"LIFELONG LEARNING CULTURE"
Report

3-7 Dec 2018
European Parliament
Brussels
"I am honoured to have hosted this year’s Lifelong Learning Week. In a constantly changing Europe, lifelong learning is more important than ever. Most education systems across the EU still prioritize formal education at school and university, and expect this to be sufficient to prepare young people for the world of work. We should be doing more to ensure that after finishing formal education, people can maintain a proactive attitude to learning in order to develop both professionally and personally. In an increasingly digitised and globalised world, this is more important than ever. We are facing unprecedented challenges across Europe, including a demographic challenge, with many countries facing an ageing population. More opportunities should be available to older people so that they can adapt easily to the rapidly changing world in which we live.

"We should be doing more to ensure that after finishing formal education, people can maintain a proactive attitude to learning in order to develop both professionally and personally."

MEP Jill Evans, host of the LLLWeek18

Jill Evans is a Member of the European Parliament representing Wales. She is member of Plaid Cymru – the Party of Wales, which belongs to the Greens/EFA group. Jill was first elected in 1999 and was re-elected in 2004, 2009 and 2014. She is a full member of the Culture and Education Committee and a substitute member of the Transport and Tourism Committee. She is also a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Parliamentary Committee. Her priorities in the European Parliament include minority rights, language equality, the environment and education.
The second Lifelong Learning Civil Society Forum, taking place in the fishbowl format, was facilitated by Lucie Susova, LLLP Steering Committee member. She set the scene recalling LLLP’s yearly theme: lifelong learning culture. She opened the debate stating that education and culture are essential to one another and that 2018 was the European year of cultural heritage.

Provocative statements followed: civil society organisations are very often blamed for “not doing enough to promote EU values”. Umbrella organisations in particular, largely represented in the Forum, are criticised for not reaching out to vulnerable and marginalised groups. European CSOs respond that not only it is not their first mission to work directly with citizens, as they represent the national and local civil society organisations, but they also have limited resources to achieve this intricate task. On the other hand, representing and cooperating with grass-root organisations is an important part of their work. EU NGOs advocate for more investment in civil society and overall more recognition of the capacity and strength of CSOs in fostering social inclusion. “Non-formal education spaces are very often the best spaces for inclusion”, they argue.

Participants claimed that the issue here is rather why formal education providers and schools in particular, are doing so little?

The LLLWeek18 started off with fireworks! The Lifelong Learning Civil Society Forum opened the week in the splendid Fondation Universitaire. The LLLWeek Reception and the LLLAwards Ceremony followed, for an unforgettable evening about LLLCulture.

According to Nicole Gesché-Koning (former researcher at CReA-Patrimoine of the Université Libre de Bruxelles), there is not enough cooperation between museums and schools and schools are often pressured to fit their programmes for the labour market. Culture is not enough used as a channel for inclusive learning in the classrooms. Cultural activities should not be restricted to art class but could be used in scientific classes too, for instance. The formal education system should be encouraged to introduce more flexible teaching methodologies and more schools should be convinced that “losing an hour of maths is not a loss of time”. To cope with this issue, the European Commission, represented by Barbara Stacher is trying to develop a STEAM curriculum. This is because another worrying trend is that in many countries art education subjects are dropped off in curricula.

There are contradictory positions regarding the feasibility of “measuring culture”. Should culture be counted? For instance as ECTS? On one side, it is argued that cultural learning can’t be measured. On the other side, research through art methods and practice-based in certain countries lead to consider that art – as well any other subject – should be recognized with an equal level-play field and therefore, needs assessment for the soft skills that it develops. Art education enhances creativity, which is one of the most sought-after soft skills, but is this skill development possible without art education?

The lack of promotion of EU values and culture is not just an educational problem, but it is a societal problem. There is not enough cultural representation, not enough investment in culture and a damaging and lasting belief that limits the recognition of the value of cultural activities for building the necessary skills that empower citizens to thrive in the society and the economy. Both formal and non-formal education sectors, and sometimes in cooperation, should contribute more to promoting EU values and making citizens more aware of their importance in our society.

The civil society Forum was followed by an elevator speech presenting CSOs initiatives in lifelong learning culture, as well as the LLLWeek Reception and LLLAwards Ceremony.
The Lifelong Learning Interest Group met to discuss European tools to fund lifelong learning. MEP Evans, shadow rapporteur for the CULT Committee's report, welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of the Erasmus+ in supporting the transition of young people from education to adulthood. Confirming the Parliament's ambition of tripling the programme budget, she underlined the need for the new programme to be more inclusive, supporting organisations working with marginalised groups. She likewise called for regular reviews of financial support to meet the real needs of students, and support to language learning, including language minorities.

MEP Pavel shared the same confidence in a positive approach towards Erasmus+ in the EP, as evidenced by the almost unanimous vote on the EMPL Committee's Opinion, for which he is rapporteur. He said VET and lifelong learning should play a crucial role in the future programme and emphasised that not only Erasmus+, but also other programmes such as ESF+, should be strengthened. He recalled that lifelong learning is a priority of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which underpins the EP's interim report on the next MFF.

Jyrki Katainen, European Commission Vice President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, shared the Commission's perspective. He highlighted that the next MFF will have the highest ever share of investment in human capital, vital for enhancing people's resilience in the face of rapid technological changes. In addition to the important role of Erasmus+, which he hopes in the next programme period will benefit more VET learners and teachers, he referred to the strong social investments that the proposed InvestEU programme will promote, as well as synergies between ESF+ and Erasmus+ for supporting disadvantaged groups.

Gina Ebner, President of LLP and Secretary General of EAEA, followed Mr Katainen's intervention by calling not only for a lifelong learning approach in Erasmus+, but also by stressing the importance of finding and fostering links between education and other sectors such as agriculture or health. Looking at the opportunities given by the MFF, she underlined their potential to reduce inequalities, reach out to disadvantaged learners, promote democracy and values, but also address inequalities within countries and within the lifelong learning sector itself where some sectors get more funding than others. Ms Ebner furthermore recalled the value of European cooperation in the lifelong learning arena when it comes to policy as well as programmes - it helps to drive and scale up the grassroots innovation that the programmes can generate, even if this is small.

Giulia Meschino, EVTA, welcomed the proposed increases in the next MFF for education, training and youth, reaffirming its importance for fighting populist movements. Outlining the three priorities of investing in people, VET and civil society, she continued by calling for a resilient ESF+ supporting structural changes in education and training.

Marguerite Potard, WOSM, stressed the need to support non-formal education, not only through Erasmus+ but under the ESF+ as well.

Katrina Koppel, ESU, addressed the new European Universities initiative which the next Erasmus+ will fund, expressing concern that it will end up increasing exclusivity rather than inclusion.

Mr Pavel recalled the amendments tabled in his Opinion on Erasmus+ on putting a ceiling for the funding of the European Universities initiatives. The initiative will encourage universities to collaborate more and use their intellectual potential to contribute to the EU.

Arja Krauchenburg, EPA, analysed the vital role of parents who come from all walks of life and their connection to civil society. They also represent the intergenerational aspect of learning. Under Erasmus+ there should be provisions for parents to access mobility grants. We should invest in parents and all parents, no matter their profession, should exert their influence in this full capacity.
This meeting of the «Quality of Childhood» (QoC) group addressed the teaching of Janusz Korczak. The reflection led participants to acknowledge children as full citizens, with the right to be heard.

Who better to give depth to our reflections on the 'Wider benefits of Learning' than Janusz Korczak - a children's doctor who wrote extensively on themes within education and who lived his beliefs to the extent of maintaining a 'republic for children' in the Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation?

Christopher Clouder complimented Janusz's work in introduction. He quoted a few lines from Janusz's work, stating that “it is a mistake to believe that education is science of children and not of men.” He highlighted that there are qualities we can still find in ourselves as adults that we once had as children, such as having sensitivity to others. In the end, ‘Janusz's work is an inspiration for what we're trying to do.’

Helma Brouwers (Dutch Korczak Association) started her presentation by saying “we wouldn't be here if we were not certain that child education needs Korczak's ideas.” She talked about Korczak’s life and work, among which she mentioned him running a Jewish orphanage (Dom Sierot, 1912) in Warsaw. In his orphanage, he set up a parliament, which consisted of children's court, and they also issued newspaper made by children. The orphanage was moved to a Warsaw ghetto, where children suffered as there were illnesses, lack of food. He was offered by Germans to leave, but he refused. Korczak's pedagogy is a pedagogy of respect and dialogue, which postulates that adults and children are equals. Before the Convention of Children’s Rights, Korczak wrote the Magna Carta, the children’s rights to be what and who they are. This includes allowing children take risks, even life-threatening risks. He didn’t write much about schools, but he did say that schools should be for life, and more human, more child-friendly. Korczak believed that children should be allowed to grieve and show their anger, otherwise it would reflect negatively in their adult life. Children should also be seen as citizens - with the right to participate in decisions and the tight to be heard.

Arja Krauchenberg from European Parents’ Association added that countries should look for parental leave models such as Austrian model, Swedish model and highlighted that parents need to have more flexibility.

The debate began with a video message from MEP Julie Ward, where she expressed her dismay with the fact that cultural and citizenship education are not appreciated enough in formal education. She stressed their essential importance for empowering young minds and fostering creativity and empathy.

Elisa Briga, EFIL, outlined the development of intercultural competences, further complicated by the lack of a clear definition. Experiential learning needs to be integrated into theachers’ training and professional development. They need to learn how to cooperate with each other and with non-formal education systems. EU policy should support these critical issues.

Sara Pöll Finnborgadóttir, OBESSU, underlined the importance of citizenship education which fosters open cooperation and communication between all stakeholders, including culture actors.

Davide Capecci, EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership, referred to the Council of Europe framework of competences for democratic culture which looks holistically at the four areas of values, skills, knowledge and attitudes. These are all interconnected - you cannot talk about skills without talking about values.

According to Michiel Heijnen, ATEE, citizenship should always be addressed in schools, even in a mathematics class. Schools, as formal education institutions, should be open to the informal learning that happens in other institutions or in society. We need to move from content-centred to student-centred learning.

Joanna Pankowska, LLLP Steering Committee, gave the final remarks and observed that there needs to be collaboration between teachers and civil society, cooperation between formal, non-formal and informal learning. This can never be stressed enough.
We asked ourselves: what is the place of non-formal and informal learning in active citizenship? How can volunteering, community action, and youth workers foster a sense of belonging and promote a more sustainable civic engagement among young people?

Lucie Myslikova (Czech Scouts), who got world-known after a famous photo of her standing up to a Neo-Nazi in Brno, explained how scouting helped her gain autonomy, independence, and ability to solve problems on her own. Lucie is currently taking part in many grassroot organisations, supporting alternative media, and taking part in climate change movement.

Reka Salamon, WOSM, introduced My Europe, My Say!, a project which aims to empower young people to take part in political life of Europe. Alongside action toolkit, website for collecting actions and inspiration, street actions and trips to reach non-engaged youth, social media campaign to create an online community are aiming to bring European topic closer to young people. Viola Bianchetti, AEGEE, added that aiming to bring European topic closer to young people, social media actions and inspiration, street actions and trips are needed.

Andrea Casamenti, board member of YFJ, stated that the diversity in the youth organisations gives space for all opinions and beliefs, based on the principle of active citizenship and democracy. In terms of European Education Area 2025, he agreed that non-formal education should be a priority of the European Union.

Floor van Houdt, representative of DG EAC and the European Commission, further added that it is essential to engage young people in the policy developments, and connect with young people as current programmes are very much focused on mobility, and moving abroad doesn’t come naturally to young people. More inclusive projects are needed.

Mariagrazia Tagliabue, ATEE, stated that despite them being partners in the Consumer Classroom project, these issues to not include teachers’ teachers. The next step would be to include teachers’ education and continuous professional development in the loop.

Barbara Archesso presented EVTA’s project: Life foster classroom project aims to increase consumer’s rights interest, increase consumer’s rights interest, as active consumer, aware of the impact that our consumption choice have. The consumer education shuold use the SDGs framework to advocate for better consumption patterns. There is an important strand in DG DEVCO that addresses global citizenship education. Such projects should try to engage EU citizens in development, its their money that go to the eradication of poverty in Europe.

Francesca Minniti, CONCORD Europe, explained that consumer education should be a tool to boost the outreach of this tool beyond their networks.

What is now the legacy of consumer classroom? There are 4,7 millions teachers in Europe, and only 1% of them is in the programme. The challenge is to boost the outreach of this tool beyond their networks.
With the contribution of key policy-makers and experts, we discussed how recent EU initiatives can provide an ideal framework for boosting language learning via mobility and intercultural exchanges.

Panagiotis Chatzimichail (EEE-YFU) started off by pointing out the understated importance of mobility and language learning. Ms Cunningham (DG EAC) highlighted the recent revision of the EU Reference Framework of Key Competences, with the first two items on the list shifting from communication in the mother tongue and communication in foreign languages to literacy competence and multilingual competence. She placed special emphasis on the need to abandon the distinction between mother tongue and foreign tongue in favour of the concept of “language of schooling”, if at all.

Davide Capecchi (Partnership for Youth CoE-EC), extended the discussion to other mobility programmes, specifically the European Solidarity Corps and the recent EP initiative DiscoverEU. He highlighted the work of the Council of Europe, specifically the widely-used Common Reference Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work. He also emphasized the importance of integrating formal, non-formal and informal learning methods and, in relation to the latter, the centrality of encouraging experiential learning by making it fun and appealing to students.

Kea Hoppe (EEE-YFU), tapped into her personal experience as an exchange student to make a point on the value of long-term mobility, especially at a younger age (high school). Mobility experiences provide a unique opportunity for language learning in a non-formal/informal education setting, which in turn allows for cultural integration, and on many occasions encourages further mobility for learning or work purposes.

Marie-Celine Falisse (ESN) highlighted other several positive aspects of mobility experiences, including students’ willingness to integrate with the local language and culture, good support from destination universities and an increased interest in repeating a similar experience upon return. But some aspects need improvement: for instance, she mentioned integration difficulties among Erasmus and local students and the reduced sustainability of the language competences acquired, after the students’ return from abroad.

Barry Tomalin (ICC), highlighted the importance of the EUROLTA certification for teachers of foreign languages to adults in the context of widespread “enforced mobility”, i.e. of the linguistic needs of the migrant and refugee population. He furthermore emphasized the potential of the concept of “plurilingualism”, i.e. teaching or exposing students to metalinguistic competences not only at the language level but also on a semiotic level.

Ministers to member States on youth work. He also stressed the positive impact of SocialErasmus, particularly the fact that it allows school students to learn about internationalisation in higher education before starting their studies.

Eddy Raepsaet, Scholengroep Vlaamse Ardennen, brought the perspective of schools, highlighting the benefits of bringing the “abroad” into the classroom, of creating social links between different generations and people from other countries, promoting European openness, and facilitating the practice of foreign languages as a complement to lessons. Recognition mechanisms for this type of experience are also important, a view shared by both Mr Gabriels and Ms Boivin.

Pauline Boivin, LLLP, presented the Comunity project which focuses on helping hard-to-reach young people through inclusive training programmes for ‘community animateurs’. Marginalised young people often distrust the ‘system’ and local associations and community centres are in the best position to reach out to them. Linking with SocialErasmus, Ms Boivin highlighted the possibility for Erasmus students to engage with disadvantaged young people in local communities, to make the most out of their volunteering experience.

Giuseppina Tucci, LLLP Steering Committee, recalled the need to maintain the ladder of participation, ensuring that we do things with people and not for people. People choose to volunteer because they want to have an impact on society and get involved in the local community. Volunteering needs to be seen as a lifelong learning experience.

Wim Gabriels, ESN, spoke about the project SocialErasmus which seeks to better involve students taking part in Erasmus mobility in the local community of their host country. The benefit is a better integration in the society but also for schools where the students volunteer because it allows the school students to develop intercultural awareness and tolerance through experiential learning and new reflections.

Ann-Sophie Vanderschueren, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, underlined that internationalisation is a top strategic priority for universities. Community service learning is also of particular importance. She stressed the positive impact of SocialErasmus, particularly the fact that it allows school students to learn about internationalisation in higher education before starting their studies.
Towards intercultural learning and active citizenship for all - Summer University 30th anniversary

July 2018 | European Parliament

While many tools are put forward in education systems and beyond to try and shape the next generations of Europeans, few have proven to be as effective as mobility schemes. AEGEE discuss their flagship programme: Summer University.

Jasmin Kaiser and Spyros Papadatos welcomed participants and introduced both Summer Universities and Europe On Track, with the aim of raising awareness, gathering opinions, and encouraging discussions. This year they would focus on current issues in the EU, such as: euroscepticism, Brexit, terrorism, youth unemployment, populism.

Christian Seuling, project manager at AEGEE, then introduced their “Summer University” project and described its new focus on eco sustainability, exploring multicultural dimensions, while also promoting history and local culture, language, leisure, sports, volunteering and training. It has been added that learners self-develop in terms of soft skills and thrive in non-formal education in multicultural environments.

After the introduction of projects, fishbowl discussion followed. Participants asked Floor van Houdt (DG EAC) to give her insights on the next EU programmes. She said that DiscoverEU is much about short-term experiences, and in order to be inclusive, it is important to offer different programmes too. DiscoverEU is often the first experience for young people of being away from their home country. Ideally, Mr Seuling added, the programme should be extended to variety of age groups, as currently it is limited to 18 year-olds. But as many cannot afford participation in the programme, he also highlighted that travel costs are insufficiently covered, thus engendering inclusiveness issues.

Joanna Pankowska, LLLP Steering Committee member, stressed that it is extremely important to talk about social inclusion aspects - accessibility and how financially challenging it is for everyone. Programmes are not really completely inclusive, young people may be scared of travelling. Ms van Houdt explained possible changes to DiscoverEU, and that there are some good elements of the programme they’d like to preserve. It has also been added that in future, AEGEE hopes to organise local support via programmes - encouraging young people to take initiative on issues such as homelessness.

Find out more about AEGEE’s projects

Lifelong Career Guidance for EU Citizens

7 December 2018 | EESC

A crucial tool to support individuals is career guidance and counselling. A lifelong learning approach can empower citizens with the information and support to build on their existing skills and acquire new ones.

Alison Crabb, DG EMPL Unit for Skills & Qualifications, opened the discussion by recalling that fewer and fewer people are following a linear career path and this evokes the role of effective, high quality guidance throughout one’s career. The Commission has various initiatives related to long-term unemployed, youth unemployment and early school leaving, and for these to succeed guidance is needed. Guidance is a topic that runs through the New Skills Agenda (e.g. Upskilling Pathways) and the European Pillar of Social Rights, and it is closely connected to validation, which will be one of their main strands of work next year.

Jean-Marie Dujardin, eucen and LLLP Steering Committee member, explained that a sustainable career is a path where the person remains employable for as long as possible and participates in a continuous development of skills. The ‘toolbox’ for a sustainable career is a combination of knowledge, know-how and attitudes, as well as a mix of professional experiences and private activities. The transfer from private to professional is important - usually people only think one or the other. Developing skills for a sustainable career is about lifelong learning. David Randaxhe, HEC Liège, followed by presenting the ESF project Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Career which...
focuses on two main actions of developing career management coaching (through group sessions & individual coaching) and awareness campaign on sustainable career challenges.

Ludovic Collin, Réseau International Cité des Métiers, presented the concept of the cité explaining that it acts as a unique actor in lifelong career guidance. There is an increasing focus on digital learning - they offer services such as e-counselling. The concept of the cité will also be affected by the changes of tomorrow, particularly bearing in mind that 6 out of 10 jobs in 2030 do not currently exist yet. Moreover, some see a blur between professional and personal life concerning lifelong career guidance - more partnerships will be needed if they choose to focus also on personal aspects.

Gina Ebner, EAEA, referred to the ‘Matthew principle’ which states that the better educated you are, the more learning opportunities you are likely to have. There are challenges such as outreach, and learners without a clear plan. But often professional and personal lives intertwine. In this case, learning is only one part of their needs, thus showing the importance of taking a holistic approach. «We need to look at preconditions such as cooperation (building a network of partners), investment for staff, training & activities (which also involves knowing how and when to reach out to other services, e.g. social protection), in addition to the strong role of social partners and companies».

Noelia Cantero, EARLALL, stressed that lifelong career guidance is crucial for coping with the rapid pace of challenging changes. Another issue is the lack of cooperation - guidance centres are often isolated. Useful conclusions on the topic in the Bridge project were presented, including building cooperation among schools, training centres and civil society organisations.

Lucie Susova, SOLIDAR presented the CLAN - Collaborative Learning Action Network - project. It offers a tool to guide professionals when identifying transversal skills among low skilled adults. People are rarely self-aware, and they might find it difficult to put into words their competences and abilities. Identifying the skills takes place through cards which are the testing phase, which will be followed by the development of an app & online platform.

Murielle Antille, The Adecco Group, explained that mindset is a crucial aspect in recruitment and needs to be considered as an additional pillar to career guidance. Lifelong learning is a mindset. Many companies are faced with this question when it comes to internal redeployment - they are afraid that people used to a specific kind of role are not able to adapt. The social impact is also important - in Switzerland they work with public authorities to help refugees navigate the labour market. On the issue of finance, Ms Antille emphasised the importance of looking at training as an investment. There are a number of initiatives linked to work-based learning and based on co-funding (e.g. public-private partnerships).

A debate with the audience followed the presentations. Lifelong learning and guidance for purposes other than labour market, such as sustainable development and active citizenship, was highlighted as a crucial factor. Ms Crabb observed an emerging shift in discourse from lifelong employment to the idea of “value-creation”, whether that be economic, social or cultural, and guiding people to give words to their skills on their pathway of creating value.