

2015 LIFE
LONG
LEARNING
WEEK
report

GUIDANCE AND
COUNSELLING TO TAKE
VALIDATION TO THE
NEXT LEVEL

30.11 - 04.12. 2015

LLLWeek 2015

Investing in Education for Inclusive Societies

More than any other year before, the Lifelong Learning Platform wishes to turn the spotlight on all that makes education one of the most powerful tools we possess to build the inclusive societies that are the basis for democracy and peace.

A new strategy for the EU education policy

The Paris and Copenhagen terrorist attacks triggered an important turn for EU cooperation in education and training. On the 17 March 2015, European Education Ministers launched together “a call for renewed efforts to reinforce the teaching and acceptance of (our) common fundamental values and laying the foundations for more inclusive societies through education” (Paris Declaration).

Education has henceforth become a top priority in the EU agenda while shifting its focus point from employability to the formation of democratic, cohesive and learning societies.

Concrete actions were announced in support of the Paris Declaration. As stated in the Draft Joint Report for Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) “New priorities for European cooperation in education and training”, “the follow-up of the Declaration is a key priority in the new work cycle, with concrete measures underpinned by funding from the Erasmus+ programme”. The opening on the 14th of September of a public consultation on EU Citizenship “Share your opinion on our common values, rights and democratic participation” only further demonstrates the new focus of the European Commission on advancing EU citizenship and building inclusive societies.

The 2015 LLL week: embracing a holistic vision of education

The Lifelong Learning Platform strongly welcomes this new approach and through the Lifelong Learning Week wishes to join its strength to promoting education as a means to build inclusive societies. All the main educational levers for the promotion of inclusive societies will be discussed: citizenship education, skills development for professional integration, validation of non-formal and informal learning, the benefits of mobility, digital skills and media literacy, etc.

This comprehensive approach aims to overcome the traditional binary vision of education that opposes those who believe in citizenship education and those who advocate for concentrating on skills development to relaunch economic growth. Adopting a holistic vision of education that includes not only formal education but also non-formal and informal learning and whose rationale is not limited to a single objective but comprehends its multiple facets is not only relevant but necessary in today's European context. Europe is undermined at once by populist nationalism, religious fundamentalism and economic turmoil, and the global race for innovation and the recent inflow of refugees and migrants are yet additional factors education policies need to grasp. The Lifelong Learning Platform believes that only taking all these factors into account will allow education policies to have a real chance of building inclusive societies.

LLLWeek 2015

Guidance and Counselling to take Validation to the next Level

This debate was very much influenced by the current migration flows towards Europe and on integrating refugees. This specific issue was the stepping stone to ask wider questions on the validation of competences.



THE DEBATE

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
2 December 2015
13.00-15.00

Debate chaired by MEP Momchil Nekov
(S&D, BG)

Moderation by Luis Costa
LLLPlatform Vice-President

PANELLISTS:

Jugatx Ortiz, BRIDGE - Building up Regional Initiatives to Develop Guidance for low-skilled adults, EARLALL; Johanna Togelid & Marcus Persson, Cuben Education (SE); Godelieve Van Den Brande, DG Employment, Skills, Social affairs and Inclusion, European Commission; Martin Noack, Bertelsmann Stiftung.

The LLLPlatform welcomed the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) as it gave a political impulse for Member States to speed up the building of validation systems. The 2012 Recommendation pays a particular attention to the role of guidance and counselling in taking forward validation and significant progress has been made in the last few years, especially with regard to the development of the legal frameworks and strategies. Nonetheless, if we have the direction, we still need to signpost the way to enable users to go forward. Guidance and counselling are what will help users turn a legal possibility into a reality, guiding them to get the right skills validated.

This policy debate gave the opportunity for participants to compare and contrast what is written in policy and what is done in the field, what the EU's objectives are and what how contingencies influence their implementation. Indeed, with the migration flows, a new set of challenges has emerged, calling decision-makers to adapt their policies to current trends.

Following-up on MEP Momchil Nekov's (S&D, BG) introduction, panellists first pointed at the paralysing mismatch between skills and jobs, one factor of the high unemployment rates in Europe. The European Commission agreed that validation was a way to employment. Hence, ensuring proper guidance and counselling may prevent such mismatches.

Unfortunately, the first element revealed by the BRIDGE Project research is that guidance services are delivered in a limited range of locations, are restricted in time, and do not use all forms of media available, in spite of their huge potential, as cost-

effective and user-friendly. In consequence, few are those using these tools (only 25% according to the European Commission). So in order to increase the potential benefits of validation for a wider group of beneficiaries and especially for disadvantaged groups, such as low-qualified adults, migrants and refugees, access needs to be generalised.

7 Implementing outreach strategies based on easily accessible information and quality guidance and counselling services to involve current non-learners in lifelong learning...

About 80 million people have low or basic skills, but lifelong learning benefits mostly the more educated⁶. We have to raise awareness on the benefits of lifelong learning and stimulate one's motivation to participate in learning activities by offering information and solutions in everyday life settings (e.g. in local communities or the workplace) with the support of community organisations. The combination of quality and coordinated guidance and counselling services, and the support offered by peers and mentors is proven to be successful.

Proposition nr.7, LLLPlatform Manifesto on "Building the future of learning in Europe", 2015

Following-up on MEP Momchil Nekov's (S&D, BG) introduction, panelists and participants pointed at the paralysing mismatch between skills and jobs, one factor of the high unemployment rates in Europe. Guidance and counselling thus prove fundamental answers in shifting the trend. Yet few are those using these tools, namely because they are still under developed. The European Commission, represented at the debate, emphasized the opportunities offered in the EU Guidelines on Validation. In order to increase the potential benefits of validation for a wider group of beneficiaries and especially for disadvantaged groups, such as low-qualified adults, migrants and refugees, access needs to be generalised.

"Validation of non-formal and informal learning is a significant issue and there are many challenges that need to be tackled", started MEP Momchil Nekov. The Europe 2020 strategy puts an emphasis on non-formal and informal learning, but to reach our goal, we have yet to take important political steps. He stressed that education is the answer to issues such as the economic crisis, migrants' integration or unemployment. However, there is still a mismatch between skills and jobs, for which young people are paying the price. Validation has a prominent role to play in solving this issue, without mentioning the positive effects it also has on personal development. He concluded by saying that the focus should be put on increasing the benefits of validation for a wider group of people and especially for disadvantaged groups, adults and refugees, convinced of its utility in pointing and solving societal problems.

MEP MOMCHIL NEKOV
S&D, BG



Mrs. Van den Brande mentioned that when looking into the skills mismatches, a lot of skills are formerly taught through formal education. What is learned beyond formal education (such as digital skills, entrepreneurship, transversal skills and so on) is however equally important and so there is the need for people to show those skills in their CV. There is already the Digital Competence framework (DIGCOMP: a Framework for developing and understanding digital competence in Europe). The upcoming Skills agenda (planned for May 2016) wants to foster the development of opportunities for people to acquire more and better skills, especially for those looking for employment. Better means better connected to the need of the labour market. Mrs. Van den Brande confirmed the fundamental role of guidance and counselling in ensuring validation of competences, such as stated in the

GODELIEVE VAN DEN BRANDE
DG EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION, EUROPEAN COMMISSION



2014 European Guidelines meant to help national and regional authorities draw up their validation schemes. Nonetheless, only 25% of people use counselling and career guidance services. These low numbers will therefore be at the heart of the Skills Agenda in 2016, she said. The focus will also be on the skills mismatch, which the Commission believes might find an answer in the skills and competences gained through non-formal learning. Mrs. Van den Brande concluded by stating that one of the key policy priorities for DG Employment is to reach employment targets by bridging the gap between education and labour market. The unit in charge adult education and vocational education and training has moved under the Skills Directorate of DG EMPL. Validation is part of the measures that can be taken in order to tackle unemployment.



JUGATX ORTIZ
BRIDGE PROJECT, EARLALL



Jugatx Ortiz presented the BRIDGE project, which aims to develop guidance services for low-skilled adults. The first element revealed by the research is that guidance services are delivered in a limited range of locations, are restricted in time, and do not use all forms of media available, in spite of their huge potential, as cost-effective and user-friendly. This underlines the need for us to use different approaches, she said, "reaching out rather than waiting for people to come". Making progress in guidance services would also be a way of supporting the validation tools that already exist but are too diversely implemented. Of course, she said progress will also depend on available funding and how it is allocated to meet the needs of different priority groups. Local and regional authorities are a valuable source of knowledge concerning employment opportunities and available education (formal, non-formal and informal). Educational institutions, universities, VET providers, employment agencies, NGOs, business and public services operate at a local level, and they need to be involved and coordinated. The outcomes of the project recommend widening access to guidance (tools, time, languages); promoting access of specific target groups (profile the services and develop evidence-based policies to target specific groups); include guidance in the validation process.



DR. MARTIN NOACK
BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG

Dr. Martin Noack presented a project led by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, aiming to create a guidance toolbox in order to support the integration of refugees on the labour market. Indeed, they realised that although guidance services exist in Germany, they are often too theoretical, time consuming or too complex for the target group. The idea behind the project was thus to create a more practical, accessible and user-friendly instrument. The project resulted in the designing of an actual toolbox, using images as much as possible in order to step over the language barrier (although it has been translated into 5 other languages aside from German). It is composed of 46 competences cards, 10 social or interpersonal competences, such as teamwork leadership skills, 18 personal competences or qualities, and 18 professional or method skills, 9 cards with additional information (computer work, crafts, languages...). It also includes 11 interests, such as music, theatre, etc. The idea is to focus on strengths, not deficits, in order to go through the validation process positively.



JOHANNA TOGELID & MARCUS PERSSON
CUBEN EDUCATION, SWEDEN

Marcus Persson and Joanna Togelid presented Cuben Education, a private school working mainly with low-skilled adult immigrants. Practically, it connects employers and employees, organising three months internships. Its success comes from the fact that what students learn at school is what they will be performing on the job. The goal is employment. Entrepreneurship is at the heart of their work, and already 23 companies have been created from student initiatives. A success factor is that Cuben Education is in constant contact with both companies and students so it serves as a link between them. "In a way, students become teachers, designing their curricula according to what they need to learn for the job", said Johanna. Another factor is the close cooperation with local municipalities and authorities.

LLLWeek 2015 WHAT IS IT?

The Lifelong Learning Platform, dedicated to lifelong learning policies and projects across the EU, held its 5th LLL Week from 30th November to 4th December 2015 within the European Parliament in Brussels. The idea is to bring together learners and educators, field workers and policy-makers, thinkers and political representatives and give them the opportunity to discuss a broad, long term concept of lifelong learning in depth.

The 2015 week constituted a milestone for several reasons. First, because the LLLPlatform celebrated its 10th Anniversary, which carries with it a certain number of changes, from its name and visual identity to the adoption of a new Manifesto. Second, because 2015 will be remembered as a year during which fundamental values and citizenship were repeatedly challenged, reminding all of the crucial role education has to play in defeating the enemy ideas to social cohesion, tolerance and democracy.



Why a lifelong learning week?

Today, the concept of “lifelong learning” (LLL) is widely used but its meaning differs according to whom is using it. According to the Lifelong Learning Platform, lifelong learning covers education and training across all ages and in all areas of life be it formal, non-formal or informal. It shall enable citizen’s emancipation and full participation in society in its civic, social and economic dimensions.

The idea of organising Lifelong Learning Weeks aims to raise awareness on Lifelong Learning in Europe and to put forward the need to adopt a holistic approach at all levels of decision-making, implementation and evaluation, at a moment when EU cooperation in education and training is rethought (ET2020 strategic Framework mid-term review). Seeing the big picture and achieving comprehensive strategies is especially important so that our citizens are fully equipped with the competences they need for their well-being, their participation in society and their professional integration.

Krystyna Lybacka, LLLWeek2015 patron

The LLL Week has over time become one of our major annual events, thanks to the support of Members of the European Parliament.

In 2015, the week was hosted by MEP Krystyna Lybacka (PL, S&D), former Polish Minister of Education and Sports (2001-2004). Mrs Lybacka has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2014. She is a member of the Culture and Education Committee, as well as in the EU-Russia Delegation. MEP Lybacka is also Vice-Chair of the Lifelong Learning Interest Group.

The Lifelong Learning Platform would like to warmly thank Mrs Lybacka’s office for its support in the organisation on the LLLWeek2015, especially Aleksandra Pilka.

ABOUT THE LLLPLATFORM

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



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EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

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10 RUE DE L'INDUSTRIE - 1000 BRUSSELS - BELGIUM

+32 (0)2 89 32 515 / INFO@EUCIS-LLL.EU

WWW.EUCIS-LLL.EU