

History of the Waldorf Movement in France

The Waldorf schools in France celebrated their 60th birthday last year in Strasbourg which was the first school to open in the aftermath of war and turmoil. A few years later came the Parisian school from where part of the staff moved on to found another school in the western suburbs and so on till the present time, where the Waldorf movement counts about 20 schools in all.

Five of the schools go up to the end (or almost) whereas half of the others are kindergardens only, and the remainder primary only or up to class 9 or so for a total enrolment of ca.2500 students.

All of the schools are so-called “private” schools, which means the majority has little or no public financing. In most cases it is impossible for the smaller schools to meet the conditions set by the state, such as a minimum of 25 students to a class, teachers with university accredited qualifications etc. In recent years, the conditions have been extended to the contents of the curriculum and have sometimes risked jeopardizing the Waldorf program. So the future is very much of a challenge which has to be met diversely according to particular situations. Naturally, average tuition is very often an obstacle for many potential families and the dilemma lies in the choice of complying with requirements, being partially financed and losing partial freedom....or....no financing and preserving pedagogical control.

The association of Waldorf parents and friends , APAPS, which was founded in 2000, after an outbreak of sectarian accusations by a government appointed commission, is determined to promote pedagogical pluralism in both official instances as well as within civilian society. It is definitely a very tedious and long term objective in a particularly centralized country such as France. At the present time, our association has about 600 active members comprised of parents, friends and alumni nation-wide.. Membership is individual and fees start at €15 (20€from 2008).Unfortunately, despite all our efforts, many parents across the country are still unaware of our existence and sometimes confuse us with the federation of Waldorf schools, which is the official association of member Waldorf schools.

The potential creation of an international association of Waldorf parents and friends, other than the establishment of friendship links and cooperation,, could definitely be an asset for the protection of pedagogical freedom and justified obtaining of state funds to provide quality education, which corresponds to the basic right of every child.

“Attempted” by Mariam Francq