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Promoting the teaching of European literature

Recommendation 1833 (2008)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers

adopted at the 1044th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (10 December 2008)

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken due note of Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1833](#) (2008) – “Promoting the teaching of European literature” and has brought it to the attention of the governments of member states. It has also forwarded the recommendation to the Steering Committee for Education (CDED) and to the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR).
2. The Committee of Ministers recognises the importance of knowledge and understanding of Europe’s literary heritage in order to build up a European identity and awareness among young generations. The teaching of European literature based on linguistic, historical and cultural diversity offers opportunities to acknowledge and develop in a cross-sectoral way the bond which unites the peoples of Europe.
3. The Committee of Ministers is fully aware that the teaching of European literature should therefore be given an appropriate place in primary and secondary education. In order to bring about the right conditions enabling pupils and students to have access to this literature, it considers it important to ensure the acquisition, throughout Europe, of skills in the languages of school education and in modern languages.
4. In this context, the CDED has just launched a project on the languages of school education which will focus, amongst other things, on the drawing up of common reference systems for pupils’ linguistic and literary skills in national/official languages and in minority languages. More generally, in the context of its activities, the CDED seeks to ensure that educational resources for promoting the teaching of European literature offer greater opportunities for discovering other literatures within the teaching of the national literature. The objective pursued is to foster the intellectual development of pupils, to enhance their cultural skills and to promote the intercultural dimension of education.
5. In higher education where students follow a wide diversity of study programmes, the Committee of Ministers considers that literature should remain an optional subject. It notes, in this connection, that the reforms of the Bologna Process – to which the Council of Europe makes an active contribution through the CDESR – enable students, through the widespread introduction of credit systems, to continue studying literature as optional subjects, regardless of their chosen field of study.
6. The Committee of Ministers stresses that the teaching and learning of European literature are fully in keeping with all the major roles of education, as identified for higher education in its Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research, namely:
 - preparation for sustainable employment;
 - preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
 - personal development;
 - the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.
7. In paragraph 8.4 of its recommendation, the Assembly suggests presenting the teaching of European literature “as an integral part of education in European citizenship, taking into account cultural diversity, in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights, and the linguistic pluralism of our continent”. This question and other aspects of the issues addressed by the recommendation have been the subject of training sessions held under the “Pestalozzi” training programme for education professionals. These sessions seek to promote not only exchanges of innovative teaching practices between teachers but also openness to foreign literature. Other projects currently being developed within the CDED, including “Policies and practices for teaching socio-cultural diversity” and “Education for democratic citizenship and human rights”, have focused their activities on drawing up descriptions for teachers’ skills in managing and enhancing cultural diversity and plurilingualism.
8. All these activities are fully in keeping with the lines of action defined by the Council of Europe’s Third Summit. The Committee of Ministers restates its conviction that education and culture are among the essential enabling factors for effective implementation of the Council of Europe core values in our societies.