

Evaluation of the Euroclassica questionnaire

The objective of the questionnaire was to have a more precise idea of the situation under which Classical languages and cultures are taught in Europe; it was distributed towards the end of 2019 to the members of the association. It was not easy to formulate because it would have been necessary to know in advance the situation in each country to be able to ask questions that everyone could answer easily. We are aware of the amount of work that many delegates have put in to find answers to questions that did not always fit with the education system of their country and we thank them very much.

Establishing an evaluation of the replies is therefore not easy either.

1. It should first be mentioned that the representatives of twenty countries completed the questionnaire, at least in part. These are, in alphabetical order: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (Wallonia), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.

2. It is very difficult to give the total number of secondary school pupils (11-18 years old) who are taught Classical languages and/or cultures: in thirteen countries (Austria, Belgium (Wallonia), Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece), these courses may be compulsory: for some in all schools; for others in a category of schools; for some with several hours per week for several years; for others with an hour or even less a week for a year.

The same countries generally have a system of options and the combination of the two is not always easy to establish. For the others (Belgium (Flanders), France, United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Malta (?), Norway and Spain), they are all optional courses. It is not always possible to interpret the data from elsewhere.

In any case, without counting the places where, as in Russia or Switzerland, all the pupils take some courses in ancient culture, and without taking account obviously of the impossibility in some cases of giving figures, even approximate, and finally without counting

either the data formulated as a percentage, as in Spain, the total number (very likely an underestimate) is more than two million pupils (2,016,372).

However, there is some doubt about the value of producing a result which is the sum of such different realities. It should be added that the situation also differs within a country, not only between regions, but between establishments themselves, even in centralized countries like France. In the next survey, we will also ask how many teachers of ancient languages and / or cultures there are, which will no doubt be more significant.

3. The more or less recent reforms of the education system are unfavourable to Classics or LCA (Languages and Cultures of Antiquity) in five Countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Luxembourg, Sweden), but rather favourable in eight others (Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Denmark, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Russia).

In four countries (Germany, United Kingdom, Norway, Switzerland), the effects of the reforms cannot be measured; in two others the results are mixed (France, Spain where the reform favours Latin but worsens the situation of Greek).

The reforms planned in four countries are very worrying (Austria and Belgium (Wallonia), Spain, where the situation of Greek is likely to be further threatened, and Romania) or difficult to assess as to their effect (France).

It seems that teachers and their associations seldom have the power to influence the direction of reforms most often driven by the desire to save money.

4. The official bodies, that is to say the governments, the directorates of education, the heads of establishments, are rather favourable, at least theoretically, to the teaching of Classics in eight countries: Belgium (Flanders), Cyprus, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Malta, Netherlands, Norway.

They are rather unfavourable in six countries: Belgium (Wallonia), Czech Republic, Greece, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, Sweden.

It is more difficult to measure the opinion of the authorities, which is not always constant, in five countries: Austria, Croatia, Germany, Russia, Switzerland.

In any case, the official authorities, even when they are rather favourable to the teaching of Classics do not necessarily give them a suitable place. They are more willing to

allocate resources which are often reduced anyway, to what is seen as "useful": science and technology or modern languages.

In addition, the authorities do not always reflect public opinion: in six countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Greece, Malta, Netherlands), it is rather favourable. In seven countries, Classics is frowned upon by the population who consider it useless (Cyprus, Croatia), elitist (Czech Republic, United Kingdom); they are even sometimes underappreciated (Romania, Sweden, Switzerland). In several countries opinion is divided, in particular in Belgium (Wallonia), Germany and Russia, and sometimes the differences are indicated by the level of education or age (Luxembourg, Norway, Spain).

5. In most countries, events and actions are organized to promote knowledge and study of Antiquity: "Nights", "Days", "Days", "Weeks", "Festivals", "Games", competitions, conferences ... These activities, which it would take too long to list, reflect the public's appetite for Antiquity and the enthusiasm of teachers' and other Classics associations.

The total number (16,637) of those who join associations affiliated to EUROCLASSICA is not very significant, because several representatives did not complete the section.

6. The number of universities where LCA is taught is significant, although not all of the data is easy to interpret: it comes to about 200.

The number of students cannot be determined and our questionnaire would probably have been better completed if we had asked to specify the number of teachers of Latin, Greek and civilization in universities.

In most countries, students of classical literature must study at least one other discipline at the same time, except in Cyprus, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

The number of years of study is four or five years. Recruitment is done in five countries (Cyprus, France, Romania, Russia, Spain) by national competitions or exams which do not always take place every year. But in the majority of cases, students are recruited at the end of their course by educational establishments with various procedures (interview, curriculum vitae, performance).

Training is generally provided either by educational authorities or by specialist associations.

7. The programmes of secondary education are most often decided by the responsible ministry which appoints a commission for this purpose. University programmes are determined by individual Classics departments, sometimes with the intervention of a supervising body.

Pupils and students, often "late beginners", have textbooks at all levels of the curriculum (there is even in the United Kingdom a Latin textbook for primary school). They are fairly numerous for Latin, but less so for Greek, except in Greek-speaking countries. They are written by teachers and published either by private publishers or by universities. Some teachers have their own method. All of them naturally use the works of ancient authors.

Traditional methods, based on learning grammar and translation, are still used in most countries, but they coexist with others, which sometimes replace them: interactive methods borrowed from the teaching of modern languages, reading authentic texts, joint teaching of Latin and Greek (ECLA), spoken Latin, immersion (Ørberg method), references to art, archaeology, history, use of games, theatre, etc. The analysis of the texts is also an opportunity to compare current ways of thinking with those of antiquity to develop the critical thinking of students.

Examinations validate the subjects studied in twelve countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain, Switzerland). The standard of achievement, when mentioned, is high, especially in Russia.

At the end of this review, one can only note the diversity and richness of the teaching of Classical subjects. No doubt our disciplines are often subject to criticism, but the energy of those who promote them does not seem to weaken and the continuing presence of our association shows this. It would also be good if this overview of the results encourages everyone to consult the questionnaires themselves to better understand the countries of those who completed them. Through the testimonies of EUROCLASSICA delegates, it is sometimes not only the forms and educational methods that appear, but the very history of these countries.