



Plateforme européenne de la société civile pour l'éducation tout au long de la vie
European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL)

EUCIS-LLL Press Release – Drawing lessons from the elections for the future of Europe

Brussels, 28 May 2014 /// EUCIS-LLL takes stock of the European elections and calls on new Members of the European Parliament to draw lessons of the ballot outcomes by delivering better for economic development, social and civic participation and well-being. Inclusive growth is definitely the forgotten pillar of the Europe 2020 strategy and consequently of EU action in education and training. Austerity measures have hit hard our welfare systems and increased inequalities within and between EU countries. EUCIS-LLL believes Europe should make a sustainable investment in public goods such as education, training and research. We also need a genuine debate about the European political project with everyone on board – the elections were a missed opportunity in that respect.

In the aftermath of the elections, Europe wakes up with the unpleasant feeling that its citizens have jumped off the boat. Very high level of abstention (up to 87% in some Member States) and rise of extreme-right wing parties are the two observations that can be made from which many lessons can be learned. For that matter, EUCIS-LLL believes Europe should make a **sustainable investment in public goods** such as education, training and research **for economic development, social and civic participation and well-being**. Only by delivering better on all these aspects will Europe prevent so many citizens to turn their back from our ideal of integration and solidarity.

One cannot really say it came as a surprise: **severe austerity measures** apparently coming from illegitimate technocrats, European growth obsession leaving ideals of social justice behind, populations in distress with desolating levels of basic skills and youth unemployment, increasing regional disparities and welfare state disengagement (16 Member States decreased their level of expenditure in education between 2008 and 2011) were as many red flags of the success of extremist political ideas during those elections. EUCIS-LLL firmly believes that we should **refocus transnational cooperation on equity and social cohesion**. Let us re-engage to deliver the vision of a social Europe with high levels of quality education in respect of Article 9 of the Treaty.

All EU political parties presenting a candidate to the European elections committed to invest in quality and accessible education and many candidates have supported the 12 principles of EUCIS-LLL Manifesto "[Building together the future of learning](#)". It is **time for newly elected decision-makers to sustain this commitment and put lifelong learning in the front stage**. European cooperation in education and training is indubitably one of the best levers to fight intolerance, fear of the other and identitarian closure and nationalism, for instance thanks to great community programmes such as Erasmus+. Concretely, it means that the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET2020) should take into account the message sent by voters (and non-voters). **Inclusive growth is definitely the forgotten pillar of the Europe 2020 strategy** and consequently and consequently of EU action in education and training. Efficient, innovative but also affordable, inclusive and flexible learning pathways should become the top priority.

Besides, taking stock of EU cooperation frameworks should not be made from an ivory tower. Electoral abstaining is the symptom of disillusioned European citizens that no longer believe in the power of ballot boxes or even sometimes in the European ideal of our founding fathers. Let us not lose another parliamentary term and look in despair at the 2019 elections turnout rates. European democracy does not need another cheap European Year of Citizens; **it needs a genuine debate on the European political project with everyone on board**. **Citizenship education** is a key for people to get ownership of what happens in Brussels, and it is not only the responsibility of decision-makers

but also of the media. Civil society organisations have also a crucial role to play in that sense: let us not forget **participative democracy**, at least, is still vividly contributing to a social Europe and the best ally of the new European Parliament. Putting back on the table the **European Statute of European Association** would give a positive signal to millions of citizens who are engaged to promote dialogue, cooperation and understanding across Europe.

See [EUCIS-LLL Manifesto](#) supported by more than 30 former MEPs or candidate MEPs during the campaign.

Notes to the editors: The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) gathers 31 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers. www.eucis-lll.eu

Contact: Audrey Frith, EUCIS-LLL Policy Officer, +32 2 234 61 92, alexia.samuel@eucis-lll.eu