

**Generation Europe Foundation  
Colloquium: The Role of Business in Education  
Paris, 9 November 2009**

Chairman: Senator Josselin de Rohan – President of the Senate Foreign Affairs Commission.

The question is whether education systems should or could respond to the needs of business. Would better co-operation, for example, between the worlds of teaching and work through, “**educational sponsorship**” ensure that **the education system better prepares students to fulfil expectations as tomorrow’s economic actors?**

**Jérôme Monod**, Honorary President of GDF Suez and the Foundation for Political Innovation, then gave the keynote speech in which he set the terms of debate.

1. **Does business have a role in education?**
2. **How can education cooperate with business?**

The question of education / business relations was, for him, **a political problem and a European problem**. He insisted that the role of **lifelong learning** – acquiring new knowledge of new techniques throughout one’s professional life – is all the more important considering the contemporary labour market in which workers are liable to change jobs several times. “**Know-how**” must continually follow “**innovation**”. For that, a synergy must be developed between “**education for the acquisition of knowledge**” and “**training for the acquisition of skills**”.

#### **The Debate**

**Moderator: Paul-Henri du Limbert**, deputy editor of *Figaro*.

**Bernard Falck**, Director of Education & Training - MEDEF (Mouvement des Entreprises France) **Henri Malosse**, President of the Employers’ Group at the EESC (European Economic Social Committee), and **Roger Serre**, executive director of Groupe IGS (Institut de Gestions Sociales)

The starting point for rapprochement between the business world and that of education is better **mutual understanding** by, for example, work experience in business for teachers.

- **Lifelong guidance:** not only academic counselling, but also vocational guidance in the context of mobility, change and professional transition. The education system functions on the basis of knowledge and diplomas, whilst business functions on the basis of skills and qualifications. 150,000 young people leave the education system each year with neither a diploma nor qualifications: it is therefore the responsibility of the education system to not only be concerned about teaching but also the transition from school-to-work.
- **Lifelong learning.** We must think of training institutes as certifiers of skills and as providers of human resources, and likewise, to train people around the notions of lifelong learning and integration in business.
- **Partnerships between the business and education worlds** via innovative initiatives – e.g. partner foundations or university foundations, co-production of guidance programmes or pedagogical material – partnerships which must be established for the long-term, throughout the academic and

university curricula, starting from primary school. Henri Malosse stressed the notion of partnership, not putting teaching at the service of business or vice-versa.

- Encourage **sectoral** approaches: develop a partnership between the fields of education and training (curriculum, qualifications and training references). Work-integrated learning and apprenticeships must be promoted at all levels in order to ensure a better transition between education and the business world.
- The problem of **financing studies** must be settled, perhaps by direct grants between businesses and young people (investment in skills). It was noted that the European Council, under the Czech Presidency, came out in favour of a process to include the education/business dimension in all levels of education. The elements of the European lifelong learning programme (Leonardo, Grundtvig, etc.) provide financial support for such initiatives.

The debate was then opened up to the audience and the discussion continued around the following themes:

- The importance of **competitiveness clusters and centres** to bring together the economic and education worlds around concrete projects.
- The delay of universities in carrying out entrepreneurial projects in comparison to schools.
- The necessity of developing the transversal aspects of education.
- The importance of promoting skills and the pedagogical dimension in business.
- The question of educating immigrants, particularly in view of the demographic trends in Europe.
- The responsiveness of certain professional unions to amend their training at all levels.
- The question of professional integration and innovation within SME's (Small to Medium Enterprises), which represent 95% of all businesses in France
- The necessity of making the professions more accessible.
- The professional fulfilment of young people in the framework of education.
- The emphasis on professional discovery at all levels.

**Patrick Hetzel**, DG for Higher Education and Professional Integration - France, then explained the mission received from the Minister of Higher Education and Research, Valérie Pécresse. He believed that the questions of information, guidance, and professional integration should be viewed in a continuum; that it is important to raise awareness among young people throughout their studies of the values of entrepreneurship, innovation and social and economic management. He acknowledged that it is crucial to entrust universities with the mission of guidance and professional integration of young people, but it is still necessary to improve the accessibility of training opportunities and to improve access to higher education.

He underlined that foundations can enable partnerships between business and education around common projects and shared finances. It is still necessary, however, to deepen partnerships around **innovation** and the **promotion of research**, e.g. to favour doctorates in apprenticeships and to liken "doctorates" to "consultants" in business.

**Jacques Barrot**, Vice-President of the European Commission, concluded the debate by re-stating the importance of teaching economics, which is very weak in France, but still crucial in helping to explain what business is and what it means to start one. It is therefore necessary to;

1. Intensify apprenticeships and work-integrated learning,
2. To increase the budget of the Leonardo programme,
3. To develop the European Institute of Technology and Innovation in Budapest,
4. To improve the profile of certain fields of study.

Jacques Barrot went on to say that he would support the creation of a European commission on workforce requirements across the piece in order to facilitate human investment, and that he would equally support the development of public-private partnerships that link public and private money and that it is necessary to orientate public research toward expanding market sectors.

**Guy Guermeur**, President of *Generation Europe France*, and **Catie Thorburn**, President of *Generation Europe Foundation*, thanked the Senate for hosting the event and the speakers for their participation.