Civil Society Day Consultation Outcomes

European Education, Training and Youth Forum 2016

**An event co-organised
by the Lifelong Learning Platform and the European Commission-DG EAC**
19 October 2016 / SQUARE, Rue Mont des Arts, Brussels

The Civil Society Day, co-organised by the European Commission Directorate General for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports and the Lifelong Learning Platform, was held on 19 October in Brussels.

This year's focus was on "**Inclusive education,**" a concept that reveals the **transformative effect of education** on society as a whole. However, this effect requires **mainstreaming the concept through all areas of education,** involving the many **educational actors** - representing formal, non-formal and informal sectors - **in a dialogue with the institutions** to develop effective educational policies.

Participants reflected on the meaning of inclusiveness in education through the prism of **learning objectives, content and methods**; **learning environments** and their link with the non- formal sector; **the role of educators and school leaders**; and finally, seeking the optimal **governance** system to ensure a comprehensive approach.

The consultation delivers key messages detailed below with concrete suggestions.

1. Learning objectives, content and methods

KEY MESSAGES

⇨ **Learning should enable individuals to live together in a society peacefully and it should teach them empathy and solidarity**
- Learning should provide students with a capacity for rhetoric and argumentation rooted in **critical thinking**
- Learning should be transversal to school life/educational setting/learning environment
- Learning should foster **interest in decision making processes** by making students **active participants** in their society (classroom, school, local community or State)
- To promote active engagement, learning should promote **volunteering** in local communities**, engagement** with civil society NGOs
- To help students **develop resilience**

⇨ **Citizenship education should be value-based (human rights and civil rights approach), provide learners with capacity for rhetoric and argumentation which is rooted in critical   thinking**
- Learning content should be **value-based**: fundamental rights, inclusiveness, proactivity, responsibility
- Learning should teach students **media literacy** and the ability to select and process information, which would contribute to developing digital skills and understanding of e-environments

⇨ **Education should be learner-centred, participatory and reflective of local realities. Education should also be a "learning by doing" experience**
- **Learning by doing / Project work**: to practice skills, team-work and empathy, discipline, develop an enterpreneurial spirit
- **Intergenerational learning**: young people mentoring the elderly on ICT for example
- **Cross-cultural learning**: involving students in teaching languages to migrant pupils for example
- **Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity**
- **Cross-sectoral Partnerships**: bewtween non-formal and informal learning (inviting NGO to school, involving parents, families, local authorities…)
- **Participation in school governance** (debating and setting the rules…)

2. Role of educators and school leaders

KEY MESSAGES

⇨ **Create space and give time to exchange ideas and innovate from bottom-up**
- Create **accessible physical and virtual platforms and spaces** to exchange practices,   share projects and grassroot activities
- Develop the notion of **Open Schools**
- Encourage **looking for good practices rather than applying established best practices** to take into account and adapt to local and national realities and education systems

⇨ **Develop cross-sectoral partnerships to innovate, diversify and implement teaching and learning methods**
- Cooperate with **non-formal sector**
- **Teacher training**: give access to **intercultural** trainings, to **mobility** for all teachers, and **measure the impact** of these trainings (Initial teacher training, continuing education, peer learning, mobility)

⇨ **Be role models in and out of educational spaces**
- Learn to **listen**, to notice, to **observe empathy**, to **mediate conflicts**
- Encourage cooperation between teachers, working in teams, working in projects

⇨ **Encourage and facilitate democratic and inclusive practices in educational spaces**
- **Democratic sharing of decision power with the students**
- **Test best practices** in own schools
-   **Implement Competence Framework for Democratic Culture** model developed by the Council of Europe used to understand the competences to develop citizenship
- **Include parents and families** in the discussion (informal share of learning)

3. Learning environments and their link with the non-formal sector

KEY MESSAGES

⇨ **Recognition of the importance of trans-sectoral partnerships for citizenship and inclusive education (formal, non-formal, informal) and associated actors**

- **Recognition of the non-formal sector and a holistic approach to education** and the inclusive and creative approach they have to education
- **Recognition of skills and competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning.** Activities considered extra-curricular, they need to be considered as part of a holistic educational approach. This recognition and higher awareness of skills gained is important for empowering individuals, but also for employers.
- Setting up mechanisms for **validation of non-formal and informal learning** to foster flexible learning pathways and broaden access to learning, give equal value to non-formal learning

⇨ **Structures themselves need to reflect the diversity of the communities they are in (i.e. methods to combat segregation need to be put into place)**

- **Teachers, staff and school leaders should reflect the diversity of the student body.** Diversifying educational staff can have strong benefits, in particular for migrant students, but also in fostering inclusive learning communities.
- **Safe Learning Spaces** for learners to experiment and fail, while involving learners in the community to practice.

⇨ **Community involvement promotes learning by doing, feeling of ownership and belonging to the community**

- **Inclusive and learner-centred learning methods: b**ringing the best of peer-to-peer learning and other NFE methods to formal settings. Methods to promote global citizenship and solidarity, in terms of attitudes, values and knowledge. Democratic practices (for example student councils) need to be more than symbolic.

4. Governance, funding and structural issues

The group believes that there is need for a **strong political will** to achieve inclusive educational systems.

KEY MESSAGES

⇨ **All institutions and stakeholders at all levels need a common long-term, comprehensive and sustainable strategy for inclusive education**

- Underlying **principle: Inclusion is excellence**
- Education should be founded on the **principle of cooperation** and not competition
- Elaborate a common definition of what inclusive education is, in order to get all institutions and stakeholders at all levels to get on board

⇨ **Inclusive education is a priority and needs clearly accountable leaders in charge**

- A coordinated governance should include a rethinking and possibly a **redefinition of the role of all implicated institutions**
- Enable/support governments to use/implement **cutting-edge solutions** to compensate for market forces.

⇨ **Coordinating governance: structured dialogue and capacity building mechanisms (with appropriate funding) to bridge government, at EU and national levels, civil society and other stakeholders**

- Only a **coordinating governance** will be able to implement this long-term strategy.
- This means organising tools for governments to **consult civil society organisations**, thus giving access to grassroots, channeling down European policies to local level. Ask Member States to introduce **(digital) tools to broadly consult** civil society organisations and citizens.