



Learning democracy values and participation

Brussels, 19-20 June 2019

REPORT



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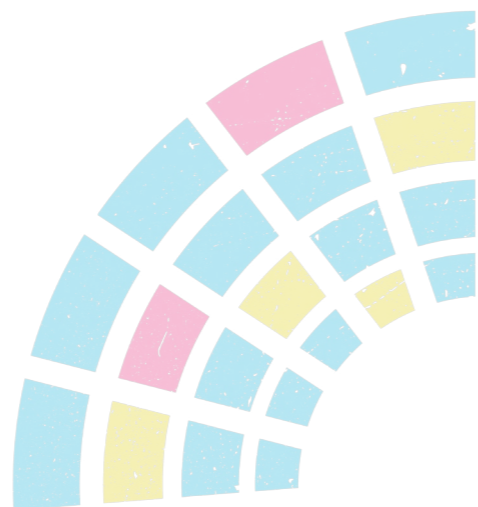


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DAY #1

WELCOMING SPEECH

The two-day conference opened up with a vibrant reception, and LLLP President Gina Ebner did the honours with an opening speech. She thanked participants and introduced the theme of the conference, stressing the **importance of all learning environments for learning democracy**. Learning democracy and values in Europe have been with LLLP since the beginning. She did not to speak of our current political landscape, because we have talked enough of what is happening and it is now time for civil society to act. Europe needs to tackle social situations, participating in democracy, elections, protests, and being active in associations. We need more structured dialogue, being invited to discuss with the policy-makers and LLLP greatly achieved that in the past 15 years or so. "Lifelong learning and education are not a silver bullet".

She then introduced Augustin Mihalache, Education Attaché of the Romanian representation to the EU. Mr Mihalache thanked the LLLPlatform for the excellent collaboration in the past months, organising events together. He chose neither to speak about the Romanian priorities in education (well-known at that point) nor about the results and success of their Presidency. What he was keen on talking about is **making a difference**. All organisations make a difference in the EU policy-making. In 2016, a large process of stakeholders' consultation in Romania defined the priorities of the presidency. All Romanians were involved



Augustin Mihalache

and this is the democratic process that led to choosing early childhood education as a priority. The consultation are ongoing in Brussels. NGOs, social partners, regions in Europe, the Permanent Representation presented the priorities, to adjust them and to explore how to better implement them. He is a living witness that **collaborative processes lead to very fruitful outcomes**.

NETWORKING RECEPTION

The evening went on with conversational tables. Through this exciting game, each table was geared with a topic and participants had to tackle it, providing ideas with posts. All the while enjoying a glass of wine and small appetizers!



A sparkling conversation



...and piano music!



DAY #2

INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Gina Ebner, opened the second day of LLLP's Annual Conference to remind us that «**Learning is not just for the labour market: personal development and active citizenship are an important part.** What do we mean by democracy? What do we mean by participation? Today, we will be looking at learner-centered approach, with learners involved in shaping their curricula. We all have to convince policy-makers that **working with civil society can improve our education systems**»

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Rilli Lappalainen, Secretary-General of Bridge 47, reminded us that all the key words that shaped this year's Annual Conference's theme - learning, democracy, values and participation - are very relevant for our time. These words are really what unites us. We are asking political system to be relevant but **democracy is not just about voting.** Vote is just a part of democracy, the most visible one but not all of it.

«What's the role of citizens then? Are we working in a democratic way? How can we empower the people so that they really believe that they can make a change? Do they have the skills for this? The responsibility is ours: are we promoting democracy enough? Education is an extremely important tool. With SDG 4.7, it was the first time ever that education was recognised by international political leaders in such a way.

In our own organisations, we have AGMs, but it is just the tip of the iceberg in our



Rilli Lappalainen

democratic functioning». Mr Lappalainen then asked the audience to have a short chat with their neighbours about how democratic are our organisations. Most of

the time, **democratic values are not only about equality but also about equity**. For instance, some smaller organisations have less members or power but they should have the same voice as bigger organisations.

Mr Lappalainen went on claiming that we **should reflect** on the core values that underpin our democratic systems. But this is easier said than done. Our current social crises show how conflict can emerge from disagreements about values. Democracy also requires us to build partnerships in the society, but it generally means that we have to go out of our comfort zone.

In times of populism, xenophobia, racism, etc global citizenship education is not a very popular concept. It is not enough to raise awareness or post “do not be mean with your neighbour” on social media. Civil society really has a role in stressing the importance of education, through formal, non-formal and informal education. A word used a lot to describe GCE is “**transformative education**”. Sustainable education, human

rights education, peace education, someone counted that there is more than a hundred of terms like this that are more or less synonym of GCE.

The most important partner remains the EU, but it does not have any real mechanisms or political recognition that highlights the importance of GCE. How could we, as civil society, highlight the important role that it plays in our modern world? Luckily, the Finnish presidency has announced several initiatives to mainstream the concept of GCE into the EU agenda. **The EU should be a role model for the world.**

«**We should not abandon the ambition to change the world**». But we need to take time to really think about democracy in our organisations, in our daily lives, and in our work. Do we talk enough about values, principles in our organisation, making it apply to reality? We should really do that once a year. We really need to change ourselves in order to change the system.



A moment of the keynote

HIGH-LEVEL POLICY PANEL

The morning continued with a high-level panel discussion, moderated by **Lucie Susova**, LLLP Vice-president. Participants discussed the current and upcoming policies that could enable education to truly inspire our democracies and their values.

Radu Szekely, Head of Cabinet, Romanian Ministry for National Education, recalled that the Romanian Presidency motto is “Cohesion, a common European value”. This is about eliminating disparities and one concrete example from education and training is the agreement on the contingency measures for the Erasmus+ programme in case of a no-deal Brexit. He emphasised the **importance of teaching languages to adults**, as well as the Council recommendation on early childhood education and care, suggesting that investment in ECEC can help to reduce early school leaving.

Birgitta Vourinen, Deputy Director General, Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, explained that the Finnish Presidency will address lifelong learning or what they call continuous training. **Lifelong guidance has been a major feature in the Finnish education system**, enabling teaching and learning throughout life and avoiding dead ends. In Finland there have been efforts to enhance prospects for continuous learning. With **several stakeholder consultations** they started a vision for 2030 and continuous learning has a role to play in this vision. Different players and services are needed such as skills mapping, personal guidance (both online and offline services) and making competences visible, especially if these are acquired outside formal settings. The Presidency wishes to bring these discussions

to the EU level, including debates to discuss investments.

Michael Teutsch, Head of Unit, Schools and Multilingualism, DG EAC, explained that he cannot yet confirm details about the **future generation of ET2020** but the EC will launch the Open Public Consultation over the summer. He further dwelled into the proposals for the new European programmes and how both citizenship education and lifelong learning are included (for instance with an ambitious Erasmus+ programme).

«Schools cannot replace the role of civil society in providing civic education»

Nils-Eyk Zimmermann, Vice-President of DARE Network, commented that **the future Erasmus+ has a direct impact on the survival of civil society at European level and in some countries**. Civil society should be held in higher consideration because it provides spaces for participative collaboration and for including different groups of society. CSOs are the biggest providers of civic education and a space for self-development and self-learning. They give people the opportunity to develop trust, also towards democratic institutions, as they offer spaces where you can find confidence in a democratic future. We should see CSOs as learning providers and more consciously support their role in finding answers to big questions such as climate change, corruption, complex social issues, as well as promoting social innovation.



Mr Szekely explained that the Minister has launched a new vision where the role of schools is to support and coordinate education rather than merely provide it. He remarked that civil society has a role and that **schools cannot replace the role of civil society in providing civic education.** He agreed that civil society should be given a stronger role from an early age.

Ms Vourinen remarked that employers want to know what skills people have and want to have a say on them. We need to make those skills visible and we need stakeholders including civil society to help us understand it. European cooperation exemplified by Erasmus+ and the EQF has enhanced possibilities for people to make their learning more visible.

According to Mr Teutsch, new technology created bigger communication spaces

where people of the same opinion speak to each other instead of to people with whom they disagree. This has implications for citizenship education. **Learning democracy should be as important as other things in curricula like basic skills, mathematics and literacy.**

Mr Zimmermann said that we have to consider if such multipliers see themselves as learners. That includes policymakers. **We still perceive the attitude that lifelong learning is for others and not for ourselves.** Mr Szekely stressed the importance **learning mobility for adults**, and not only for schools and young people, in citizenship education. Adult education moved away in previous years from the ideas of European citizenship more towards labour market concerns because of the economic crisis but now the values crisis is bigger.



BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

#1 LEARNING DEMOCRACY

This first breakout session was opened by **Marta Lempart** from OKS who has had a leading role in the Polish Women's Strikes. She brought her perspective on the topic of learning democracy which she stressed can only happen through **learning-by-doing.**

Ms Lempart explained that the women involved in the movement are locally organised and do not belong to organisations. They are good at organising themselves and sharing knowledge. The movement offers a safe space for these women, many of whom are from rural areas or smaller cities, who may not be comfortable with the regular conferences or panel discussions which are centred on people from the capital Warsaw who almost speak a different language, that of the 'élite'. Women are made to feel "weird" in such fora and do not wish to be told what

to do by "experts".

Several participants expressed the view that it is a very **educational movement**, even if it does not explicitly identify itself as such. Ms Lempart explained that is difficult to have anything about equality or civic-based in the education system because it is excessively influenced by religion. There was also a debate, with no final agreement, about the extent to which the women from rural areas or disadvantaged backgrounds should be supported or trained to engage with the political elite.

The key conclusion from the session was the need to **empower people through learning-by-doing** and the importance of having a safe space to do so.



#2 GCE

Discussions on Global Citizenship Education were led by **Ricarda Rotshilnig**, from the International Council on Adult Education. She started off by drawing the state of play and analysing where we stand, as a society, on GCE. Today we see that there is a lack of definition for Global Citizenship Education, which is detrimental to its full recognition. Often non-formal and informal education actors do the main job, and today especially **CSOs are seen as main providers of GCE**. There is therefore a need for a marginer engagement of actors, but GCE seems to occupy a low spot in the political agenda of priorities.

Participants gave birth to a lively debate, at the end of which it was deemed necessary to come up with new pedagogical methodologies that would steer up the field. Such methodologies should integrate and even «exploit» the technological advancements, rather than be scared of it.

Formal education should take a stand at GCE, integrating it in curricula and making sure that newer generation grow up bearing in mind its values. Solid investments in educators' trainings was considered of primary importance, because **if GCE is still not recognised is because those who want to foster it are not empowered enough**.



#3 PROMOTING VALUES

Pawel Marczewski is head of unit Citizens at the ideaForum, a large NGO in Poland. He illustrated the current political concerns regarding values and democracy in Poland. His organisation recently developed a handbook promoting diversity for schools; it became a highly politicized issue, the book was called "LGBT propaganda" by the right-wing movement. This prompted them to take a step back and look at democracy, and how education can better promote values.

According to the EU Social survey, **in most EU countries education is more valued than democracy**. What does it tell us? When education is highly valued, there is limited causality to how much is democracy trusted. The main factor is the extent to which systems are centralised, i.e. the autonomy schools are granted. The level of education is another factor: we would expect the higher it is, the more you believe in the system. But as a matter of fact, the more educated you are, the more you think that you are responsible for your own educational achievements (education itself system plays no role).

In order **to uncouple the opinions on education and on public institutions, it is recommended to give autonomy to schools** (decentralisation). This is the case in the Netherlands where no causality can be found between trust in public institutions and schools. «**Democratic values cannot be conveyed by centralised governments**», he argued.

Funding is another issue. Often, it is very



Pawel Marczewski (Batori) and Joanna Pankowska (LLLP)

centralised and the funding is not adapted to local needs. Funding is naturally better where there is higher tax collection but this does not contribute to equality of chances.

Susana Oliveira (EAEA Board Members) said that what made the education reforms successful in Portugal is that for instance, they introduced 25% **flexibility in curricula** that is open to citizenship education. The schools can decide what to do. More autonomy was then given to the schools. This has led to build trust and more social justice.



THE LEARNING PARLIAMENT

Alberto Alemanno, Professor of Law at HEC Paris and Founder of the Good Lobby moderated a fishbowl discussion. He threw at the audience controversial statement to stimulate the debate.

«When it comes to learning democracy, schools and universities only teach the theory - non-formal and informal settings are where it is actually practised».

Stefan Jahnke, EUF, thought a **strict division between formal and non-formal education is counterproductive**. Arja Krauchenberg, EPA, commented that **vocational institutions are a good way to combine theory and practice** and this knowledge can be transferred to other settings. According to Loes Rutten, YFJ, **youth organisations show an added value that formal settings cannot replicate**. This is true especially because as Jim Dratwa, European Commission, explained, most teachers are still reluctant to **integrate informal and non-formal methods into their teaching**, although these can help learning about democracy. Judit Lantai, OBESSU, said that «learning democracy» means to put young people at the centre and make their participation meaningful. Most participants considered their family as the first environment and a safe space for learning democracy.

«The main challenge for democracy is that people are not taught about it at local level».

Nils-Eyk Zimmermann, DARE, said **we need to empower people locally** to get involved and make a difference at national and

«We need to empower people locally»

European level. Ms Lempart agreed and said that **democracy has to be practised, it cannot only be preached**. This is what leads people to give up on democracy. Participants agreed, and added that there are good practices at local level where we see democracy flourishing, such as participatory budget, but there still needs to be institutional support for learning about democracy across all spectrums of society.

«Our education systems fail to teach people about their rights - and particularly their responsibilities - as citizens».

Ms Krauchenberg, EPA, said education has an essential role in preparing people to



live and foster a pluralistic society. Werner Lich, EUROPE for School & Teacher Training, said practicing democracy means both proactivity and knowledge, citing Brexit as an example since knowledge about the EU was lacking. Anna Fornaciari, a student, remarked that democracy has many shapes, including referenda as a tool of participative democracy. Mr Alemanno added that referenda are in fact a non-binding consultation and we are witnessing an increasingly pathological use of such an instrument, while there are many others.

«Vocational Education and Training is about promoting employability and has nothing to do with learning about values - that's for people following an academic pathway».

There was general opposition to this statement. Dr Marzewski explained that many people who opted for an academic education ended up disillusioned with the quality of their training. **There is a greater purpose to life than having a job**, so only teaching the technical dimension is not

enough. Mr Zimmermann, DARE, said that although important for employability, **VET still has to incorporate an awareness of values and basic principles such as equality, solidarity and freedom**. Ms Rutten, YFJ, commented that we are often skewed to academia because of our own backgrounds but we need to have stakeholders from the VET sector join this debate.

«Despite the EU's limited competence in education, civil society managed to create a valuable ecosystem»

«Neither the public nor private sector recognise the importance of investing in education as a way to build a sustainable democracy».

Brikena Xhomaqi, LLLP, remarked that **there is fragmentation across EU funds that support education**, reinforcing rather than breaking down silos. Also, the private sector is often expecting education to fix the problems that it faces, yet many companies keep on denying investments for their employees' training. Lucie Susova, Solidar, criticised the lack of long-term vision behind investment in education which is replaced by a project-based approach. Ms Gimonprez, DARE, reflected on the fact that investment at EU level in education is mainly going to mobility but we need to consider the majority of static citizens who also need support in learning about democracy and the EU. Mr Alemanno closed the debate and commented that, **despite the EU's limited competence in education, civil society managed to create a valuable ecosystem** and much more could be done, including learning from other sectors and looking at education from a more horizontal perspective.



an exercise of participatory democracy!



CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS

During the days of the LLLP Conference, the EU summit and other European events highlighted the importance of skills for the labour market, whereas the Annual

Conference was focusing on education for values. We have to bridge the two worlds and CSOs have to work for ensuring both are taken into account. LLLP is currently drafting a policy paper on 21st Century Learning Environments. "Agreeing to disagree" is the beauty of diversity and we also have to find some unity together. At the Annual Conference, we tried to diversify our methods showing how formal, non-formal and informal education have also different methods. The LLLP hopes to bring these discussions to European lobbies and then help shape the next actions and programmes.



The final wrap-up



Sharing views

EU CAFÉ



The AC was a space for sharing and connecting. All along the conference, members and partners of the LLLPlatform had the chance to showcase interesting practices in the field of Learning Democracy. Networking and experiencing each other's work experiences is the perfect way to create bottom-up innovation!

the «learning parliament» was recorded on paper!



...and then there was dancing



Networking moments

ABOUT THE LLLPLATFORM

The Lifelong Learning Platform 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 and to react to the 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 12 years now, the LLLP 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 ancestors.

Today funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, the LLLP 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 43 member organisations, the Lifelong Learning Platform is today the most legitimate interlocutor of the European institutions in the field of lifelong learning. The LLLP 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 Platform is a tool to promote 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 LLLP 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
- Organising events and developing activities



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