

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Right to Education:**

### **Freedom of Choice as a way to anchor democracy and social cohesion**

Brussels, 27 January 2015

The 'economization' of education weakens European democracies. As a way to anchor democracy and social cohesion in Europe, the EU Parliament is urged to promote freedom of school choice throughout the European Union. At a round table on 27 January 2015 in the EU Parliament, representatives of 27 organizations of independent education in Europe discussed this urgency with the EU Parliament.

Civil society has a growing responsibility to enhance democratic values, based on diverse cultural, religious and pedagogical convictions. Independent schools have proven that they can unite in diversity, strongly embedded in the civil society have proven to be levers to strength social cohesion.

The educational systems of EU countries seek to promote the highest quality. Quality of education is generally taken as one of the key issues to solve complex social inequality. The right of education for parents is also a freedom of school choice. A freedom to choose for the education that fits parents best. Therefore parents should be offered access to instruments (legal, financial or others) to overcome specific constraints, enabling the right to choose school for their children.

The possibility to innovate and the diversity of ethos connected to autonomy, responsibility and accountability has shown that the independent education sector has been fuelling change and innovation, with its own knowledge and practical experience, throughout the whole educational system. Thus making independent schools flourish in a strong civil society.

The multiple dimensions of freedom of choice and the multiple roles of different players: learners (either children or adults), parents, teachers, communities and



ultimately schools, are crucial actors for social cohesion and the anchoring of democracy. For this reason tendencies towards uniforming policies and rankings have to be countered

Organizations for independent education present at the round table:

<b>ACSI Europe</b>	Association of Christian Schools International	H	EU	Organization committed to supporting Christian educators and schools throughout Europe
<b>AEEP</b>	Associação de Estabelecimentos de Ensino Particular e Cooperativo	P	N	Portuguese association of independent schools
<b>ANESPO</b>	Associação Nacional de Escolas Profissionais	P	N	Association that assembles VET schools in Portugal
<b>ASŠSZS</b>	Asociácia súkromných škôl a školských zariadení 'SR'	SI	N	Slovak association of Private Schools and School Facilities
<b>CEEC</b>	Comité Européen pour l'Enseignement Catholique	B	EU	The European Committee for Catholic Education is an international non-profit association
<b>CNEF</b>	Confederação Nacional da Educação e Formação	P	N	Umbrella organization includes independent education and VET national associations' in Portugal
<b>CST</b>	Christian Schools Trust (UK) and Brussels Consideration (VGS)	UK	N	The Christian Schools' Trust is a group of independent Christian schools working in the UK
<b>D</b>	Danmarks Privatskoleforening	Dk	N	Danish association of independent schools
<b>DE</b>	Driestar educatief	NI	N	Protestant Reformation school in the Netherlands
<b>ECNAIS</b>	European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools	Dk	EU	International association for collaboration between national associations of independent schools in Europe
<b>EJCE</b>	European Jewish Centre for Education	B	EU	Umbrella organization founded by European Agudas Yisroel supporting Jewish education
<b>EurECA</b>	European Educators' Christian Association	UK	EU	European network for Christian teachers working in schools
<b>EyG</b>	Confederación de Centros Educación y Gestión	Sp	N	Spanish organization of Catholic schools
<b>FFS</b>	Förderverband Freier Schulen, Freie Schulwahl Österreich	Au	N	Austrian association of independent schools and free school choice
<b>FOMENTO</b>	Fomento Centros de Enseñanza	Sb	N	Its mission is to help parents of the students to provide their children quality education
<b>HAL</b>	Het Amsterdams Lyceum	NI	N	Dutch independent secondary school in Amsterdam



<b>IB</b>	International Baccalaureate	NI	EU	Is a non-profit educational foundation offering (four) highly respected programmes of international education
<b>JFsg</b>	Jacobus Fruytier scholengemeenschap	NI	N	Dutch independent school in Apeldoorn
<b>ME</b>	Montessori Europe	Au	EU	An association with the aim of establishing and promoting Montessori pedagogy throughout Europe
<b>NMV</b>	Nederlandse Montessori Vereniging	NI	N	Dutch national association of Montessori schools
<b>Socires</b>	Society and Responsibility	NI	EU	Organization promoting civil society empowerment
<b>SRS</b>	Stichting Rijdende School	NI	N	Independent organisation based in the Netherlands providing primary education for children of occupational travellers (Circus and showmen)
<b>VBS</b>	Verenigde Bijzondere Scholen	NI	N	Dutch association of independent non-confessional schools
<b>VEBS</b>	Verband evangelischer Bekenntnisschulen e.V.	G	N	Organization supporting German Christian education
<b>Verus</b>	Vereniging voor christelijk onderwijs	NI	N	Dutch organization for Christian schools
<b>VGS</b>	Vereniging voor Gereformeerd Schoolonderwijs	NI	N	Organization of Christian reformatory education
<b>VKO</b>	Vereniging voor Katholiek Onderwijs	NI	N	Dutch association for Catholic education
<b>VSKO</b>	Vlaams Secretariaat van het Katholiek Onderwijs	B	N	Organization supporting Catholic education in Flanders

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**FOR THE PRESS ONLY:**

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