LIFELONG LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES

1-4 December 2020

REPORT
“It is my honour and pleasure to host the Lifelong Learning Week in 2020. This year will mark a major break, perhaps even a change in the way we think and act about globalisation and sustainability. When this year’s theme "lifelong learning for sustainable societies" was chosen, nobody could have guessed how tightly the Covid-19 pandemic would grip our societies. This far-reaching experience for all may have disillusioned us in some ways. In any case, it should encourage us, because education remains, in my opinion, the most important key driving source for sustainable development.

“A development based on equality of opportunity, which enables people to live in peace and a sustainable ecosystem” – this was the self-declared goal of the UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (2015-2019). We are not there, yet. We haven’t accomplished the European Education Area what should remain our goal for 2025 and mark a cornerstone on our way to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. A great many young people today are "sustainability-savvy", motivated and bring with them certain knowledge of sustainable development. Despite their high motivation, however, only a few of them have the hope that positive scenarios will be realised. The emphasis on "learning that empowers, matters and lasts" for this year’s week comes with it just at the right time. Without education, we can’t empower, nor engage, respond nor transform.

We are on the right track and should continue on it consistently! The Council is right saying “the European Education Area should be underpinned by the lifelong learning continuum, from early childhood education and care through school and vocational education and training to higher education and adult education, including non-formal and informal learning”. But it is a long way and we, as politicians, should invest more in it. That is why I steadfastly demand Member States to invest at least 10% of their respective gross domestic product in education.

Civil society actors are essential support in lifelong learning for sustainable development. They are increasingly becoming partners of the learning institutions and promote a culture of sustainability. They inform, guide and encourage people from all generations and from various educational backgrounds. I hope and wish that both this year’s LLLWeek and the LLLAwards will again draw attention to remarkable lifelong learning projects throughout the EU and highlight the indispensable importance of these actors and their work.”

MEP Petra Kammerevert, Host of the LLLWeek 2020
The LLLWeek Launch event continued the conversation that LLLP started off during its Annual Conference 2020. Between keynotes, virtual fishbowl and fun moments, the evening offered a great picture of CSOs’ stance on the topic of the LLLWeek!

The host, MEP Kammerevert, opened the conference highlighting just how crucial the role of civil society’s contribution to education is, stating that all EU institutions need civil society’s ideas, contributions but also warnings and criticism. It was said that education is and will be our lifesaver, as it can guide us towards change - the change that is needed if we are to achieve the SDGs. A strong call for countries to invest at least 10% of GDP in education was made, to upgrade all our education systems. This is how we can achieve the 2030 Agenda, with education driving us.

It is by rethinking and regenerating our education systems geared at tackling sustainable development issues, that education can become the solution to addressing sustainability as Professor Stephen Sterling highlighted. In his keynote address, Prof Sterling was underpinned by how for education to unleash its power to transform our societies, we must first and foremost rethink and reconfiguring education so it has a positive impact on our collective future requires transformative education. Shifts in curriculums and pedagogies, such as a move towards experiential learning, participative and active learning, provisional and contingent knowledge, are approaches that can pave the way to applying transformative education. Sterling underlined the difference of two main concepts around sustainability and education, one being sustainability education (or Education for Sustainable Development - ESD) which seeks to develop learners’ awareness, values, knowledge and skills to understand and build a more sustainable world. The second instead being sustainable education which encompasses the notion of a change of culture by working towards a transformative paradigm which sustains and realises the human potential in relation to sustainability. Drawing to the conclusion that ‘sustainable education is the change of educational culture’.

As MEP Stelios Kympouropoulos underlined, education for sustainable development is yes, about the environment but also and more importantly perhaps about how humans interact with it. It becomes clear then that citizenship education is part of education for sustainable development. It is reacting to a systemic crisis and the need for transformation explained Christoph Müller-Hofstede, from the NECE network. However, how can we move forward remains the key question. We have fantastic concepts and excellent practices to show for, but it is time to move them to our education and training systems to turn them into a reality, as MEP Ros put it.

Michael Teutsch brought a wave of positivity, talking about the excellent initiatives and examples that already exist and that are in motion, making them systemic through political and financial coordination. Through the Recovery and Resilience Facility for the economic and social recovery of the EU, it is possible to invest in education for a greener future, education for more digital societies and for equity issues - however the competition for these funds is rife. To this, a strong reaction from Mr Chakroun claiming that if the investment is there investing in new economies and infrastructure we are missing the point. LLL and Learning for sustainability needs to be a right - so that the government competences, claiming they should be mainstreamed and more awareness around them is needed, as well as clarity on what we mean by green skills. Learning to live together, learning to become, green skills cannot be limited to skills for the labour market: in fact far beyond the employment context, green skills are citizenship competence, as MEP Ros pointed out. The framework is universal: that was the message that sounded loudly and clearly.

As Borhene Chakroun from UNESCO said, the quest for the various dimensions of learning is universal, it is how this is embedded in cultural national contexts differs. Education for sustainable development does not end at environmental sustainability - the five P’s from the 2030 Agenda were mentioned: People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity, Partnership.

In the three distinct breakout sessions, the audience was asked to collectively come up with a shared sentence on what (1) learning that empowers, (2) learning that matters, (3) learning that lasts means to them, these are the results:

- Learning that empowers is not content specific learning but change in mentality and approach towards empowering learners.
- Learning that matters is one that is relevant for the learner and for society, it is one that instigates curiosity and creativity.
- Learning that lasts is learning that places the learner first, it stirs interest and motivation, it is an enjoyable learning.
In partnership for the EU-funded project ‘European Change-Maker Academy’, AEGEE, OBESSU and YEU engaged with a young public and European decision-makers on the need for young people to be represented in the political arenas. The event culminates an intense three-day workshop, where young people got together and formulated policy recommendations to European institutions in order to unlock the potential of young people as real change-makers.

Many of the newly-adopted recommendations call for the establishment of participation spaces for all. These democratic species are essential to reach the youth participation goals. Other recommendations include the right to have access to internet, the necessity for European Member States to support initiatives through cross-sector activities and funding, the need to promote youth NGOs at local, national and European level, as well as lowering the voting age to 16.

MEP Melchior, in her capacity as Member of the European Parliament but also as a former activist in AEGEE, stressed the lack of youth participation and representation in EU institutions. NGOs and civil society are there to fill in this gap, so it is crucial to support them - both financially and politically.

Other international institutions have taken a stance on this matter: for instance, the OECD has been working on ways to have more direct and deliberative democracies involving young people too. Indeed, young Europeans are best-placed to see the change in our societies and are the ones that should determine its pace.

Giuseppina Tucci, LLLP, challenged the notion that young people are un-engaged in politics: they have been present in every major political debate, from anti-racism to gender to environment to democracy. We often hear the misconception that political forces should listen to young people for they will be the future; but their opinion is valuable not only for the future, but also for the present!

MEP Šojdrová opened the event highlighting the importance new methods of assessment to face individual and collective challenges. This meeting of the Quality of Childhood comes very timely, as these issues remain high-priority for the Parliament’s work.

Speakers presented three inspiring practices so far collected within the Erasmus+ project “Personalised and Formative Assessment Practices Supporting School and Learner Development”. They were presented by the teachers who developed using formative assessment in their work.

Nico Ginter developed a collaborative game of human history and development of communities that approaches assessment as a continuous process of following students’ progress. It starts from the natural curiosity of children and follows curriculum development on this basis. The teacher assesses students’ progress through naturally gathered evidence. More information is available here.

Ulrike Sievers applies an integrated framework to assess students’ work and prepare them for Abitur. The core of this assessment practice is understanding learning (of each student), welcoming diversity (in learning styles and interests), looking for treasures, identifying criteria and inviting self-agency. Feedback is provided on a set of criteria (e.g. class participation, timely preparation/delivery of homework, ability for self-directed learning) and based on the biology-related topics chosen by students themselves on the basis of their interests.

Tom Oosterhuis and Marianne Rongen presented an e-portfolio underpinned by social-design based learning. It comprises four elements: exploration (what subject, interest, criteria for learning?), idea generation (taking into account different views and reaching consensus), realisation (carrying out assessment), harvesting (present and assess results, look at different viewpoints, celebrate shared learning).
LIFELONG LEARNING INTEREST GROUP: TOWARDS A EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA?

1 December 2020 | LLLP and EAEA

The second meeting of the Lifelong Learning Interest Group of the European Parliament in 2020 addressed the need for a holistic approach to education and training in the implementation of the European Education Area.

 MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen, Chair of the Interest Group on Lifelong Learning, opened the conference by stating that we need more Europe in the area of education - we need to harmonise better and increase resources, with the aim of raising standards across all levels of education. The lifelong learning approach in this realm is fundamental.

 Janine Costa, Representative of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, emphasised that lifelong learning is missing from the EEA Communication: during the Portuguese Presidency the EEA agenda will be moved forward and a new education and training cooperation framework will be developed. She insisted on the importance of involving stakeholders, including civil society, in the co-creation process, for a cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation in E&T.

 MEP Radka Maxová brought the attention towards the need to provide access to quality education for adults and senior citizens citing the need for their inclusion and involvement in society, to increase active lifestyles, prevent diseases, increase personal development and fight the spread of disinformation - citing the 2018 Council Recommendation on competences for adult learning. While the EEA mentions lifelong learning, it does not especially target older people, we therefore should be striving for a more organised and structured cooperation on this.

 Carlo Scatoli from DG EMPL mentioned how this is the moment for the Member States to make efforts in implementing the agenda, since it’s mainly in their competence, even though, he reminded, the EU has a strong impact on education and training. He emphasised how fundamental the role of Civil Society Organisations is in reaching out to all those who need to improve their skills. Bridges should be built with SMEs, industry, research, ecological efforts and so on.

 MEP Radka Maxová

 Tatjana Babrauskiene, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee pointed out that the Covid-19 crisis showed how quickly people have “reformed” in the education world. We should look at lessons learnt through this “process” (i.e. the covid crisis). What is essentially missing to move forward is investment - Member States should increase funding for lifelong learning, for adults, re- and up-skilling, especially for those who are vulnerable in society, including women and young girls. Member States should look beyond formal education and allocate more funds for non-formal and informal education, such as youth organisations for instance. Soft skills are needed to face the transformations we are embarking upon, in this context social and citizenship competencies are important.

 Oonagh Aitken, LLLP Steering Committee welcomed synergies with the European Research Area and the Digital Education Action Plan, and stated that education should be seen as a major contribution to achievement of a Social Europe. To achieve a holistic lifelong learning approach, more synergies across sectors are required as well as a greater focus on non-formal and informal education. The European Skills Agenda and the European Education Area links could be strengthened for these synergies to happen. Ms Aitken stated “Evolution not Revolution” adding, why not build on past achievements? An ambitious timeframe requires an ambitious investment. The Erasmus+ programme and the Solidarity Corps programme need major investments to become inclusive. Equity of provision is needed to tackle digital divides. Moreover, there need to be flexible pathways for people to access learning pathways - she anchored the hope that the European Education Area will equally value different learning environments, adding in the same spirit that the validation of these skills (volunteering included) should be possible. Ms Aitken concluded that the European Education Area should be co-created with Civil Society Organisations and education and training providers.

 Participants in the event agreed that in order to build a more modern system, we need to work together and think across silos and borders. In this regard, it was acknowledged that LLLP is a unique place to have all sectors together to exchange and bring some of the solutions to the table in terms of cooperation and policy coherence vis-a-vis the EEA. Discussants welcomed the mention of teachers and the revalorisation of the teaching profession. This is an aspect that still needs to improve, the silos between education sectors need to be broken. Cross-sectoral teacher training and building platforms/communities of practitioners can have a positive impact on this regard.

 Also on this topic, it was underlined that teachers need to be much more involved in policy development and that space must be given to the voices of teachers who are facing problems and ensure their involvement in these communities of practice. Similarly, all educators regardless of sector should be recognised equally.

 Discussants highlighted that the EEA Communication does not mention some key programmes and stakeholders such as Europe for citizens and UNESCO. Failing to acknowledge them is risky in the sense that it may lead to replicating programmes and projects instead of building upon existing ones. Participants also agreed that it is necessary to have an in-depth reflection on whether digital solutions are or not suitable for all learners before pushing for more digitalisation.
DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED AND AGE-APPROPRIATE MEDIA EDUCATION

2 December 2020 | ECSWE

The second day of the LLLWeek opened with a great discussion: is media literacy and education bearing in mind learners’ needs? The debate, promoted by ECSWE, paved the way for more awareness.

MEP Negrescu opened the debate stating that media literacy is a key element of the future of our society: we need more investment in education to enable everyone to take part in it. It is important to support existing initiatives in this field and promote new ones, as well as to introduce media literacy in existing school curricula. It would be relevant to have an open, multi-stakeholder, co-creation approach: at the moment, the European Parliament is working on a resolution on media issues and media education will be highlighted as a key element.

Prof. Paula Bleckmann, keynote speaker, highlighted that kids’ screen time has increased to three times the recommended daily amount. She went on with a provocative question: why do Silicon Valley tech giants send their own kids to Steiner schools? Because the positive effects associated with the use of digital media have been achieved without screen forever up until now! Another advantage of the fundamental limitation of digital education is the slack of inputs for all senses (taste, touch, smell, temperature etc.). Basic principles of lateral and digital thinking are embedded pretty much everywhere in today’s education. When kids learn to speak, this is what they learn: computational thinking. Media literacy is the ability to decide how much time I want to spend on digital tools for what purpose and taking away from which other activities. When using digital media, let’s use them in a conscious, mature and critical way.

Renato Sabbadini, All Digital, noted that it is important to use non-digital tools to teach digital competences. Months of distance learning have demolished our traditional, “comfort zone”, but we’ve become more flexible and adopted new educational approaches, noted Gianluca Coppola, DLearn. Participants agreed that in the coming months we will see more game-based learning and more micro-learning (short courses). If we want to drive the digital revolution we need to think not only of hardware but also of “software” (teacher training etc.). Robert Neumann noted that many people are mistaking the goal for the path: the goal is media literacy, not the devices that teach us.

It’s not about teaching teachers why digital is beneficial, it’s about giving them all the information they need to judge which parts of it are and which are not, and how to use it. “We don’t know what the future holds” argument: we never did in the past either, it’s up to us to shape it as we see fit.

RESILIENT AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING: OPPORTUNITIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

2 December 2020 | WOSM

This workshops built on studies to reinforce the positive contribution of youth organisation and non-formal education to possible solution sets to equip society with resilient skills.

MEP Sojdrova announced that the EP has worked to make the European Solidarity Corps programme efficient, inclusive and focused on learning outcomes of the volunteering experience. She recognises the importances of volunteering and argues that non formal learning should be supported, recognised and developed. WOSM conducted a small study aimed at understanding the impact of the “Scouting at home” activities, which found out that:

- Quick adaptation of scouting activities.
- Majority of survey respondents affirmed having learned new things.
- Majority of survey respondents affirmed feeling less lonely and more positive due to the activities of “Scouting at Home”.

Loes Rutten, European Youth Forum, shared that youth organisations are in tune with the needs of young people and are able to react faster to them. Youth organisations had to go through financial difficulties, with some of them having to close their doors for good. Although these organisations have shown great resilience, we can’t push them to the edge. Healthy youth organisations are a cornerstone of a healthy civic space and societies.

The OECD shared the results of “Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice”. The main results from their research were:

- The crisis is having different impacts on different age groups.
- Youth’s greatest worries are mental health

education and employment

- Non-formal learning can offer solutions to mitigate these worries. Now it is a great time to leverage the potential of non-formal learning.
- Recovery plans should deliver for all age groups.
- Financial support and integrated strategies are needed for the youth sector.
- Young people reacted and adapted very fast, they acted as a resilient force in society.

Closing the event, Flor van Houdt, European Commission, mentioned that the EU’s programmes are a solution. Mechanisms such as Next Generation EU and Youth Guarantee will be key to support young people’s employment situation.
CHALLENGING DIGITAL COMPETENCE: TRANSFORMATIONS IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

2 December 2020 | DARE

How are digital transformations impacting citizenship education? What’s the role of learners in this process? Promoted by DARE, this event suggested a multi-stakeholder approach.

Digital transformations are not only an economic process, but also shape our social and cultural reality - as well as the political one. MEP Negrescu highlighted how ownership of this process - by educators, learners, civil society, parents among others - is the only way to engage in a multi-stakeholder approach. He expressed a curiosity: the six main digital platforms used in European remote education (during the Covid-19 crisis) are not made in the EU. MEP Andresen reflected upon the tools at the EU’s disposal, mentioning that regulations are not the only tool available, there’s more the EU has to offer, i.e. innovative ideas, financing, exchanging good practices.

Mr Zimmermann (DARE Network) recalled that it’s not just about learning with digital technologies but also learning about them, which is of central importance to equip learners with the competences they need to live in a digital world. Generally, when looking at digital education, a shift away from a unique focus on infrastructure was commonly viewed as necessary. Ms Aitken (LLLP) emphasised that a communication plan is needed so the Digital Education Action Plan reaches the national, regional and local level. The Education Hubs proposed in the Digital Education Action Plan could serve to fill this gap, if designed with this in mind. There was agreement that the human dimension of digital education cannot be left behind, otherwise we risk excluding people and not allowing them to fully participate in the digital transition. In fact, consultations, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and learners’ participation in their learning, were prominent in the discussions.

The risks of the commercialisation of education were clearly identified, as well as the phenomenon of consusers - users who become consumers, often without being aware of it. The discussions concluded on the point that digital education needs to be centred around the learner, human rights, democracy and inclusion, which were seen as important approaches to break down the walls of the classroom and become part of the community. The last remarks pronounced by MEP Negrescu resonated with civil society’s calls for meaningful involvement: “Sometimes we [EU institutions] need to legislate. Sometimes we need to leave some freedom. But we always need to consult to understand what to do.”

MEP Victor Negrescu

DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR STUDENTS’ SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2 December 2020 | EuC

The COVID pandemic has made digital innovation more compelling than ever. What are the best pedagogical practices that can contribute to students’ success in higher education?

Maria Giulia Palocci, EuC set the scene by reminding us that while challenges and effects of online education are still monitored, many questions remain open about learning and teachers’ role in this, but also the EU’s role (in the context of DEAP). It is a call for action at European level for all actors, to learn from COVID and make systems fit for the digital age. Funds are needed for developing infrastructure but also for developing teaching methodologies towards this ambitious plan.

The role of the teacher and their digital competence has gained particular attention in the current times of the pandemic, said Prof Eva Cendon, from eu cen. It is important to also note that we are talking about different generations of educators, but also teachers who are with the higher education institutions, but also professionals outside - and the question is how to bring them all together and how to bring about success of students.

The DigCompEdu Framework she presented has been around before COVID, but it nevertheless gives good insight into what teachers need to know in relation to digital competences and student success. The framework, developed at EU level, refers to three sets of competences: educators’ professional competences, educators’ pedagogical competences and learners’ competences (facilitated by educators). The three broad areas encompass a total of 22 competences, which is quite extensive and not simple to know all about, but it gives a very good overview and a common framework that helps to think about what is necessary. She mentioned those topics that, in her view, are important for the EU level.

In the area of professional engagement, it is the importance of reflective practice of teachers themselves (how they engage in their own practice). In the area of digital resources, it is very much about selecting the right resources, the ones that are effective. In the area of teaching and learning, it is about facilitating collaborative learning in the online context. And finally, the issue of accessibility and inclusion, which is quite pertinent in the EU context, both in terms of infrastructure and competences. Under Erasmus+ a group of open universities developed a course on digitally competent educators and slightly reframed the EU framework, trying to work together with a common understanding of teaching, especially teaching in the online environment. One of the main aspects they agreed on is the relevance of student-centred learning and personalisation, collaborative and peer learning, as well as structured and developmental process of online learning.

Prof Sacha Gomez, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid and Coordinator of the Erasmus+ project ADeAPtIVE, said that the transnational consortium has developed the so-called Face-to-face vs distant learning axis: from master-
And it is a key factor in the challenges over time, at first, a big challenge for lessons learned during covid. Looking at gamification, learning. In their approach, they focused on explained the meaning and motivating online confinement. Students learned much more during the pandemic/exam period. It also allows teachers to see students use the platform most closer to the platform. Findings from the confinement: teaching accordingly. They also monitor the use of the platform. Findings from the confinement: students use the platform most closer to the exam period. It also allows teachers to see where students struggle the most in real time and support them in real time. Findings also show that students learned much more during the pandemic/confined.

Tuula Nousiainen, University of Jyväskyla, explained the meaning and motivating online learning. In their approach, they focused on gamification, which she combines with general lessons learned during covid. Looking at challenges over time, at first, a big challenge for both students and teachers was to adapt to the new context. It is also a huge learning opportunity to re-examine teaching and learning. In spring, the main focus was on getting things done, and make it as simple as possible. Later on, students were experiencing distance learning fatigue by the same environment, tools and approaches. For educators, the challenge now is to expand the methods used in a meaningful way to have a range of advanced tools and competencies to make learning quality for students.

In her case, the lesson learned is that gamified elements can make learning more motivating for students but it is important to pay attention to different motivations of students. Gamification helps students focus on tasks and complete them on time. They conducted an experiment with teacher students and the students reported a slightly positive effect on their motivation as compared to the beginning. However, how to cater for different motivations? In case of teacher students the social interaction and collaboration play a huge role, which online platforms do not really support fully. So the next step is to conduct an experiment to use virtual reality as a pedagogical tool to support collaboration, exploration, creativity.

From a more general perspective, it is evident that supporting digital competences of teachers is a top priority at all levels. And it is a key factor to provide high-quality learning experience. This might imply self-assessment tools and professional development models for teachers. High value of continuing education at universities. Another aspect to emphasis is the importance of peer learning and sharing practices, pedagogical ideas, etc. She highlighted this developed sharing culture as a silver lining in the circumstances.

In her concluding remarks, Martina Darmanin, LLP, highlighted the importance of focusing not only on students, but teachers as well in this context. The input from Sacha’s presentation is very beneficial in order to follow and understand the learning process, and also to prevent and deal with fatigue. Something that will help in advocacy efforts concerning digital education.

Online tests/questionnaire. The questions are of different levels and are interlinked depending on how correct the student’s answers are/how well they perform (it’s an algorithm). It allows to follow the progress over time and adapt the content and teaching accordingly. They also monitor the use of the platform. Findings from the confinement: students use the platform most closer to the exam period. It also allows teachers to see where students struggle the most in real time and support them in real time. Findings also show that students learned much more during the pandemic/confined.

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING: MOBILITY, PHYSICAL, VIRTUAL, OR BLENDED?

3 December 2020 | ESN and EFIL

Regular learning mobility has witnessed a critical halt with the pandemic. What will the future hold? What can the new Erasmus+ programme bring to the table? What lies ahead for learning mobility?

What is the future of mobility programmes? MEP Marcos Ros highlighted the importance of student mobility and of Erasmus+, the most successful EU programme. Distance learning is now a necessity, but it can only play a complementary role to real mobility, which must be kept high in EU priorities. Elisa Briga (EFIL) agreed, explaining how EFIL had supported the interrupted mobility of around 7000 students by setting up an online course to help them debrief this experience and allow for a shared intercultural reflection on what they went through. Michael Teutsch (EC) expanded on Elisa’s point, stating that our support should go both to the student mobilities affected by Covid and to the schools who are interested in providing blended mobility experiences (virtual and in-person), in order to enable them to kickstart the initiative and continue it well after the pandemic. This was not a possibility for some schools, as testified by Jacek P. Kaczor from First High School (Krakow, Poland).

Are schools ready for virtual mobility? Michael Teutsch (EC) confirmed having received great interest from students and schools. The foreseen one-time KA1 accreditation for schools will make it much easier to access mobility opportunities. Jacek P. Kaczor, representing the school perspective, confirmed that schools are ready to take on the challenge, but expressed concern about his students’ perceived decrease in motivation as time in isolation went by. Elisa Briga (EFIL) agreed, highlighting the importance of European support for all schools interested in organising virtual mobilities, including those who normally wouldn’t be able to offer such an opportunity (disadvantaged areas, etc.). Equally important is to rebuild trust with the students’ families by giving them reassurance and informing them about the risk management measures in place. Another crucial factor, particularly valued by parents, is ensuring that mobilities are recognised.

Virtual exchanges cannot replace physical mobility and although it can have other positive dimensions, it was definitely rejected as a tool for inclusion of disadvantaged learners for whom
The rationale behind this request was that as the Erasmus programme have to be differentiated. Many learners go for blended mobility and Data collected by the Commission on how the same with virtual exchanges? Erasmus programme offers this - would it be the beliefs, attitudes and realities are challenged, the transformative learning happens when your somewhere, others stressed that intercultural exchanges will never be the same as meeting someone in real life or being physically present - making clear by audience participation that virtual mobility is not an option. Online learning was already growing in popularity before the pandemic, so it is likely to continue after the crisis too and perhaps physical mobility will become more important, particularly because of the Covid-19 experience.

Elena Tegovska from the European Commission explained that the Commission’s objective is to bring complementary solutions to students whose situation does not allow for physical mobility. In particular, she cited medicine and law students, but also parents among other categories. This, she proceeded, could foster inclusion, although stressing it as a complementary aspect not meant to replace physical mobility in its entirety. It was made clear by audience participation that virtual exchanges will never be the same as meeting someone in real life or being physically present somewhere, others stressed that intercultural and transformative learning happens when your beliefs, attitudes and realities are challenged, the Erasmus programme offers this - would it be the same with virtual exchanges?

Data collected by the Commission on how many learners go for blended mobility and how many for physical mobility thanks to the Erasmus programme have to be differentiated. The rationale behind this request was that - as the pandemic has shown us how many learners do not have access to connectivity or digital equipment - blended mobility cannot be the sole aspect of inclusion for the programme. Audience members pleaded for the Commission and other stakeholders to re-engineer the programme so it is inclusive - after all it is the intentional design of experiences which will influence the impact and make it meaningful. To facilitate blended mobility, teachers and educators will need support and training. Ms Tegovska reassured the audience that inclusion has been reinforced in the new Erasmus programme (2021-2027), by quoting the example of the reinforced ‘Charter of Values’ for Erasmus which ensures that universities indicate what kind of services and infrastructure they offer for students with special needs, so the students can make informed decisions on their exchange experience thanks to this information.

Many even disputed calling it ‘mobility’ when it’s carried out online. On top of this, virtual mobility does offer widespread opportunities for inclusion, but since about half the world is not connected to the internet, we must bear in mind that virtual exchanges can end up reinforcing elitism and thinking in silos - this is an important reflection to make when thinking of the internationalisation of education. We should work together to co-create transformative opportunities for learners, going beyond schools and universities to also include vocational education and training.

Noelia Cantero from EARLALL opened the event and mentioned that this activity is part of a continuous effort on the topic. She highlighted that we can’t have green transition if people are not aware nor equipped for this transition.

MEP Ros mentioned that public awareness is key to achieve the SDGs and the Green Deal. Education is a powerful force and is one of the key elements in this regard. For this to materialise, it is necessary to invest in E&T. The EP will work on a INI report on the EEA and will include the topic of green skills. MEP Ros also highlighted the importance of making this topic clear in the curricula because a well educated childhood is a guarantee for having active citizens. It is paramount to recognise the dual role of green skills, on one side to face the green transition (skills for green economy - in line with new industrial strategy) and on the other side general green skills for society (competences to deal with environmental issues).

Vos de Wael from EFVET highlighted good practices for implementing green skills in adult learning and education. These good practices were shared in the EPALE Dossier on the Netherlands. The main questions posed were 1) How to ensure that sustainability and climate change becomes an important topic for the wide audience and 2) How to ensure that sustainable activities find their way to people for whom learning is not obvious. Some of the practices shared were: 1) Environment Center Rotterdam (grassroot environment coaches), 2) Exercising NL (online course Doing Green, provides practical green tools for daily life), 3) Colorful Green (colorful green ambassadors, connects sustainability and diversity), 4) Climate conversations (workshops about living, eating, consuming, transport and holidays) and 5) Citizens’ participation, climate tables and citizens assembly. Among the main conclusion from the dossier were a) Teachers are not equipped enough, they lack of materials for adults, b) Acquiring green competencies deserves special modules, but it is even better if it is included in all the curricula, c) Clear framework for green skills is needed, including a holistic approach for climate management, is not not just about specific knowledge but it is a way of life.

The Commission (DG EMPL) highlighted that there is coordination at all levels of the Commission and that the Green deal objectives were set very high. The need for recovery does not lower the importance of achieving the Green Deal, the Skills Agenda is anchored on the Green Deal. Mainly in Action number 6, the language aims at employability but not only. The EC proposes support for skills development that allow us to go through the recovery and transition. The EC sees two sides, skills for a green economy and the skills that every worker needs to transform their current job (support sustainable societies). Ferrari underlined the importance of
integrating green skills in all parts of the curriculum. Regarding the competence framework, Greencomp was announced in the Green Deal, Skills Agenda and Biodiversity Strategy. Take into account the need for green skills in a lifelong learning perspective, not relevant just for a specific group, but include the knowledge, skills, attitudes that all citizens need to have. The EC is asking for this cooperation to support mutual learning in different aspects, and could be applied in green skills. Horizon2020 funding is said to boost the green transition, to act on climate change, which needs to be done through education and citizen engagement.

The EESC is encouraging the Commission to have a strategy on green skills which, for the time being, does not exist. Green skills should be integrated transversally in all sectors and at all ages. They call the EC to conduct EU level research, not enough to coordinate between DGs, serious research is needed. It was brought to the audience’s attention that the Skills agenda does not provide a target for adult learning, and including also teacher education.

UNESCO shared the work on Human Capacity Development in Africa’s water sector with the AU-NPAD Water Centres of Excellence: Application for the Water, Energy, Food Security & Ecosystems Nexus. The EU-funded project ACEWATER addresses junior professional and technician level capacity challenges in the water sector in Africa.

Gina Ebner from EAEA and Joachim James Calleja from IEFET delivered the closing words to the audience. Ebner highlighted the importance of working across sectors and the need to be active now. An important task is to work with research organisations, there is a lot of research on sustainability and green transition. CSOs need to be translators and of these technologies and how we can use them. Calleja highlighted the need to educate educators and walk the talk when it comes to green skills and the green transition. We have made a huge step in making many more people aware of how important this subject is but we also need urgent action.

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approach in the post-pandemic world. GCE needs recognition, political support, adequate funding, EU competences: we need to create a policy field at EU level, where we can be active. GCE can help in achieving results in different policy areas in the EU.

MEP Incir mentioned GCE as a means and a goal, two processes at the same time. We should start very early and recognise the importance of all types of education. We are not isolated islands, solidarity, battle injustices regardless of where it happens in the world. All forms of education need to be included in our forward-looking discussions on GCE. It is indispensable if we are to achieve the SDGs.

The Commission (DG DEVCO) mentioned the DEAR programme as a vehicle of promoting European values. There is the issue of how to measure the results, how do we know that we really do what we aim to do, how to measure these changes in behaviour since they are not immediately evident. Council conclusion youth in external action: GCE is an important element to a comprehensive approach to youth in external action. She shared a link to a dedicated survey on GCE. It is indispensable if we are to achieve the SDGs.

Regarding an INI report on GCE MEP Incir mentioned that it would be important, at the Parliament we are working with it quite a lot and sometimes we are not even aware since it is not called specifically GCE. We could work together and put pressure to those in the Parliament undermining the efforts.

Francesca Minniti from CONCORD underlined that going local is the solution. Local organisations interact with their political counterparts, they can translate what is happening at EU level to citizens, making it much simpler and GCE can be instrumental in this.

On Chancing the narrative of GCE, Nils from DARE asked: Is the European structure prepared for it? Specially with the way we organise funding and grant making. We need to support those local organisations really dedicated, we need a more europeanised approach. One challenge is that educational discourses are disconnected from political discourses e.g. Digital Act can create a totally different reality in europe. Personal data, human rights, can be empowering things. As a sector we have the duty to serve the european way, align our topics. The EU should have an interest in bringing the education sector to discuss major european issues e.g. digital act, trade treaties.

MEP Incir mentioned that we need to think globally and act locally. I also believe that it needs to be supported at EU level. Authoritarian regimes make it a challenge to talk about GCE, hard for civil society to receive support. Act locally but with the support of the different levels.

The speakers present some examples of lifelong learning centres, one of which is the Ohjaamo centre in Helsinki: it is both a counselling and social service in Europe is crucial to offer the fast-changing needs of the clients.

Mapping lifelong learning career guidance centres and service in Europe is crucial to offer harmonised services based and built on the needs of the population. Examples of multi-partnership initiatives in lifelong learning career guidance in Europe are based on 7 case studies from 6 countries, with data collected from interviews and desk research, focusing on different types of initiatives, such as events, counselling spaces, e-services, etc. For each study multiple aspects were addressed: general description, key figures, governance, funding, communication, multi-partnership organisation, impact, etc.

The speakers present some examples of lifelong learning career guidance centres, one of which is the Ohjaamo centre in Helsinki: it is both a counselling and social service, as the services are located to the social areas of population needs. The centre provides counselling, education and training, employment services, business development, health and social care. They organise recruiting events, support groups and leisure activities with 14 partners.

Keep in Pact is developed based on the need for multi-stakeholder cooperation in lifelong career guidance in Europe, which allows better quality of services and offer to the fast-changing needs of the clients. A competence framework for multi-partnership management looked into the needed competences of a partnership manager in relation to their roles and responsibilities. The development of the framework was based on available job descriptions, interviews and KIP case studies. The work resulted in identifying 7 key competences for partnership managers (clusters of knowledge, skills and individual predispositions). The framework will be used to develop learning materials, toolkit for mutual learning and an online training platform.

Current and future local issues greatly imply COVID-19. One of the important takeaways from the debates is that the pandemic has had not only negative impacts on cooperation, but also provided some opportunities with an accelerator effect on digitalisation, search for common solutions and mutualisation of resources, new partnerships and due to more digital communication, it has somewhat “deterritorialised” the services provided.

A European survey on multi-partnership practices in lifelong learning career guidance revealed that 80% of respondents work in multi-stakeholder partnerships and the remaining 20% reported being in the process of setting up such structures. The most common examples of collaboration are territorial, governance, higher-education study and work programme, projects and activity-based cooperation.
More inclusive schools are needed to accompany the young generations with a migration background. The EU should continue to invest in education and training if it wishes to achieve this goal.

Education and training are an important part of transmitting social values, the foundations for successful participation in society and a tool for inclusion. Children's voices are excluded from the media and institutions. Viewing them as active social actors rather than just learners would fix most of our hiccups. To make this a reality we should consider enabling children to have a voice through research as well. There are methods of research which are participative and can support children's autonomous production of knowledge - which should start from early childhood education.

MEP Guillaume highlighted that with school closures many children have lost their possible safe space, access to a healthy diet and a place to socialise. Those most vulnerable have dropped out or gone off the radar. This generally intensified inequalities especially with covid's negative impact on inclusiveness.

Education is not just the responsibility of schools. Collaborative work around education and integration is required, the speakers urged the audience to not forget practitioners and NGOs which are part of the educational ecosystem. Practitioners play an important role in stopping early school leaders. Strengthening mentoring is important, key to tackle inequalities in education. Both formalised and informal mentoring programmes exist, it is believed to be the human bond which can move relationships and inclusion forward in education and society as well. Human bonds exist outside of formalised schemes, how can we integrate informal mentoring and how can we make that fit into school are both questions which require a reflection. Embracing diversity and countering ‘assimilation’ remains the goal. Support to families is a clear need in the Covid-19 crisis, when children need to learn at home, but should be a practice that is mainstreamed also outside the remits of the pandemic.

Paradigm and narrative shift was called for, instead of looking at inclusion as a deficit or a challenge, we should look at migrant children as an asset as we know that multicultural and multilingual students become much more resilient and think out of the box more. Migrant children in Europe are an asset, how can we all make them stronger by including them?
ABOUT THE LLLPLATFORM

The Lifelong Learning Platform is an umbrella that gathers 41 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth, coming from all over Europe and beyond. Currently these networks represent more than 50 000 educational institutions and associations covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Their members reach out to several millions of beneficiaries.

The LLLWeek aims to raise awareness on lifelong learning’s capacity to answer many challenges of modern societies. The LLLWeek has over time become a milestone in the European education agenda, thanks to the support of civil society actors and Members of the European Parliament. The idea is to bring together learners and educators, field workers and policy-makers, researchers and political representatives, and give them the opportunity to discuss today’s greatest educational challenges.

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