

**Education councils at national and regional level in the Member
States of the European Union**

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INTRODUCTION

There are two distinguishable trends in education policy which prompt a study on the role played by education councils in the countries of the European Union.

Education is an important area of policy both for the EU Member States individually and for the European Union collectively. A third of the population is below the age of 25. Some 120 million young people are in education and training, partly under the national systems of compulsory school education. Lifelong learning is also increasingly necessary if we are to survive in the labour market and in society. Given that education and training influence the future prospects of young and old alike, these are policy areas of the very first rank. They affect each and every one of us. Since the 1980s a range of social groups has been involved, in an institutionalised form, in the shaping of education policy. It was during this period that most national and regional education councils were formed. Education councils can draw inspiration and enrichment from an understanding of the structure, makeup and (statutory) powers of similar councils in the European Union.

Earlier studies also show¹ that the internationalisation of education is leading to an increasing internationalisation of education *policy*, certainly in the European Union. Because education councils are involved in education policy this will have a direct bearing on the way in which they operate. This certainly applies to topical issues on the agenda at any given time. It is also reasonable to assume that education councils will exert their own influence (actively) on policy players in other countries. To do this they need a knowledge of the structures in other countries of the Union.

A search of the literature reveals that there is no comprehensive comparative study of education councils in the Member States of the European Union. Even leading journals such as the *European Journal of Education* have barely touched on the subject. The only study there is was published by Eurydice in 1996 under the title "Consultative councils and other forms of social participation in education in the European Union"². Eurydice's main concern was to draw up a review of consultative councils which reviewed them in a modest sort of way but did not compare them. We also know of an address by D. Francesco Pedró García published under the title "La participación institucional en los países de la Unión Europea"³.

Prompted in part by these modest efforts at an overview we have sought in this study not only to review the national and regional education councils of the fifteen EU Member States, but also to compare their remits, operation, membership and impact.

¹ W. Wielemans & G.J.M. Roth-van der Werf: *Onderwijsbeleid in Europees perspectief*; Leuven/Heerlen, Garant/Open Universiteit, 1997.

² Eurydice, the European Information Network on Education. *Consultative councils and other forms of social participation in education in the European Union*; Brussels: Eurydice European Unit, 1996.

³ Consejo Escolar del Estado, Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, *Consejos Escolares de las Comunidades Autonomas y del estado. Séptimas Jornadas de encuentro*. El Escorial, 26-28 marzo 1996, p. 37-53.

As part of our theoretical considerations we analysed the "policy process" within which education councils operate. This helped us to identify the questions to be asked in our study and to devise appropriate methods of inquiry. This first stage produced a working definition of the concept of "education council" and a broad questionnaire which enabled us to compile an inventory of education councils (phase 2). The leading education councils in a given country were then questioned in greater depth (phase 3). This detailed questioning formed the basis for the comparative conclusions with which the report ends. The actual interviews we conducted are an integral part of the full research report but are not reproduced in full here.

1. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS, QUESTIONS ASKED IN OUR STUDY, AND METHODS

1.1. Theoretical considerations

Before we tackle the study topic as such, at least two other points need to be clarified.

1.1.1. The policy process and various players

Education councils with a remit to advise on policy interface with other factors and players making up the complex policy process. So we first need to decide what is meant by the concept of "education policy" and more precisely what is meant by the "policy process". We thus need to construct a "general model" (or classification) which may help us gain a (systematic) understanding of the many factors and players involved in policy processes. A model of this kind has already been devised by the Centre for Comparative Pedagogy and applied to education policy in the EU Member States⁴.

The concept of "education policy" is not straightforward. It is hard to trace the boundaries of this social phenomenon and identify the distinctions which exist within it.

Direct experience and reporting points to the "dynamic" nature of education policy. In other words, education policy manifests itself as a policy *process* which can best be described as a dynamic cycle. We attempt to portray this cycle in three linked figures in which the degree of complexity steadily increases. In this way it is possible to define the phenomenon of "education policy". The three figures at the same time suggest a complex area for study in which specific policy issues or bodies (such as education councils) can be identified more clearly in relation to or separately from other problems.

Figure 1 simplifies the policy process cycle and presents it as four phases: preparation, decision-making, realisation and implementation. These phases may be acted out in the local school community or at regional and national level. Thus "education policy" is not just policy imposed by government, but by regional and local authorities too. It is very important to understand the (nature of the) interactions between these levels and to review and analyse who is responsible for what (both in pursuit of predetermined education objectives and in other matters).

⁴ W. Wielemans & G.J.M. Roth-van der Werf, *op. cit.*, p. 21-26.

Reality teaches us that this cycle does not always follow the pattern suggested. Thus, for example, the idea of a "preparatory phase" should not give the impression that every policy decision is preceded by a neatly planned period of preparation. The choice of four phases reflects the desire to encompass systematically as many aspects of the policy process as possible.

But the following questions are highly relevant to what we have termed the internal dynamics and nuances of education policy: How are policy measures arrived at? Who takes "statutory" decisions, and using which procedures? Which groups, institutions and forces have an impact on each of the proposed phases? What is their (statutory or other) structure? Which policy problems are specific to which groups? Whom or what do they represent? How do they seek to influence one or more phases of the policy cycle?

Figure 1
Simplified education policy cycle, levels and phases

Answers to these (and similar) questions will enable the phases of the education cycle to be differentiated still further. Figure 2 tries to do this. The differences will of course vary from country to country. There will be differences at levels below the national level, depending on the degree of centralisation and decentralisation. For each country or "sub-unit" of the country the substance of each phase will have changed, partly as a reflection of historical developments.

Figure 2
Internal differentiation of the simplified education policy cycle: institutions, interest groups, factors/players and forces exerting an influence

Lastly, education policy must be viewed in relation to a more complex range of social and cultural forces. Other, often more dominant subsystems have a powerful influence on education policy. These are presented in Figure 3.

As stated, these expanding contexts also regularly demonstrate greater degrees of complexity.

Context A represents policy in respect of the smallest organisational units, namely the class and the school. As stated, the pupil/student is always the central factor here. Thus for example the pupil/teacher ratio is very much determined by the psychological developmental characteristics of the pre-school child/pupil... And as a result that ratio will have (budgetary and other) consequences for the number of nursery school and other teachers who need to be trained, employed and paid.

Context B stands for the policy of (cooperating) educational units, schools and school communities and (merged) institutions. This context is currently the focus of the greatest interest and is being made increasingly efficient (by management training, for example).

Context C represents regional and national policy. The most direct policy cycle is at this level, since the machinery of political decision-making and legal standards is located here. The education councils operate at this level.

Context D represents the many other subsystems of a given country which are found at regional or national level. It is a well known fact that education policy increasingly interacts with most of these subsystems. The impact of economic change and the labour market are familiar enough.

Context E stands for a number of supranational establishments and trends which may be seen as new to the educational scene.

Lastly we must not neglect the importance of the even more widespread, omnipresent and all-penetrating *Context F*, namely the dominant social and cultural model.

These Figures at least attempt to show that education and education policy are not realities which operate in isolation. It may be that changes in the characteristics, style and core tasks of education policy are dictated by this overall context-inclusive cycle. Examination of the impact of advisory bodies will give us a more realistic picture of the multiplicity of factors which influence education policy.

Figure 3
The overall policy cycle in terms of systems analysis

1.1.2. The "education council" defined

A second question follows on from the necessary preconditions for a comparative study. Comparisons require "comparability". It is apparent from the Eurydice publication quoted earlier that even within one country there are different (kinds of) education councils and participatory structures.

The features of an education council are as follows:

1. It operates as a public and independent body.
2. It is involved in the shaping of policy decisions on educational matters affecting one or more or all levels of education (cf. Figure 2). Participatory management structures are not regarded as education councils. Involvement in policy-making can take several forms; advice, consultation, research into specific topics, a forum where support for reform plans can be freely discussed, and the performance of more specific tasks such as curriculum development. An education council may be involved in the phase of policy preparation and realisation (cf. Figure 2).
3. Its form and status is defined by law (membership, powers, relationship to government, funding, etc.).
4. The council's members are from social sectors which lend legitimacy to its work (representatives of social groups, educationists or other experts, etc.)

In some countries the education council may operate above all at a decentralised level. These are countries where important powers in respect of education are held at a decentralised, regional level. We regard these "regional" education councils as full education councils. In that case, of course, we also have to consider the relationship between the education council and central government and the national education council if there is one.

1.2. Questions asked in our study

The issues identified in this way in the "policy cycle" enable us to formulate the following questions to be asked in our study:

1. Which **forms** of national and/or regional education councils are operational in the 15 EU countries?
2. What is the **legal** basis of these councils in terms of structure, powers, duties, membership, operation and funding? What part **ideally** are these councils expected to play in the policy process as a whole?
3. Are the **de facto** structure, powers, duties, membership, operation and funding of these education councils as they are supposed to be by law? This question requires empirical study.
4. What **de facto** part do these councils play in the overall policy process (cf. classification) in their **interaction with** other players and establishments which may (also) be expected to impact on education policy?
5. The answers to question 4 will permit further research into where the balance of power lies in the policy process as a whole and the nature of the (changing) impact of education councils on the policy pursued (on certain issues). Is it possible to identify similarities and differences between the countries studied regarding the impact of councils on that and/or similar topics over a comparable period?
6. National and regional education councils are relatively new in most of the EU countries. We can thus chart the **changing pattern of topic selection** which has occurred since these councils were formed. Naturally the reasons for these changes will be examined in depth. We can also ask which topics will be prioritised in the next few years and why.
7. A seventh question is designed (1) to record the **modus operandi** of education councils in their approach to certain topics. Then (2) we can look for a (possibly causal) **link between this modus operandi and the degree of impact** which councils have on education policy in the countries concerned (a link between questions 5 and 7).
8. What similarities and differences can be identified in respect of each of these seven questions? Can correlations be found between the answers to the study's questions, e.g. between the degree of (de)centralisation in education policy and the characteristics of education councils, or between the results of questions 5 and 7 (as stated)? Are there any discernible trends emerging from this? How are they to be interpreted?

REVIEW OF EDUCATION COUNCILS IN THE 15 COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. INTRODUCTION

In this study we shall endeavour to give as accurate a description as possible, for each country of the European Union, of the membership and duties of the main national and regional education councils. Some committees and councils have not been included because they do not meet the pre-determined working definition of an "education council". Councils whose function is mainly administrative have not been included either. Councils which are predominantly interest groups within a given sector of education are not included unless they have statutory advisory responsibilities. One such example is the conferences of university chancellors which exist in most European countries.

Our description of the education system starts from three questions:

Firstly we try to show the various policy-making levels which have a say in educational decision-making, making reference to the theoretical considerations which define the policy cycle. Secondly we seek to show the relationship between state education and private education. Some education councils have a duty to soothe ideological conflicts over education. Thirdly we describe the principal subdivisions of the education system since this helps to clarify the powers of education councils.

We then seek to give as full a picture as possible of the education councils operating in the country in question.

Thirdly we offer a more detailed analysis of the education council which we consider to be the most representative of the country in question and the one which best meets our earlier working definition of an "education council".

2. BELGIUM

Since 1989 Belgium has been a federal state with three policy-making levels which have both legislative and executive powers: central government, the Communities and the Regions. With certain exceptions - the age at which compulsory schooling begins and ends, minimum criteria for the award of diplomas, and the staff pension scheme - the Communities have full authority in matters of education and training. Each community can develop and administer its own education system. Consequently the education systems in the various parts of the country have many similarities but are gradually adopting different approaches.

Belgium is, furthermore, divided into 10 provinces and 589 municipalities.

Education in Belgium is compulsory from age 6 to 18. Under this system children go through nursery school (age 2½ to 6), primary school (age 6 to 12) and secondary school (age 12 to 18). The options available in secondary education are general education, technical education, arts education and vocational education. Higher education is provided either by colleges of

higher education or by university institutions. The colleges offer two distinct study pathways. The strongly vocational courses offered by colleges of higher education are shorter than more economic or technological courses which are of university standard. For adults there is basic education (primary level) and adult education (secondary level and short higher education). Pupils with a handicap are catered for by special primary or secondary schools. There are also specific arts courses offered in tandem with mainstream education.

2.1. French Community

2.1.1. The education system

In the French Community education is organised in three ways. So there are three types of "organising authorities". "State" education is organised by the French Community. Provincial or municipal authorities are responsible for organising state-funded education. Private individuals or non-profit associations organise privately funded education.

In the French Community the education minister thus has a twofold remit. He applies the rules to funded schools and colleges, both private and state-funded, in accordance with the Schools and Colleges Act of 29 May 1959. He is also the organising authority for "state" education and in that capacity stipulates the structures, curricula and methods for this area of education. He administers the schools and colleges and takes all measures needed to improve them.

2.1.2. Advisory bodies

The *Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation de la Communauté Française* has responsibility for all levels of education and for education overall. As the law requires, this Council cooperates with other councils which have only limited powers or are only representative to a limited extent.

These are the *Conseil de l'Education aux Médias* (Council for Media Education) and the *Conseil Supérieur de la Guidance Psycho-médico-sociale* (Supreme Council for Psycho-Medical-Social Guidance). The *Conseil Supérieur des Allocations et Prêts d'Etudes* (Supreme Council for Study Grants and Loans) awards grants for secondary and higher education. The *Conseil des Parents de la Communauté Française* (Parents' Council) ensures that parents have a voice in educational matters at all levels.

For secondary education there is the *Conseil Général de Concertation de l'Enseignement Secondaire*. Non-university higher education has a *Conseil Général des Hautes Ecoles* (General Council for Colleges of Higher Education). The *Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté Française (CIUF)* (Inter-University Council of the French Community) groups the chancellors of the French-speaking universities.

2.1.3. Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation (CEF) (Council for Education and Training)

Foundation

The Council for Education and Training was set up by the French Community decree of 12 July 1990.

Powers, delivery of opinions and advice

The remit of this Council is, generally speaking, to promote training and education in the French Community. In the advice it provides the Council respects the autonomy and educational freedom of the organising authorities and takes account of the work done by existing councils. The Council makes suggestions for the rhythm of educational activities and the staggering of school term and holiday dates. It also concerns itself with the relationships between education and training and the world of work and monitors the labour market and future prospects for students graduating from the various levels of education and training. To that end the Council liaises with contacts in the social and economic field. The Council delivers opinions on all major educational reforms and policy decisions on training, including the coordination of policy by sub-regional bodies on employment and training. The Council also reports annually to the minister on the state of education and training in the French Community.

In addition to these tasks it has a number of other duties such as negotiation with the General Council for Colleges of Higher Education and other councils.

In 1996-97 the Council delivered opinions on the balance between studies and top-level sport, transparency in assessment procedures, core tasks in primary and secondary education and structures for their achievement, date of registration for colleges of higher education, targets in higher education and strategies for attaining them and the status of the teaching profession and teacher training.

In 1997-98 the Council delivered opinions on the chances of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, teacher training, participation in university studies, validation of skills, first years of study in higher education. Other opinions covered channels of information and mediation, methods of assessment including those used by university lecturers, assessment of the state of education using an analytical instrument which compared academic studies with the findings reported by the parties concerned, literacy in the French Community, student numeracy in the French Community, infrastructure in vocational training, objectives of vocational training, the training of teacher trainers, primary education, television and violence.

In 1999 the following topics were addressed: the teaching of reading, a code of ethics for violence on television, the specific objectives of education for social advancement, reform of the legislation on study courses in higher education, the launch of a Community committee for occupations and qualifications, the educational skills of lecturers in higher education, the objectives of continuous vocational training, equal opportunities for boys and girls in education.

Internal organisation and structures

The Council encompasses the work of two "chambers", one for education and one for training.

Opinions may be delivered either as an own initiative or at the request of the appropriate minister(s). Each chamber usually debates a subject itself ahead of any joint discussion with the Council. Any official pronouncement by the Council must be endorsed by a simple majority of its membership. For certain issues the Council may set up working parties and co-opt experts to assist them.

The *Chambre de l'éducation* comprises representatives of the organising authorities of the education networks, the relevant teacher unions, the parent association federations, the full universities (Brussels, Liège, Louvain-la-Neuve), the university institutions (religious and secular

foundations) which are not full universities, and representatives of the higher education student body. No philosophical or religious influence of any kind has a majority within this forum.

The *Chambre de la formation* comprises representatives of the relevant employers' and employees' organisations and the relevant agricultural organisations, with a view to equal representation for all social partners and for the Community and regional office of vocational training and employment, the Brussels regional employment office, the French institute for continuous small-business training, the supreme council for continuous training and the agricultural training organisations.

The Council appoints a daily bureau in which equal representation for education and training is guaranteed.

Membership

The Council has 15 full members and 49 alternates. These members are appointed by the executive of the Council of the French Community. 60% of members represent the *Chambre de l'éducation* and 40% the *Chambre de la formation*.

The two chamber presidents (education and training) are nominated by the members and appointed by the French Community for a four-year term. This term may be renewed twice. The two chamber presidents take it in turns to chair the Council for a year at a time. When one is acting as president, the other acts as vice-president.

Degree of independence and impact

The Council's annual operating appropriation is entered in the budget of the French Community's ministry for education, research and training. The Council comes under the ministry for administrative matters too.

The Council, the two chambers and the daily bureau are free to set their own budget rules and put these to the executive for approval. This has already been done and approved in the French Community Decision of 6 December 1996.

The Council is in principle independent. The requirement to provide answers at all times to questions from relevant ministers in no way curtails that independence. The Council has complete freedom in reaching its opinions. It can also deliver own-initiative opinions. The minister or other public bodies do not have to consult the Council, however. Nor is the minister obliged to respond officially to an opinion of the Council.

Ideally the Council aims to play a part in the shaping of long-term education policy. Forecasting is thus a significant part of its advisory work. The chairman sees no real difference between the Council's statutory and de facto roles.

It is not clear how much competition the Council faces from other formal or informal councils or channels of influence. In theory the Council brings together all representatives of education and training organisations, but a measure of dialogue also takes place elsewhere.

2.2. German Community

2.2.1. The education system

Whereas in the other Communities in Belgium there are three types of education provider, in the German Community there are just two networks: state education and private, funded education.

The principal subdivisions of education are in line with the general structures in Belgium.

2.2.2. Advisory bodies

There is no full education council at present in the German Community.

From 1991 to 1996 there was a *Pädagogische Kommission*. This had a limited remit in respect of continuous teacher training and curricula. It was set up on a participatory basis and its members were a representative of the minister, a representative of the service in the department of education responsible for refresher courses, the inspectorate, the administration, representatives of the various organising authorities for compulsory school education, the unions and establishments of higher education.

2.3. Flemish Community

2.3.1. The education system

In 1989 the Flemish Community relinquished virtually all responsibility for education and training policy. The power to organise education was transferred to an autonomous body, *Gemeenschapsonderwijs* (Community Education). This devolution of powers meant that the government could concentrate on its core tasks without having to be responsible for the organisation of community education.

Since federalisation, education policy in Flanders has taken on a momentum of its own which is reflected in a comprehensive programme to modernise and simplify the rules governing all levels and sectors of education. There are now new decrees for the main sectors of education which will enable these sectors to organise themselves in a more dynamic fashion.

Education in the Flemish Community is organised in three ways:

- Community education. This came into being after the government delegated its power to organise education to an autonomous organising authority.
- State-funded education is organised by the municipalities and provinces.
- A variety of private individuals or non-profit bodies also organise education. Many of these schools and colleges are Catholic foundations. Other organisers of privately funded education are independent "method" schools.

The levels of education in the Flemish Community are the same as in the other Communities.

2.3.2. Advisory bodies

In 1999 the Flemish Government set up a "*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad*" or Vlor (Flemish Education Council). This was designed to replace a wealth of advisory bodies which had limited powers. The Government's wish was for advice and opinions to be provided more coherently

for all levels of education. Here again it opted for a participatory model whereby all circles involved in education would be represented in the Education Council. The operations of the Flemish Education Council are described in greater depth in 2.3.3.

In the area of higher education the Flemish Government is also advised, on the specific sectors concerned, by two bodies: the *Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad* (Flemish Interuniversity Council) and the *Vlaamse Hoogescholenraad* (Flemish Council for Colleges of Higher Education).

The Flemish Interuniversity Council (Vlir) was formed in 1976 at the instigation of the Flemish university chancellors. It is made up of the chancellors of the six Flemish universities or their representatives.

Vlir is primarily a discussion forum for the universities and their administrations. It also advises the authorities on their university education and research policy and it provides the Flemish universities with certain services such as quality assurance.

The Flemish Council for Colleges of Higher Education (Vlhora) was formed on 17 January 1996. It delivers opinions to the Flemish Government on matters of relevance to the colleges of higher education. Vlhora acts as a mouthpiece for the colleges.

Vlhora's general meeting is made up of the principals of the 29 Flemish colleges of higher education. It elects a 10-member administrative council for a four-year term (two members from the provincial colleges of higher education, three from the Flemish autonomous colleges of higher education and five from the funded private colleges of higher education).

2.3.3. *The Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (Vlor) (Flemish Education Council)*

Foundation

The Flemish Education Council was set up by the education decree II of 31 July 1990. It gradually became operational during 1991.

Powers, delivery of opinions and advice

The remit of the Flemish Education Council is threefold: opinions and advice, research and consultation.

The Flemish Education Council's opinion is a formal step in the government's decision-making process. The education minister has to obtain the opinion of the Flemish Education Council on all preliminary drafts of decrees and all policy memoranda he places before the Flemish Parliament. More specific powers of the Council relate to quality standards for educational establishments (exit qualifications) or planning. The Flemish Education Council may also formulate own-initiative opinions on any education issue.

The Flemish Education Council is also a forum in which education partners can agree arrangements for the organisation and development of education. Vlor provides a forum where education partners can sound each other out on the implementation of government policy or a common approach to certain initiatives or innovations. It is also a place where educational circles and the social partners can talk about how vocational training needs to be designed.

In support of its opinions and consultations Vlor also draws on existing research findings and international data. To this end it may itself commission study projects.

We shall not list all the opinions which Vlor has delivered here. In addition to purely technical opinions the Flemish Education Council has delivered opinions on coordination of the policy programmes envisaging priority educational measures for migrants and broader guidance and welfare measures, and on other aspects of education policy as it affects migrants. Other opinions have looked at expectations of education, government policy priorities and the various specific-level decrees enacted by government in recent years. The Council advised the minister on educational research, how to cater for students with special needs and quality standards for schools and colleges. The Council has also addressed the question of IT in secondary education. It is also working closely with the social partners to devise occupational and training profiles.

Internal organisation and structures

The Flemish Education Council consists of a general council and various councils and departments for each level and form of education. Each council or department has autonomous powers in respect of those matters relating exclusively to the level or form of education covered by the remit of the council or department.

The permanent bureau is responsible for the establishment's equipment and staff policy.

The Flemish Education Council has a permanent secretariat headed by a chief administrator. The permanent secretariat acts as a staff department underpinning the work of the councils and departments.

Membership

The various partners involved in education are represented in all councils and departments. Thus the councils include representatives of the education organisers and student guidance centres, representatives of the unions and education users (parents, pupils, students, course participants) depending on the level concerned, the social partners, education experts and government (department of education and inspectorate).

Degree of independence and impact

The Flemish Education Council is a Flemish public establishment with its own budget, which can act independently vis à vis the education authority and administration.

Vlor's real impact on policy stems from its own-initiative opinions or those requested by the minister, where no prior agreements have been concluded and there is time for the parties concerned to consult amongst themselves. The drafting of policy is also influenced by thought processes triggered by Vlor. In its opinions Vlor also emphasises the importance of consistency in policy across all levels and sectors of education.

Points of difficulty are the fact that there are many consultative structures operating parallel to one another. The creation of a negotiating committee for direct talks between organising authorities, unions and government is an example of this. Its effectiveness is also impaired by time pressure and the lack of a distinctive profile for Vlor's opinions compared with the other parallel consultative structures. There is a situation of inequality between organising authorities

and unions on the one hand and parents, students and representatives of society and the economy on the other hand.

A significant plus-point is that the Education Council's opinion is one of the official documents which must be placed before Parliament when it is required to rule on a preliminary draft decree.

3. DENMARK

3.1. The education system

Denmark has very specific educational traditions and a well organised and richly layered education system.

Since 1972 education in Denmark has been compulsory from age 7 to 16. The *Grundskoler* organised by the municipalities are called *Folkeskoler*. At this age pupils are entitled to receive education free of charge at a state *Folkeskole*. The 1991 act on independent and private schools sets out the requirements for these schools. Private schools provide education consistent with the requirements for the *Folkeskole*.

The structure of primary education still in place today was decided in 1975. Denmark then had a new, undivided *Folkeskole* which lasted nine years with an optional tenth year. Policy as it affects this *Folkeskole* is largely determined by the 275 Danish municipalities. Before the age of six children may receive pre-school education. After nine or ten years' primary education (and lower secondary education) pupils move on to various forms of secondary education: vocational training or grammar school-type education. Higher education in Denmark is of three types: short-duration higher vocational training (in health care and the social sector, for example), medium-duration training which includes teacher training, colleges of higher education in the social sciences, engineer training and training at universities or establishments of higher education. Denmark also has an extensive system of adult education (further education colleges, for adults with little formal education, for adult foreign nationals, adults preparing for examinations, etc.), plus special needs education for pupils and students with a handicap.

In Denmark three levels of administration are responsible for education policy and its implementation. Denmark's administration is highly decentralised, especially in primary education. Despite this establishments must meet centrally imposed criteria of effectiveness and quality. In recent years debate has focused on the quality of education and research, the need to save money and (once again) the degree to which administration and management are decentralised.

A first level of administration is the central, national level. The main players here are the education minister, his administration and Parliament.

The education minister has general responsibility for the whole of the education sector plus specific powers in respect of vocational education and higher education at universities and colleges. Parliament determines the legal frameworks for education, is responsible for setting educational targets and decides on how government funds for education will be apportioned.

In each of the fourteen Danish provinces (*amter*) the provincial council is responsible for education in the establishments of the province. The provinces organise *gymnasium* education (upper secondary schools) and centres of adult education. There are only a few independent *gymnasier*. The provincial council develops adequate educational facilities in the province, grants funding to establishments and lays down financial frameworks, and it has responsibility for staff policy and scrutinises special needs education and adult education for foreign nationals.

At local level the authorities of the 275 Danish municipalities have since 1933 been responsible for primary education in the municipal *Folkeskoler*. Each municipality has a standing education committee whose duties include administration and the provision of opinions and advice. The municipalities are also empowered to set up a consultative "umbrella" body to cover *Folkeskoler* in the municipality.

The municipality lays down general objectives and frameworks for primary schools in the municipality. It monitors schools, distributes funding, determines staffing policy and planning, lays down broad guidelines for timetabling (e.g. number of hours, number of hours per subject and the rules for special needs education) and it approves the curriculum submitted by the school's governing board.

3.2. Advisory bodies

At national level the Danish education minister has representative advisory councils for the various levels and types of education which can advise him on policy. For each area of education there are central advisory bodies in place:

- *Folkeskolerådet* (Primary Schools Council);
- *Erhvervuddannelsesrådet* (Council for Vocational Education and Training);
- *Teknikerrådet* (Council for Technical Education);
- *Uddannelsesrådet* (Council for Higher Education);
- *Seminarierrådet* (Council for Teacher Training Colleges);
- *Efteruddannelsesrådet* (Council for Further Training).

Given that the municipalities and provinces have wide powers, there are advisory bodies at these levels too. Municipalities may also form joint advisory councils. The National Association of Municipalities (*Kommunernes Landsforening*), the Association of Provincial Councils (*Amtsrådsforeningen*), the national trade union committees and various interest groups also have advisory duties at various levels.

The Primary Schools Council is considered at length later.

3.2.1. Erhvervuddannelsesrådet (Council for Vocational Education and Training)

The Council advises the minister on vocational education, in line with developments on the labour market. The following aspects are relevant here: educational targets, curricula, innovative projects, teacher qualifications, clustering of courses, the core curriculum, student guidance, the status of practical trainees, criteria for the recognition of vocational schools, etc. The Council may also formulate own-initiative opinions on curricula. It also has a more general power to advise on the organisation of education and general aspects of education in the sector concerned.

The 24 members represent both public bodies and private companies (20 members) and vocational education (4 members as observers only). The minister takes the chair.

3.2.2. *Teknikerrådet (Council for Technical Education)*

This Council has responsibility for short-duration higher vocational training in higher, non-university education. It deals with the renewal of curricula and their objectives, subject divisions, structure, duration of training, eligibility requirements and assessment methods. The Council also advises on mandatory teacher qualifications. The Council keeps a watchful eye on the links between this form of education and the world of work.

The minister of education appoints the chairman. Two members are nominated by the Council for Vocational Education and Training, eight members represent the employers' associations, and eight speak for the relevant employee organisations. A number of members act in an advisory capacity: three independent experts are nominated by the education minister, two members represent the school principals' associations and teachers, one member represents the minister of labour and two members represent the education minister. The Council members serve a four-year term.

3.2.3. *Uddannelsesrådet (Council for Higher Education)*

Since 1992 there have been five education councils for higher education - for technical subjects, the social sciences, natural sciences, languages and training in the health care sector.

These councils have the following powers: a general remit to advise on matters relevant to the type of education in question, to monitor national and international developments in education and on the labour market. The councils take initiatives to innovate and they assess types of training and promote the further development of training and its quality. They also deliver opinions on all current topics and issues on which they are consulted by the minister.

Each council consists of a chairman, a vice-chairman and eight members (10 members in all). All are chosen by the minister and appointed for a four-year term. Half the membership comes up for reappointment every two years. The councils may co-opt people from outside if they deem it necessary.

The chairmen of the five councils together form a Chairmen's Council, presided over by a chairman appointed by the minister. This Chairmen's Council meets at least twice a year to agree working arrangements covering all the councils for higher education of them and to liaise on a number of overlapping topics.

3.3. Folkeskolerådet (Primary Schools Council)

3.3.1. *Foundation*

The present-day *Folkeskolerådet* was set up in 1993, when the present Primary and Lower Secondary Education Act was approved. As a result of this Act the earlier municipal councils were dissolved, though municipal advisory bodies were retained by subsequent legislation.

Prior to 1993 the minister convened the Council on his own initiative. It operated more on an ad hoc basis. The impact of its opinions has changed in that the old Council answered to Parliament whilst the present Council only advises the minister.

3.3.2. *Powers, delivery of opinions and advice*

The *Folkeskolerådet* is mainly concerned with primary and lower secondary education (the *Folkeskole*) but may also pronounce on other sectors of education in so far as these impinge on the *Folkeskole*. Thus the Council recently adopted a position on basic, further and advanced training for teachers in the *Folkeskole*.

The advisory duties of the *Folkeskolerådet* encompass all aspects of day-to-day life in the *Folkeskole*. The Council also considers methods of assessing procedures in schools, research projects and development work and the legal basis of innovations and development projects initiated by municipalities and/or schools. Previously the Council also disseminated experience gained from the further development of the *Folkeskole*.

Council opinions may refer to the preparation and realisation of policy initiatives. These opinions may also be pro-active and anticipate policy. In that case they constitute primarily an exploration of the field and issues concerned.

On the other hand, the Council's powers are also limited by the fact that the municipalities have wide-ranging policy-making powers. The minister who is advised by the *Folkeskolerådet* has only a limited number of powers in respect of the *Folkeskole*. Municipalities take far-reaching initiatives on the organisation of the *Folkeskole*. The autonomy of the municipalities is very much a factor here.

The Council may deliver opinions either at its own initiative or in response to a request from the minister.

In 1998 the Council dealt with issues of assessment, the new structure of the 10th year, school textbooks, IT and migrants in the *Folkeskole*.

In 1999 it considered the future of the *Folkeskole* (the *Folkeskole* in the 21st century).

3.3.3. *Internal organisation and structure*

The Council meets eight times a year.

3.3.4. *Membership*

The most influential groups and associations of relevance to the *Folkeskole* are represented in the Council. The Council has a chairman and 14 members appointed by the minister. The minister directly appoints the chairman and two members who have relevant material expertise in education. Two members represent the National Association of Municipalities and the cities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg. Two members represent the Danish teachers' union. Two members represent the parents' organisation (*Skole og Samfund*), and two represent the pupils' association. One member is appointed on a nomination by the national head teachers' association. The national school principals' association may also nominate a representative. The council for youth and adult education may nominate a representative and the Danish youth

council and sports council may jointly nominate one member. The *Folkeskolerådet* does not include any employers' representatives even though these interest groups have a major impact on policy.

These members are appointed for a three-year term.

3.3.5. *Degree of independence and impact*

The Council is an independent forum which determines its own views. It also sets its own internal operating rules. The education ministry undertakes to second staff to positions within the Council secretariat.

The Council has only an operating budget. This budget, however, is limited. It means that the Council cannot itself commission research to back up its opinions.

As is apparent from the description of the Council's membership, a large number of influential groups and organisations are represented in it. Denmark has a long tradition of involving these groups in the development of the *Folkeskole* and the process of taking decisions which affect it. Notwithstanding their membership of the Council, these interest groups retain their own autonomy in their relations both with the *Folkeskole* and with political bodies and the education minister.

The Council's impact is greater when processes of innovation and reform are being discussed than when innovations, reforms and legislation are actually being implemented.

Because the Council meets only eight times a year, decision-making processes are slow and there is less opportunity for topical debate on the *Folkeskole*.

The chairman of the Council is a figure of authority in Denmark who enhances its public prestige.

4. GERMANY

4.1. The education system

Education in Germany is compulsory from age 6 to 18. Up to age 15 it is full-time; thereafter part-time. In some of the *Länder* education is only compulsory up to age 16.

Under the German system pre-school education is provided in kindergartens. In most of the German *Länder* children move across at age six to the *Grundschule* which lasts just four years. At age 10 they opt for the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium* or *Gesamtschule*.

Education in the *Hauptschule* is general and not yet vocational. After a polyvalent foundation year pupils can learn a trade under the dual system. Alternatively, these young people can opt for full-time education at the *Berufsfachschule* (commerce, home economics and service occupations).

The *Realschule* lasts six years. After this pupils may also switch to the dual system or the *Berufsfachschule*. They can also opt for the *Fachoberschule* which gives access to the higher

technical colleges (*Fachhochschulen*). Via the *Fachgymnasium* these young people gain entry to the university establishments.

The *Gymnasium* provides a general education leading directly to university entrance. It lasts at least nine years. The *Gesamtschulen* offer a comprehensive education. Depending on the syllabus, pupils can go on to more vocationally oriented training or the *Gymnasium*.

Higher education is provided in *Fachhochschulen* and universities. The *Gesamthochschulen* are formally part of the university system.

Special needs education (*Sonderschulen*) is systematically subdivided into types according to the handicap of the children or young people concerned.

The picture on adult education policy is broadly encouraging. Apart from training for government personnel and certain forms of second-chance education, adult education is very much in the hands of private enterprise. There is thus a wide diversity in objectives and manifestations.

Private education is modest in Germany, except in the case of kindergartens, special needs education and adult education.

Characteristic of German education policy is the far-reaching autonomy enjoyed by the *Länder*⁵. Federal Government has responsibility for financial assistance to pupils and students (grants and loans), for legislation on vocational education and framework legislation on higher education. The *Länder* draw up legislation on the other aspects of education and above all higher education. The organisation of education is exclusively the province of the *Länder*. Within the *Länder*, however, policy is markedly centralised.

Because of the autonomy which the *Länder* enjoy, uniformity goes no further than the broad lines of policy. Another reason for wide differences in education policy and organisation is German reunification which meant that on 3 October 1990 five new *Länder* were added to the existing eleven *Länder* of the Federal Republic. Because of their specific history these new *Länder* have their own culture and organisation. There is a forum for debate by the 16 education ministers and the federal education minister in the shape of the *Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister*. Within this conference the culture ministers agree the broad lines of the German education system.

In most of the *Länder* education is supervised and administered at three hierarchical levels of policy. The highest authority is the *Land* education minister, and below him come the *Bezirke* which are in turn divided into *Kreise*.

Gymnasia, *Gesamtschulen*, vocational schools and usually the *Realschulen* too come either under the *Bezirksregierungen* or directly under the education minister of the *Land* concerned. The *Kreise* are responsible for the *Grundschulen*, *Hauptschulen*, *Sonderschulen* and

⁵ Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hessen, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony, Sachsen-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia.

sometimes the *Realschulen*. All *Länder* have local education services with staff to provide student guidance, administrative management and supervision.

4.2. Advisory bodies

The autonomy of the *Länder* and the distribution of powers within them naturally have significant implications for the way in which advisory bodies are organised. At federal level there are advisory bodies only for higher education and vocational training.

In (most of) the *Länder* there are advisory councils for higher education and *Schulbeiräte*. In addition to these advisory bodies most *Länder* have separate representative parents' councils (*Landeselternbeiräte*). These are grouped at federal level in the *Bundeselternrat*. In most *Länder* a lot of discussion takes place in ad hoc committees. These are by definition temporary bodies which are wound up once their objective has been achieved. Depending on the topic, this debate involves all manner of bodies, for example trade unions, parent and pupil associations, representatives of the social partners, church organisations, representatives of private schools and local authority associations, etc.

We describe below firstly the advisory bodies which exist at federal level, and then those in place at *Land* level.

4.2.1. *Wissenschaftsrat (Academic Council)*

Founded in 1957, this Council advises the Federal Government on the substantive and structural development of higher education and academic research. In so doing it takes account of social, cultural and economic change.

The *Wirtschaftsrat* has 54 members. The Federal President appoints 32 members whose influence spans both academic circles and public life. The other 22 members are appointed by Federal Government and the governments of the *Länder*.

The Council has an annual budget of some DM 8.5 million provided by Federal Government and the 16 governments of the *Länder*.

It has a large secretariat: a total of 60 staff members, 25 of whom are university graduates in a variety of disciplines. This staff has a baseline administrative remit which is primarily to prepare the substance of the many discussion topics and the recommendations to which these give rise. Opinions are adopted by a two-thirds majority. A balance is sought between academic and political interests and between national and *Land* interests.

The following topics are typical of those discussed by the Council: new grades in higher education, the relationship between higher education and the labour market, accreditation and assessment in higher education, energy research, cooperation by research centres, assessment of non-university research establishments, structural development of higher education establishments, priority spending on buildings for large-scale academic research, and education and research in the medical faculties.

4.2.2. *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (Conference of Higher Education College Principals)*

This Conference advises at federal level on non-university higher education. It has over 300 members who represent the many state establishments of higher education, universities and *Fachhochschulen*. Proposals for general guidelines on syllabuses and final examinations in higher education must be unanimously approved by the Conference before being passed on to the *Länder*. The *Länder* may or may not then adopt them as generally binding.

4.2.3. *Councils for higher education at Land level*

The 1976 *Hochschulrahmengesetz* required the *Länder* to ensure that training at colleges of higher education was more effectively tailored to social, cultural and economic developments. The Act explicitly envisaged the formation of advisory councils.

The *Länder* have implemented the Framework Act but its organisation and effectiveness vary from one *Land* to another.

4.3. **The Landesschulbeiräte (*Land* education councils)**

Most of the *Länder* have a *Landesschulbeirat*. The membership, remit and organisation of these councils may vary from one *Land* to another.

They are consulted on important subjects such as the development of new curricula, drafting of new legislation or application of existing legislation, important pilot projects and their results.

A Council will on average have 26 members representing teachers, parents, pupils, the churches or a wide range of groups (e.g. municipal and regional associations, chambers of industry, commerce and trades, unions, youth organisations, educational establishments, etc.), as well as the various levels and sectors of education. Experts are also usually represented on the Council. The education minister for the *Land* in question usually chairs the Council.

Our information is that it is not easy to say how these advisory councils relate to government and other bodies which shape and influence policy. There are too many major differences, both between advisory councils in any given *Land* and between the councils of different *Länder*. By way of illustration we shall now take the case of Baden-Württemberg.

4.3.1. *Foundation*

The *Schulbeirat* for Baden-Württemberg was set up under the 1983 *Schulgesetz* which was revised in 1997.

4.3.2. *Powers, provision of opinions and advice*

The *Schulbeirat* advises the *Land* minister on constitutional questions of education. The minister may ask for specific advice. The Council may also deliver own-initiative opinions on topics of its own choosing.

These opinions are used purely as an aid in the preparation of policy. They play no part in policy implementation. The Council has no pro-active or exploratory role. Its main function is to

present the minister with a picture of how the Council members think education policy should look.

Since 1997 the *Landesschulbeirat* of Baden-Württemberg has addressed the following topics: shortening the period of school education, syllabuses for vocational education, problems in special needs education, the starting age of pupils at school, action on student problems, and foreign language instruction in the *Grundschulen*.

4.3.3. *Internal organisation and structures*

Following a first meeting initiated by the minister, the chairman convenes the Council within three weeks if a third of the membership or the minister so requests. The minister or his alternate is entitled to attend all meetings. The minutes of all meetings must be sent to the minister.

4.3.4. *Membership*

The Council has 41 members, eight of them representing parents, eight the teachers, eight the pupils, six the vocational schools, three the municipalities, three the churches and six the employers' and employees' associations. Each group chooses its own delegates who are then officially appointed by the minister. The parents' and pupils' representatives are appointed by the *Landeselternbeirat* and *Landesschülerbeirat* respectively.

The Council elects a chairman from amongst its members by simple majority.

The Council is elected for a renewable three-year term.

4.3.5. *Degree of independence and impact*

Written replies to the questionnaire indicate that the Council is "independent". The minister does not interfere in the election and appointment of members or the chairman. This independence is underwritten by the *Schulgesetz* referred to earlier.

In addition to the *Landesschulbeirat* there are other councils - the *Landeselternbeirat* and *Landesschülerbeirat* - but these do not compete with it.

5. FINLAND

5.1. The education system

Education policy in Finland is highly centralised. The education ministry acts for central government in matters of education. It has responsibility for almost all forms of education funded by government. The remit of the ministry is to prepare as well as implement policy. The National Education Council plays an important part in the implementation of policy.

In recent years the influence of the provinces has declined. They are concerned primarily with the selection of students, the allocation of study places to the various educational establishments and the breakdown of government funding across the province.

Primary and general secondary education is organised by the municipalities. In some cases these also organise vocational training and centres of adult education. 54% of all vocational education establishments are run by municipalities or local authority groupings.

Finland has pre-school education (*esiopetus*). Very little of this is provided by the state education system. Most of it is organised by day nurseries and private bodies. As in Denmark primary school is designed for all children of compulsory school age. From age seven to 16 or 17 pupils are taught in the *peruskoulu*. There is special needs education for children with a physical or mental handicap or behavioural problems. After primary education children may opt for general secondary education (*lukio*) or for vocational training (*ammattillinen koulutus*). Three years of *lukio* are the preparation for university entrance.

Vocational education is provided in specialist establishments. There are three levels of vocational education: lower vocational education (*kouluaste*), intermediate vocational education (*opistoaste*) and higher vocational education (*ammattillinen korkeaste*). *Kouluaste* is regarded as secondary education, *opistoaste* and *ammattillinen korkeaste* are regarded partly as tertiary education. Since 1996 Finland has had a new type of higher vocational education colleges. The aim is to develop a fairly large sector of non-university education.

In adult education the options are general education, vocational education, further vocational education, private education and university education.

In addition to state education, Finland also has private education which is government-funded. But most of these schools follow the national curricula and guidelines for assessment laid down by the National Education Council. Among other things this has implications for the award of diplomas. The private sector is extremely small, though. In primary education it accounts for 1% of schools; plus 6% of general education, 11% of vocational education and 40% of adult education. The bulk of education is provided at municipal level or organised by local authority groupings. Since 1993 the Finnish state has sought to transfer vocational and special needs education establishments to the municipalities.

5.2. Advisory bodies

Although the Finnish administrative tradition (in education too) is inclined to favour democratic representation, the number of formal advisory bodies on education is quite small. In Finland those in the field of education take part in the devising of education policy primarily on an ad hoc basis.

Interest groups are also directly represented in decision-making administrative bodies. One example is the board of trustees of the *Opetushallitus* (National Education Council) which groups education experts, employers and employees, teachers, municipalities, the two language groups (Finnish and Swedish) and staff of the National Education Council.

The National Education Council itself is a central administrative body answering directly to the ministry of education. The *Opetushallitus* is headed by a group of experts from education, industry and local government. It is a body for planning and expertise in lower, secondary and adult education. The job of the *Opetushallitus* is to develop educational objectives, content and methods, draft and approve national core curricula and guidelines on qualifications, and

assess the Finnish education system (with the exception of higher education establishments). The National Education Council also assists the ministry of education in the drafting of policy.

At national level there are five advisory bodies in the strict sense of the term. They all serve strictly defined sectors of education. So we did not explore the role of the most important advisory council further in our interviews. Nor have we analysed the main important council in greater depth here.

5.2.1. *Aikuiskoulutusneuvosto (Advisory Council on Adult Education)*

Foundation

The Advisory Council on Adult Education was set up on 18 October 1984.

Powers, provision of opinions and advice

The Council generally encourages the development of adult education in Finland and promotes research in this area of education. The Council encourages lifelong learning inside and outside the education system. It also promotes coordination and cooperation between sectors of adult education and between adult education and other forms of education. The Council also monitors social trends which may have implications for adult education. Its remit is multifaceted but not very specific. Recently, however, the Council's role has begun to be more specific. The Council is currently concentrating on the assessment of adult education.

Internal organisation and structures

If necessary the Council can divide itself into a number of subcommittees. The Council chooses the chairman of the subcommittee from amongst its members. Subcommittees may be made up of members of the Council or of persons co-opted by the Council from outside. The subcommittees do preparatory work which is then taken further by the Council. In response to a Council request or decision, a subcommittee may also prepare proposals directly for the ministry.

Membership

The Council consists of a chairman and 12 members plus an equal number of alternates. Both professional and political circles are fairly comprehensively represented within the Council (mirroring the balance in Parliament). The Council includes the social partners, members of Parliament and the leading organisations in the field of adult education. The two language groups in Finland are also represented (Finnish and Swedish). Lastly there are seven permanent experts representing the various administrations, such as the ministry of education and the ministry of employment.

The chairman and members are appointed by the Council of State for a three-year term. The Council elects a vice-chairman and general secretary from its own membership. A secretary is appointed from officials of the ministry of education.

Degree of independence and impact

In principle the Council is independent of the ministry of education, though that independence is to some degree restricted by the fact of having to negotiate an annual budget appropriation with the ministry.

On the other hand, the Council receives its mandate from the Council of State and not the ministry of education, which underscores its autonomous status. Both the chairman and the membership are appointed by the Council of State. The broad representation of a range of players also strengthens its position. The Council is also entitled to put forward a candidate of its own for the presidency of the Council of State.

Its de facto role depends on the members of the Council and their activities. They can take the Council in whatever direction they wish.

The Council's influence is best observed over the long term. It can influence thinking by emphasising certain aspects of training and keeping these at the forefront of public debate. Its views are usually taken seriously and often lead to political action being taken in adult education policy. The fact that most of the leading players in the field are represented in the Council only serves to enhance its prestige.

5.2.2. *Koulutusoimikunnat (training committees for vocational education)*

The training committees are the principal channel through which the social partners and representatives of industry play a part in the planning of vocational education.

Foundation

A new decree on training committees came into force on 1 November 1997. As a result of this decree, which superseded a 1992 decree, the training committees will henceforth come under the ministry of education rather than the National Education Council.

Powers, provision of opinions and advice

As expert committees, the training committees help to plan and develop vocational education. Their role is to promote closer cooperation between education and the world of work. To this end they work closely with the ministry of education and the National Education Council.

The training committees monitor the (quantitative) evolution of vocational education in relation to developments on the labour market, future education requirements and the changing vocational needs in the various occupations. Thus they monitor research on the relationship of education to the labour market, conduct field-specific research (and produce reports) to develop the structure and content of education and formulate proposals to encourage education which is vocationally oriented. The training committees also assist the National Education Council in drafting national core curricula, have an input into discussions on the basic principles of competence-based examinations and express opinions on issues within their field.

Internal organisation and structures

There are six general training committees for the sectors of natural resources, technology, transport, commerce and services, health and social work, education, culture and physical education. These general training committees deal with broad cross-sector issues.

For each field there are field-specific training committees, 24 in all. Other field-specific training committees may be set up in addition.

A training committee may use subcommittees. Each subcommittee has a maximum of five members appointed by the training committee. The chairman and members of the subcommittee may also be drawn from outside, i.e. from outside the training committee.

Every year training committees must submit a programme and annual report to the ministry of education.

Membership

The education minister appoints a maximum of 14 members for the general training committees and ten for field-specific training committees. The minister also appoints a chairman and vice-chairman for the training committees, from amongst the membership, and chooses a secretary from staff of the ministry of education or National Education Council.

The members represent the education administration, teachers, employers, employees and other experts in matters of relevance to education and the labour market. Employers and employees must have an equal number of representatives. The membership must also reflect representation of the different levels of education and both language groups (Finnish and Swedish). The education administration has just one representative in each training committee. This representative of the administration also acts as secretary. Representatives of the world of work form a clear majority in the training committees.

Degree of independence and impact

Technically speaking the training committees are headed and supervised by the ministry. Nevertheless, they have a fairly free hand in the way they deal with issues.

Financially too they have a measure of independence: each training committee has its own budget, based on a grant given to each committee. The chairman, together with his/her committee, has independent responsibility for the way in which the monies are spent. Additional funding can be requested if it is justified.

Ideally the training committees are a public forum in which ideas and opinions can be aired and exchanged for the benefit of representatives of the main interest groups concerned with education, training and the link with business and industry. The committees are expected to foster cooperation and interaction between education and the world of work. The committees anticipate likely changes in occupational structures.

As stated, the training committees' tasks, membership, *modus operandi*, etc. are determined by law. But this legal basis is not stipulated in detail and is merely a statutory framework.

The training committees do not have a political mandate. Thus there is no expectation that they will compete with other possible shapers of policy. As indicated, numerous interest groups are represented on the committees. It would make no sense or those committees to be in competition with these interest groups. The reality is that they work together as a network, seeking solutions to shared problems.

5.2.3. Opetuksen, tutkimuksen ja kulttuurin tietoyhteiskuntaneuvottelukunta (Council for Promotion of the Information Society through Education, Research and Culture)

The Council for Promotion of the Information Society through Education, Research and Culture is an advisory body set up by the education minister in a decree of 1997. The job of this Council is to collect, analyse, summarise and report on information concerning the impact of the

developing information society on education, research and culture. The Council also encourages broader debate on subjects related to the information society.

5.2.4. *Korkeakouluneuvosto (Council for Higher Education)*

The Council for Higher Education has 13 members appointed by the Council of State. These members represent the various academic disciplines, students and spokesmen for industry. The Council draws up guidelines for the planning and development of higher education.

5.2.5. *Koulutussuunnittelun (Council for Education Planning)*

The Council for Education Planning monitors planning in all forms of education for those outside the compulsory school system (higher education and adult education). It monitors both figures and content and draws up a quantified plan for further development. It makes proposals for research and coordinates that research.

The Council has a maximum of 20 members appointed by the Council of State. These represent the education administration, other ministries involved in education and employment, representatives of employers and employees, central bodies of the municipalities and the two language groups.

6. FRANCE

6.1. The education system

Education in France is compulsory from age 6 to 16.

France has both state and private education. State education is neutral in terms of philosophy, religion and politics. The scale of private education is modest: 86.2% of primary school children and 79.25% of secondary school children attend state schools.

Pre-school education in France is well developed, though not compulsory. Since 1992 primary education has sought to make rigid system of a class for each year for flexible and it thus has three cycles: *apprentissage premier* (up to age 5), *apprentissage fondamentale* (age 5-8) and *approfondissement* (age 8-11).

Special needs education (primary and secondary) is provided in special classes in the mainstream system and in special needs schools.

Secondary education consists of two cycles spanning seven years. For the first four years pupils are taught within a comprehensive school structure (the *collège*). In the second cycle there are different options. Pupils can opt for the *lycée*, providing general or technical education over three years. This leads to university entrance. The *lycée professionnel* prepares young people for the labour market. After the *collège* pupils can also opt for apprenticeships or agricultural training.

Higher education offers a complex range of options and divisions. A distinction can be made here between vocationally oriented training of the shorter type and university training. There are also the *grandes écoles* and the preparatory classes for them.

Formation continue has also been a great success in France since 1971. This encompasses widely differing forms of education, from vocational training to university education.

The impact of the central state has traditionally been very great and responsibility for the administration of education rests wholly with the minister for national education and culture. Central government thus determines timetables, syllabuses, curricula, the programming and organisation of examinations, diplomas, teacher training, recruitment, holidays, etc. it also determines the general structures of the *lycées*, special needs education establishments, maritime and navigational training and agricultural colleges. It is also responsible for infrastructure and equipment and for programmes of adult education.

Within France there are 28 *académies* or education districts, each headed by a *recteur*. The *recteurs* are responsible within their districts for the implementation of government policy. The recruitment and salaries of teaching staff in nursery and primary schools are also part of their duties. The *recteur* is assisted by a *Conseil Académique d'Education Nationale* (CAEN). These councils act mainly as administrative and decision-making bodies. The *académie* is responsible for planning establishments, planning the necessary investments and the general procedures for channelling funding to establishments. Each CAEN also has a disciplinary remit, covering for example the suspension of teachers, the checking of compliance with the compulsory school attendance obligation, the temporary closure of a school, licences to operate private schools, etc.

The *académies* are in turn divided into *départements*. Here too there are councils, *Conseils Départementaux de l'Education Nationale* (CDEN) which are largely administrative.

6.2. Advisory bodies

The principal advisory bodies at national level were created by or their specific functions defined in the *Loi d'Orientation* (general framework law on education) of 10 July 1989. In all there are four councils at national level. The *Conseil Supérieur de l'Education* (Supreme Council for Education), the *Conseil National de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche* (National Council for Higher Education and Research), the *Conseil National des Programmes* (National Council for Curricula). The fourth body is made up of a large number of *commissions professionnelles consultatives* (CPC) grouped within a *Commission Interprofessionnelle Consultative*.

We give below an outline of how these councils operate. The *Conseil Supérieur de l'Education* has general advisory powers and is discussed in further detail later on.

6.2.1. *Conseil National de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche* (CNESER) (National Council for Higher Education and Research)

The National Council for Higher Education and Research has responsibility for these fields. The Council is also consulted on the apportioning of budget funds for equipping and operating establishments. It is also asked for its opinion on the curricula of public establishments of an academic, cultural and professional nature and their applications for funding. The Council may also discipline teachers and students found guilty of fraud.

The Council is chaired by the minister or his alternate. The Council has a total of 61 members, appointed for a four-year term, except for the 11 student members who serve for two years only. There are 29 members representing university lecturers, 21 members represent the social partners, the National Assembly, the Senate and the Economic and Social Council.

Within the CNESER there are three sections which, like the Council itself, are set up on a participatory basis. The permanent section of 20 members takes care of day-to-day administration. The standing academic committee of 23 members gives advice on education and diplomas in the third cycle and on research. (The disciplinary committee of 14 specially elected members, which takes action against fraud, does not meet in public.)

The CNESER also maintains systematic relations with other advisory councils, partly by being directly represented in those councils.

It has its own budget.

6.2.2. *Conseil National des Programmes (CNP) (National Council for Curricula)*

The National Council for Curricula was also set up in March 1990 pursuant to the *Loi d'Orientation*. The Council is empowered to advise the minister(s) and formulate proposals on the general content of education, principal objectives and curricula in primary, secondary and higher education. More specifically this Council ensures that curricula are continuous and consistent across all the forms of education. Either at its own initiative or in response to a request from the ministers concerned the Council may research all manner of issues and produce proposals and/or opinions on them. Proposals for curricula, their content and methods, may be drafted by special working parties.

The Council has 22 members appointed by the appropriate minister(s) for their qualifications and expertise. The chairman is appointed by the members.

6.2.3. *Commissions professionnelles consultatives (CPC); Commission Interprofessionnelle Consultative (CIC) (advisory occupational committees and the Inter-Occupational Advisory Committee)*

These committees, 20 in all, prepare opinions on technical and vocational education. Each advisory committee represents a specific economic sector. They provide opinions on curricula, training programmes, new avenues of study, examinations, etc.

The committees are chaired by the 20 members of the Inter-Occupational Advisory Committee, which is in turn chaired by the minister. The committee members are drawn from representatives of these forms of education and the world of work. Individuals chosen for their specific competences also sit on these committees.

6.3. **Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation (Supreme Council for Education)**

6.3.1. *Foundation*

The *Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation* is firmly rooted in the big university councils, the first of which was founded as far back as 1798. 1946 saw the establishment of the *Conseil Supérieur*

de l'Education Nationale. As of June 1990 this has superseded the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Education Nationale* and the *Conseil National de l'Enseignement Général et Technique*.

6.3.2. Powers, provision of opinions and advice

The Council has an advisory function in respect of all education issues which are in any way of national concern, whichever minister is responsible. The education minister may ask the Council for an opinion. Its more specific powers vary, depending on whether the area of interest is the state or private education system. The Council gives advice on the objectives and operation of state education, and legislation on syllabuses, examinations, diplomas and compulsory schooling. Issues relating to private education (primary, secondary and technical) may also be covered, for example the terms of employment of staff in private establishments ("*sous contrat*").

This Council may also act as an arbitration board, albeit with a specific membership and a chairman and secretary appointed for the purpose. This "arbitration function" is thus entirely separate from its "advisory function".

6.3.3. Internal organisation and structures

There are five committees within the Council. A standing committee of 49 members takes care of the day-to-day administration. Each member has two alternates. There are also three special committees: one for schools, one for the *collèges* and one for the *lycées*. If the minister or a majority of the Council members requests it, additional committees may be set up and members co-opted from outside if necessary. There is a special committee for state and private education which has 18 members, 12 of them representing state education and 6 the private sector.

The dates of meetings and agendas for this Council and its committees are set by the minister. Full meetings of the Council are held at least twice a year but not in public. On average the standing committee meets ten times a year.

The Council maintains formal relations with, and is kept informed of, the opinions of other advisory bodies.

6.3.4. Membership

The Council is chaired by the minister or his/her representative. The full Council has 97 members. 48 of these represent teaching staff and the directorates of state and private education. Representatives of the parents' and families' associations and pupils have 19 members. The regions and *départements* have 12 members. The main cultural, educative, social and economic interest groups are represented by 18 members (including 8 salaried employees and 6 employers). The Council may co-opt experts from outside on an ad hoc basis.

Council members are elected for a three-year term, except for the student representatives who serve for one year only.

6.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

This Council has no budget of its own. Its costs are covered under the overall budget of the ministry of education.

The Council is expected to be an independent body. Its opinions are respected and they have a manifest impact on the decisions ultimately taken. On the other hand, the minister sets the agenda and also convenes the Council meetings.

This advisory council is of course also influenced by other formal or informal councils or conduits of influence. There is possible competition from circles which are represented in one or more councils or are also anxious to defend their own interest, which is often not the same as the consensus views of the council in question (e.g. the French unions).

7. GREECE

7.1. The education system

Since the 1980s the Greek education system has undergone a number of reforms. The 1985 Act on primary and secondary education sought to make the administration of education more democratic. To that end new administrative and participatory bodies were set up.

But these reforms failed to bring about real change. The highly centralised, bureaucratic structure remained more or less as it was. The Greek minister for national education and religious affairs has responsibility for the whole of education, with the exception of certain types of vocational education, e.g. apprenticeships which come under the labour minister. A number of duties are performed by separate bodies under the direct supervision of the minister. The Institute of Education, for example, is responsible for formulating guidelines for primary and secondary education, devising curricula and timetables, producing textbooks, introducing new subjects, applying new teaching methods and providing in-service training for teachers. The Organisation for Textbook Publishing oversees the publication of textbooks and other teaching aids, which are distributed free of charge and must be used by all schools. The School Buildings Organisation looks after the construction and furnishing of school buildings.

There are three regional levels: the prefectures, regions and municipalities. The duties of these, however, are administrative and executive and they play no part in the shaping of education policy.

Establishments of higher education have total autonomy as regards their administration, but they also subject to supervision by the minister for national education and religious affairs. In practice this "supervision" is on such a scale that the term autonomy is something of a misnomer.

The Greek constitution allows private education, except in the case of higher education which is a state monopoly. Private schools, however, are strictly supervised by the government. Most of the legislation applies to them. The education minister controls curricula, staff policy and organisational aspects. This education is not normally state-funded, except in the case of special needs education. The minister may decide on a case-by-case basis to give funding for mainstream schools. The number of private schools has declined sharply since the 1970s, though it has risen again slightly in recent years. A notable feature of the Greek education system is the existence of a wide network of teachers who prepare pupils outside school for the highly selective university entrance examinations.

Pre-school facilities include nursery schools and crèches. The *nipiagogia* cater for children aged 3½ to 5½. Primary education covers the first six years of compulsory schooling from age

5½ to 12. Under the state system parents have no freedom of choice and must send their children to the school nearest to them. Secondary education is divided into two stages. Stage one ends on completion of compulsory schooling, at age 15. This first stage continues the general education given at primary school. These middle schools are called *gymnasia*.

Stage two of secondary education (the *lykeio*) offers general, technically and vocationally oriented or comprehensive education. There are also vocational schools and apprentice training.

The quality of special needs education only began to improve in the 1980s. The 1985 Act clearly endorses the principle of inclusion in mainstream education. Children with special learning needs must be accommodated in mainstream schools as far as possible. For children needing more help there are special classes, but these are attached to mainstream schools. In this way they can switch between a mainstream and a special needs class.

Greece has a dual system of higher education: university education and higher non-university education.

Adult education in Greece comprises basic education, second-chance education and non-formalised types of vocational training.

7.2. Advisory bodies

The present Simitis government has plans (1998-99) for radical reforms. These include the setting up of a broadly based and consultative-type National Council of Education. The education minister (Gerasimos Arsenis) is having great difficulty with this, as reflected in repeated protests from pupils, teachers and parents. The operation of this National Council of Education (*Ethniko Symvoulío Pedias*) is discussed in greater detail below.

Once the National Council of Education is fully operational other bodies which draft and advise on policy will cease to exist: the Council for University Education (*Symvoulío Anotatis Pedias*, or SAP), the Council for Technology Education (*Symvoulío Technologikis Ekpedefsis*, or STE) and the Institute for Technology Education (*Institouto Technologikis Ekpedefsis*, or ITE). When fully up and running, the National Council of Education will also render the Regional Council for Technology Education (*Periferiako Symvoulío Technologikis Ekpedefsis*, or PSTE) redundant. For this reason we shall not consider these councils further.

7.3. Ethniko Symvoulío Pedias (ESYP) (National Council of Education)

7.3.1. Foundation

This Council encompasses all levels of education, including higher education. The new Council was introduced by the Act of 31 July 1995 - superseding the old structure - but the Council did not operate for several years because the minister never consulted it. Very recently, however, the Council was made officially operational. Despite not being supported and even opposed by the minister, its first meeting was held in Athens on 16-17 January 1999. Much is expected of this Council, because consistent policy requires sound and thorough consensus.

7.3.2. *Powers, provision of opinions and advice*

The Council is an independent administrative body answering to the ministry for education and religious affairs. It submits policy proposals to the education minister on all levels of education, including special needs education, secondary education, in-service training and adult education.

The opinion of the administrative board is required on all draft legislation concerning education. The opinion is drafted by the appropriate unit of the ESYP. The minister is notified of the Council's views within a month of his request for an opinion; in the absence of one, the normal procedure may continue without regard for the Council's opinion. The Act does not oblige the minister to respond officially to opinions which the Council delivers.

7.3.3. *Internal organisation and structures*

The decision-making bodies are the general meeting, the chairman, the administrative board, the departments and departmental sectors, the units and unit sectors. The Council is administered by the chairman and administrative board. The minister chairs the general meeting if he is there, otherwise the chairman officiates.

The general meeting is held once a year and an extraordinary meeting may be called by the minister for education and religious affairs in exceptional circumstances.

The Council has a department for primary and secondary education, for tertiary education, for Greeks living abroad or returning from abroad and for special needs education and education targeting specific social groups.

The units are: the unit for assessment and certification, for the equivalence of study diplomas and titles and the award of titles, for documentation, for educational funding and for new forms of education, training and the promotion of education.

Sectors may be created within each department or unit. Thus, for example, the department for tertiary education has at least two sectors: the sector for higher university education establishments and the sector for higher technical education establishments.

7.3.4. *Membership*

The chairman of the National Council of Education is a university professor or academic with experience in the administration of education.

He is appointed for a five-year term. The general meeting consists of 97 members. They represent the government and political life, namely the ministers for education and religious affairs, the interior, national economy and finance, labour, health, welfare and social services, culture, industry and energy and technology, and they include a representative from each political party in Parliament, a representative of the Athens Academy, representatives of the administrations (general secretariats) (more specifically the general secretariats for sport, for Greeks living abroad, adult education, research and technology, youth) and the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK).

The Council also includes representatives of the organisers of education: a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, the chancellors or chairmen of the university administrative councils, the principals of establishments of higher non-university technical education.

Thirdly, personnel working in education are represented by one member for university administrative and teaching staff and one for the colleges of higher technical education. The three largest teacher organisations send one member: the Confederation of the Secondary School Teachers' Union (OLME), the Confederation of Primary School Teachers (DOE) and the Confederation of the Private Teachers' Union (OIELE). There is also a representative of the Civil Servants' Confederation (ADEDY). There are also four teachers representing basic education (nursery or primary schools) and four teachers representing secondary education, appointed by DOE and OLME respectively.

Education users are represented by a member of the Confederation of Parents' Associations, five members of the National Union of University Students (EFEE) and five members of the National Union of Students in Higher Technical Education (ESEE). There is also a representative of the National Confederation of Persons with Special Needs.

The social partners have ten representatives of trade unions and occupational organisations. The employers have seven representatives.

Lastly, the Council has a member jointly representing the Greek academic organisations in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geology, information technology and a member representing Greeks abroad.

No department, unit or sector may have more than seven members. These must be academics with a recognised background and/or specific qualifications and expertise in the matters dealt with by the department, unit or sector of which they are to be part.

Members are appointed for three years. At the end of this term a maximum of half the membership must be replaced.

Council, departments, units or sectors may also co-opt experts from outside.

7.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

The National Council of Education receives an annual budget from the state. It has a relatively free hand in how it spends that budget. The Council justifies its spending in its annual report, which is published.

The Council is an independent public establishment.

But the Council is not as yet fully operational. As stated, the ESYF has managed only a first meeting in January 1999. The education reforms of the current Simitis government are beset by difficulties.

8. IRELAND

8.1. The education system

Up to the mid-1980s education policy was highly centralised. A feature of this centralism was that Ireland had relatively little legislation on education. It is now working hard to develop a policy of decentralisation (partly prompted by the comments of the OECD on the matter). But curricula and standard examinations are still set centrally for the whole of the country.

A feature of Irish education is the predominance of the private sector (60.45% of all secondary schools and 64% of students), which is controlled almost entirely by Catholic organisations. There are numerous Catholic schools, especially in primary and secondary education. Notwithstanding its private-sector status, this private education has always been governed by a centralist (but protective) education policy. Only a very few educational establishments are totally independent of the state.

Education in Ireland is compulsory from age 6 to 15. Primary education is for children aged 4 to 12. There are four types of secondary schools: private secondary schools, state vocational schools, comprehensives and community schools. Secondary education consists of two cycles: junior (age 12-15) and senior.

Higher education in Ireland consists of universities, regional technical colleges providing higher education in technical subjects and technology, the Institute of Technology and the six colleges of education which provide teacher training.

8.2. Advisory bodies

In primary education there is currently little formal cooperation by the various players. But there have been some moves towards consultation on education policy. In October 1993 the education minister launched the National Education Convention, which brought together 42 bodies representing education, the social partners and government for a structured debate on key topics in Irish education policy. This prompted the White Paper which is the basis for the education reforms of recent years. A similar gathering addressed nursery education.

The history of secondary education in Ireland has resulted in the creation of numerous committees and representative groups. Despite a measure of streamlining, representation and interactions between the partners remain complex. Many of these representative groups are now represented in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, described later. The operation of this Council is analysed in some detail.

8.2.1. Higher Education Authority (HEA)

This Authority was set up as an ad hoc body in 1968, becoming a statutory body in 1972. Its remit covers university education and four other establishments of higher education. The Council is consulted on funding for the universities and these other four establishments of higher education, on the tailoring of higher education to trends in society and all other aspects of higher education policy in Ireland.

The chairman is appointed by the minister on a full-time basis. The chairman is assisted by 18 part-time members and a staff of 23.

8.2.2. *Irish National Certification Authority (TEASTAS)*

The Irish National Certification Authority advises the minister on the single integrated structure of qualifications for all non-university syllabuses and training programmes and on how this structure is to be implemented, with a view specifically to the legal aspects.

This Authority consists of a chairman and vice-chairman, appointed by the minister, and 12 representative members. Three members, appointed by the minister for enterprise and employment, represent business and industry. Three members are nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The departments of agriculture and arts and culture may also appoint one member each. The education minister appoints three representatives of education and vocational training. There is also one member representing the Union of Students of Ireland. Lastly, the minister for enterprise and employment appoints an EU expert.

8.3. **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)**

8.3.1. *Foundation*

After repeated false starts, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment came into being in 1987, with limited powers in respect of curricula and a number of associated duties in respect of assessment. The Council became a statutory body in 1998. The National Council consists of representatives of all levels of education (except higher education), and its remit is to facilitate debate on the curriculum and questions of assessment concerning the whole of the education system.

8.3.2. *Powers, provision of opinions and advice*

The Council's job is to conduct regular reviews of the curriculum and syllabuses in primary, secondary and vocational education and adapt them as necessary. In this context the Council also pronounces on ways of helping pupils make the transition from primary to secondary education successfully. The Council advises on the levels of knowledge and aptitudes which pupils should possess at certain key stages. Implicit in this is the development of assessment techniques for measuring whether the required standards have been reached. The Council looks at the best ways of assessing the effectiveness of schools. It also reports on the results achieved by pupils in public examinations and it evaluates teachers' further training needs. Lastly, the Council coordinates research and development.

The Council delivers opinions in response to requests by the education minister but may also do so on its own initiative. It is free to review broader issues, though it rarely does. The Council tries to be pro-active in its opinions and anticipate future developments in its thinking.

Up to April 1999 the NCCA was concerned with the finalisation of a revised primary school curriculum. Other priorities in the years before 1999 were a broad curriculum for children with a handicap, development of back-up material for implementation of the new curriculum, including information to parents, a global view of assessment in primary education, guidelines for the use of IT, and completion of the pilot project on modern European languages (Spanish, Italian, German and French), which included guidelines for teachers.

For the junior cycle of secondary education, work has been done on a review of the effectiveness of the curriculum in this first cycle. This is being done on the basis of a frame of

reference laid down for the NCCA by the minister. It will also necessitate a review of assessment procedures. The science curriculum has been revised too. Changes have been made to the subjects making up technology. The Council is completing a review of the mathematics syllabus and drafting new teacher guidelines. It is drafting guidelines for teachers, ready for when the religious education syllabus is introduced as an examination subject. It is drafting guidelines on the use of IT in the curriculum. The Council and department of education are also preparing a pilot project on physical education.

For the senior cycle, the Council is working on a full revision of the structures of this cycle. The Council will also make changes to 31 subjects required for the school-leaving certificate. The curriculum and assessment methods for the revised certificate are being changed. Certain aspects of the certificate in vocational education are to be developed further. The current rules on assessment for the school-leaving certificate are being amended together with the level of achievement expected of pupils. The nature and organisation of the transitional year are being reviewed. Priorities for refresher courses are being adjusted and their effectiveness assessed.

A joint strategy for the junior and senior cycles is being devised for science and technology in post-primary schools.

8.3.3. *Internal organisation and structures*

The NCCA has a full-time chief executive officer and three assistant chief executives appointed by the minister. The NCCA's work is performed by a number of committees. These committees, made up of school governors, teachers, school principals, inspectors and others, draw up the syllabus or programme of studies for each subject or section of the curriculum.

8.3.4. *Membership*

The Council has 22 members. It is set up on a participatory basis and has one representative of the minister and two representatives of the department of education. Education users are represented by two members of the National Parents' Council. Other groups involved are the teaching unions and other organisations which include teachers from primary level up to university lecturers, and the employers' confederation. The associations for the various forms of secondary education are represented, together the governing boards of the various Christian schools.

Four members, including the chairman, the two vice-chairmen and the minister's delegate, are appointed directly by the education minister. Sixteen of the other members are also appointed by the minister, though the relevant bodies and associations are consulted first. There are also two representatives of the department of education. They serve a three-year term.

A number of members, notably teachers, have been temporarily co-opted to work on the setting of curricula. These extra members do not have to represent any particular group but are chosen on the basis of their expertise. Their duties are "technical". They sit on the various committees.

8.3.5. *Degree of independence and impact*

The Council is funded by the education minister and is financially accountable to him. The NCCA must also submit an annual report on its work and achievements in the previous year.

The Council may deliver own-initiative opinions on issues which it deems important. In so doing it does not have to restrict itself to curricula and assessment. But own-initiatives are rare. Most of its opinions are commissioned by the minister.

The minister may accept, amend or reject proposals by the NCCA. He is not obliged to respond to opinions or explain his stance. Some opinions are not acted on or are subject to considerable delays. In practice the minister channels his response to all recommendations made to him by the Council through the government representatives sitting in the Council.

In line with the NCCA's new rules, a five-year plan is being drawn up and the efficiency and effectiveness of its structures are being assessed.

As in other countries, the effectiveness of opinions is influenced by the existence of direct lines of communication between the minister and interest groups. On the one hand, these groups are represented in the Council but they sometimes influence decision-making along different lines from the consensus reached in the Council. On the other hand, the Council also acts as a filter which enables different pressure groups to agree positions which are less rigid. This promotes consensus on proposed education policy.

One of the Council's strengths is that positions are achieved as a result of input from people of widely differing backgrounds: people working practically in the field, civil servants, inspectors and policy shapers. No permanent places are earmarked in the Council for educationists. The strength of the Council's opinions is based on (practical) expertise but their legitimacy derives from the fact that the various interest groups all have their input into the final consensus.

Opinions have to be realistic. The involvement of so many different interest groups guarantees that they are.

The Council's annual planning is coordinated with that of the education minister and political priorities. This too means that the impact of the Council's work on policy is greater.

In Ireland too it appears that the impact of an education council is greater at times of radical education reform - the case at present. The Council plays no direct part in the implementation of policy, though it can deliver opinions on it (on the need for refresher courses for teachers, for example).

9. ITALY

9.1. The education system

Ever since unification in 1859 education policy in Italy has reflected a political and administrative concentration of power and responsibility. A desire for greater decentralisation only emerged apparent after the collapse of fascism and found full expression in the post-war constitution of the Republic. But the aspirations of the constitution did not become reality until 1972, when it was decreed that certain powers should be devolved to regional, provincial and municipal bodies.

Despite this measure of decentralisation and participation, education policy and administration have remained under the central control of the ministry of education (for levels from nursery

school up to senior secondary education) and of the ministry for higher education and academic research. The ministry of education has general responsibility for supervising and coordinating all education activities organised both by the state and private establishments and for planning, funding, research and innovation in education.

The regional and provincial education offices oversee the implementation of central guidelines, fostering contact with other local bodies and coordinating services and activities. The regional supervisory bodies (*sovrintendenze scolastiche regionali*) operate at regional level, and the provincial education inspectors (*provveditorati agli studi*) at provincial level. The regions have a specific statutory and administrative responsibility for support services to education (medical and counselling services), vocational training, school equipment and the construction and maintenance of school buildings.

In some instances the provinces provide premises, school furnishings and maintenance services. They also appoint the non-teaching staff of schools.

The municipalities provide the services needed for the day-to-day organisation of schools in their locality, either on their own initiative or on behalf of regional or provincial authorities (e.g. school buses, school meals, textbooks).

Italy has both state and private education. In exchange for funding the state sets specific quality criteria for private education. Private education is most strongly represented in the pre-school sector (46.7% of pupils). Only 8.2% of children in primary education are at private schools, 4.7% in junior secondary education, 9.1% in senior secondary education and 10% in university education.

Compulsory schooling in Italy lasts 10 years, from age 6 to 16.

Pre-school education (the *scuole dell'infanzia*) is for children aged 3 to 5. Primary education, *istruzione primaria*, lasts five years up to the age of 10. Primary education is divided into two cycles. The first lasts for two years, with one teacher responsible for the whole of the curriculum. In the second cycle teachers teach a specific subject within the curriculum.

In secondary education, *istruzione secondaria*, there is a comprehensive structure for children aged 11 to 14 and senior secondary education.

Pupils with a handicap are integrated thanks to specially trained teachers who are attached to a given school full-time or part-time. They provide classroom assistance for handicapped pupils. Italy does not have separate educational facilities for handicapped children or young people.

After successfully completing the first cycle pupils may enter the labour market or move on to senior secondary education. Senior secondary education is divided into *licei* (general education and teacher training for nursery and primary education), *istituti professionali* (technical and vocational education) and *istituti d'arte* (the arts).

Higher education is a dual system with university training and higher non-university education. The latter is focused primarily on the arts. Adult education encompasses literacy initiatives, training equivalent to the junior cycle of secondary education, evening courses equivalent to senior secondary education, and preparatory vocational courses.

9.2. Advisory bodies

In Italy too greater demand for participation arose in the 1960s and 1970s. Law No 477 of 30 July 1973 increased the extent of participation in response to powerful social pressures. Presidential decrees 416-420 of 31 May 1974 implemented this Act at various levels of policy.

At national level there are the *Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione* (National Education Council) and the *Consiglio Universitario Nazionale* (National Universities Council). The *consiglio scolastico provinciale* (provincial education council) operates at provincial level. At district level there is the *consiglio scolastico distrettuale* (district education council). The same Acts (1973 and 1974) also created education districts. These are defined as divisions of a region; they are administratively independent and have their own budgetary planning. The aim is to allow the local community a democratic voice in the organisation of education.

The experience of recent years has highlighted both the limitations and the benefits of participatory councils. The great expectations of the early period were not realised. Even so, they opened the way for the development of an education system in which parents and various sections of society can indeed have a voice.

The Act of 15 March 1997, however, requires advisory councils to be reformed. The government crisis in the second half of 1998 has delayed plans for this. There is still no clear picture of how the councils will operate and be structured in future. We offer a more detailed description of the *Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione*, since this covers the broadest area of work.

9.2.1. *Consiglio Universitario Nazionale*

The National Universities Council advises the minister on coordination of the universities, university appointments and terms of employment for university teaching and research staff, the allocation of research funds, the system of university education generally and more specifically the three-year plan for the universities.

The Council is chaired by the minister for higher education and academic research. The Council has 54 members, namely 8 chancellors, 30 representatives of all the teaching staff, 5 representatives of technical and administrative staff, 8 student representatives and 5 representatives of the economic sectors and academic research.

The Council's term is five years. The Council has a budget allocated each year by the minister responsible. It also has its own secretariat.

9.2.2. *Consiglio scolastico provinciale*

The provincial education council formulates opinions for the provincial directorate of education and for the regional education administration on the following topics: school planning in the province, planning and coordination of school medical and counselling services, educational guidance, the right to study, continuous education, the use of school premises for teaching purposes by state and private bodies, allocation of school budgets.

The number of members in the provincial education council depends on the number and size of schools in the province (at least 12 and not more than 20). Half the Council membership are teachers and the other half are representatives of head teachers, non-teaching school staff, administrative staff, the provincial director of education, parents, municipal and provincial policy-makers and the world of business and work.

Members are elected for a three-year term. The chairman is chosen from amongst the members, but usually the chairman is the province's most senior education officer (*provveditore agli studi*). The secretariat is provided by staff of the province.

9.2.3. *Consiglio Scolastico Distrettuale*

The work of the district education council is concerned with medical and counselling services, study and career guidance, extracurricular activities, continuous education, experiments in education and assistance to pupils in their cultural activities. The Council's proposals are forwarded to central, regional, provincial and municipal education authorities.

The Council is usually chaired by the district head of education. The secretariat is provided by the district. The Council's term runs for three years.

9.3. **Consiglio Nazionale della Pubblica Istruzione (National Education Council)**

9.3.1. *Foundation*

The National Education Council was created by the 1974 Act.

9.3.2. *Powers, provision of opinions and advice*

The Council advises the minister in the planning and assessment of education policy. In its annual report the Council gives its verdict on the quality of state education, educational planning, proposed or ongoing experiments, innovations and reforms in education and all other issues on which the Act requires it to pronounce. The Council's powers are purely advisory but in delivering its opinions it can base them on an analysis of the policy which has been implemented. The Council may also identify problems and function pro-actively.

9.3.3. *Internal organisation and structures*

The Council secretariat is provided by the ministry of education.

9.3.4. *Membership*

The Council has 74 members and is chaired by the education minister or his alternate, assisted by two vice-chairmen. 47 members represent teachers in the state system, three represent teachers in recognised private schools, and three represent administrative staff. Then there are two representatives of the principals of state schools, one representing the private schools and three representing minority schools. There are two representatives of the National Universities Council and three representatives of the school inspectorate. Two members represent staff of the local and central education services. The Council also has five members representing industry.

Members are nominated by their groups and appointed by the minister. They serve a five-year term.

9.3.5. *Degree of independence and impact*

This Council has always operated with a sufficient degree of independence, as one might expect under an Italian democracy.

Even though the most relevant interest groups are represented on the Council the teacher unions, parents' associations and pupils' and student bodies also exert considerable influence outside the Council and may thus undermine the consensus reached within the Council.

10. LUXEMBOURG

10.1. The education system

In contrast to all other European countries Luxembourg has only two levels for the administration of education: national and (local or) municipal. The country has no further subdivisions into provinces or districts. It does have cantons, but these have no effect at all on the working of education.

At national level education in Luxembourg is highly centralised. Political responsibility rests with the minister for national education. But the duties of the municipalities are confined to the administration and organisation of nursery, primary and complementary education. The body with political responsibility here is the *Conseil Communal*, backed by the *Commission Scolaire* which looks after the day-to-day running of nursery and primary schools.

The basis of state education in Luxembourg is not neutral, as there is no separation of church and state. There are private Catholic or "method" schools. Unlike the state schools, private schools are not free. Private denominational schools have the same curriculum as state schools and receive funding. In primary and supplementary education 2.4% of children attend a private school. In general secondary education the figure is 6.7% and in secondary technical education it is 14%.

Children can attend nursery schools from age 4 to 6. Primary education is divided into three grades of two years each. Primary education also includes complementary education for pupils aged 12-15. This is designed for pupils who have failed the entrance examination to general or technical secondary education. It does not lead to a qualification.

Secondary education is either general or technical and vocational. Luxembourg also has post-secondary education. This comprises university courses which prepare pupils for university in neighbouring countries, the short cycle of the *Centre Universitaire*, three-year cycles for engineers, teacher training for nursery and primary schools, educator training and higher technical studies.

In Luxembourg children with a handicap are catered for by "differentiated education". This runs parallel to nursery schools and primary schools.

Adult education includes advanced vocational training, classes for adults in e.g. foreign languages, and further training organised outside the education system.

10.2. Advisory bodies

Luxembourg has just one large national advisory council covering all types and all levels of education, the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Education Nationale* (Supreme Council for National Education). We consider this Council in more detail later. There are also a number of advisory councils of a more specific nature.

10.2.1. Commissions des programmes (curriculum committees)

For each subject area there is a committee chaired by a teacher of that subject. The members are appointed by the minister. Depending on the subject in question, members representing industry are also included on the committee. The courses, syllabuses, methods and teaching ethic devised by these committees are usually approved by the ministry and declared applicable to the whole of the Grand Duchy.

10.2.2. Commission de Coördination de l'Enseignement Secondaire Technique (Coordinating Committee for Secondary Technical Education)

This Committee advises the minister on all aspects of secondary technical education. Special attention is paid here to optimum relations between schools and labour market.

The Committee is chaired by the head of the education ministry's vocational training department. It includes representatives of this department, head teachers and inspectors, teachers, members of study and career guidance services, members of the administrative bodies of services related to employment and health, educationists and social and economic experts, representatives of occupational associations, parents and pupils.

10.2.3. Commission de Coördination de la Formation Professionnelle Continue (Coordinating Committee for Continuous Vocational Training)

This Committee advises the minister on all aspects of continuous vocational training, including measures to ensure optimum relations between schools and the labour market.

It too is also chaired by the head of the education ministry's vocational training department. The members are representatives of that department, of ministries with an interest in vocational training, of business and industry and other users of education, and the head teachers of the technical *lycées*.

10.3. Conseil Supérieur de l'Education Nationale (Supreme Council for National Education)

10.3.1. Foundation

The Supreme Council for National Education was set up at the instigation of the minister on 2 April 1963. In late 1998 there was draft legislation to increase the Council's autonomy and change its composition.

10.3.2. Powers, provision of opinions and advice

The Council advises the minister on all aspects of education. It delivers opinions at the request of the minister or on its own initiative.

In 1997-98 the Council deliberated on cooperation between technical education and the world of work, failures at school, reforming the organisation of primary education and the autonomy of secondary schools. Lastly, the Council also delivered an opinion on revising itself.

10.3.3. Internal organisation and structures

The rules governing the Council's budget were approved by the education minister on 20 December 1974 and were last amended on 29 October 1981.

10.3.4. Membership

The Council has 42 members appointed by the minister for a renewable two-year term. The chairman too is appointed by the minister. These members represent the church authorities, the ministries of education and vocational training, physical education and sport, health, the family and social solidarity, home affairs, the governing bodies of the private denominational schools, the two organisations for principals of general and technical secondary schools, the inspectorate, teachers at the various levels of education (as union delegates), parents' associations, associations for sport and culture, and industry.

10.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

The rules governing this Council do not stipulate that the minister must seek the Council's opinion and/or give an official response to its opinions.

11. THE NETHERLANDS

11.1. The education system

In the Netherlands "special" education - which occupies a dominant position (68%) is fully funded by government, as is state education. Special education means Roman Catholic, Protestant and general special education (based on religious persuasion or educational principles). The government can thus impose quality criteria for schools, whilst respecting their freedom of persuasion, establishment and organisation.

As a reaction to perceived government over-enthusiasm for regulation, a new administrative philosophy emerged in the mid-1990s, referred to as "government in the background" or

"control from afar". The idea was that government should concentrate more on its core responsibilities: funding, matching education to social needs and interests, setting general quality criteria and monitoring compliance. There was a move towards framework legislation, with fewer but broader rules which allowed schools and other establishments greater control over their own affairs.

Administration and policy operate at the following levels:

Within central government the final responsibility rests with the ministers of education, culture and science and - in the case of agricultural education - the minister for agriculture, natural resource management and fisheries. These ministers have political responsibility for policy, assisted by secretaries of state and their civil service departments.

Apart from a number of minor tasks, the role of the provinces is primarily supervisory and they rule on occupational issues. In recent years, however, the remit of provincial administration has expanded to include a number of activities in the field of adult education and the structuring of regional consultation on education issues. The provinces are also increasingly involved in the planning of schools in their area and the provision of advice and opinions on them.

The municipalities have joint administrative tasks imposed upon them by the education laws, and autonomous tasks which they perform on their own initiative. The municipality plays a dual role, because it is the "competent authority" for state education at municipality level and the local government authority for education as a whole. With increased decentralisation and deregulation, the municipalities as local government authorities have also acquired more responsibilities and a different role. Thus, for example, they have taken on important new tasks in respect of school premises, school guidance and counselling services, remedial policy, facilities for Dutch as a second language and resources for ethnic minority languages.

In recent years the special schools have acquired more and more freedom over policy, albeit within the constraints of lump-sum funding. The government sees the school of the future as a large and powerful professional organisation with a distinctive profile on the education market.

Basic education in the Netherlands encompasses nursery and primary education and is for children aged 4 to 12. Children between the ages of 4 and 6 are taught in nursery schools. Then there is a three-year elementary stage and a three-year junior stage. Secondary education is in two stages: a first stage comprising three to four years of foundation study. In the second phase there is more differentiation: apprentice training and intermediate vocational education (*mbo*) which prepare pupils for the labour market, together with pre-university education and higher general secondary education (*havo*) which is the entry route to higher education. The five-year *havo* is more of a preparation for higher vocational education whilst academic education prepares pupils for further study at the universities.

Higher education is divided into university education and higher vocational education. Adult education comprises basic education, further general adult education, vocational adult education and other forms of training and instruction.

11.2. Advisory bodies

At national level the advice and consultation structure plays a significant role in the shaping of education policy. Before a piece of draft legislation or policy comes before Parliament, a round of consultation and debate is held with organisations in the educational field. The influence of advisory bodies and discussions forums in particular is traditionally very considerable, which means that policy-making and legislation is an unwieldy and protracted process.

This was one of the reasons which prompted the government recently to try to limit the influence of advisory and discussion bodies and to seek a more transparent and efficient framework for debate. With its *Raad op Maat* initiative ("the right council for the right counsel") national government effected a radical reform of the whole system of advice and consultation. This reorganisation is part of a broader process of governmental, administrative and constitutional reform. Only the Council of State and the Social and Economic Council (SER) were excluded from this operation. All existing external advisory bodies at national level were dissolved. The processes of advice and consultation were separated from each other.

Since then the *Onderwijsraad* (Education Council) has been the only advisory body for education. There are no regional advisory councils and the objectives of *Raad op Maat* mean that the ability to form all manner of ad hoc committees outside the Education Council will end. This will supposedly have positive implications for the transparency and consistency of policy advice.

In addition to the Education Council and advisory councils in other fields there are also national consultation bodies for the various levels of education. These consist of the minister (or secretary of state), representatives of the education administration, of interest groups and various social groupings such as employers' organisations, trade unions and national minority group associations. These councils offer a forum for consultation and debate. The minister consults the relevant councils before deciding whether there is sufficient justification for translating policy plans into concrete proposals. These are not advisory councils in the sense indicated earlier. They are POVO (the Consultative Body for Primary and Secondary Education), the Chamber for Education and Vocational Education (the *BE-Kamer*) and the Chamber for Higher Education (the *HO-Kamer*).

The Students' Chamber is the forum for consultation between the minister and representatives of national student bodies. The Students' Chamber advises the minister for education, culture and science on policy issues of relevance to students.

11.3. Education Council

11.3.1. Foundation

As of 1997 the Netherlands has had a new Education Council, replacing the former one which went back 77 years. The *Kaderwet adviescolleges* (Advisory Bodies Framework Act) provides the overall legal context within which national advisory bodies may be set up and perform their advisory remit. This Act contains rules which cover amongst other things the creation, membership, *modus operandi* and budget of advisory bodies, their work programmes, the reports they must provide, assessment of them and the required response to

the opinions they deliver. The Education Council Act stipulates the scope, de facto membership and remit of the Education Council.

11.3.2. Powers, provision of opinions and advice

One of the Education Council's duties is to advise on the broad lines of education policy. The Council advises not only the minister but also the States-General.

In carrying out this duty the Council acts as a kind of think tank at the start of a policy-making cycle, when there is not as yet any definitive policy memorandum on which the opinion of the Education Council has been formally sought. The Council examines general educational issues and indicates ways in which problems might be solved. Opinions delivered in this context are referred to as "pointers to policy" (*beleidsontwikkkelende adviezen*), policy-initiating opinions or strategic policy opinions. Advisory activities here, by their very nature, are usually somewhat complex and abstract.

Pointers to policy in 1997-98 were concerned with access to education in the Netherlands, access to agricultural education, the position of persons taking part in education, lifelong learning, information technology in the future, the structure of qualifications for agricultural education and decentralised selection in higher education.

The Council's second duty is to advise the government and the two chambers of the States-General on the broad lines of education legislation. This task is known as "policy response" (*beleidsreactieve advisering*) and comes at the end of the policy-making cycle. The Council attempts to judge the quality of intended policy as it appears in policy plans, working papers or draft legislation. The issue is not so much whether proposed measures are legally in order, but more whether they are desirable and feasible from the social, administrative and educational point of view.

The Council reviews policy proposals on the basis of criteria pertaining to educational content, the organisation of schools, and legal, administrative, social and economic feasibility.

In 1997-98 the following policy responses were drawn up: class size in primary education, per capita funding of education for children with a handicap, changing school numbers, amendment of the Order on the Organisation of and Examinations in *mavo/vbo* (intermediate general secondary education/preparatory vocational education), amendment of the Order on the Organisation and Examinations in *mavo/vwo* (intermediate general secondary education/pre-university education), examination syllabuses for *mavo/vbo*, entrance procedures for *vwo/havo-vwo/hbo* (pre-university education/higher general secondary education-pre-university education/higher vocational education), higher education and 1998 research programme, the future of primary and secondary education and the "talent unlimited" policy proposals.

In principle both remits are performed on the basis of a programme drawn up every year by the minister for education, culture and science and the minister for agriculture, natural resource management and fisheries. Over the period other policy initiatives may be added to the programme at the prompting either of the government members concerned or of one of the two chambers of the States-General. The Council may also act itself to expand or amend the programme. Thus it may also deliver opinions on its own initiative.

Its third duty is to advise on the application of laws, orders in council and ministerial rulings on education. Opinions are delivered here only as and when the minister needs them. In this case they are specific decisions targeting the governing bodies of schools or establishments or interested individuals. This advisory role on policy application (*beleidstoepassing*) is exercised whenever the ministers concerned are considering exempting a special educational establishment from a general or financial requirement (e.g. in respect of core objectives, co-determination, financial penalties in a school).

The Council's fourth duty is born of the geographical decentralisation of education policy. The Council also acts as mediator in disputes between a municipal administration and one or more school governing bodies. Municipalities are required after all to consult with the governing bodies of schools on buildings and premises for primary and secondary schools, remedial policy and school guidance and counselling services. If no agreement is reached either of the parties may ask for the Education Council to intervene. The Council is not the final arbiter, however. If there is still no agreement, the parties may ask the courts for a ruling.

11.3.3. Internal organisation and structures

The Council keeps a finger on the pulse of education policy thanks to the agreement with the minister that the Council will be informed at the appropriate time of all draft legislation concerning education. This is not only important with a view to own-initiative opinions of the Council but also to ensure that the Council's own expert knowledge is always up to date and accurate.

Within the Council there are four standing committees, for primary, secondary, vocational (*hbo/bve* - higher vocational education/vocational and adult education) and agricultural education. Outside experts may also be invited to take part in preparatory work done in working parties.

The Advisory Bodies Framework Act also provides for a number of different advisory councils to deliver joint opinions. Overlapping areas of responsibility have sometimes meant in the past that important but complex issues could not be translated into concrete policy, because they affected several different departments at the same time (e.g. the question of lifelong learning, which is relevant to several different ministries).

Each member does duty for the work of the Education Council one day a week, apart from the chairman who is available for his duties two days a week.

The Council has a fixed schedule of meetings with two full meetings per month.

11.3.4. Membership

The new Education Council has just 19 members: 10 women and nine men. The government appoints them for a four-year period. They are appointed for their own individual skills and experience. Thus the members do not represent the interests of social organisations. They are recruited as independent experts on the basis of their specialist knowledge, which may derive either from practical experience and knowledge of the field (acquired in an educational establishment or a policy-making role), from a theoretical knowledge of a given discipline or a combination of the two. Many Council members work in education (from primary to university

level). Others come from areas of society such as business and industry or local government. The various religious and social forces are represented in order to ensure the requisite degree of plurality.

Each member of the Council has a specific area of interest, e.g. a sector of the school system, a specific discipline or a subject such as (in)equality of opportunity, which spans all sectors. In the Council's jargon these are known as portfolios. Although its tasks are subdivided in this way, the Council is collectively responsible for the opinions it delivers.

The Council has a professional secretariat. These staff are not members of the Education Council. They are appointed by the minister after consultation with the Council chairman.

11.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

The Education Council has its own budget which is part of the national budget of the ministry for education, culture and science.

The Education Council is independent both vis à vis the minister and vis à vis interest groups in the field of education. The fact that the Council acts as adviser not only to the government but also the States-General gives it greater leverage. If the government fails to take account of the Council's opinions, it may be that the States-General will.

The Education Council reflects the views of a number of experts in the drafting of policy. The emphasis in the Council is more academic than strategic or political. An important role is played in this policy decision-making not only by the Education Council but also by the consultative councils and administration. The opinions of the Education Council do carry social weight and thus have a resonance when issues are discussed in Parliament too.

The Education Council has no formal relationship to any other advisory or consultative bodies. By virtue of the Council's specific membership its opinion has a different significance from that of other advisory and consultative bodies.

The Education Council's prestige is determined in part by the identity of its members and above all its chairman. It may also be influenced by the fact that the Council is a council of experts.

An important element in the Netherlands is also the fact that advisory activity is closely coordinated with the policy agenda. The Council's programme endeavours to elucidate items of policy. If unsolicited opinions are not immediately relevant to the policy agenda they have less of an impact.

The government is formally obliged to respond to policy opinions produced by the Education Council. The government gives a detailed response to such opinions.

12. AUSTRIA

12.1. The education system

Austria is a democratic federal republic. The federal minister of education and culture is the highest authority on all aspects of education. Several other ministers too have specific remits for

education. An important piece of post-war education law is the 1962 Act which set out the powers of the federal state and the provinces (*Länder*) in respect of education. Within the frameworks defined by central government, the *Länder* have autonomy in respect of secondary matters. Austria thus has a large degree of uniformity as far as the organisation of schools, curricula and so on is concerned.

The constitution guarantees freedom of education and study. Austria has a comprehensive state education system covering about 95% of all pupils. Private schools are recognised by the government. Up to 1993 higher and university education was a state monopoly. Even today all Austrian universities are state establishments but as of 1993 technical colleges of higher education, post-secondary establishments and specialised courses in higher education may also be organised by private bodies. The federal state funds these establishments.

Compulsory schooling lasts for nine years (from age 6 to 15). Primary education is given in the *Volksschule* which has four grades. Junior secondary education covers pupils aged 10 to 14. They can choose here between the *Hauptschule* or the *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule*. Whilst the first type of school is non-selective, there are entry requirements for the second type. Pupils then move on to the senior cycle of general education or to vocational training (*Berufsbildende Höhere Schule*). Both lead on to higher education. Afterwards pupils may opt for dual vocational training. Pupils with a handicap are catered for by *Sonderschulen*.

As well as university training, there is also the option of two or three years of post-secondary education. Austria also has an extensive system of adult education and training.

12.2. Advisory bodies

At federal level the most important body is the *Schulreformkommission* (Federal Educational Reform Council). There is also the *Bundesschülervertretung* (the Federal Pupils' Association), the *Elternbeirat* (Parents' Council) and the *Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat* (Federal Vocational Training Council). Teachers are represented by the *Bundespersonalvertretung*, made up of elected teacher members.

At regional level there are the *Kollegien der Landesschulräte* (Education Council Boards in the various provinces or *Länder*), and other councils which are also represented at federal level. The *Landesschulräte* themselves are primarily administrative bodies organised on a participatory basis.

12.2.1. *Bundesschülervertretung* (Federal Pupils' Association)

The *Bundesschülervertretung* was set up in 1990 to represent pupils primarily in senior secondary and vocational education. The Association has 30 pupil members elected by councils in the *Länder*. The Association meets four times a year and is formally chaired by the minister of education and culture and a federal representative of pupils. This Association is mainly concerned with pupil interests and issues which transcend the boundaries of any one *Land* and need to be addressed at a federal level. The results of debates by this Association are effectively recommendations to the authorities responsible for education at one or more levels.

This Association does not have its own budget. Its costs are borne by central government.

12.2.2. *Elternbeirat (Parents' Council)*

This federal council is chaired by a representative of the minister of education and culture full-time. It has 18 members. These members are elected from parents and family organisations. They advise on a wide range of education and training issues. The Parents' Council meets five times a year.

12.2.3. *Bundesberufsausbildungsrat (Federal Vocational Training Council)*

The Council is chaired alternately by a representative of the employers and a representative of the employees. It has 14 members. Voting members are appointed by the Federal Economic Chamber (6) and the Federal Labour Chamber (6). The other two members, representing teachers in part-time vocational schools, do not have a vote and can only express opinions. The job of this Council is to advise on a wide range of vocational training issues directly related to business and industry and the labour market.

12.2.4. *Kollegien der Landesschulräte (Land Education Council Boards)*

These boards exist in the various *Länder*. They are chaired by the chairman of the *Landesschulrat*. This chairman has the highest political office in the *Land*.

There is no specified number of members. Voting members are the chairman, parents and teachers. Representatives of the churches, pupils, school inspectors and official representatives of the *Landesschulrat* have an advisory role only. These members are appointed by the *Länder*.

Their job is to advise on draft legislation (bills), orders and curricula. They also draw up guidelines for the appointment of teachers and head teachers in schools subject to supervision by the federal state.

12.2.5. *Landesschülervertretung (Land Pupils' Association)*

These associations too operate at *Land* level. They have the same membership and remit as the previously described *Bundesschülervertretung*, but their remit is confined to matters at provincial (*Land*) level. They have at least 12 and at most 30 members, representing primarily pupils in senior secondary, technical and vocational education.

12.2.6. *Landesberufsausbildungsbeirat (Land Vocational Training Council)*

This Council too has a membership and remit at *Land* level similar to that of its federal counterpart, the *Bundesberufsausbildungsbeirat*.

All these councils have a greater or lesser degree of autonomy depending on their *modus operandi* (arriving at positions via debate), their membership and the process by which their members are appointed. According to the chairman of the *Schulreformkommission* there is no difference between the statutory (ideal) role of these councils and their de facto role. Nor is there any competition between formal advisory groups or between formal and informal groups over the degree of their influence on policy.

12.3. Schulreformkommission (Federal Educational Reform Council)

12.3.1. Foundation

The *Schulreformkommission* was set up in 1969 as the result of a resolution by Parliament.

12.3.2. Powers, provision of opinions and advice

This Council's main duty is to advise the minister of education and culture on all aspects of education.

Subjects addressed by the Council have included: the relationship between general and technical/vocational education, the design of modern curricula, the fostering of pupils' talent and ways of identifying and differentially nurturing that talent, teaching aids and methods, teacher training, in-service training and teachers' pay, educational research and planning, handicapped pupils in mainstream education.

12.3.3. Internal organisation and structures

The Council has its own secretariat.

The Council's work is done in six working parties, an "umbrella" group and five subgroups: structure, methods, fostering and development of pupil talents, teachers and budgetary matters.

The outcome of Council discussions is put on record in a formal resolution. This requires the support of a majority of the Council members. Minority opinions are included provided they are backed by at least three Council members.

12.3.4. Membership

The Council has 58 members, including 11 delegates from the political parties represented in Parliament, nine chairmen of the *Landesschulräte*, 12 representatives of teachers, six representatives of parents and family associations, six representatives of pupils/students, five university professors and eight representatives of the social partners, churches and experts on adult education.

The Council is chaired by the federal minister of education and culture.

12.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

The Council's budget is "very small".

In reality the work done by the *Schulreformkommission* is fairly modest. Further questioning revealed that the Council had not met in 1997 and 1998. No meetings were planned for 1999 either, partly because national elections were scheduled for the autumn.

But the Council does a lot of work in its working parties, which co-opt experts from outside.

It is up to the minister whether or not he heeds the Council's opinions. There is no obligation for him officially to acknowledge receipt or comment on the substance of opinions delivered by the Council.

13. PORTUGAL

13.1. The education system

Following the revolution of April 1974 debate focused on new forms of administration and power-sharing. "Participation" became the mantra in social and political circles and in education. That principle is reflected in a 1976 Act which lays down rules for participation in primary and secondary education.

But the structure of the education system, by tradition highly centralised, did not come up for debate until 1986. The *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo* of 4 October 1986 brought changes, through a redistribution of powers amongst the various authorities at central, regional and local level. Powers in respect of schools were also strengthened. For a number of years now schools have enjoyed a measure of financial autonomy.

At national level the education minister is responsible for formal and non-formal education and for private and state education. Responsibility of vocational education is shared with the minister of labour and social security. Central government has the following powers.

Since 1988 there have been four regional directorates for education (*Direcção Regional de Educação*, or DRE): DREN for the north, DREC for the centre, DREL for Lisbon and DRES for the south. These directorates are executive bodies required to implement objectives set at national level. To this end they work together with the regional departments of the national inspectorate. They do not cover higher education. Under a recent change in the law the governing bodies of schools which are not part of higher education were brought under the supervision of the regional directorates of education; prior to that these schools were the direct responsibility of the ministry of education.

Schools providing nursery education and the first cycle of primary education are organised by the municipalities.

The Portuguese government is responsible for ensuring an adequate provision of state education and it supervises private education. Private schools may conclude a *contrato de associação* under which they receive the same per capita funding as state schools. These are schools in remote areas where there are not enough state schools. All private schools follow a curriculum which must be equivalent to the state school curriculum, and they are subject to government inspection. Private schools provide 64% of all pre-school education, 6.8% of primary education and 88.6% of secondary education.

Pre-school education (*educação pre-escolar*) is for children aged 3 to 6. Compulsory schooling begins at age 6. Portugal also has mobile education services for children in sparsely populated areas. Another form, the play school, is for children in problem areas where there are no nursery schools. Children attend these for one year before starting nursery school.

Primary education has three cycles and lasts nine years. The aim is that children in these primary schools should be able to complete their compulsory education at age 15. The first cycle lasts four years, with the same teacher covering most of the subjects. The second cycle lasts two years and is taught by special subject teachers. Following the second cycle of primary school

pupils can change to the new "vocational preparatory schools". The third cycle is comprehensive. Parents have no say in which primary school their children attend.

After primary school pupils have a choice between further secondary education (*liceu*) or vocational education. The *liceu* is the entry route to higher education. In the last few years the *liceu* too has offered the option of a more employment-oriented type of training. This type of education lasts three years.

In vocational education pupils can opt for a three-year technical training which offers opportunities of entry to higher vocational education. Technical education also includes a one-year period of training followed by six months of practical work experience. Pupils may also opt for short vocational training courses of three to six months, which come under the responsibility of the ministry of labour. The third option is an apprenticeship.

A fourth option is vocational preparatory school which offers training lasting one, two or three years. These schools target pupils aged 12 to 18. It is a joint project by the ministers of education and labour. Experts from business and industry and the social partners are closely involved in the planning and development of these schools. Higher education in Portugal is provided at university establishments (universities and university institutes) and in more vocationally oriented polytechnics.

In 1990 there was still 13% illiteracy in Portugal. Adult education thus comprises a large measure of basic education. *Educação extra-escolar* concentrates on giving people independent life skills and is provided partly during leisure time. Adult education leading to diplomas is provided at basic, secondary and higher education levels.

Portugal offers integrated special needs education to pupils with a handicap. As far as possible these children are taught in mainstream education. Special needs teams give support to mainstream schools. Even so, 14% of handicapped pupils in Portugal are taught in special needs schools.

13.2. Advisory bodies

At national level Portugal has for 10 years or so had a range of statutory education councils existing side by side. The most important of these is the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (National Board of Education). This is described in greater detail below.

Another advisory body is the *Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Particular e Cooperativo* (Coordinating Council for Private and Cooperative Education). Both bodies have a membership representative of the sectors covered.

In higher education there are two councils: the *Conselho para a Cooperação Ensino Superior-Empresa* (Cooperative Council for Higher Education and Industry) and the *Conselho Nacional para a Acção Social no Ensino Superior* (National Council for Social Welfare in Higher Education).

*13.2.1. Conselho Coordenador do Ensino Particular e Cooperativo
(Coordinating Council for Private and Cooperative Education)*

This Council was set up by a decree of 1988. The Council may put proposals to the education minister with a view to ensuring that private and cooperative education are included and integrated into the education system as a whole. To this end the Council advises on the relationship between state education and private and cooperative education. It proposes curricula for these establishments. The Council also sets criteria for funding and the recognition of autonomy and educational equivalence. The Council also acts as an interface between the ministry of education and establishments for private and cooperative education.

The Council is chaired by a representative of the education minister. It also includes a general inspector of education, the directors of the departments for primary, secondary and higher education, the heads of the regional directorates of education, delegates from the associations of teachers, parents and pupils in private and cooperative education, and delegates of associations of private and cooperative educational establishments.

*13.2.2. Conselho para a Cooperação Ensino Superior-Empresa
(Cooperative Council for Higher Education and Industry)*

This Council was set up in 1988 to foster cooperation between commercial bodies and higher education and the research institutes. Its main objective is to improve the technology base and technical development of human resources.

The Council puts proposals to government on ways of improving cooperation between establishments of higher education and companies, organisations and financial establishments. It also helps with implementation of reforms. It acts as the information centre for COMETT in Portugal.

The chairman is appointed by the education minister. There is also an executive committee of five to seven members. These members are appointed by the ministers of planning and territorial administration, education, and industry and energy. The two national delegates from the COMETT committee also sit on this committee.

The Council as such comprises representatives nominated by the ministers named earlier, by the Portuguese University Chancellors' Council and the Coordinating Council of Polytechnics.

*13.2.3. Conselho Nacional para a Acção Social no Ensino Superior
(National Council for Social Welfare in Higher Education)*

This Council monitors the development of general welfare policy and social welfare provision in establishments of higher education. The Council proposes general criteria for the apportioning of funds for social purposes and selection criteria to be applied in the awarding of student grants.

A representative of the education minister chairs the Council's meetings. Members represent the ministers of finance and health, the members of the government responsible for youth affairs and the senior civil servant in charge of the department of higher education. The coordinating councils of the universities, establishments of higher education and private higher education are also represented in the Council, together with student bodies, the universities, polytechnics and private colleges of higher education.

13.3. Conselho Nacional de Educação (National Board of Education)

13.3.1. Foundation

The National Board of Education is an independent advisory body set up by the Act of 1987. It enjoys administrative and financial autonomy. It advises Parliament and the government on all issues arising under the Portuguese education system. The new "organic" law for the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* dates from 1996. This lays down rules for the Board's membership, statutory powers, organisation and programme.

13.3.2. Powers, provision of opinions and advice

The Board draws up opinions, reports and recommendations on all aspects of education at its own initiative or in response to a request by Parliament or the government.

The Board formulates opinions on the democratisation of the education system, its structure, success in schools and education, compulsory schooling, the problem of illiteracy, basic education for adults, distance learning, curricula and syllabuses, criteria for the evaluation and certification of educational programmes, study and career guidance, management systems for schools and colleges, the foundation, organisation and restructuring of higher education establishments, access to higher education, career progression for teachers, the decentralisation of services and regionalisation of the education system, general criteria for the schools network, freedom of education and teaching, private and cooperative education, vocational training, multiannual investment programmes, annual education budgets and assessment of the education system.

The Board contributes by its opinions to the drafting of policy. It also monitors the implementation of policy and plays a part in its assessment.

In 1997 the Board looked at policy on lifelong learning and continuous training, the funding of higher education, autonomy in and the management of primary and secondary education, education policy in the context of the European Union and national identity, social partnership to counter social exclusion, and (proposed government) changes to the comprehensive law on the education system. The following topics were addressed in 1998: particular needs in education, the information society in schools, issues in secondary education, in vocational education and in arts education, personal and social development in the secondary education curricula, failure rates in compulsory education and entry into working life, social partnership to counter social exclusion.

13.3.3. Internal organisation and structures

The Board also calls on special committees which it elects from amongst its own membership. These may be standing or ad hoc committees. Committees are overseen by a coordinator. They may co-opt experts from outside. The Board may also hold (discussion) seminars either whilst it is in the process of forming its opinion or afterwards.

The "Coordinating Committee" consists of the chairman, the coordinators of the special standing committees and the general secretary. This Committee draws up the Board's programme of work and oversees its implementation.

The administrative council acts as a management body and monitors the Education Board's financial and material policy. It comprises the chairman, the general secretary and a member of the staff of the technical and administrative advisory service.

The National Board of Education has its own secretariat headed by the general secretary, to assist in the Board's work. Its staff are appointed by the minister on nominations by the chairman and general secretary, from amongst permanent staff of the ministry of education.

Formal opinions of the Board and its activity report are published in the *Diário da República*.

13.3.4. Membership

The National Board of Education is a relatively large organisation with 55 members representing the various bodies in the principal areas of education, politics and society in Portugal.

The Board chairman is elected by Parliament.

Parliament is represented on the Board by a delegate from each parliamentary group. The government may also nominate seven members. Each of the regional councils of the autonomous regions and each administrative region may nominate one representative. The National Association of Municipalities is entitled to two representatives.

Educational establishments themselves have seven representatives: two appointed by the national universities, one by the state polytechnics, two by state establishments of non-higher education, two by the organisations of private and cooperative education - one for higher education and one for non-higher education.

The parents', teachers' and students' organisations can each nominate two members. One member represents the joint worker and student associations.

Social participation is ensured by two representatives of the trade unions, two representing employers, two representing the foundations and cultural organisations, two representatives of the National Youth Council, a representative of the non-governmental women's organisations and one member nominated by the churches. A delegate from the National Council for the Professions and a delegate representing private organisations for social solidarity are also members of the Board.

The academic world is represented by two members nominated by the academic associations and two members of educational organisations. Seven members are co-opted as persons of eminence in the field of education and science. The Board also has a delegate from the Academy of Sciences, one from the Portuguese History Academy and one from the Portuguese Association of Education Science.

These members are appointed for a (renewable) three-year term.

13.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

The National Board of Education is funded by an annual allocation from the ministry of education. It has an entirely free hand in how it uses this budget and sets its own priorities.

The Board operates independently of government. In seeking a broad consensus on education policy it endeavours - without losing sight of the powers of other authorities - to facilitate the participation of the various social, cultural and economic forces and partners. The broad basis of the Board's membership guarantees its success here. The Board has also widened its area of activity, in that it advises not only the education minister but also the ministers of labour, science, etc. It also advises Parliament.

The Board's job is to devise strategies and forecasts for education policy. It seeks social agreements with all partners in education and training. These agreements are essential to the devising and implementation of education policy.

According to its chairman there is a marked discrepancy between what the Board is supposed to do by law and what it does in reality. The reason for this is the variety of ways in which the members of the Board of Education perceive their role. All those within the Board of Education have other ways of influencing education policy. They may do this through direct dialogue with government and Parliament, or through the media. It often happens that positions adopted by the social organisations and interest groups in this direct dialogue differ from those of the members representing them on the National Board of Education. These divergent positions make the process of negotiation and agreement of strategy in the Board more difficult. Bodies which frequently adopt strong positions of their own include the teaching unions, the University Chancellors' Council, the Council of Polytechnics, the parents' confederation and the association of higher education college students.

In other instances interest groups may adopt common positions, which reinforces their influence on policy.

At present the Board is seeking to focus its activity on key issues in education and trends in education policy. It is also studying alternatives to policy measures taken by government, particularly where these measures stand in the way of educational reforms and objectives which it deems desirable.

In Portugal too the identity of the Board's members and chairman plays a part in the prestige which the Board enjoys in society.

14. SPAIN

14.1. The education system

There is a long tradition of Catholic schools in Spain. About a third of all pupils are taught in private schools. Private schools which meet the statutory requirements can claim funding from the government. In nursery and primary education 71% of children are taught in the state system, in secondary and technical/vocational education the figure is 58% and in higher education it is 88%.

Notwithstanding the political and cultural diversity of Spain there is a high degree of uniformity in its education system. The 1978 constitution secured the transition from a highly centralised state-controlled system to a semi-federal structure. Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities, each of which is empowered to run its own affairs in education and other areas. Only seven autonomous regions have so far made use of that power. The other 10 autonomous

communities will move towards a more autonomous administration of education over the next few years.

Responsibility for policy is based on a breakdown by level of education and on a breakdown by territorial power, that is to say national responsibility, the responsibilities of the autonomous communities and responsibilities at municipality level.

National responsibility encompasses the services and powers essential for the maintenance of a degree of uniformity in the education system. Thus central government sets the minimum requirements which educational establishments must meet, years of compulsory schooling, levels, cycles and directions of study in education, diplomas, curricula, examinations, inspection, etc. Central government also acts as the "regional" administration of education in the 10 autonomous communities which do not yet run education matters for themselves. Education is still administered here by the provincial directorates (*Direcciones provinciales*).

To help it carry out these "umbrella" functions, central government uses provincial offices of education and science (*Oficinas de Educación y Ciencia*) in the seven autonomous communities which already run their own affairs. The seven autonomous communities have wide-ranging executive powers (to manage the education system in their region) and statutory powers (to regulate and organise a number of matters). In addition to managing the organisation and regulation of the education system, this means essentially managing the educational establishments within their areas, responsibility for recruiting and appointing teachers and the conduct of technical inspections.

At local or municipal level, decisions on education matters are taken by the municipal council. The role of these councils may include the acquisition of land for the building of state schools, payment of maintenance and operating costs and the organisation of additional activities such as educational counselling services, workshops, etc.

The period 1990-2000 saw the introduction of a new education system, pursuant to a new Education Act. Schooling is now compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16.

Pre-school education (*educación infantil*) differs from childcare in having a clearly educative remit. Pre-school education is divided into two cycles: the *jardín de infancia* for children aged 0 to 3 and the *centro de parvulos* for those aged 3 to 6.

Primary education (*educación primaria*) is for children aged 6 to 12. This is divided into three cycles of two years each. After primary education children move on to *educación secundaria obligatoria*. This is a comprehensive school structure for pupils between the ages of 12 and 16, that is to say it goes through to the end of compulsory schooling. In the second cycle of this secondary education the number of subject options is progressively increased, depending on the direction of further study which the pupil has chosen to pursue.

Pupils aged 16 to 18 may then opt for the two-year *bachillerato*. They may choose from four directions of study. This baccalaureate prepares young people for further study in higher education, for studies in vocational education or for direct entry to the labour market.

Higher education consists almost exclusively of university education. There is no real education at higher level other than at the universities.

Continuous education includes an important sector of basic education given that there is a relatively high level of illiteracy in Spain. Social and cultural training is offered by private providers. Continuous education is also the province of the ministers of labour and social security and culture.

Children with a handicap are catered for either wholly or partly in mainstream education. There are also special needs schools.

A feature of Spanish education is the existence of a very distinctive system of education in languages and the arts, which operates in tandem with mainstream education.

14.2. Advisory bodies

The principal advisory body at national level is the *Consejo Escolar del Estado*. There are also two other important councils, the *Consejo General de Formación Profesional* and the *Consejo de Universidades*. Our study looks at greatest length at the *Consejo Escolar del Estado*, which has the broadest powers.

14.2.1. Consejo General de Formación Profesional (General Vocational Training Council)

The General Vocational Training Council encompasses mainstream vocational education and adult vocational education plus career guidance. It puts forward proposals on the national curriculum for vocational education, new directions of study, specialisations and diplomas and study and career guidance. It drew up the national vocational training programme. This devised a coherent system of vocational training leading to equivalent qualifications. The Council also oversees the implementation of this programme.

The chairman of the Council is the deputy minister or minister of labour and social security. This Council has 39 members, 13 of them representing the leading trade unions, 13 the leading employers' associations and 13 the ministry of education and the ministry of labour and social security.

14.2.2. Consejo de Universidades (Universities Council)

This Council has administrative, coordinating, planning and advisory duties in respect of higher education. It comprises representatives of university education from the seven autonomous communities, the 40 chancellors of state universities and 15 other prominent figures from the universities. The chairman is the education minister.

14.2.3. Consejo Escolar de la Comunidad Autónoma (Education Council of the Autonomous Community)

At regional level there are a number of *Consejos Escolares de las Comunidades Autónomas*. These are not dealt with in further detail here, since they have the same remit and membership as the National Education Council, except that they deal only with education issues at the level of the autonomous community in question.

14.3. Consejo Escolar del Estado (National Education Council)

14.3.1. Foundation

The Council was set up by decree in the Act of 3 July 1985.

14.3.2. Powers, provision of opinions and advice

The National Education Council has general advisory powers in respect of overall educational planning in Spain and any reform of educational structures. It issues opinions on draft legislation. It must also assess and approve the annual report on the state of education in Spain. This approval is necessary before the report can be published. The Council may also deliver own-initiative opinions on any education issue which it deems important.

In 1997-98 the Council concerned itself mainly with the implementation of compulsory secondary education. In 1999 its main focus has been the autonomy of centres of education.

14.3.3. Internal organisation and structures

A full meeting of the Council must be held at least once a year to review the state of education in Spain and report on it to the minister. The "standing committee" meets as often as is necessary for the optimum performance of its remit.

The Council has a general secretary. Its day-to-day secretariat is a department of the administration.

14.3.4. Membership

The Council is organised on a participatory basis, though it includes a number of independent "experts". There are 80 members.

The staff of educational establishments are represented by 20 teachers from both state and private systems and four representatives of their support staff. Education users are represented by 12 members from the parents' associations and eight from the pupils' organisations. Private education is represented by four members. The universities are entitled to four representatives. The Council includes four trade union representatives and one member representing the employers' organisations. All these members are appointed by the minister on nominations by the bodies they represent.

The minister himself nominates eight representatives of the education administration and 12 persons of repute from the field of education and a number of leading figures representing the traditions of education in Spain (secular and church organisations).

The minister appoints the chairman by decree. The vice-chairman is nominated by the chairman and elected by a simple majority vote of the Council members.

The Council serves a four-year term.

14.3.5. Degree of independence and impact

According to its chairman the Council is respected in society and thus exerts considerable influence on various aspects of central education policy. Full guarantees are also in place to ensure that it can be independent in its operations and notably the way in which it spends its budget.

The Council plays a clear and independent role in policy drafting, working for the most part with, but sometimes against, other policy shapers. Here too there is the problem of sections of the Council which undermine the consensus achieved, through direct contacts of their own with the minister. The teaching unions in particular are often a force on their own when it comes to influencing policy.

The Council also regards forecasting and advice on future trends as part of its remit.

It is not yet clear what the repercussions of progressive regionalisation will be on this National Education Council.

15. UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom comprises England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Education in these regions is broadly similar.

15.1. England

15.1.1. The education system

At national level the Secretary of State for Education, assisted by the Department for Education and Employment, is responsible for education in England. The Secretary of State for Education also has far-ranging powers for Wales and Northern Ireland and in respect of policy on teacher qualifications.

Since 1979 there have been significant changes, initiated by the Conservative Thatcher and Major governments. These introduced a combination of strong administration from the centre and neo-liberal free market ideology. The emphasis on decentralisation and "parent and consumer power" has resulted in a marked increase in government control over key areas of education. The minister has, for example, taken total control for supervising curricula and educational content.

In contrast to most other European countries, the structure of education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has traditionally and consistently been decentralised. At regional level education has been administered since 1902 by local education authorities (LEAs). These are democratically elected regional administrations representing about 150 000 to 1 000 000 residents.

Under the 1998 Education Reform Act the local education authorities lost many of their powers to central government on the one hand and the schools on the other hand. Schools can opt out of LEA control and be "grant maintained" instead, in which case the school is funded directly by the state. Some schools have remained under LEA control but with a greater degree of

autonomy. The LEAs have retained their function as an intermediary in the distribution of government grants to schools. They must also continue to provide services to schools in the region. But this takes place in an open competitive market in which the schools themselves have choices (on refresher courses, school buses, etc.).

Schooling is compulsory from age 5 to 16. This means that children under 8 must have at least three hours' teaching a day and older children at least four.

There is pre-school education for children between the ages of 2 and 5. However, many English children in this age group do not attend nursery schools. Primary education encompasses the age group of 5 to 11-year-olds. LEAs have a range of options in the way they divide up primary education. Primary education comprises the first two stages of the national curriculum (ages 5-7 and 8-11). Secondary education is for pupils aged 11 to 18. The first five years of this are part of compulsory schooling. After they complete their compulsory schooling pupils can prepare for higher education in the sixth form (sixth and seventh class). Forms of education for this age group which are provided outside the school system count as adult education. In Wales all secondary schools are comprehensive. In England more than 90% of pupils attend a comprehensive school. But in recent years the trend has been for these schools to specialise (technology, modern languages, arts, etc.). In recent years new initiatives have been taken primarily in the vocational training sector. The "technology colleges" are an innovation here. Young people can acquire hands-on work experience in "compacts", co-operation agreements between educational establishments and employers. As an alternative to general education schools are also introducing modular vocational training. This consists of modular courses leading to a vocational qualification.

"Further education" also comprises a wide range of full-time and part-time training aimed at persons outside the compulsory school system.

A crucial feature of the English education system is the structure of qualifications in vocational training. There are four levels of qualification which all types of training must observe. Modular courses and the award of credits means that young people can always add to their qualifications. These are also an important reference point when people embark on further education.

In higher education, as of 1988 universities and all other establishments of higher education have been placed on the same footing. As far as possible England and Wales try to cater for children with a handicap in mainstream education. There are special needs schools for a limited group only.

15.1.2. Advisory bodies

England does not have a separate overall council for consultation or advice on educational matters. The principal forum for social participation is the governing body of each school, in which the various interested parties are represented.

A variety of groups, such as parents' associations and spokesmen for business and industry, are also routinely called on by government to take part in discussions and consultations before any major reforms are approved.

At national level there are a number of bodies responsible for specific areas of the education system. In addition to the three departments of education there are also a number of non-departmental public bodies which advise the ministers and have delegated powers in respect of some aspects. Examples of these are the Further Education Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council which are responsible for funding and assessing the quality of education in their respective sectors. The minister appoints the members of these councils, who represent business and industry, the professions, the local authorities and the respective sectors of education. They are consulted by the minister before new policy measures and procedures are adopted.

Another important example is the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) which is responsible for what is taught in the schools. We describe this Authority in greater detail below since its operation and membership are typical of similar bodies in Northern Ireland and Wales. All four bodies are concerned with education from pre-school level (the under-fives) through to further education. The QCA is also responsible for lifelong learning.

There are also political and other groups (associations of parents, teachers, school governors, students, employers, unions, etc.) which take part in the decision-making process at all kinds of levels and in all kinds of ways. Interested parties are routinely asked to comment on government working papers and policy proposals. Other groups or individuals can also express their views on these papers and proposals. Reservations about certain issues can also be addressed directly to the government.

Lastly, England and Wales also have local training and enterprise councils (TECs). These are partnerships headed by local industries and a board of directors, two thirds of whom are from the private sector. Other directors may represent the public sector, voluntary organisations and trade unions. These councils promote the forging of links between education and industry, with work experience for trainees and teacher secondments to industry being some of the opportunities created.

15.1.3. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Foundation

The Education Act of 1997 set up the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. This new body combines the former work of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and the School Curriculum and Assessment authority and adds a number of further powers and duties.

Powers, provision of opinions and advice

The QCA determines the structure and content of education. A basic requirement here is to tailor the content of education to society and the changing economy. In essence this means that the Authority evaluates and adapts the national curriculum (subjects covered, core objectives and assessment procedures).

The QCA also devises standard national systems of assessment. It contributes to the efficient collection of national data and early publication of national results. This enables schools to show that they are achieving the requisite national and local targets.

The Authority also devises a national qualifications structure which provides the standard for external examinations and government-funded (academic and vocational) training.

The Authority also provides information to the public on curricula, the structure of qualifications and examinations. It carries out research for the minister on the effectiveness of policy proposals. The Authority advises the minister on all aspects of the school curriculum, pupil assessment (national tests and external examinations) and government-funded qualifications which are offered in education, adult education, and elsewhere.

The Authority may not deliver own-initiative opinions.

In 1997-98 the Authority specifically worked on learning objectives and materials for the under-fives, systems for assessing children at the start of primary education, reform of the national curriculum and its system of tests, the development of national assessments at age 7, 11 and 14, ways in which schools can set their own quality improvement targets, development of a coherent national system of qualifications, recognition and guarantees of the quality of all government-funded qualifications awarded by schools, colleges of further education and workplaces, the conduct of research to support policy proposals and assess their effectiveness, the provision of information, support and guidance to persons in the practical training field, monitoring and comparison of international developments with an eye to adopting the best methods and applications as rapidly as possible, the promotion of quality and consistency in education and training as stepping stones to lifelong learning and the creation of a learning society, and the monitoring of and efforts towards constant improvement of the Authority's own efficiency and efficacy.

15.1.4. Internal organisation and structures

The QCA draws up its own annual programme which must then receive ministerial approval. The Authority must then follow the programme which has been approved. Other planning documents are a "management statement" which outlines the role of the QCA, its objectives, *modus operandi* and organisation, its relations and agreements with other bodies, its financial policy and other matters, a "corporate plan" setting out the QCA's objectives, priorities, plan of work and budget for three consecutive years, including attainment criteria and targets, and an "annual report and accounts" which describe what has been achieved in relation to the targets set in the corporate plan.

The Authority also has three policy committees to advise the full Authority in major areas of its remit: the Curriculum and Assessment Committee, the General and General Vocational Qualifications Committee and the Vocational Qualifications and Occupational Standards Committee.

Membership

The Authority has not less than 8 and not more than 13 members appointed by the minister. From amongst these members the minister also appoints a chairman and possibly a vice-chairman (as alternate). The identity of the chairman is extremely important. He must be someone with experience and expertise in the field of education as a teacher or head teacher, or someone with experience and specialist knowledge in the provision of education and training or someone with experience and special knowledge of industry, commerce or finance or one of the professions.

The Authority currently comprises representatives of academe, senior figures from business and industry, school and college principals and teachers, local policy shapers, etc. A number of

individuals attend meetings of the Authority in a consultative capacity: a delegate of the minister who is also Director for Qualifications and Occupational Standards, the chairman of the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (or his delegate), a representative of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) for England and two representatives of the Further Education Funding Council Inspectorate and the new Training Inspectorate.

Degree of independence and impact

According to the QCA chairman, its objectives are furthered by an ongoing open dialogue and coordinated channels of communication with a range of partners. The minister too attaches importance to an open, collaborative and consultative attitude towards the world outside. He encourages the QCA to take sufficient account of the interests of the world of work on the one hand and the interests of students, parents, schools, colleges, LEAs, teachers, educators, qualification bodies and the higher education sector on the other hand.

The QCA is a non-departmental government body answerable directly to the Department for Education and Employment. It thus maintains close links with government and a number of other regulatory and supervisory bodies, such as the Standards Evaluation Unit which is part of the DfEE, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the Further Education Development Agency, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). These relationships provide valuable mutual support. The QCA will be cooperating closely with the three inspectorates (Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Schools, the Inspectorate for the Further Education Funding Council and the Training Inspectorate), so that its work on the curriculum, assessment and qualifications can be based on its assessments of the quality of the education and training system. Lastly, the Authority works together with the bodies which award qualifications and other interested parties such as providers, the social partners, etc.

The QCA is also required to cooperate closely with its counterparts in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, namely the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, the Training and Employment Agency in Northern Ireland and the Scottish Qualifications Council.

The Authority is funded by the Department for Education and Employment but strictly speaking it is independent. The minister usually responds with an official letter to the opinions it delivers. But there is no statutory obligation on him to do so.

15.2. Wales

15.2.1. The education system

The education laws in England and Wales are virtually identical. The basic rules for education systems in the United Kingdom are laid down centrally in London.

Wales has its own administrative structure with a Secretary of State for Wales and his civil service apparatus, the Welsh Office Education Department. This has no statutory powers, however. The Secretary of State for Wales can, within the constraints of centrally enacted legislation, issue enabling legislation in the form of "statutory instruments". These may give rise to differences between the education system in England and that in Wales. For example, the curriculum provides for instruction in Welsh and other specific educational content.

15.2.2. Advisory bodies

The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales is the Welsh counterpart of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in England. The Authority's powers and membership are similar. The Authority's remit covers all aspects of setting the curriculum, examinations, assessment and qualifications in vocational training. The Authority monitors developments in these areas and advises the National Assembly. It also advises on research and development in these areas and it provides support for Welsh language teaching.

Like England, Wales too has local training and enterprise councils (TECs). They operate in a similar way to their English counterparts.

15.3. Scotland

15.3.1. The education system

Scotland, together with England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is part of the United Kingdom. The central legislative power is the Parliament in London. But Scotland is also able to pursue an independent policy in a number of areas.

At national level the Secretary of State for Scotland is directly answerable to Parliament for overall supervision and development of the education system in Scotland and for legislation on Scottish education. In practice he delegates day-to-day power to a minister for education who heads the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. This is responsible centrally for monitoring education, advising and managing national policy, coordinating the work of the local education authorities and other bodies involved in education and overseeing the national administration of curricula and education methods, funding school buildings, etc.

Regional powers for education were devolved on 1 April 1996 from the regional authorities to 32 local authorities. A local authority education committee has direct responsibility for the provision of an adequate and effective network of schools. The appointment of staff, provision and funding of most education services, financial management of the education budget, the provision of school buildings, facilities, equipment and materials and the practical implementation of government policy. Local education policy is of course conducted within the framework of the national laws and regulations on education.

15.3.2. Advisory bodies

Responsibility for implementing education policy in Scotland lies primarily with the local authorities and individual schools. Scotland does not have an education council with general powers. It does, however, have an extensive network of advisory councils which examine aspects of education or represent specific groups in education.

The principal councils at present are as follows: the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC), the Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC), the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET), the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

For the most part these advisory councils are staffed by representatives of local education authorities and teachers, but they also include people from outside the world of education,

usually business and industry. They provide advice and information to parents, employers and other organisations.

They are usually government funded but otherwise operate independently within the policy framework of the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.

The various bodies liaise closely with each other, with the local education authorities and individual establishments.

15.3.3. Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

The Scottish Qualifications Authority is a non-departmental government body set up by the Education Act of 1996. The SQA became operational on 1 April 1997 with the merging of its two predecessors, the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) and the Scottish Examination Board (SEB).

The SQA is responsible for the administration of assessment and the structure of qualifications in Scotland. The creation of this Authority was a significant and necessary step towards the goal of a coherent Scottish education structure, combining the vocational and academic educational routes. The Authority devises and awards certificates and qualifications, assessed educational and training establishments, recognises qualifications, and monitors the quality of educational and training establishments which award qualifications. The Authority advises the minister when requested to do so.

The SQA has a maximum of 20 members appointed by the minister. These members are recruited from education and industry and they ensure the participation of social partners. The Authority may co-opt not more than five additional members. Its work is guided by a board of management.

The SQA is funded by the Scottish Education and Industry Department.

15.3.4. Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC)

The Scottish Community Education Council acts as the national focus for community education. This is the name given to the informal educational initiatives and services provided by local authorities and/or voluntary organisations. People learn not only at school or college but also through their day-to-day involvement in their local community. This kind of education meets the learning needs of people in local communities. The Community Council promotes this kind of education by influencing public policy, promoting examples of good practice and giving support to persons in the practical field.

The SCEC concerns itself with adult education, community work, youth work and schools, etc.

It has 13 members appointed by the minister. Two members represent local government, one represents voluntary organisations, three represent the establishments of higher and further education, two represent industry, one represents the schools and two are members from outside education.

15.3.5. Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET)

SCET is an expert body which aims to develop and promote effective learning in schools, further and higher education, at work and in the home, by the use of educational technology tailored to the pupil's needs. The Council is both an advisory and a research and development organisation. Its focus is primarily on Scotland, but it has also built a Europe-wide reputation.

SCET has 14 members directly answerable to the minister. Two members represent educational bodies, three the establishments of higher education and one represents secondary education. Central government has two representatives and local government one. Two members represent industry and three represent the schools.

15.3.6. Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE)

SCRE is an independent public body answerable to the minister, which specialises in research of relevance to policy and practice at all levels of education, from nursery education to higher and adult education. The Council also disseminates research findings and information, and works for greater awareness of the implications of research among policy-makers and teachers. Its third duty is to maintain contacts and co-operation with other research bodies, research workers and policy-makers.

Research carried out by SCRE is funded by a variety of bodies including government departments, local authorities, charities and international organisations.

The Council has 25 members appointed by leading organisations. Three members are appointed by the minister, however. Five education bodies are represented in the Council, with one educational adviser, four representatives of establishments of higher education, one representing the establishments of secondary education, seven the trade unions, one representing central government and three representing local government. The Council has two representatives of industry and one member representing the schools.

15.3.7. Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum

The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum is the principal body which advises the minister of education for Scotland on all aspects of the curriculum for 3 to 18-year-olds. The Council constantly assesses and adjusts the curriculum, consults all parties involved in education and provides guidance for teachers. It also provides local authorities and schools with information and guidance on the curriculum. In agreement with the minister it implements curriculum development programmes. Curriculum development takes place in consultation with teachers, parents and representatives of business and industry and other interested parties. The Council has 22 members all appointed by the minister. There are 10 representing head teachers or teachers, three representing the local authorities, three representing industry, two representing further education, three lecturers/advisers and two representing school governing bodies. The SCCC maintains close links with the other UK bodies responsible for the curriculum.

15.4. Northern Ireland

15.4.1. The education system

Northern Ireland is (still) a part of the United Kingdom. But it has its own educational laws and structures. Education in Northern Ireland is administered centrally by the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI). This is headed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland appointed by the UK prime minister. The Secretary of State answers to Parliament in London for all policy measures in Northern Ireland on education, training, sport and recreation, youth work, arts and culture and the development of relations between schools and the community.

Education in Northern Ireland comes under the local control of five "education and library boards" rather than local education authorities. The duties of these boards are broadly comparable to those of the 116 LEAs in England and Wales.

A specific feature of Northern Ireland is the relationship between the government-funded schools and independent schools. The funded schools are "controlled schools" set up and maintained by local authorities. Most of these are Protestant. Voluntary maintained schools are private initiatives and mainly Catholic. The government pays their operating costs. The voluntary grammar schools are comparable to these, except that they provide secondary education. The new category of voluntary schools are schools of the previous two types but they have restructured their governing bodies in such a way that no one interest group has a majority. Grant-maintained integrated schools aim to provide primary and post-primary education to Catholic and Protestant children together. In addition to these schools which are funded by government, Northern Ireland also has independent schools.

15.4.2. Advisory bodies

The Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is the relevant advisory body here. The Council also oversees public examinations such as GCSE, GCE, the Certificate of Education Achievement and the Graded Objectives in Modern Languages for pupils aged 16 to 19.

The Council also consults the education community in Northern Ireland on all manner of changes to the curriculum and examinations. It also disseminate information on curricula and examinations. Lastly, the Council also deals with the development of IT materials for education.

16. SWEDEN

16.1. The education system

The Swedish education system has been radically reformed over the last thirty years. The post-war policy model, centrally administered and geared to uniformity, has now been changed into a broadly decentralised policy which places greater value on the freedom and responsibility of the local level and on pluriformity.

A number of common features still remain, however. The right to equal educational opportunities for all is a high priority in the Swedish system, reflecting the effort being made to

eliminate social and geographical barriers. And the standard form of education typical of Sweden (*grundskola*) must be seen against this background. The *grundskola* offers compulsory education which is common to all. Another typical feature of education is its close links with the world of work and the importance attached to being an integral part of society. With very few exceptions, education in Sweden is state-controlled. The number of non-state or private schools is extremely small (about 2%).

Policy is defined by the state and implemented on the ground by the municipalities and provinces. With one or two exceptions, all forms of education are the responsibility of the minister of education and science. Pre-school education comes under the ministry of social affairs, vocational training under the ministry of labour and the agricultural university under the ministry of agriculture. The ministries' job is to prepare government proposals and implement laws and general guidelines.

At local level the municipalities are the most important administrative bodies. Decentralisation has given greater freedom and responsibility to local administrations. Educational facilities have become one part of their remit.

Primary and lower secondary schools (age 7-16) and higher secondary schools (16 plus) are administered by the municipalities which fund roughly half of their costs. Central government funds the rest. Government funding is no longer calculated on the basis of teachers' pay. The municipalities now receive a lump sum and make their own spending decisions within the constraints of the general terms and conditions. As the organising authority for schools the municipalities are now the employer of most school personnel. Exceptions to this rule are the higher secondary schools administered by the province, schools for paramedic training and agriculture, horticulture and forestry, the "integrated schools" which come directly under central government, and of course the private schools.

All municipalities must draw up an education plan which shows not only that they are following the broad lines set by government but also that they are tailoring their curriculum to local needs.

16.2. Advisory bodies

Sweden has no national advisory councils. The right to consultation and information is enshrined in the 1976 *Medbestämmandelag* (Co-determination Act), which requires employers to consult the trade unions over important decisions. In the education sector the leading trade unions are the *Läraryrket*, representing pre-school and primary school teachers, the *Lärarnas Riksförbund* (higher secondary school teachers) and the *Sveriges Skolledarförbund* representing head teachers. There is no trade union representation in institutional councils anywhere in Sweden.

The *Hem och Skola* is the national advisory body representing parents. This parents' association operates independently of government and other policy-makers. Its main objective is to promote co-operation between school and parents and increase the extent to which parents can have a say in school life. The members are all representatives of parents. The chairman is selected from amongst the members.

There is also a *Programråd* at national level for each subject in the national curriculum for higher secondary education. Each council passes judgment on the national objectives of each

curriculum. The council is chaired by a representative of the Education Department. Its members are representatives of employers and employees in the relevant sector of industry.

In Sweden, dialogue between education and business and industry is not formalised within a specific forum, but industry is increasingly recognised as a partner with which the universities, higher education establishments and research institutes can usefully work.

CONCLUSION

1. EDUCATION COUNCILS REFLECT THE DEGREE OF CENTRALISM IN EDUCATION POLICY

As is clear from the theoretical considerations in the introduction to our report, education councils are part of the process of policy preparation and they are consulted when decisions are to be taken on education policy. Education policy may be a highly centralised affair, in which case lower levels have less influence and are mainly required merely to implement directives imposed from the centre. To varying degrees this is true of the education systems we have described in France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Portugal. Other countries have delegated powers in respect of education to the regions or provinces. But these regions in turn operate a centralist policy on education. This is the case with Belgium, Germany, Austria and Spain. A third model is that of countries which do not have autonomous regions but have relinquished significant powers on education to lower administrative levels, essentially the municipalities. Examples of these countries are the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. These are of course rather broad generalisations. Amongst these various types of policy there may be mixed forms whereby countries operating a centralist policy nevertheless delegate powers over education to the municipalities (as in the Netherlands). Within a given type too, there may be graduated differences.

These policy types also influence the role of the education council and the impact it has on education policy. In all countries where the organisation of schools is controlled by a central ministry there are national education councils, usually with an all-encompassing remit. This is the case in all the Member States in the south of the European Union and most of those in the centre, namely France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal. Greece and Italy have both central and regional education councils.

In countries with regions which have autonomous powers in respect of their education policy but pursue a rather centralist policy, there is also an education council with broad powers, but these powers are exercised at regional level. This is clearly the case in Belgium. In Spain, which has been moving since 1978 towards a semi-federal structure, there are education councils in the autonomous regions plus an education council at central level. Some regions, after all, are empowered to conduct their own education policy, whilst others come under the national authority. In Germany too the breakdown of powers between the Federal Republic and the *Länder* is reflected in the structure of education councils. There are "national" education councils for higher education and *Landesschulbeiräte* for the provinces or *Länder*. Austria too has a dual structure.

But in those countries where control over education is exercised at local level (e.g. by the municipality) or even by the school itself, the way in which the minister consults the various social groups takes on different forms. Though in the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries, where policy is decentralised, a number of ministries can call on an advisory council which has limited powers. Denmark is something of an exception here, since the *Folkeskolerådet* (Primary Schools Council) has a remit for the whole of compulsory schooling. The autonomy of the municipalities limits the impact of this Council.

Most of the national education councils were set up in the 1980s, and their names are often very similar. We can infer from this that a process of democratisation has developed in the centralist countries, with advisory councils expressing a growing need for participation and involvement in education policy. Advisory councils thus serve to counterbalance the well-known legitimacy problems in those countries of Europe which have a centralist tradition⁶.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF EDUCATION COUNCILS

Education councils are also very similar in their membership. They comprise representatives of the various social groupings involved in education. Consequently education councils guarantee a certain form of social participation.

The principal groups represented are: a delegate of the education minister, sometimes representatives of other ministries and education types or networks set up as private initiatives, teacher organisations and often representatives of technical and administrative staff, representatives of parents and often pupils or students too, representatives of the economy and society (business and industry, minority language groups, cultural associations, etc.), and experts/educationists.

The Netherlands is an exception here in that its *Onderwijsraad* (Education Council) deliberately opts to be a limited team of "independent experts". To some degree this is also the case in certain councils in the United Kingdom.

The number of members ranges from 19 (experts in the Netherlands) to 36 (the average in the German *Länder*) and 97 (in Greece).

There is usually balanced representation of the various parties. In some countries, however (e.g. France and Italy), representatives of teaching staff form the majority.

The groups most frequently represented are the employers' associations (14 times), followed by the teaching unions/associations (11 times). Parents' associations and employers' organisations each score 10. Then come the ministers or their representatives (8 times) and representatives of the education administration (8 times).

It is not possible to say anything definitive about the relevance of membership, since membership has to be considered in conjunction with a council's powers. Before reaching firm conclusions one would need more detailed information on, for example, the number of members representing each group within a council.

Something else which may make one education council different from another is the number and position of experts within it. Some councils have interest groups plus experts, whilst others have members of interest groups only and others again are made up of nothing but independent experts. By "expert" we understand here someone who is appointed for his or her personal

⁶ H.N. Weiler, Education and Power: The Politics of Educational Decentralization in Comparative Perspective. In: *Education Policy*, 1989 (3), No. 1, pages 31-43.

knowledge of the matters dealt with the council and who is not perceived as representing one particular interest group. "Expertise" may mean both academic knowledge and experience.

The great majority of EU Member States have education councils which are dominated by interest groups. Where they include experts - and most of them do - they are usually a small proportion of the membership. Only the Netherlands *Onderwijsraad* and the more specifically targeted QCA and SCCC in the United Kingdom are made up solely (or very predominantly) of "experts".

3. POWERS OF EDUCATION COUNCILS

First of all a distinction must be made between education councils which have responsibility for the whole of education (or a large proportion of it) and those which pronounce only on specific aspects of education policy or a specific level of education.

The remit of councils which have all-encompassing power is chiefly to advise on proposed reforms or educational matters of general interest, which are referred to the council by the minister. Usually councils can also put forward proposals on their own initiative. They are responsible for all levels of non-higher education in Germany, Spain, France and Austria, and for the whole of the education system in the other countries. Only in Denmark do education councils have responsibilities defined for one specific level of education. Consequently they are much smaller in size.

It is noteworthy that quite a few countries have specific consultation structures for dialogue between technical and vocational education on the one hand and the social partners on the other hand, in which the substance of vocational training is tailored to developments on the labour market.

Our study found that all the advisory councils described have a measure of freedom, allowing them to take initiatives of their own in addition to performing the duties explicitly laid upon them. But the degree of this freedom varies considerably. Advisory councils with a remit which is limited, mainly to curriculum and assessment (e.g. the QCA in England), have very little room for pursuing topics of their own and delivering own-initiative opinions on them.

Education councils perform their remits at all levels of education and education policy: at the "micro" level (teaching methods, curriculum and assessment), the "meso" level (school management systems, opinions on the transition to higher levels of education) and "macro" level.

We tentatively offer the following comparative conclusion. The opinions delivered by education councils are used primarily as aids in the preparation of policy and only to a very limited extent in its implementation. In most cases these councils aspire to advise pro-actively, with greater emphasis on the conceptual. There is little evidence of this in the legislation governing education councils. And even less evidence in reality. The emphasis is for the most part on specific practical opinions and advice.

In decentralised countries central advisory councils have only limited powers (like the national ministry), e.g. the *Folkeskolerådet* in Denmark. Consequently these councils can usually provide conceptual opinions only rather than specific practical ones.

In centralised countries national and regional advisory councils are required to produce both specific practical opinions and conceptual opinions. Often the specific practical opinions are in competition with the policy drafting duties of the officials of the ministry responsible. These opinions are thus frequently perceived as "reactive" (or even as "reactionary") (cf. the *Onderwijsraad* in the Netherlands).

Advisory councils which are more "specialised" (e.g. the NCCA in Ireland and most councils in the United Kingdom) produce almost exclusively specific practical and professional opinions.

It is noteworthy that the workload of education councils is greater in times of major educational change than in periods of implementation and consolidation.

4. DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT

Qualitative indicators of independence are: who appoints the chairman and members, the nature of the council's membership, its autonomy in respect of its budget and the size of that budget, whether or not it has its own staff, how these staff are appointed and whether or not the council is free to make its positions public.

Except in Finland and Portugal, where the chairmen are appointed by the Council of State and Parliament respectively, the minister appoints the chairmen. The chairman of the Flemish Education Council is chosen from amongst its members. In some countries, France amongst them, the minister himself chairs the education council.

Except in the Netherlands, the members of advisory councils are all nominated by their respective interest group and then appointed by the minister. They are thus independent in the sense that the government does not directly intervene to choose the members. The members of the Netherlands Education Council are also appointed by the minister on the basis of democratically agreed criteria. These criteria explicitly guarantee a maximum degree of independence.

The education councils of the various countries vary as to whether or not they have their own staff. In some countries officials of the education ministry provide the secretariat for the education council. This is the case in France and the *Landesschulbeiräte* in Germany. In other countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal the education council has its own administrative staff.

When (in)dependence is considered in conjunction with the nature of the council's membership, the picture is less clear-cut. The Netherlands has opted for the "expert model". The chairman and members of its Council have no ties of any kind with interest groups. The Netherlands Council thus seeks to be independent on both counts: from government and from interest groups. We see something similar in some advisory councils in the United Kingdom.

The picture is different in countries which base themselves largely on the "representation model". Members are appointed precisely because they represent certain interest groups. Here, though, the job of the education council is to "filter" the views of the bodies represented and facilitate compromise. A good opinion transcends the individual interests of a single group.

From the limited information on sources of funding and the size of the annual budget, we deduce that advisory councils are in virtually all cases funded by the education ministry. Advisory councils usually have an annual operating appropriation set aside for them in the overall budget of the education ministry. What is crucial is the degree of freedom the council has in spending its own budget.

In most countries the advisory councils have a budget large enough to ensure their "independence". Only in Denmark (*Folkeskolerådet*) and Austria (*Schulreformkommission*) do our informants have a problem with the size of the budget. In Ireland too, the NCCA works with a relatively modest budget, but this Council is able to draw on a lot of unpaid volunteers so that much can be achieved with few resources. From talking to those "in the know" in advisory councils we gather, furthermore, that "voluntary work" is quite commonplace, so it is not a monopoly of the Irish NCCA.

For the most part advisory councils are also free to choose types of work (which may need funding), for example the setting up of ad hoc subgroups/working parties on one or more topics, holding seminars which may trigger a debate on certain subjects and/or may enable people's views to be aired.

The fact that governments acknowledge the (relatively) independent status of advisory councils does not mean that governments see that independence as a threat. There is no single country in which education councils have powers at decision-making level. Apart from the statutory provisions agreed for the *Onderwijsraad* in the Netherlands, the ministers responsible are not even obliged to acknowledge receipt of the opinions sent to them and/or respond to or comment on them.

5. FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION COUNCILS

Although the first part of our study does not yield empirically proven conclusions, we can hypothesise that an advisory council based on the **representation model** is well placed to accommodate a striking variety of actual and potential policy shapers. Within the broader policy-making process an advisory council of this kind acts as a sort of mini-parliament during a phase which precedes ministerial decision-making. Whether or not this important feature guarantees a speedier path to consensus and/or the "solidity" of that consensus, remains open to question. After all, interest groups can always operate independently as well, and adopt positions of their own which frequently deviate from the consensus reached in the council.

On the other hand it is reasonable to suppose too that advisory councils based on the expertise model (whose membership does *not* represent a wide range of policy-shaping interest groups) may be quicker to reach a sound and uncompromising opinion, but may be less engaged with the many interest groups affected by that opinion.

All in all an advisory body may be deemed to have six functions:

- to improve the quality of policy drafting (expertise)
- to help make policy more acceptable (legitimisation)
- to act as a seed bed for plans and ideas ("think tank")
- to help justify "non-decisions" (putting things on the back burner)
- (sometimes) to help implement or apply policy (administration)

- (sometimes) to mediate in disputes (arbitration).

Another factor which determines the impact of advisory bodies is the degree to which they can adequately coordinate their own agenda with that of the minister. The opinion of the education council is a relevant part of the policy debate of the moment, provided it does not lead to unnecessary delays. In various countries the education councils thus work to an agenda set for them by the minister.

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Belgium - French Community: Mr Y. Van Haverbeke, chairman of the Conseil de l'Education et de la Formation; D. Van Schoorisse, secretary to the Council.

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