

OIDEL. A PRESENTATION

The founding members of OIDEL are:

Lluís Alegre*, (E) former Member of Parliament and Catalan Minister of Commerce, Maria Jesus Barroso de Soares*, (P) President of the Foundation Pro Dignitate, former Vice-President of the Education Commission of the parliament, Marie Laure Beck-Henry, (CH) former President of the Parliament of Geneva, Emilio Colombo, (I) former President of the Minister Council, former President of the European Parliament, Concepció Ferrer, (E) Member of the European Parliament, Vice-President of the 'Internationale Démocrate-chrétienne', Charles L. Glenn*, (USA) Professor in sciences of education, Boston University, Guy Guermar*, (F) former Member of the National Assembly and of the European Parliament, Victor Guillén-Preckler, (E) former Vice-President of the European Parents' Association, René Haby, (F) former Minister of Education, Fernand Herman*, (B) former Minister of Economy, former Member of the European Parliament, Antoine Humblet, (B) former Minister of Education, honorary President of OIDEL, Werner van Keltwijk*, (NE) President of the Parents' Association of Protestant Schools, Member of the regional Parliament, former President of the European Parents' Association, Patrick de Laubier, (CH) Professor and former Director of the Department of Sociology of the University of Geneva, Kurt Malangré, (D) former Member of the European Parliament, former Mayor of Aix-la-Chapelle, Mario Mauro*, (I) Member of the European Parliament, Joseph Michel, (B) former Minister of Education, Alberto Michelini, (I) Member of Parliament, Juan Antonio Ortega y Diaz-Ambrona, (E) former Minister of Education, Jacques Python, (CH) lawyer, honorary President of OIDEL, Rosa Russo Jervolino, (I) Mayor of Naples, former Minister of the Interior and of Education, Stuart Sexton*, (GB) Director of IPSET, Education Unit, Monica Taiwo*, (NGR) Women's Board, Mario Visconti*, (I) former President of the European Parents' Association.

* Member of the Executive Committee (2000-1)



THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND FREEDOM OF EDUCATION

OIDEL is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, recognised of public interest under Swiss law. It has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO and the European Council.

The prime objective of OIDEL is the PROMOTION OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT. Such a right cannot exist without the presence of State benefits and the protection of individual liberties. This is why OIDEL focuses its efforts on the promotion of the freedom of education. We are convinced that this right is a human right that characterises a democratic society.

Inspired by human rights international legal instruments, OIDEL aims at the promotion and creation of novel educational models and

policies, as well as new financing options for schools.

At OIDEL, we believe that FREEDOM OF EDUCATION rests on three basic principles:

- the parents' right to choose a school for their children
- the existence of a genuine diversity of school systems
- the possibility for members of civil society to create and manage independent schools

To attain these goals, OIDEL collaborates with experts across the globe, thus acting as an observatory of educational policies in the world. It collaborates also with international organisations and governments to promote greater freedom of education worldwide.

OIDEL promotes both a greater parity between public and private schooling systems, and the implementation of a genuine pluralism within the public educational system. This implies involving the responsibility of all those acting in the field of education.

OIDEL also proposes training programmes in the field of human rights, notably through its daughter organisation, the Summer University on Human Rights and the Right to Education (SUHR).



OIDEL

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OIDEL

FREEDOM OF EDUCATION

FREEDOM OF EDUCATION IMPLIES:

> THE FREEDOM FOR MEMBERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY TO CREATE AND MANAGE SCHOOLS;

> THE FREEDOM FOR PARENTS TO CHOOSE A SCHOOL FOR THEIR CHILDREN, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF, NOTABLY, FINANCES;

> THE FREEDOM FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL DIRECTORS TO FORMULATE AN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT AND TO PROVIDE THE TYPE OF EDUCATION THAT THEY EVALUATE AS BEST SUITED TO THEIR PUPILS' NEEDS;

> REDEFINING THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN EDUCATION, WHOSE MAIN DUTY IS THE MONITORING AND PROMOTION OF A RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM FOR THE ACTORS OF EDUCATION.

PROMOTING FLEXIBILITY IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Today's world, characterised by ever accelerating social and technical changes, demands that educational structures are able to continually adapt to new situations. New educational models, demonstrating greater flexibility, need to replace the rigidity and centralism of traditional models. To promote a greater freedom of education is to help schools stay in touch with today's world.

DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL PLURALISM

Parents have the right to choose the type of education they wish to give their children. This freedom is recognised by all human rights

legal instruments. However, such a choice cannot be a genuine one as long as the offer remains uniform. Educationalists recognise today that different pupils have different needs. A genuine freedom of education would lead to a true variety of trainings responding to the diversity of talents, personal histories and cultural backgrounds of children.

MANAGING COSTS

In the field of education, systems managed by monopolies lead to troubling raises in costs. States are often in difficulty to deal with those raises. A system with greater freedoms, that would enable decentralised decision powers and involve the responsibility of school

directors and teachers, would offer tools for a more effective management of the costs of education.

EDUCATING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Among its tasks, the school must educate pupils to become citizens: preparing them to take responsibilities and exercise their freedoms in a democratic society. But what is the validity of this concept when school directors, teachers and parents can only execute directives that were elaborated in their absence? Freedom of education would enable, within every school, the participation and co-responsibility of all those concerned.

EDUCATING IN THE RESPECT OF OTHERS

Modern societies are no longer defined by a unique culture. It is no longer culture as such that is the motor of social cohesion, but the recognition of a pluralism of values in a spirit of enlightened tolerance. States can no longer justify their monopoly of education by the need to promote unified values. A freedom of education that respects the other prepares children to today's social reality.

FOUNDATION

OIDEL was created in 1985, by forty political personalities, educational experts and parents. It collaborates with the European Union and international non-governmental organisations. OIDEL was attributed the status of public interest organisation by the Canton of Geneva, which hosts its headquarters.

OBJECTIVES

OIDEL aims to:

CONTRIBUTE to research in the field of the right to education, of freedom of education and educational policies;

COLLABORATE with human rights international organisations in the promotion of the right to education and freedom of education;

OFFER training programmes on the right to education and develop a network of concerned individuals and institutions;

COUNSEL those who wish to create, manage or finance independent schools;

INFORM public opinion on progress and violations of the right to education and freedom of education.

COLLABORATION with international organisations.

INTERVENTIONS, oral and written, collaboration with experts and lobbying during the meetings of the following bodies:

- UN Commission on Human Rights
- UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
- UN Economic and Social Council
- UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Conference on Education (UNESCO/IBE)
- General Conference (UNESCO)
- Parliamentary Assembly (Council of Europe)
- European Parliament
- European Commission
- UN World Conferences

ORGANISATION of Symposia and colloquia.

THE SUMMER UNIVERSITY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

A post-graduate training programme taking place at the UN in Geneva during the meetings of the Sub-Commission on Human Rights. It is aimed primarily at decision makers (diplomats, civil servants, members of parliament), activists, journalists, academics, and students who have completed a degree in law, social sciences or education. The programme has been running since 1995, and benefits from the official support of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

A NETWORK OF EXPERTS

OIDEL manages a network regrouping worldwide experts: jurists, economists, academics, government representatives and managers of independent schools.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

OIDEL is involved in scientific research in the fields of educational policies and financing options for schools. It maintains a documentation centre on issues related to freedom of education. OIDEL disseminates the results of its research through publications, articles, newsletters and oral interventions at conferences and meetings.

MAIN ACTIVITIES