

**Greek Federation of Secondary  
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**OLME Statement on the European Commission's Consultation text  
on *Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

**INTRODUCTION**

EC based on "Lisbon Strategy" has begun the consultation on School Education in EU. One of the consultation subjects is: "Schools for the 21st century".

The consultation text includes the EC directions regarding education in the states members of EU and the problems that, according to the authors of the text, current school faces. In the text are also included 8 questions that constitute the main axes of the proposed consultation by EC and refer to basic educational problems and the ways of dealing with them. These questions can be answered both by institutions and individuals (parents, students, schoolteachers etc).

The target of the consultation, as it is reported in the introductory chapter, is to serve Lisbon Strategy, that aims at "the rendering of EU into the most dynamic and competitive economy of the world until 2010".

**The philosophy of the consultation text is inspired by the principles of "Lisbon Strategy". It constitutes one more effort to de-structure and reword the concepts of learning and education, highlighting the need of planning strategies on education and training in order for them to correspond to the market and employment (possibility of employment) priorities.**

The proposed educational policies are attempted to be legalised mainly on the basis of more effective exploitation of human resources, a choice that is the proposed model of progress aiming at the competitiveness of European economy in the world market.

**GENERAL REMARKS**

Our Federation during the last Congress (June 2007) proceeded to a total evaluation of the conditions in which educational work is taking place nowadays.

According to this evaluation, the attack of neo-liberalism in Greece, Europe and the world grows harder. In world level, inequality, poverty, increase of exploitation, war interventions, ecological destruction are the consequences of a new savagery that determines the sovereignty of USA, of international monopolies, of OECD and of the International Monetary Fund. In Europe competition is acclaimed as a main objective and, in order for it to be promoted, structural policies (market release, privatisations, work market policies) are considered as important, since budgetary and monetary policies are considered as "locked". Lisbon Strategy is the modern tool of changes against working people, aiming at the de-construction of what remained from the social model, the employment model, as well as the regulating context of work protection, and at the ensuring of cheap working force for the capital. The attack is also extended to the individual rights and freedoms.

Recently the general governing lines of the so-called “flexible safety” (flexicurity) were announced by the European Committee. The enlargement of flexible work forms is the direct objective of these regulations that will be accompanied by inversions of the security rights, with parallel subversion of **Collective Labour Bargaining** and mainly of any protective conditions from the redundancies.

In the context of the above mentioned wider policies, neo-liberal structural changes are also being promoted in our country. The government privatises public goods of vital importance, while hard austerity, increasing high cost of living, de-regulation of labour relations and unemployment broaden social inequalities. In the education sector and mainly in universities, this policy was expressed by the effort for the revision of article 16 of the Greek Constitution (regarding the foundation of private Universities) and the imposition of a new “law - frame” for Higher Education Institutions- Higher Education Polytechnics.

Since May 2006 a powerful educational movement appeared in Greece, that marked not only educational, but also to some degree political developments in the country, which substantially cancelled the revision of article 16 of the Greek Constitution and it created further conditions of cancellation in practice of the new “law - frame” for Higher Education Institutions- Higher Education Polytechnics through its complete de-legalisation in our people’s conscience.

It is therefore clear to our trade-union movement that the de-valorisation of public education in all sectors (financing, organisation, recruiting, content, operation, infrastructures) has reached in marginal point. Systematic scorn policies against teachers and public school have serious negative repercussions for the education of new generation in all educational levels. We have to stop this unpopular process, creating simultaneously the conditions for a progressive, democratic educational reform.

More generally, we have expressed our opposition to market and enterprises education, that prefers, instead of education and complete knowledge, skill learning, accumulation of information and spineless knowledge. New curricula and books, as well as educational “innovations”, like the flexible zone or the so-called inter-discipline, in the way they are promoted, are processes that encourage the ruling of “market school”. Our demand is that companies and sponsors should not be involved in the educational process.

### **Question 1: How can schools be organised in such a way as to provide all students with the full range of key competences?**

To our Federation, school, from the point of view of structure, curricula, teaching methods, objectives, is not a neutral, diagnostic process. It is connected with social distribution of knowledge and division of labour, hence it is intermingled and serves, clearly or not, the economic, political and cultural power, it shapes social roles and models for tomorrow's citizens on the basis of ruling values. The ideological and cognitive content and the **distributive** function of school, as components of state superstructure, depend on political correlations.

However, the interventionist role of the social and trade-union forces can, under some conditions, influence progressively the objectives of current school, point out the contradictions of ruling policy and, mainly, bring to stage student educational needs.

In this context OLME promotes the demand that all children and young people at the age of 18 should participate compulsorily in 12year general, provided by the state and free of charge education, which should be anticipated by a biennial state and free compulsory preschool education. Objective of education should be the shaping of an integrated personality. Consequently, along with cognitive, physical and aesthetic development, care will also be taken for emotional, social and moral development of children and young people. The content of education should combine theory with practice and, especially at Upper Secondary School (Lyceum), it will be provided in the context of a comprehensive Lyceum up to the age of 18.

School should provide all students with the basic notions of all applied sciences and humanities, but also the basic elements of industrial, rural production and developing technology. Only this **comprehensive** education will connect creatively the system, the content,

the working method of general education with the new conditions and needs of current production and growth in favour of all the people and not of the few and powerful. And, naturally, we do not connect this comprehensive education with narrow professional interests or with the **private tutoring preparation** for the access to the Higher Education Institutions/ Higher Education Polytechnics. On the contrary, education should intervene dynamically in the changes that take place in production and society. This is the education we demand for all the children of our people.

More specifically, for the Lower Secondary School, the basic problems we demand that they should be faced immediately are:

- the high percentage of **organic and functional** illiteracy,
- the lack of proper connection between Lower Secondary School and Primary School,
- the perseverance in traditional, inflexible teaching methods that do not take into consideration the particularity of students,
- the de-valorisation of collective spirit and solidarity,
- the culturally ethnocentric and one-dimensional character of the curriculum and the pedagogic climate in school,
- the serious deficit in **compensatory** education that leads a lot of students to **early school leaving/drop out**.

According to OLME, there is a special importance in the structure and organising of Upper Secondary Education level. In our opinion, the development of a single type of school in secondary education should be a prospective target, a real Comprehensive Upper Secondary School (Lyceum) that will develop the positive characteristics of multi-subject lyceum, within the context of 12year compulsory education. Objectives of this school will be:

a) the provision of essential supplies/skills to our students for their creative social and professional development and b) the unification of school choices (general and vocational/professional education) and the decrease of the distributive role of school.

The basic advantages of this Lyceum are the following:

- it keeps within the school community those who wish to continue their studies in the Upper Secondary Education after compulsory education
- it connects theory with practice in the higher education level,
- it helps the bluntness of stereotypes that are connected with mental and manual work,
- it provides higher general education, necessary for a more successful follow-up of further specialisation,
- it provides the possibility of more choices regarding the horizontal penetrability (possibility of moving between circles and directions that operate at the same time in the comprehensive school),
- it helps the bluntness of consequences of social inequalities in education.

However, we do not ignore the existing situation in the level of Lyceum. Direct and essential upgrade of VET aiming at its equivalent integration in the Secondary Education, based on the principles adopted by OLME, also remains our basic objective. In any case, state and free technical professional education and training must be guaranteed, as well as the placement and the permanent employment status of teachers in VET.

In order for the school to operate effectively, we ask for a maximum limit-number of 25 students per class in Lower and Upper Secondary Education, 20 students in the special classes of the last year of Upper Secondary School (Lyceum) and of VET, and 10 students per teacher in the laboratories of VET of Lower and Upper Secondary School.

Also, we request that concrete measures **of compensatory education** should be taken, like Zones of Educational priority, in order for all students to complete the 12year compulsory education (cf. answer in Question 4).

In this context we seek the release of families from expenses on children's education that can and should be undertaken by the state. For example, the state school should at least provide a

certificate of attainment in foreign languages of 1<sup>st</sup> level as well as in ICT up to the age of 18 in exams held by the state.

School curricula, targets and objectives should be differentiated, as long as it is possible, from specialisation and training. The support of general education and general technological knowledge should be planned in order for the students to acquire a serious learning infrastructure and professional supplies/skills, in order to be capable, if they wish, to continue their studies in Higher Education or to continue in post-upper-secondary specialisation (integrated in the educational system) for the acquisition of the relevant professional rights.

We have expressed, also, our opposition to market and enterprises education that prefers skill learning, accumulation of information and spineless knowledge in the place of education and total knowledge. The new curricula and books as well as the educational “innovations”, as the flexible zone or the so-called inter-discipline, in the way they are promoted, are processes that encourage the supremacy of “market school”.

Generally, our Federation considers that we should not seek the forming of one-dimensional individuals through education, orientated towards development. In the consultation text “Schools for the 21st century” a serious shift of the emphasis from integrated knowledge to skills is attempted. Humanities and social sciences are progressively marginalized and downgraded. The conception about school turns out to be completely utilitarian and is registered in a clearly economic-merchandising way of thinking. Training and education are considered above all as tools in the service of economy, competitiveness, enterprising and employment. They are not considered as universal rights, public and social goods.

Traditional employment (full-time and permanent work) is considered henceforth as old-fashioned. The social obligation and responsibility for sufficient education and exploitation of possibilities for every citizen are sought to be changed to a large extent into personal responsibility of each individual, who should catch the opportunities for social progress and personal development. School failure is not considered as failure of the educational system but failure of the individual, who does not have the skills, the required characteristics or the will to succeed. The new educational ideal seeks to combine a common European cultural identity with special emphasis in the responsibility of each individual separately regarding their integration in the so-called “knowledge society”. Central point of the current policy is the tendency of privatisation of public and social goods, something that presupposes and promotes the stifling restriction of welfare state by the neo-liberal policies of EU.

In this way, the formation of a type of individual and basically of worker, who should be flexible and adaptable in all kinds of changes, especially technological, who should be productive and obedient, is the main target; the individual, who will not seek any guarantee and permanence in their work, who will be ready to change their job many times in their lifetime. Generally speaking, they should be “fluid” and adaptable to the demands of market. And mainly, that is to say, they should be in a new training process all the time, ready to accept the “new knowledge”.

In order for us to render feasible the educational system that we propose, our Federation considers as necessary the increase of public expenses in our country to the 5% on the GNP at least, with the prospect to have a convergence in European scale on the level of countries that allocate the highest resources, on the level of 7%.

## **Question 2: How can schools equip young people with the competences and motivation to make learning a lifelong activity?**

Already we have described the model of school that OLME seeks. We believe that the establishment of such school, in combination with its pedagogic innovation, the guarantee of necessary infrastructure and of a suitably specialised and sufficient teaching staff, as well as the taking of further measures for its support will create the background for a new relation between children and young people with school and knowledge.

Generalised 2year compulsory preschool and early school education can play an important role in the creation of permanent, positive relation between future citizens with knowledge and learning.

The content of knowledge should be provided in connection with the needs of children; it should be on the level of their possibilities and should respect the rhythm of their development.

It is essential that differentiated and individualised teaching/learning methods should be developed, in a parallel way with group or common teaching, depending on the case.

The prompt spotting and the effective meeting with difficulties that some groups of children face (children of immigrants, with special needs, with training difficulties etc.) are necessary.

### **Question 3: How can school systems contribute to supporting long-term sustainable economic growth in Europe?**

Our position is explicit: Firstly, we conceive development as an overall development with focus on the individual, with respect for the environment, based on principles and values like equality, social justice and respect for the human rights, as we described already in our previous reports.

Educational systems can contribute in such an overall and multidimensional development of European countries to such an extend that they will follow the specifications we have described in our previous answers. Beyond what we have already mentioned, we particularly stress the importance of school for the creation of students' respect to equality and human rights and for the possibilities of active application within school itself. This position, however, does not mean that education can by itself face further social problems, without further social changes.

The type of tomorrow's citizens/working people depends on the content and the quality of education. Towards the end of 12year studies young people have to take serious decisions not only about their selves but also about the whole society, since they have the right to vote, apart from anything else. Therefore, Secondary Education has to prepare young people, who will have to live in contemporary Modern Greek economical, political and cultural reality and in worldwide material and intellectual rivalry. Consecutively, rational organisation and structure of our educational system based on modern needs is what we need. We need fast and active metamorphosis of school to the direction that we propose.

### **Question 4: How can school systems best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?**

School faces today many challenges. School failure, in all its forms, is still affecting all European countries, in a small or a large scale. Some groups of children face particular difficulties, which educational systems often ignore. Generally speaking, it is more likely for young people who were brought up in a less favourable socio-economic environment to leave school early, students who come from minorities or immigrants face serious difficulties in their access to Higher Education, as well as children with special needs and/or disabilities.

Early school leaving is an important problem in some states members. EU places occasionally limits to be achieved by country-members, but the taken measures do not have the desirable results.

There is a tendency in Europe that all pupils should attend mainstream schools, regardless of their particular needs. We agree with the opinion that education without exclusions, in the context of mainstream schools, provides an important base for the guarantee of equality of chances for people with special needs in all aspects of their life. In any case however this inductive or inclusive policy is not sufficiently accompanied by relevant supporting measures (security of resources, special staff, suitable material and technical infrastructure, training of all in service teachers, sensitization of the whole school community and media), in order for the induction to have positive results for children with special needs and/or disabilities.

We also note a tendency for the interest of EU in educational inequalities to be focused on the enormous economic cost that they hide as well as in the social problems that result from early

school leaving. The causes, however, that create educational inequalities are not reported, as well as the fact that they mainly are related with social and economic inequalities. For EC social inequalities in education are easily reduced in “cultural differences”.

Basic axis of our own proposal is the total, free state education in all levels that will provide with education, culture and skills all children without exclusions, with pedagogic freedom and democracy. State school, to us, has enough space for all children regardless of their sex, origin, religion, social class, nationality and physical situation. No child under 18 should be at home, in the streets or at work.

To that direction we claim, as we already have mentioned, immediate establishing of 12year compulsory education in the prospect of the 12year comprehensive school, 2year compulsory, public preschool education, immediate upgrade of VET and limited number of students per class (cf. Question 1). Especially for VET, we stress that graduates of VET should have the real and not simulated possibility of access in higher education (Higher Education Institutions -Polytechnics), without any barriers and discriminations that exist today, and in a percentage relevant to the school potential of VET.

Regarding the access system to Higher Education, we propose the enhancement of that access, certainly with a relative brave financing of infrastructure of higher education institutions and support for the teaching staff, so that studies are not continuously downgraded with the increase of students' number, the lack of further financing and the shortage of teaching staff. The free access will be realised on the basis of the certificate of studies that will be acquired after taking internal exams. In the meantime, until the establishment of free access becomes a reality, access to Higher Education will take place after the graduation from Upper Secondary Education through national exams on limited number of subjects which will be held with the responsibility of secondary education. We constantly support state and free higher education. We are against the revision of article 16 of Greek Constitution, against privatisation of higher education, against establishment of private universities. We fight for the public and academic character of higher education to be ensured. Also, we support measures like free food, accommodation and books for students and scholarships in order for them to be concentrated on their studies on graduate and postgraduate level.

For the bluntness of inequalities in education, we propose the taking of full measures of compensatory education, like Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP in France), so that all students are helped to complete the 12year compulsory education and that **early school leaving/drop out** is decreased. At the same time, we seek, after analytic study, the upgrade of some measures and practices like additional teaching support, induction classes and **further teaching courses**. The enactment of Regions or Zones of Educational Priority constitutes an educational practice that has led to positive results in various countries. This is why OLME has proposed their application (firstly on trial) in Greece. We believe that their application, based on scientific planning, can contribute effectively to the reduction of educational inequalities, illiteracy and school drop out. At the same time, we propose measures like day-schools in their own buildings with the required equipment (school library, laboratories, computer room etc.) on the basis of a well-planned medium-term programme, staffed with the required scientific personnel (psychologists, social workers etc.) and special care that is required for some **disadvantaged** geographic areas or groups of population..

We say that school should be a cultural centre and remain open all day long, that extra staff should be employed (school psychologists, social workers, interdisciplinary groups per school, secretaries), so that children's basic needs are met, like an all-day library, athletic and cultural activities.

At the same time, we propose further development of inter-cultural and antiracist education in all educational levels and institutions. We also claim that effective support measures for children with special needs and training difficulties should be taken.

**Question 5: If schools are to respond to each pupil's individual learning needs, what can be done as regards curricula, school organisation and roles of teachers?**

We have already mentioned school programmes (cf. Question 1). Also, we mentioned the need for differentiated and individualised teaching and learning process, as well as the need for the creation of a school environment and climate that will encourage learning for all children.

We add that our Federation's opinion is that integration of children with special needs and/or disabilities in the mainstream schools has indeed positive consequences provided that all necessary conditions have been ensured in order that integration becomes advantageous (material and technical infrastructure and equipment, required scientific and auxiliary staff, suitable support by the state and training of all teaching and non teaching personnel).

Teacher's job becomes more and more exigent without the necessary support. Teachers work with more heterogeneous groups of students in comparison with the past. They get more and more overloaded with responsibilities and duties without any provision for their support and help. They have to develop the possibilities offered by new technologies, to meet the demand of individualised learning (it needs here to be added that the terms of differentiated teaching and learning are never mentioned, only that of individualisation) and to teach students how to learn autonomously and to get life long learning. Finally, they possibly undertake, also, more decision-making or administrative duties, as a consequence of increased school autonomy.

**Question 6: How can school communities help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity?**

It is a fact that in schools of European countries members an increase of violence incidents are observed as well as events of racism, xenophobia, homophobia and sexism. Bullying is a problem which a lot of countries members consider as a priority problem and should be faced as such.

Our conviction is that such incidents should not be examined in isolation from their social context, as social factors are of decisive importance for their appearance and their strengthening. Also, the important role of media should not be underestimated, especially that of television, which has an important effect to children and young people.

Apart from the general social measures, that certainly refer to a different model of development, as we have described, we consider as important the role of the school to prepare children for a world of picture and digital technology and for the potential dangers, but also for the chances that this world provides. Media education is necessary more than ever today.

We consider that the contribution of school staff and especially of teachers is the key for success of school in this field too. However, this wording includes the danger (potentially and the intention) that the responsibilities for the inefficiency of education might be attributed to teachers them selves.

Moreover, in a lot of schools the context is problematic. Aggressive behaviour towards teachers is recorded in a lot of states members. A recent study recorded 37 different environmental and organisational factors that cause stress or diseases connected with stress to teachers. Consequently, issues are put regarding work conditions and the support that teaching staff need.

**Question 7: How can school staff be trained and supported to meet the challenges they face?**

While EC admits that teachers' contribution is the key for the success of every school, its policy and directions, as well as that of the states members, have not the same target, but they are against working people's basic conquests that are directly related with the effectiveness of educational work; they lead teachers to various forms of labour insecurity and uncertainty; they have serious negative repercussions for the educational staff and inevitably for the educational

work itself. Permanent labour status, complete respect of labour rights for all teachers and decent wage are some necessary conditions for the guarantee of quality in education.

Regarding **financial** upgrade of teachers, salary increase is the fundamental axis of our claims, so that the central and opportune demand “to live with dignity on our salary” is satisfied. We claim a new wage arrangement that will ensure for teachers the possibility of doing their educational-pedagogic/work concentrated on it as a **full-time and exclusive** employment, of having sufficient and permanent access to bibliography and scientific developments, Pedagogy and Didactics, of being substantially supported for their continuous presence and attendance to cultural events and of being able to retire as long as they are still flourishing biologically and intellectually.

Our demand also is to secure public, general and social character of our **insurance** system and to cancel the new, painful anti-insurance measures that are promoted by neo-liberal policies. Also, we demand a complete medical and health care.

**Regarding our labour rights, we reject the dispute and the gradual cancellation of the labour rights we won that lead a lot of our colleagues to labour uncertainty, wandering and insecurity. We claim free and reliable Collective Agreements in the Public sector in all levels, consolidation for teachers of the right for essential and in depth Collective Labour Bargaining, pedagogic freedom and democracy in school, constant and permanent employment in education and teaching staff employment according to real educational needs. Our demand is the abolishment of labour status of part-time and assistant teachers (with the exception of real substitution needs), as well as the immediate permanency of all assistants teachers who cover constant and permanent needs. Finally, we demand the employment of secretaries, janitors and guardians in schools.**

Teachers’ **initial (pre-service) education and training** are basic presuppositions for the effective operation of the educational system. We demand:

- (a) the integration of pedagogic training and practical exercise in basic education of secondary education teaching staff of all subjects,
- (b) the essential introductive training immediately after employment,
- (c) the continuous teachers training with the collaboration of Higher Education Institutions, with democratic organisation and active participation of the trainees, with focus on the establishment of annual periodical training of all teachers with simultaneous exemption from their teaching duties during the training, and multiform, short-term training with the same as the above mentioned conditions (collaboration of Higher Education Institutions, exemption from teaching duties etc.).
- (d) the enactment of further training for Secondary Education teachers and its connection with postgraduate titles, and
- (e) the real reorganisation of the institutional frame for state scholarships, extension of sabbaticals for further studies and of European and international exchange educational projects.

**Question 8: How can school communities’ best receive the leadership and motivation they need to succeed? How can they be empowered to develop in response to changing needs and demands?**

The question of effective school operation and of suitable organisation and administration depends on the general conditions in which it is supposed to operate.

The experience of European countries has shown that decentralisation policies, to the extend that they prompt schools to apply programmes of different level, depending on the level of students of each school, they can easily lead to schools of “different speeds” against children of the most downgraded regions of cities and countryside. We point out that efforts in Britain, USA and other countries for the application of school categorisation models based on their effectiveness led to enlargement of educative inequalities from school to school, even to “ghetto schools”. In various countries, evaluation, external and internal, and reports are often emphasised as a solution, as well as evaluation systems and classification of state schools based on the results



of external national or international evaluations are activated. Such systems usually lead to attribution of responsibilities for negative results to teachers. We do not accept evaluation - guidance of teachers and social categorisation of schools through the evaluation of school units. We also believe that evaluation of school or class cannot take place independently from the socio-economic and educational profile of students. Regarding the organisation and administration on school unit level, we support constantly the elevation of teaching staff into a sovereign body. Moreover, we ask for pedagogic freedom and democracy in schools with parallel abolishment of the entire legislative frame within which the “conformity” - guidance of teachers is attempted in Greece.

## FINAL REMARKS

The Consultation text is far beyond the reflections and priorities that the trade-union movement of teachers in Greece put and generally is far from the educational needs of modern societies and for this reason, to our opinion, it cannot constitute sufficient base for consultation.

We bring our own proposals for the school of 21st century as we envisioned, we claim and fight for it.

Education (extract from statement by OLME - DOE on World Education Day 2007) is a public good, a fundamental right for every individual, a presupposition and an indicator of a modern, fair and democratic society, a means for personal development, professional prospect and continuous education of citizens. The role that it plays is decisive for citizens who will be able to face society and its structures with a critical eye, and will have the will and the possibility to influence positively the developments, in local and in world level, aiming at the guarantee of human rights, the protection of environment, the individual and collective prosperity.

All the necessary measures should be taken, so that education is ensured for all children without discriminations of sex, race, colour, religion, political convictions, nationality and social origin.

We strongly believe that learning process should not be subjugated to the demands of the market. On the contrary, it should aim at its basic objective, i.e. the contribution in the creation of integrated personalities that will be in position to participate actively in all levels of social activity.

Also, we stress the importance of education and teachers for the promotion and the securing of peace all over the world, for a world community without war, founded on the principles of freedom, democracy, equality, social justice, solidarity among the people and the respect of human rights. We point out the particular importance of the teacher's task for the formation of tomorrow's citizens who will respect and appreciate the offer of all the people around the world in the creation of world culture as a field of agreement and coexistence.

For the E.B. of OLME

President

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Grigoris Kalomiris

Kostas Boikos

Ο Πρόεδρος  
  
Γρ. Καλομυρίσης

Για το Ε.Β. του ΟΛΜΕ  


Ο Γ. Γραμματέας  
  
Κώστας Μπόικος