MEDIA LITERACY: XXI CENTURY CHALLENGE

30.11 - 04.12. 2015
LLL Week 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.
Media Literacy: XXI Century Challenge

This debate questioned the challenges regarding access to new technologies as regards their learning function, balancing their wide use with the need for users to develop critical thinking towards the information received.

“...The challenges our society faces, from climate change to unemployment via terrorism, should seek answers in peoples’ empowerment, an empowerment through knowledge”, introduced MEP Zorrinho (S&D, PT). Knowledge today stems from many sources, while the “digital era” caused a sudden leap in access to information, making digital literacy one of education’s most sensitive issues at this time. Indeed, if literacy is a human right, in a digital era, should not digital literacy be too?

It is essential today that all citizens acquire digital and media competences in order to ensure their interactions with media are positive and enriching. The inclusion of media literacy in compulsory education curriculum is of particular importance in order to equip children with tools to raise their critical thinking and decision making and to counteract possible negative sides of the digital world. Digital technologies can also enhance the learning experience and support creativity and interactivity and increase motivation to learn. It is essential to enable educators to develop the use of technologies in an age-adapted and transversal way (e.g. when learning languages, math or literature).

Every European citizen should have access to digital technologies and learn basic digital and media competences by mainstreaming them in formal education and supporting non-formal training providers, especially those working with disadvantaged groups...

Proposition nr. 12, LLLPlatform Manifesto on “Building the future of learning in Europe” 2015
Cultural dimension: the focus should be on parents too

Critical dimension: what is use is done of the information

Zarko Cizmar presented a number of projects dealing with media literacy, such as “Media Literacy for the 21st Century”, led by Telecentre Europe together with VET schools in Zagreb. Another project he presented was “Television Multimedia Academy”, which had teachers as its main target group; the teachers learned how to use new technologies and media in classrooms. “Professional” was an Erasmus+ project which set a competence framework from digital tools use and art. The project “Trans eScouts” focuses on intergenerational learning and “Generation 010”, finishing in 2016, introduces coding as an element of media literacy.

The last, ongoing project that he presented was “European Youth News Exchange”. The last, ongoing project that he presented was “European Youth News Exchange”. The last, ongoing project that he presented was “European Youth News Exchange”. The last, ongoing project that he presented was “European Youth News Exchange”. The last, ongoing project that he presented was “European Youth News Exchange”.

MEP Carlos Zorrinho stated that the LLL Week is an extraordinary initiative and congratulated the LLLPlatform for its organisation. The debate proposed is crucial to understanding the challenges face by our societies today, he said. Indeed, increasing poverty and inequalities around the world, but also climate change, terrorism or cyber-attacks, are all examples of the threats that could be prevented were people empowered with knowledge. So in this sense, lifelong learning, because it combines education and social interaction, should lead the way and become a priority.

Andras Szucs stressed the very sensitive nature of the topic. Indeed, each and everyone of us can experience the amazing technological developments that surround us, that have become part of our daily lives, namely because they are more and more affordable. But while we have entered our living spaces, should we be asking ourselves if there is a proper way to use them? Indeed, there are examples of misuse, such as vehicles in online hate speech. We have realised there needs to be a “user-guide” to ICT. To find the answers, Mr Szucs underscored how important it is to look into the user’s behaviour. In educational frames, teachers and pupils could be the ones providing the most useful information. This is why we welcomed this debate, as the exchange of best practices, including the grassroots level in a bottom-up approach is crucial to understanding the issues at stake.

To define media literacy, Judith Gerling presented a Dutch publication entitled Mediawijzer. The study that followed revealed key elements: the first being how time constraints (video length for instance) affect the perception of what is being shown; the second, what is therefore being left out; and why. To illustrate this, Mrs Gerling gave the example of the Iraqi War Wikipedia page, which contains official US Army sources. In this example, the bias is obvious. Another example was the martinlutherking.org website, ironically managed by an openly white-supremacy group, and yet, in the first five Google search when you make an enquiry about Martin Luther King. The problem is, she said, that studies show that the main competence a vast majority of students lacks is being able to reflect on media usage. The examples mentioned above command us to put our heads together to make sure Martin Luther King’s legacy is not left to the hands of a hateful few. Knowing how to search critically, being able to sort out information, and find and choose according to sources, should therefore be given more space in curricula.

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Fabio Nascimbeni started by reminding the audience that literacy is a human right, because education is a human right. So in a world governed by ICT such as ours today, the digital literacy should be one too. Mr Nascimbeni said that first, we need to agree on a clear definition of digital literacy that goes beyond the ability to use ICT. Indeed, it needs to include a critical dimension, or the capacity to understand the information received. However, this critical dimension rests upon an operational and a cultural dimension, or access and environment. He urged decision-makers to act quickly, as too many still have restricted access to technologies, widening the gaps in society, while pursuing efforts to train teachers on their use, also as way to raise awareness of the risks to physical and mental health that may derive from internet use.
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 which fundamental values and citizenship were 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 LLLLPLATFORM

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.

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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