EDUCATION TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND SOLIDARITY IN EUROPE

30.11 - 04.12. 2015
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.
What will we remember 2015 by? Will it be a year of fear or one of courage? Terrorist attacks, migration waves, electoral outcomes... all have been moments for Europeans to express their concerns and fight for what they believe in, in good, but also in bad. Citizenship education has been put at the top of the agenda, as Rodrigo Ballester from Commissioner Navracsics's cabinet later developed. But beyond political declarations, what is happening in the field to overcome the negative trends, asked Joke Van der Leeuw Roord who moderated the debate.

Education is a vast topic, not only in content, but also in time. Qualifications age quickly, said MEP Krystyna Lybacka, revealing the need to help learners develop deeper knowledge and competences that they will be able to adapt in many fields. But knowledge is not only directed to the labour market: lifelong learning includes the development of social and intercultural competences such as personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion. Intercultural education should not be made an option in our curriculum, she said. Indeed, the challenges we face today are certainly not new: a simple glance at Europe's past should be enough to convince any observer of the necessity to design an education capable of fighting back intolerance, hate and exclusion, reminded Robert Ruffino from the Fondazione Intercultura. The problem remains that although many teachers theoretically support cosmopolitism, they are emotionally tied to their national identities, he said. This is partly due to the lack of training on the matter. Ambassador Froysnes, Head of Brussels Office of the Council of Europe to the EU, continued with the example of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, which stipulates that every person should be given the opportunity for citizenship and human rights education. Yet currently, only 2/3 of European Member States have developed such programmes.

The role of the European Union is to support cooperation between Member States and stakeholders, including third countries, said Mr. Ballester. It does so by developing multi-level programmes such as Erasmus+ or eTwinning, and also counts on the expertise delivered by the Council of Europe. Indeed, as Professor Barrett stressed, much is done to provide national authorities with recommendations and guidelines to develop the transversal competences that will feed a democratic culture. In this line, Ambassador Froysnes called on stakeholders to stay attentive to the Conference of Education Ministers’ which will take place in April 2016 to discuss the 2016-2019 action plan for building inclusive societies on the basis of the Charter. This will contribute to the pursuit of our common efforts, a cooperation that also incarnates the idea according to which we do not teach what to think, but how to think, to be able to live together with others, he said.

Mary Tupan-Wenno, who presented the IDEAs project, stressed how much success comes when many stakeholders are involved, as revealed in the project study. She also corroborated Roberto Ruffino’s opinion, pointing out that diversity has been a reality for many Europeans for a long time. The question is what has been done to represent this diversity in student population, politics, etc. Since culture is not fixed but alive, the way in which we demonstrate, share and discuss our differences needs to be a continuous process. About young people and politics for instance, MEP Julie Ward (S&D, UK) reminded the audience how much many of them are interested in politics, only not in the classic frameworks. Opening up to the methods used in non-formal education, using arts in education, constitute a creative way to channel the diversity we all represent and must therefore be part of promoting.

Making citizenship and global education, as well as intercultural and interreligious dialogue, priority areas of European Union and national education policies... Proposition nr. 1, LLLPlatform Manifesto on “Building the future of learning in Europe” 2015

THE DEBATE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
2 December 2015
16.30-18.30
Debate chaired by MEP Krystyna Lybacka (S&D, PL)
Moderation by Joke Van der Leeuw-Roord, LLLPlatform Secretary General

PANELISTS:
Ambassador T. Froysnes, Council of Europe; R. Ballester, Member of Cabinet of Commissioner Navracsics, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport; R. Rufino, European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL) Honorary President and Secretary General of Intercultura Foundation; MEP Julie Ward (S&D, UK), rapporteur on European Parliament opinion on the topic; M. Tupan-Wenno, Director of ECHO, Netherlands; Pr. M. Barrett, Consultant for the Council of Europe.
Jole Van Der Leeuw Roord, welcomed panelists and audience as moderator of the debate. She introduced the discussion by reminding participants of how the central topic of the Education and Training Forum 2014, in line with the concern of a poor economy, had been education for work. In 2015, following the Paris and Copenhagen attacks, citizenship has been reinstalled, the Paris Declaration putting citizenship education at the top of the agenda. However late this comes, she saluted this initiative, but wished to ask panellists and audience, to use this opportunity to evaluate what is concretely being done beyond political statements, to efficiently tackle the major challenges faced by our society.

MEP Krystyna Lybacka stressed the importance of education in a lifelong perspective. Although field specific qualifications are crucial, she underlined their rapid obsolescence, making deeper and transversal knowledge and competences the ultimate goal of any learning process. Education cannot merely serve the purpose of the labour market, personal development, intercultural understanding or social or civic competences are equally important, and key for social inclusion and active citizenship, at the same level as employability. Intercultural education cannot be made an option in a learner’s curriculum, she concluded. Raising awareness of and understanding cultural diversity is all a question of openness to one another, and therefore calls for constant cooperation between all actors, because in this matter, we are all stakeholders.

Ambassador Torbjørn Froynøs presented the Council of Europe’s Centre for Democratic Education, which stimulates that every person should be given the opportunity to participate in citizenship and human rights education. A background report showed that only 2/3 countries have such a programme in place. If the 2016-2019 action plan in education is for it to be the cement for building inclusive societies, we need to broaden our approach. The model of competences for democratic culture includes not only knowledge and skills, but also values and attitudes. The aim is not to teach what to think but to teach how to think. The Council of Europe hopes to support teachers and educators with a comprehensive framework to reach this goal.

According to Rodrigo Ballester, the Paris attacks are the illustration of education’s failure to ensure young French people are equipped with skills and a sense of belonging, especially regarding people with migrant backgrounds. Education should carry both these concerns and not separate values from employability, as one cannot live without the other. The Paris Declaration is thus a momentum in our European perception of education. Its scope ratione loci involves the collaboration of all European, national, regional and local levels; in terms of content, if the fight against radicalisation is an important element, the declaration should be understood as a broad commitment to promote values, citizenship education, media literacy and social inclusion. However, since the EU only has a support competence in education, its role will be in exchanging and disseminating good practices, establishing concrete objectives in the Education and Training 2020 work programmes, using the channels opened by its funding programmes, such as Erasmus+, without limiting itself to higher education. Mr. Ballester insisted on the importance to work hand-in-hand with third countries.

For Pr. Martyn Barrett, a democratic culture is dependent on intercultural dialogue given the diversity of our societies. To ensure this dialogue can take place, projects have been developed, as the “Competences for Democratic Culture” project. Its key aim is to assist national education systems to enhance the intercultural and democratic competences of young people across Europe. It develops a new European framework of reference of the competences young people need to effectively participate in democratic spaces, as well as guidelines and recommendations to help educators support the development of these competences. He also presented a set of descriptors which use the language of learning outcomes and describe what can be done once these competences are acquired. The project covers the whole range of formal education, from pre-school to higher education. Pr. Barrett announced that the Framework will be presented as a set of non-binding guidelines to all European governments starting in April at the Conference of Education Ministers.

Roberto Rufino stressed by reminding participants that the question of intolerance is not a recent one, antisemitism, colonialism or Nazism are examples of how much European history is full of intolerance and racism. A recent study showed 74% of Italian pupils of primary education have difficulties interacting with people from different origins. This is an illustration of how European schools are still based on a very national model, one followed by students and teachers alike. In addition, much of our surroundings (street names and avenues, art, references…), reinforce this nationalism.

Intercultural understanding is an exercise that challenges people intellectually and emotionally. Indeed, many teachers theoretically support this approach, but in practice, they are emotionally tied to their national identities. This is amplified by the fact that many are not trained to develop intercultural competences. But education, such as Jacques Delors so rightfully pinpointed, is about learning to know, to do, to be and to live together. Delors’ report was published 20 years ago, and yet, so little has happened since then, regrets Mr. Rufino, explaining this status quo by the necessity to change one’s mindsets. This change occurs at the same time than the intercultural dialogue and increases the same understanding.
Enabling exchanges of best practice, experiences and knowledge to social cohesion, tolerance and democracy.

Pursuing an active dialogue with European institutions, stakeholders and public institutions at all levels, regional, national and European.

Disseminating information on key issues in the field of education and training in the so-called “Open Method of Coordination”.

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.

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 of terrorism.

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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 citizens 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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