74.0%
Total	336	253	75.2%

The sample of young people was attained by adding a series of questions to the Annual School Leavers Survey which the ESRI conducts on behalf of the Department of Labour. The sample for this enquiry is obtained by writing to an annually rotated stratified random sample of about one quarter of all second level schools in the country and requesting them to provide the names and addresses of all those who left their school in the previous academic year. A systematic one in six sample of these names is then taken which yields an initial target sample of about 2,700 persons. Some of these will be pupils who are simple changing schools and so are not eligible for inclusion in the survey. Among the 2,000 who are interviewed, about three quarters respond in person; information in respect of the remainder is supplied by parents or other relatives. Since the supplement on Europe in the Classroom involved a number of evaluative and opinion questions, it was decided to ask the supplement only of those who were responding in person. This gave the achieved response as shown below in the May 1988 survey.

Initial Target Sample (incl. not eligibles):	2740
Achieved Sample:	1994
Number answering in Person:	1385

5 Results and interpretation of both surveys

5.1 Survey of teachers

The principal conclusions to be drawn from the survey are as follows. Second-level teachers are much more in favour of current moves towards European integration than the population at large. This finding holds true irrespective of age, sex, location, type of school, size of school, subject taught, or whether or not the school had been visited by the European Education project; however, slight variations in levels of support were observed.

Nearly 97% of teachers polled considered that a European dimension, relating specifically to the EC and to moves towards further integration, should be included in the second-level curriculum. Of the remaining 3% of respondents, most indicated that either no time was available, or that a European dimension existed already. Only one respondent said it was unnecessary. Subjects where a European dimension was regarded as necessary were languages (89%), geography (82%), history (67%), economics (62%) and civics (58%).

Three-quarters of respondents did not believe that teachers would introduce a European dimension to their subjects if it were not explicitly included in the curricula for school certificate examinations. Virtually all (98%) wished to see the gradual inclusion of such a European dimension between 1988 and 1992.

There was a strong positive response to the teaching material produced in connexion with the European Education project, particularly for videos and wallcharts. There was a strong demand for more such material, and support for the idea of a teachers' handbook prepared by the EC institutions.

The European Education project itself was well received by teachers whose schools had been visited. Almost three-quarters (74%) said it had had a slight or considerable positive impact, and no negative impact was recorded. The principal improvements sought were more videos, more visits to schools and greater scope for preparation.

Details of the survey results follow.

Attitudes to European unification

Respondents were asked three questions to gauge their attitudes to European unification. The first question was a classic attitudinal question from the Eurobarometer series, in order to permit comparison with the population as a whole.

1 Are you in favour or against efforts being made to unify western Europe?

	teachers %	Eurobarometer (%) (Mar-Apr88)
very much for	62	21
for to some extent	33	42
against to some extent	2	11
very much against	0.8	4
no reply	3	22

2 How did you vote in the referendum on the Single European Act?

	teachers %	all voters %
in favour	80	31
against	13	13
abstained	4)
missing	3) 56

3 if the same referendum were held today, would you vote in favour or against?

in favour	84
against	10
missing	7

Attitudes to the European dimension in education

Respondents were then asked a series of questions to elicit their views on the European dimension in education. Were they in favour of introducing a European dimension in the second-level curriculum, and if so at what level and in which subjects? Did they believe teachers would introduce a European dimension spontaneously if it were not included in the curricula for state certificate examinations? Would they favour its gradual introduction between now and 1992? A series of questions then probed their views on the back-up necessary to help them teach a European dimension.

4 It has been suggested that the curriculum in second-level schools should include a "European dimension" reflecting Ireland's membership of the European Community and current moves towards integration. The European dimension would involve an increased emphasis on European culture and European affairs in all their aspects (historical, linguistic, geographical, economic, sociological etc) and on the development and structure of the European Economic Community itself. Do you consider that such a European dimension should be included in the second-level curriculum?

yes	244	97%
no	6	2
missing	2	1

Tests for the following variables proved statistically insignificant: age, gender, subject taught, location, school size, school type, pupil gender, and whether or not visited by the project.

Of the 6 respondents against, 3 said there was no time available, 2 said it was already sufficiently covered, and one said it was unnecessary.

5 Please specify the subjects which should in your view include a European dimension.

	necessary %	desirable %	marginal %
languages	89	11	0
geography	82	16	2
history	67	31	2
economics	62	31	7
civics	58	34	8

Some 74 respondents made further suggestions:

other	53	37	10
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6 Do you believe teachers will introduce a European dimension to their subject(s) if it is not explicitly included in the curriculum for school certificate examinations?

yes	25%
no	75%

7 Would you favour the gradual inclusion between now and 1992 of a European dimension in the curriculum of various second-level subjects?

yes	98%
no	2%

8 If yes to 7, do you think that a teacher's handbook, prepared by the EC institutions, on the European dimension to teaching of the subjects involved would be

(a) desirable?

yes	98%
no	2%

(b) sufficient to meet short-term needs?

yes	78%
no	22%

(c) Have you any comments on what such a handbook should contain or on how it should be presented? (110 replies)

	%
presentation	34
historical/geographical aspects	15
integration of other countries	10
operations of EC	8
cultural aspects	7
economic and political aspects	6
implications for Ireland	4
other	16

Two significant factors were found in 8(c) when the data were analysed by the school type variable: teachers in vocational schools were less than half as likely to emphasise presentation as teachers from secondary or other schools, but were twice as likely to emphasise cultural aspects. No other significant variables were found in responses to questions 5 - 9.

9 In the medium term, what support would teachers require in order to add a European dimension successfully to their subjects?

	yes%	no%
in-service courses	69	31
short seminars	60	40
provision of briefing material	80	20
other	27	73

Role of the Information Offices of the European Parliament and Commission
Respondents were asked about the support they received from the European Parliament and European Commission offices, and to rate the usefulness of Parliament publications and teaching aids. They were also asked what further materials they would like to receive. These questions were followed by a series designed to elicit information, where appropriate, about the impact of the project.

10 Did you receive any of the following teaching materials from the European Parliament Information Office in Dublin? If so, please say how useful you found them.

	received, very useful %	received, quite useful %	received, useless %	not received %
wallcharts	34 (48)	35 (50)	1 (2)	30
EP basic brochure	24 (34)	43 (61)	3 (5)	30
EP brochure (Irish lang)	17 (31)	28 (49)	11 (19)	44
Young Citizen suppl.	23 (48)	21 (44)	4 (8)	53
EP video	26 (58)	17 (39)	1 (2)	57
P Ustinov at EP video	18 (68)	9 (30)	1 (2)	73

Figures in brackets give percentage scores excluding 'not received'.

11 Have you received materials from the office of the European Commission in Dublin?

yes	60%
no	40%

12 Is there other teaching or support material which the EC institutions could provide?

yes	80%
no	19%
other	1%

If yes, what?

videos	38%
booklets	25%
information on EC effects on Ireland	6%
teacher exchange	5%
cultural material	5%
information on other EC countries	6%

Impact of the European Education project

Two questions aimed to discover teachers' rating of the impact of the project, and their suggestions for its improvement. This question was administered only to teachers who had taken part in the project.

13 What sort of impact has the project and its associated materials had in your school?

considerable positive impact	25%
slight positive impact	49%
little or no impact	26%
negative impact	-

14 Can you suggest any improvements which might be made in the content of the project or the way in which it is conducted? (open-ended, 56 replies)

	1st choice %	2nd choice %
more videos	20	
more visits to schools	16	11
more preparation for visit	16	37
smaller groups, simplify content	10	
trips to Europe	5	
info on EC effects on Ireland	5	
involve primary tier	5	
projects on Community	2	11
less boring lectures	2	
other	11	

5.2 Survey of school-leavers

Some 87% of respondents were in favour or very much in favour of the unification of western Europe. Their level of knowledge of the Community institutions was patchy; though 28% knew there were 12 Member States, and 29% knew the European Parliament was directly elected, only 4% knew there were 15 Irish MEPs, while only 25% volunteered a name or names of MEPs and of these nearly half were incorrect. However, 83% knew Denmark was a Member, and 77% knew that Austria was not a Member. Some 85% had heard of the European Parliament, and 68% said they would vote in the next European elections.

While 41% said they had been taught nothing about the EC at school, 52% said they had been taught about it at second-level, 2% at National (ie primary) School, and 5% at both primary and second level. The second-level subjects most mentioned, as being those in which the EC had been taught, were geography (72%), business/commerce (12%), history (11%), economics (11%) and civics (6%). The topics chiefly covered were institutions, members, facts about Member States, and trade.

Two-thirds of school-leavers would have liked to have learnt more about the Community at school, particularly about how it works, its effects on Ireland and other member states, and the effects on employment. Two thirds thought the EC would have some effect or a major effect on their lives, while nearly four-fifths thought it was quite important or very important to know about the EC.

Two-thirds of respondents had at some time considered working in another country, most likely in the UK (37%), USA (21%), Australia/New Zealand (16%), Germany (10%), or France (7%). They appeared to have a realistic appreciation of some of the problems in entering the jobs markets in these countries.

A feature of the survey was that there appeared to be little difference in the responses of school-leavers who had attended schools visited by the project. A possible reason for this could have been a tendency to select for visits schools with a greater apparent need to catch up.

Details of the results of the survey follow.

1 In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify western Europe? If for, are you very much for this, or only to some extent? If against, are you only to some extent against or very much against?

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
very much for	31	26	26	28
for	61	59	57	59
against	5	9	9	7
very much against	1	3	1	1
dont know	3	5	7	5

Knowledge of the European Community and European Parliament:

2 How many countries are now full members of the European Community (EC)?

less than 12	40	45	43	42
12	32	26	23	28
greater than 12	18	15	21	19
dont know	10	14	14	12

3 Which of the following countries are full members?

	yes	no	dont know
Austria	17	77	7
Denmark	83	12	5
Switzerland	31	63	6

4 Have you heard of the European Parliament?

yes	85
no	14

5 Is the European Parliament

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
appointed by national governments?	16	13	12	14
selected by the EC Commission?	27	22	25	26
elected directly by the citizens of each country?	31	33	25	29
dont know	27	31	38	31

6 Do you think you yourself will vote in the next European Parliament election in 1989?

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
yes	71	61	66	68
no	26	33	29	28
dont know	3	6	6	4

7 How many Irish members of the European Parliament are there?

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
less than 15	44	42	44	44
15	5	1	3	4
more than 15	8	11	15	11
dont know	44	46	38	42

8 Which Irish members of the European Parliament can you name?

none	74	75	76	75
one	16	15	14	15
two	6	4	7	6
three	2	3	2	2
four	1	1	1	1
more than four	1	2	1	1

(Of the 402 attempting an answer, the following were the % correct)

none correct	41	49	56	47
one	40	28	26	33
two	12	12	13	12
three	3	5	2	3
four or more	3	7	1	3

Teaching about the EC:

9 While you were at school, were you taught anything about the European Community?

never taught anything about EC at school	34	47	48	40
was taught about EC in National School (only)	3	3	2	3
was taught about EC in 2nd-level school (only)	57	48	45	52
National and 2nd-level	7	3	4	5

(If taught about EC at second-level) In which school subjects did you learn about the EC? (787 valid cases)

geography	72	62	73	72
business org/commerce	15	7	7	12
history	10	14	13	11
economics	13	17	6	11
civics	7	3	6	6

10 What types of thing did you learn regarding the EC while at school?

institutions	37	36	26	34
members	32	23	32	31
Member states (facts)	27	21	34	28
trade	16	26	18	18
agricultural policy	10	10	7	9
effects on Ireland	8	6	7	7
EC policy	3	3	5	3
dont know	1	3	1	1

11 Would you have liked to learn more about the EC at school?

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
yes	66	70	60	65
no	33	28	38	34
dont know	1	2	2	2

(If yes) What aspects of the EC would you have liked to learn more about?

how EC works	43	28	30	37
general	22	21	25	23
details	15	19	19	17
effects on Ireland	14	11	15	14
economies of EC	12	9	11	12
effects on member states	8	12	12	10
jobs in EC	6	11	10	8
youth grants	4	4	2	3
food surpluses	2	2	3	2
negatives(disadvantages)	1	1	1	1
other	2	1	2	2

12 Do you think the EC has or is likely to have an effect on your life?

major effect	25	15	14	20
some effect	50	51	45	48
little or no effect	24	34	39	30
dont know	1	1	3	1

13 How important do you think it is to know about the EC?

very important	38	29	22	31
quite important	46	48	50	48
of little or no importance	16	22	26	20
dont know	1	2	2	1

Attitudes towards working in other EC and non-EC countries:

14 Have you ever considered working in another country?

yes	69	67	60	66
no	31	33	39	34
dont know	0	1	1	1

15 If you were to go to work in another country, which country would it be most likely to be? (open)

United Kingdom	35	40	41	37
Germany (Fed Rep)	12	12	7	10
France	10	4	4	7
Benelux	2	1	2	2
Other EC	2	2	2	2
USA	21	25	21	21
Aust/NZ	14	13	19	16
rest-of-world	3	3	2	3
nowhere	4	1	2	3

Participants were then asked (questions 16-19) their views on a number of statements about other countries. Their replies, given below, are summarised in Q.20.

16 Jobs are reasonably easy to get in:

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
16.1 Ireland?				
agree	11	15	10	11
disagree	89	85	90	89
16.2 United Kingdom?				
agree	64	69	70	67
disagree	36	31	30	34
16.3 USA?				
agree	76	81	76	76
disagree	24	19	24	24
16.4 Germany?				
agree	56	54	45	52
disagree	44	46	56	48
16.5 France?				
agree	33	34	30	32
disagree	67	66	70	68
16.6 Netherlands?				
agree	31	25	26	29
disagree	69	75	74	72

17 I would have language difficulties working in:

17.1 UK?				
agree	1	2	1	1
disagree	99	98	99	99
17.2 USA?				
agree	1	3	2	2
disagree	99	97	98	98
17.3 Germany?				
agree	80	86	89	84
disagree	20	14	11	16
17.4 France?				
agree	59	79	75	67
disagree	41	21	25	33
17.5 Netherlands?				
agree	75	83	83	79
disagree	25	17	17	21

18 I would have visa problems working in:

	2ndry	comp/com	voc	total
18.1 United Kingdom				
agree	3	5	4	4
disagree	97	95	96	96
18.2 USA				
agree	78	79	79	78
disagree	22	21	21	22
18.3 Germany				
agree	31	24	43	34
disagree	69	76	57	66
18.4 France				
agree	26	18	36	29
disagree	74	82	64	72
18.5 Netherlands				
agree	24	22	36	28
disagree	77	78	65	73

19 I would like to live in:

19.1 UK				
agree	32	34	39	35
disagree	68	67	61	65
19.2 USA				
agree	47	54	53	50
disagree	53	47	47	50
19.3 Germany				
agree	32	36	23	29
disagree	69	64	77	71
19.4 France				
agree	38	36	29	35
disagree	62	64	71	65
19.5 Netherlands				
agree	21	21	17	20
disagree	79	79	83	81

20 Summary of questions 16-19:

Ease or difficulty of working in other countries (all respondents)

	UK	USA	Ger	Fra	Neth
easy to get jobs	67	76	52	32	29
no lang difficulties	99	98	16	33	21
no visa problems	96	22	66	72	73
would like to live in	35	50	29	35	20

6 Conclusions

The conclusions from the surveys are that both teachers and pupils would welcome a greater emphasis on Europe, including the European Community, in school. The frame of reference of appropriate subjects might be enlarged; this is greatly preferable to the introduction of a new subject entitled European Studies.

These findings underline the timeliness of the recommendation of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and the decision of the Minister for Education, to introduce a European Dimension in the new Junior Cycle Curriculum as a whole, and in the frame of reference of particular subjects.

The Information Offices of the Community institutions might consider how best to respond to the need for backup information, both for teachers and pupils, in particular over the transitional period until new textbooks are available. The existing materials provided by the Offices are used to a considerable extent, but more are needed.

Consultations should continue with the aim of ensuring as good a match to needs as possible. The surveys did not pick up particular differences between those schools which had taken part in the project and the others. Not too much should be read into this, but clearly it is important to monitor the usefulness of assistance provided.

Annex: The European Education Project, 1986-89

The European Education project ("the project") was conducted in Irish schools during the period September 1986 to June 1988, with a short extension into 1989.

The European Parliament Information Office in Dublin was established in 1973, on the accession of Ireland to the European Communities. Since that time it has been involved in a number of information activities, including the occasional circulation of brochures and other teaching materials to Irish schools. There are approximately 3500 primary ("National") schools, and 950 post-primary schools (Community, Comprehensive, Secondary and Vocational).

With the development of the Parliament as an institution following the 1979 elections, the Information Office produced a growing quantity of published material. By 1986, the Office had circulated several editions of the basic brochure, several four-page full-colour leaflets (off-prints from Young Citizen schools magazine), several versions of a set of 20 colour slides with explanatory notes, and films and videos, including some in Irish. A set of explanatory posters was also published in 1980, one of which was available in Irish.

The year 1986 saw two developments: simultaneous production of a large number of teaching aids; and a consequent desire to maximise their impact and usefulness, combined with the availability of the necessary funds.

The Information Office therefore sponsored a project under the auspices of the Irish Council of the European Movement with the aims of promoting the coordinated use of the materials, demonstrating to teachers the relevance of the EC dimension to a range of subject areas, reaching a considerable number of senior-cycle pupils who would be first-time voters in the European elections of 1989, and finally, providing feed-back on the materials provided by the Office for use in schools, and ideas for their improvement.

An experienced educationalist was recruited by the Irish Council of the European Movement as director of the project. Her task was to visit a substantial number of schools, of all types, and throughout the country, in order to achieve the aims cited above. A large display panel was prepared for use in the classroom. The teaching aids were either mailed directly to schools, using labels provided by the Department of Education (addressed to the Principal), or in the case of videos, offered free of charge to applicants responding to a circular enclosed with the mail-shot.