

Brussels, 10 June 2005

Florence : 3 countries join the European University Institute

Jàn Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, visited the European University Institute in Florence on 8 and 9 June. During a meeting of the EUI High Council, composed of delegations drawn from all governments of those EU Member States which are also members of the EUI, a unanimous vote approved the accession to the EUI of three new EU Member States, Cyprus, Slovenia, and the Slovakia.

Commissioner Figel' addressed the meeting, outlining the long-term aims for higher education and research that the Commission intends to pursue. "Centers of learning like the EUI are important for the future of higher education in Europe, said the commissioner, because they give depth and perspective to the issues that stir the European debate".

The approach outlined by the commissioner was given the unanimous support of the meeting. In particular, the commissioner emphasised the role which could be played by an institution of the reputation and prestige of the EUI in the promotion and stimulation of debate about the European Constitution. The outcome of some referenda must not halt the process of integration but rather must offer an occasion for developing a greater understanding not only of cultural issues but also the wider political view.

Commissioner Figel' recalled the Commission's support to the EUI's new Post-Doctoral Programme (which will be limited at first to the Social Sciences), aimed at strongly encouraging young postdoctoral scholars to look in the direction of the European education area, thus offering attractive and plausible alternatives to the 'brain drain'.

The Commissioner also underlined the importance accorded by the Commission to the Historical Archives of the Community Institutions, which are housed in Florence at the European University Institute. He expressed his thanks to the Italian Government for its current efforts to provide a new Seat for the Historical Archives, which it is greatly hoped can be achieved in the very near future.

Background :

The European University Institute (EUI) was founded as an intergovernmental institution by the then Member States in 1974 and started its activities in Florence in 1976. According to its statutes, the EUI has the objective to contribute by means of post-graduate education and research activities to the development of Europe's cultural and scientific heritage. Also part of its mission is the evolution of Europe and its institutions and the relation with extra-European civilisations.