

*Letter dated:*  
19 December 2008

*From:*  
EU Secretariat, DK-1240 Copenhagen

*To:*  
Commissioner for Education and Culture, Mr Ján Figel', European Commission, B-1049 Brussels

**Subject: Opinion on the Commission's Green Paper on migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems, cf. COM(2008) 0423**

Dear Mr Figel',

I am enclosing the responses to consultation from the Danish Parliament's European Affairs Committee, the Education Committee, the Alien and Integration Policy Committee and the Science and Technology Committee on the Commission's Green Paper on migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems, cf. COM(2008) 0423.

On 15 September 2008, the European Affairs Committee asked the Education Committee, the Science and Technology Committee and the Alien and Integration Policy Committee to examine the Commission's Green Paper. The Committees discussed the matter at a number of meetings and agreed on the common response to consultation set out below, as endorsed by the European Affairs Committee on 28 November 2008.

**Opinion of the European Affairs Committee, the Education Committee, the Alien and Integration Policy Committee and the Science and Technology Committee.**

A majority (the Liberals, the Social Democrats, the Conservatives, Socialist People's Party, the Social Liberals and the Liberal Alliance) acknowledge and welcome the fact that the Commission's Green Paper on migration and mobility raises a series of core issues concerning the challenges and opportunities for education systems in the EU. The EU Member States are faced with an increasingly international and globalised world in which a substantial number of schoolchildren with immigrant backgrounds are now starting school, many of whom come from poor social and economic backgrounds. It is therefore of decisive importance to the development and education of these pupils to ensure they make a positive and stable start to their school careers, and also the basis for later ensuring that they successfully complete their secondary education and shorter or longer courses of further education.

The majority stresses that education policy as a starting point is not an EU concern but a national responsibility. However, it is of course very useful for countries to exchange experiences in this kind of field in which countries have different practices that can be of use to the other countries.

The majority considers that the European Union should support a wide-ranging exchange of experience and knowledge between the Member State school systems, so that best practices and knowledge of what works in relation to immigrants and their descendants can be gathered and made available to the Member States. This work also fits in well in the context of the Lisbon process laid down at the 2000 summit. Here education was seen as key to developing a competitive and knowledge-based economy, and agreement was

reached on a number of overall objectives for the Member States' task of developing their own education systems, including intermediate objectives concerning migration and mobility.

The majority supports the fact that the Commission's close cooperation with other international organisations such as the OECD and the Council of Europe, which also deal with education and immigration, continues to be given high priority.

The majority requests the Commission to send the Danish Parliament its analysis of the results of the consultation on the Green Paper and the its conclusions in this connection.

A minority (the Danish People's Party) believes that the European Commission and other European Institutions are increasingly interfering in the Member States' (including Denmark's) internal and national fields of competence, including integration and education policy. The Danish People's Party is opposed to this trend, as experience has shown that the European Union is ultimately unable or does not intend to respect the sovereignty of the Member States. The Danish People's Party thus recommends that the European Union stop these activities, or alternatively scale down its activities regarding, for example, integration and education until there is more clarity as to the division of responsibilities.

The Danish People's Party also considers that the Green Paper itself is an expression of political correctness which may be regarded as contrary to national legislation in a number of fields. Firstly, the majority of parties in the Danish Parliament have abolished the municipal authorities' obligation to offer the children of immigrants teaching in their mother tongue. The European Union recommends that this obligation be reintroduced, despite the fact that it does not lie within the EU's field of competence. The corresponding passage in the Green Paper reads as follows: 'Schools must adjust to their presence [i.e. that of immigrants] and build their particular needs into the traditional focus on providing high quality and equitable education.' This is highly politicised and, moreover, highly problematic, given that many politicians from many different parties, both the parties in government, the supporting party and some of the opposition parties have expressed their political and legitimate democratic opposition to Danish primary and lower secondary schools having to make special provision for muslim customs and traditions, for example. Moreover, it should not be for the European Union to work towards promoting a multicultural society in individual Member States and introducing special provision for other cultures in Danish primary and lower secondary schools, which are intended for Danes, funded by Danish taxpayers, and whose activities are determined by Danish politicians. Their activities and possible special provisions are a purely Danish matter and neither the national, regional or municipal authorities nor individual schools should be forced to follow the European Union's recommendations.

The Danish People's Party would point out that the Green Paper states the following: 'Responsibility for setting educational policies remains firmly a matter for Member States. Nevertheless, the challenges outlined here are, increasingly, widely shared' (i.e. a matter for the EU).

The Danish People's Party considers that this duality should be removed from the present Green Paper and from all future green papers and other documents on any related subjects and topics that fall within the Member States' competence. In other words, the Danish People's Party would point out that on the one hand the Green Paper says that it respects, for example, the Danish Parliament, and on the other hand that the European Union will increasingly be taking on tasks that fall within the Danish Parliament's competence. Such ambiguity is unacceptable. In the view of the Danish People's Party, if

the Green Paper and EU cooperation were generally an expression of a reciprocal dialogue, the parties to which respect one another, the recommendations could be discussed at a sensible level. However, as all experiences have shown that the European Union is endeavouring to take more and more power away from Member States, including in the field of integration and education, this development should be advised against, as in all its simplicity it conceals a deeper distrust of national democracy.

The Danish People's Party believes that a democratic malpractice has essentially developed in which education and other ministers meet at EU level to discuss 'voluntary' agreements and tools to implement them that are binding on Member States to introduce. This development will eventually legitimise the European Union's complete takeover of the field of education, for example, and must be regarded as contrary to the already existing EU rules on fundamental democratic principles. In the light of these facts, the Danish People's Party considers that the cooperation on the Green Paper itself should be suspended until necessary and credible assurances are given, guaranteeing that integration and education policy still is and will remain a matter for the Danish Parliament and the individual countries' parliaments.

The Danish People's Party would also recommend that those countries wishing to give up their sovereignty in the field of integration and education policy, for instance, are granted this opportunity, while others are permitted to opt out.

A further minority (the Red-Green Alliance) will communicate its position during the discussion of the recommendation in the European Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely

Chairman of the European Affairs Committee  
Svend Auken

Chairman of the Alien and Integration Policy Committee  
Karsten Lauritzen

Chairwoman of the Education Committee  
Charlotte Dyremose

Chairwoman of the Science and Technology Committee  
Marianne Jelved