



**EDUCATION TO FOSTER
INTERCULTURAL
UNDERSTANDING AND
SOLIDARITY IN EUROPE**

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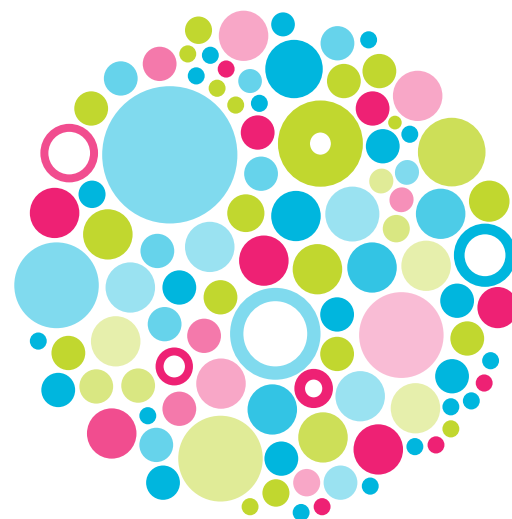
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EDUCATION TO FOSTER INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND SOLIDARITY IN EUROPE

The diversity in contemporary European societies is increasingly **seen as unparalleled and ever-changing**, linked to the **increasing interaction and interdependence** of citizens, institutions and markets worldwide, and of their respective values, attitudes and ideas. In the course of the last months, a series of worrying phenomena in Europe took place that clearly indicates that Europe is facing **serious challenges** in managing diversity. **Anti-immigrant rhetoric, attacks on refugees, border fences and hesitation to aid people fleeing war-torn zones** as a response to the recent influx of refugees clearly demonstrate the limits to how solidary and inclusive our societies are. The recent barbarous attacks in European cities only gave a further push to the rise of **racism, xenophobia, islamophobia** and other forms of fear and hate across the continent, visible in the **rise of radical right parties** across Europe.

Only an **equitable society of engaged citizens** can be resilient to such threats. Facilitating active citizenship and civic engagement, is not only a regulatory and a legal task

- **it is equally an educational task.** The **transformative power of education** has a major role to play in building inclusive learning societies and in fostering civic participation¹, as it is a preferred vehicle for **creating awareness, knowledge and understanding of (European) fundamental values.** Our education systems **need to be a part of the solution**, not a part of the problem. Making them more **inclusive and democratic** has to be the central goal in this regard, since only



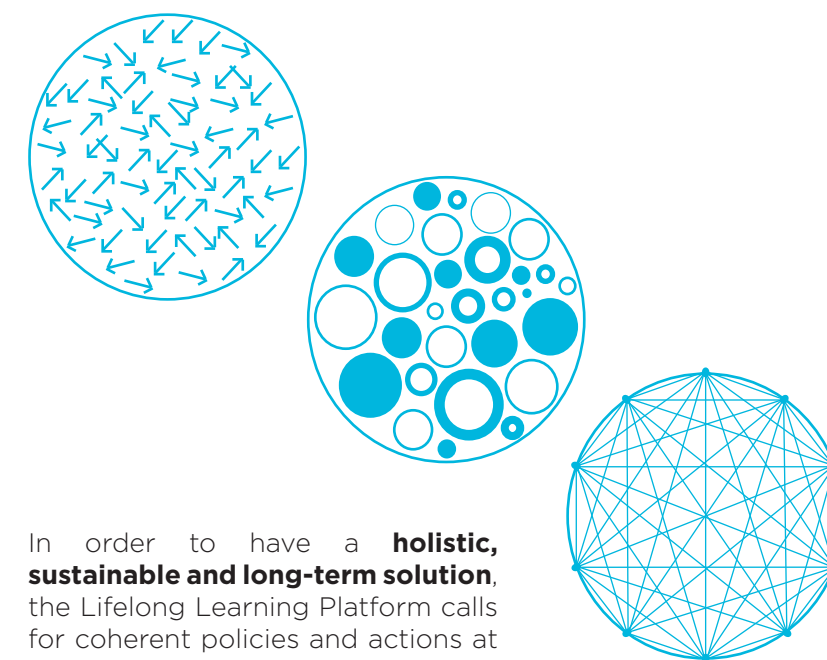
individuals who feel they are accepted by their surroundings can also be accepting towards others.

1. Many studies demonstrate that learning is the main driver in fostering civic participation. The International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement highlights the interrelationship between civic knowledge and active participation. The more you know about how democratic society functions the more likely you are to participate.

The increasing diversity in our societies is **not well reflected in our education systems.** *De facto*, segregation of migrant children in urban schools - usually in disadvantaged city quarters - exists in many European countries². The segregation is only a part of **large-scale social inequalities** which are pushing an increasing number of (young) people to the margins of society and making them more likely to join radical and violent groups. Therefore, it is worth to note that tackling inequalities in education should be a part of the **comprehensive fight for social justice**, in order to **make universal values alive** particularly among **young people.** This entails both investing in quality integration policies and strengthening participation in the society.

Making **education for citizenship** a genuine priority in the European Commission "Education and Training 2020" work programme for the upcoming cycle is to be welcomed. Citizenship education enables an individual to act as an active and responsible citizen respectful of others and is indeed fundamental to a free, tolerant, fair and inclusive society, to social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and solidarity, as well as equality between women and men. However, this is just the first step.

2. European Commission, NESSE, "Education and the Integration of Migrant Children", Brussels, 2008, p.89.



In order to have a **holistic, sustainable and long-term solution**, the Lifelong Learning Platform calls for coherent policies and actions at three levels:

1. Active educational settings
2. Inclusive educational institutions
3. Collaborative wider communities



ACTIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
COLLABORATIVE WIDER COMMUNITIES

Learning to become an active citizen is about knowledge - history, intercultural learning, media... - and attitudes, which requires the use of methodologies that involve learners actively in their own learning.

In order to raise engagement levels in all forms of educational settings, we have to look both at the curriculum and at pedagogy. How is citizenship education covered in the curriculum? Learning to become an active citizen is about knowledge and attitudes, which requires the use of methodologies that involve learners actively in their own learning. For example, **experiential learning, project-based learning and learning by doing** based on everyday life are effective ways of increasing the appetite for learning and the acquisition of transversal skills such as team work. They should be encouraged at all levels and in all sectors of education.

Curriculum should thus be **competence-based**, aiming to equip learners with **democratic attitudes and social, civic and intercultural competences**, as key competences for lifelong learning and representing an essential gear which any citizen should have in today's complex and fast-changing world. We need to build learners' capacity to **think critically and creatively**, to explore **new ways of acting** and **making informed and adequate decisions**. It is important **to apply those active methods and goals as early as possible**, because research shows that children form their political views already at the age of 12-13¹. It involves reflecting on how people interrelate with each other, understanding cultural differences and creating alternative ways to live together. **Media literacy** is very important in this regard, and should be further developed and integrated in educational settings.

Social cohesion, equality, non-discrimination and civic competences can be boosted through following:

- Citizenship education
- Intercultural learning and dialogue
- History education
- Learning Europe at school

Citizenship education

Citizenship education in Europe **urgently needs a renewal**, in order to contribute to ending the increasing democratic fatigue and the rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies. We need to ensure access to **quality citizenship education for all** in both formal and non-formal educational settings, consisting of both a **core of constitutional values and fundamental rights** and an **open debate about controversial issues**. This entails understanding citizenship education as a social responsibility and a means to show people how to become informed about their rights and responsibilities and help them realise that they can indeed make a difference. **Human rights and democracy** are central in a value-based definition of citizenship education.

1. David Kerr, director of Education Citizenship Foundation, University of Bristol, keynote speech "Active Citizenship Harnessing the Potential - Why, what and how", eTwinning Conference, 23 October 2015

2. According to the Council of Europe [Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#), "Education for democratic citizenship" means education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law.

Intercultural learning and dialogue

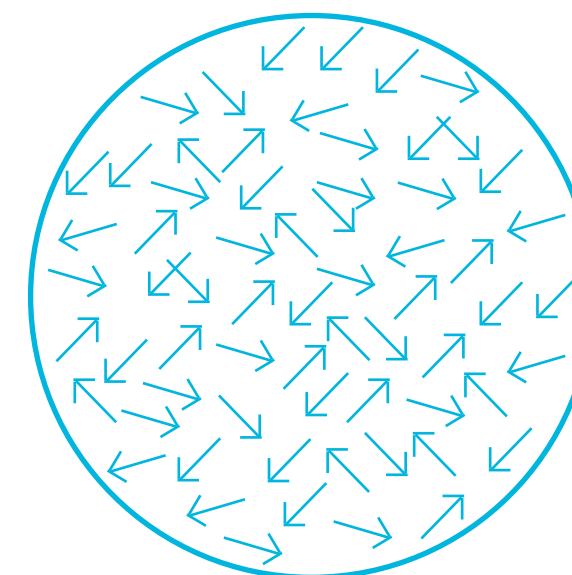
Intercultural learning and dialogue help prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides. Allowing space in the curricula to **deal with our differences constructively and democratically** on the basis of shared values is essential in more and more diverse societies. Such dialogue can also be fostered through initiatives that celebrate diversity and support **participation of particularly marginalised members of society and minorities**, further strengthening social cohesion (e.g. "Diversity Day" in schools). Intercultural learning and dialogue are a strong tool to move from the culture of peaceful coexistence between separate communities towards an open inclusive society **free from stereotypes and discrimination**. The curricula should allow educators to allocate time to assist learners in developing intercultural competences, for which they should be adequately prepared for via initial and continuing professional development. The **use of culture and arts** can also be a valuable tool to tackle social challenges and tackle controversial issues (e.g. theatre play).

History education

Understanding Europe's past helps to foster **a sense of belonging**, creates awareness on the shared values upon which Europe was built and **strengthens the political identity** of people as citizens of the EU. That is precisely why we need to change the way we teach history. History education should not be simply about knowing the past. It should aim at exploring and understanding different perspectives on the past (**multiperspectivity**), as well as making links between lessons from the past and current trends. By doing that, it has the potential to develop learners' ability to analyse and understand **information critically through dialogue**, in search for historical evidence and in an open and safe debate on controversial issues.

Learning Europe at school

EU citizenship that is only defined and promoted "from above" **cannot be enough to allow the transformation of a legal status into a democratic activity**. According to the study *"Learning Europe at School"*³, every student has heard something about the European Union in school. However, this knowledge is mainly limited to facts about geography, history, economics, etc. More than twenty years after the Treaty of Maastricht and the introduction of European citizenship, the 2015 Eurobarometer on European citizenship⁴ shows that one third of Europeans still do not feel as European citizens and up to **70 per cent would like to know more about their rights** as European citizens. A decreasing sense of belonging to the EU is therefore not surprising - a genuine democratic society cannot be built if citizens are unaware of **the impact the EU has on their daily life and do not know how to engage in democratic processes. democratic processes.**



3. Allison Dunne, Daniela Ulicna, Stéphanie Oberheidt, "Learning Europe at School", Final Report - DG EAC, ICF GHK, 2013, p. 86.

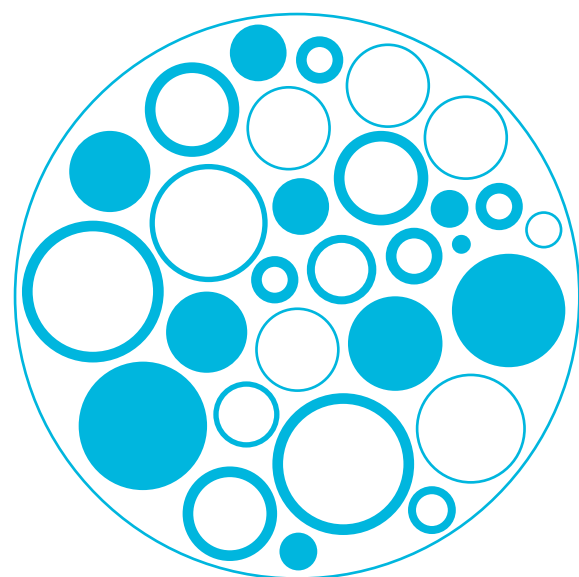
4. European Commission, "European Citizenship report", Standard Eurobarometer 83, Brussels, 2015, p. 91.

ACTIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

COLLABORATIVE WIDER COMMUNITIES

Inclusive educational institutions that address the issues of “learning to live together” and cultural diversity need to function in light of what they promote: they should carry within themselves democratic procedures, continuous learning opportunities... all keys to face the challenges we meet outside school.



An inclusive educational institution addresses the aspects of “**learning to live together**” and **cultural diversity** in all teaching activities, because pluralism cannot function as an autopilot, it is an intentional commitment imprinted by action. That is why we need to **change the school and its leadership culture**. Adopting a learner-centred approach at organisational level plays a central role in making our educational institutions more inclusive. In that regard, educational institutions should be **committed to non-violence and fighting discrimination and bullying**, as well as **avoiding stereotyping**. This shall be reflected in the policies of the educational institutions and in its overall strategy. Children have to be **equal partners** in the learning process and it is important to address the **emotional aspects** of pedagogy and learner **well-being**. Participatory and inclusive educational settings have to rely more and more on **teamwork, collaborative learning and peer learning**. Teachers and educators should also be counselled and trained to deal with radical ideas and behaviours. Educational institutions should also work with non-formal education providers and social actors; especially when confronted with learners that are at risk of dropping out. Last but not least, it is crucial to implement the UN principles affirming the rights of national minorities¹ to learn and/or have **instruction in their mother tongue** or heritage language by providing proper training and support to learners and their families and to educators.

We need a strong focus on:

- Democratic governance
- Supporting educators
- Prevention of radicalisation

Democratic governance

Citizenship has to be both learned and lived. Inclusive democratic governance and participation in educational settings is **key to empower individuals and create a sense of ownership**. We have to make educational institutions democratic settings themselves where learners and educational staff can engage in the democratic life of the institution. The Eurydice report “Citizenship Education in Europe”² highlights the fact that “all countries have introduced some form of regulation to promote student participation in school governance”. However, it often comes after the transfer of knowledge and skills (ICCS study). Non-formal and informal education sector can aid the process of democratic school development. By giving voice to learners, we can contribute to giving meaning to our shared values.

Supporting educators

Professional and non-professional educators³ such as parents play an essential role in preparing future generations for dialogue and through their commitment they serve as important role models. One can never stress enough the need to support professional and non-professional educators’ lifelong learning. Concerning professionals, a competence-based initial and continuous training should encompass **working methods to prepare them to manage diversity, discrimination, racism, xenophobia and sexism, and to resolve conflicts peacefully**. They need further support with teaching and assessing soft skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking. We need programmes to increase their capacity to use interactive methodologies to engage learners and at the same time to offer them a safe space to share their thoughts. Furthermore, **peer learning between educators themselves** and with other actors in relevant fields should be supported. That is how we can strengthen their capacity to help learners to develop democratic values, inquisitive mindsets, tolerance and open-minded attitudes needed in 21st century.

Prevention of radicalisation

Educators have to be in **capacity to deal with difficult issues** such as attacks in Paris and Copenhagen that are related to **feelings, principles and beliefs**. Educators should also be supported if they are faced with extremist ideas or behaviours. Some countries have for instance implemented **hotlines** for teachers who can request help when faced with such cases. Educational institutions have to **work hand in hand with specialised actors** to find the adequate responses (psychologists, experts, police offices, social services, NGOs, etc). Putting in place independent **coordinated networks of services** is necessary. The Platform supports in that respect the proposals made in the Manifesto for Education – Empowering Educators and Schools (“*Ran Prevent*”⁴).

1. UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992, Article 4) and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) Article 30.

2. EACEA, Eurydice, “Citizenship Education in Europe”, Brussels, 2012, p.142.

3. Educators hereby include educational staff in formal, non-formal and informal learning including teachers, adult educators, parents, youth workers, etc.

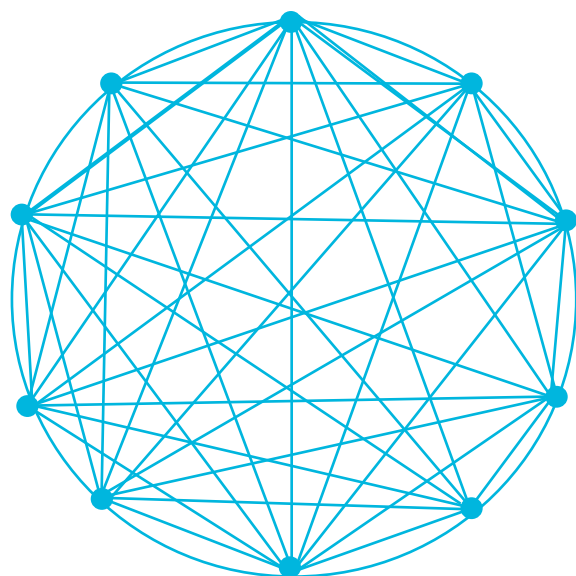
4. Radicalisation Awareness Network, “Manifesto for Education – Empowering Educators and Schools”, Ran Prevent, p.5.

ACTIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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Building active and participatory communities cannot be solely based on knowledge. Not only should it take into account the strong added-value of experience, whether it is lived inside or outside schools, such as through volunteering.



Informal and non-formal learning, particularly in youth work and all forms of civic engagement such as voluntary and civic services, play a prominent role in **building active and participatory communities and restoring solidarity**. However, in only one third of EU Member States steering documents, such as national curricula and other regulations, encourage student participation in local communities. Providers of citizenship education in non-formal settings are often not supported and recognised for their work, since only a handful of European countries understand education for citizenship as integral part of youth work. **Youth and sport organisations, popular education, community centres and citizenship learning centres** are more flexible and open to the needs of learners, especially of the marginalised and disadvantaged. Therefore, **synergies between formal and non-formal education** are of paramount importance. Last but not least, we need to ensure that everyone is provided the right, means, space and opportunity to participate and engage in activities in their communities and that their **access to lifelong learning is guaranteed**, as acquiring social and civic competences needs to remain equally relevant in adulthood. To strengthen it further, action must focus on **building up skills and confidence** through community development, training and advocacy schemes.

Other important generators of social cohesion are:

- Volunteering
- Learning mobility
- Family learning

Volunteering

Volunteering is one of the main drivers to developing “citizenship skills” and empowering learners. Furthermore, **opportunities for out-of-school activities**, such as work with the local community, exist in most European countries, but they **remain too limited**. The 2012 Eurydice report¹ rightly called for a renewed effort to develop and support country-wide **programmes and projects encouraging participation in society**. Another challenge is that volunteers are seldom recognised for their engagement in the community, at national and European level. It is necessary to make further progress towards a **better recognition and validation of the learning outcomes** they get from it².

Learning mobility

Learning and teaching mobility also plays a crucial role in developing social, civic and intercultural competences and promoting a sense of belonging. Taking part in a mobility period has a wide range of positive aspects. According to the Erasmus Voting Assessment, students that took part in an exchange are **twice as likely to take part in democratic processes** such elections³. Additionally, twenty-one percent of EU citizens think that student exchange programmes are **the most positive achievement of the EU**⁴. EU mobility schemes are therefore strongly associated with the benefits of EU citizenship in people’s minds. **Proper investment** has to be made by Member States in support to Erasmus+ so that learning mobility **becomes the rule instead of an exception**. We need to ensure inclusive learning mobility schemes and that access to mobility programmes is possible for all **regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds**. Moreover, we need to ensure the increasing quality of mobility programmes, starting from credit recognition to full integration of exchange students in hosting countries.

Family Learning

Parents as important role models should be fully involved in the democratisation of our classrooms, schools and communities. It is well-known that students whose parents actively engage in the school community and participate in school management, develop strong competences with respect to interacting to their peers, teachers and their community. Moreover, studies show that **parent involvement has positive effects on learning outcomes**⁵. Adult and family education programmes addressing the issue of cultural diversity can assist the family in fulfilling this role. Finally, **intergenerational learning** involving grandparents and the younger family members exchanging knowledge, competences and skills also has a strong educational impact on the community.

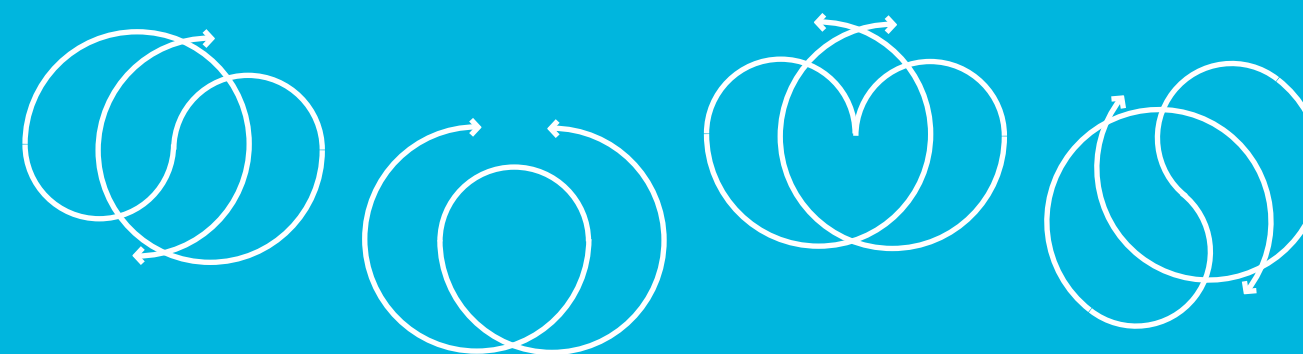
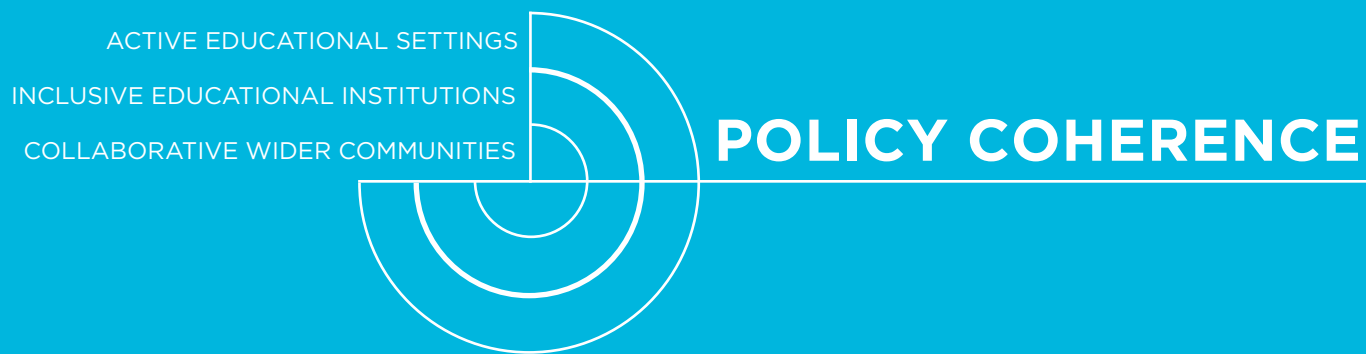
1. EACEA, Eurydice, “Citizenship Education in Europe”, op. cit.

2. Lifelong Learning Platform, “Survey results on the Recognition of volunteers’ competences by employers”, GR-EAT project, 2015, p. 11.

3. Generation Europe Foundation, “Erasmus Voting Assessment Project, Final Report”, Brussels, 2014, p. 52.

4. European Commission, “European Citizenship report”, Standard Eurobarometer 77, Brussels, 2012, p. 50.

5. Sam Redding, Janis Langdon, Joseph Meyer, Pamela Sheley, “The Effects of Comprehensive Parent Engagement on Student Learning Outcomes”, Academic Development Institute, Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, p. 7.



Succeeding in our endeavours to build inclusive communities starting with our educational settings, democratically involving all parties, require coherence in our policies, linking one to another thanks to established partnerships based on civil dialogue.



All EU Member States (and many others) have adopted and committed to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. Now it is **high time to put words into action** and ensure **proper investment** for a sustainable solution. It is about policy coherence and effectiveness.

There is a wide range of educational initiatives and we need to put the tools and instruments we have together, because policy seems to be replicating and going into different directions. It is also about mainstreaming and upscaling initiatives that have shown positive results at local, national and European level while at the same time assessing current policies and instruments in order to address possible gaps.

Engagement across multiple sectors, actors and levels is required to have a long-lasting impact and to find innovative solutions. This double process should take place at all levels. The EU needs to affirm clearly its shared values and commitment to democracy, peace and intercultural understanding and support this process.

The policy coherence to turn ideas into action rests on:

- A new narrative for Europe
- Partnerships
- Civil dialogue

A new narrative for Europe

The Platform stresses the need for the European Commission Directorate for Education and Culture to take legislative action following the Paris Declaration. We call for a broad initiative that would come with an action plan with concrete measures to implement the new priorities of the ET2020 related to its social and civic dimension, in line with the Paris Declaration. It is important not to narrow down such initiative to the prevention of radicalisation. Although Member States ought to exchange their practices on the former, we have to be **careful about the narrative that is used** in order to avoid any further stigmatisation of certain groups. We thus call for an **EU-wide campaign on the “Role of Education in promoting an Inclusive and Democratic society”**, supported by the Erasmus+ programme. Sending a positive message to tackle “living together” in diverse and complex societies, it would ensure policy coherence between various initiatives and provide a policy push for Member States to act on the important issues raised in this paper. Erasmus+ Policy **Support actions (Key Activity 3) should be strengthened** to support the process.

Policy coherence and partnerships

Policy coherence between different International and EU institutions and within the Institutions, between Directorate-Generals and Units is essential. Within the European Commission, synergies should be made particularly (but not exclusively) between **DG EAC, DG HOME, DG JUST and DG EMPL**, in a cross-sectoral and lifelong approach. The same applies at national, regional, and local levels. Concrete mechanisms of coordination should be established to follow up the implementation of the Paris Declaration. Cooperation **between the national and the EU level** is important, as well as **between Member States**. In this regard, a working group between Member States for the exchange of good practices is an important step (OMC Thematic Working Group) - best practices and projects should be **mainstreamed and replicated** in other countries. Civil Society organisations should be involved throughout the process.

Civil dialogue

A genuine civil dialogue should be implemented to make sure EU policies are better **aligned with citizens’ needs**. Consistent and meaningful involvement of citizens in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies should be promoted. In order to do so, **partnerships with civil society** are needed. Civil society has an important role in this regard, but it needs **sustainable, secured funding** to carry out its tasks. This process will help the EU to get closer to its citizens, a clear ambition of M. Juncker, with concrete and sustainable dialogue mechanisms.



ABOUT THE LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

The Lifelong Learning Platform (previously EUCIS-LLL) was born in 2005 as a response from civil society organisations to the definition and implementation of a European policy in the field of education and training in the so-called “Open Method of Coordination”.

In 2001 already, several educational networks had come together to share their experience and expertise around a Europe-wide consultation on the EU “Lifelong Learning Memorandum”. This cooperation became systematic when the Platform was established as a permanent organisation in 2005. For 10 years now, the Lifelong Learning Platform has played a key role in structuring and increasing the input of civil society on the “Education and Training 2020” and “Europe 2020” strategies and their predecessors.

The Lifelong Learning Platform was acknowledged by the European Commission in 2009 as a “unique representation” of lifelong learning of the various education and training actors organised at EU level, and in 2011 as “in a unique position to support European networks in education and training to work collectively at European, national and local levels and to contribute to a structured policy dialogue within the open method of coordination in education and training”.

Gathering 39 organisations, the Lifelong Learning Platform is today the most legitimate interlocutor of the EU institutions in the field of lifelong learning. It continuously defends the need to implement a dialogue across educational sectors and between stakeholders and public institutions at all levels, regional, national and European.

Values

The platform fosters a vision of lifelong learning that promotes equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. It believes that the objectives of education and training should not only be described in terms of employability or economic growth but also as a framework for personal development. It is essential to raise awareness on the fact that lifelong learning should include a large range of learning settings and create more complementarity and continuity between formal, non-formal and informal learning.

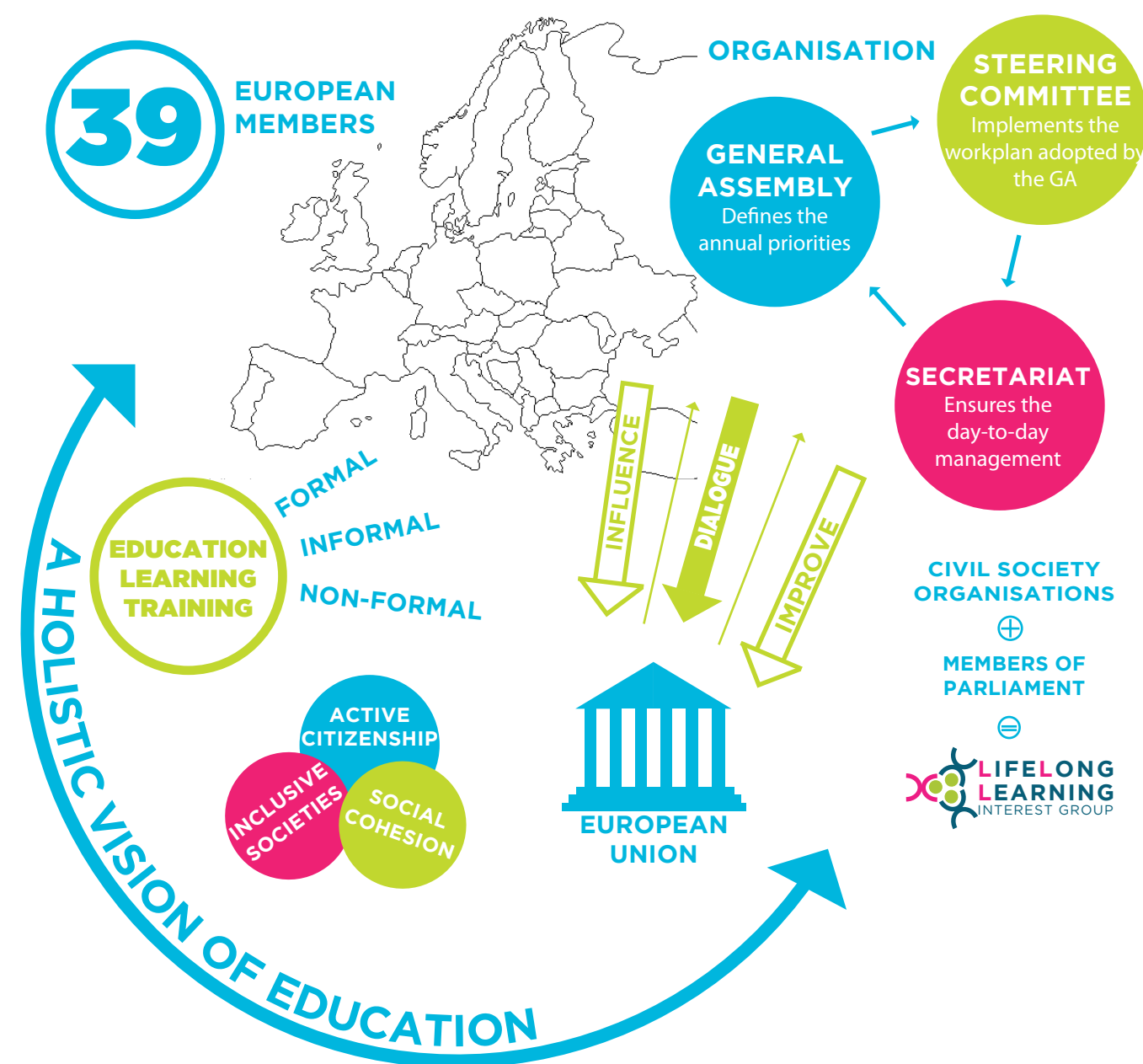
Vision

The Lifelong Learning Platform promotes a holistic vision of lifelong learning, from cradle to grave, that is not limited to formal education but integrates non-formal and informal learning. By bringing together actors from all sectors and levels of education and training, The platform contributes to an increased flexibility between systems. By encouraging an exchange of knowledge, it aims to build a citizen’s voice on education and training issues but also to propose concrete solutions to make lifelong learning a reality for all.

Objectives

- Pursuing an active dialogue with European institutions
- Enabling exchanges of best practice, experiences and expertise
- Disseminating information on key issues in the lifelong learning sector

Building the future of education!





**LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM
10 RUE DE L'INDUSTRIE
1000 BRUSSELS - BELGIUM**

INFO@EUCIS-LLL.EU

WWW.EUCIS-LLL.EU