



ESTABLISHING AN INTEREST GROUP FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

“INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES”

The Interest Group for lifelong learning on inclusive education for inclusive societies was held in Brussels on Thursday 16th of April 2015. The aim of the group is to reflect on how lifelong learning can contribute to 21st Century challenges in Europe and to make concrete proposals to policy-makers at all level.

Present: Gina Ebner (EAEA), Audrey Frith (EUCIS-LLL), Tania Berman (EAEA), Alen Maletic (EUCIS-LLL), Thomas Tugulescu (EUCIS-LLL), Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP), Julie Ward (S&D), Julia Poulpy (MEP Assistant working for Julie Ward), Hegedus Orsolya (MEP Assistant working for István Ujhelyi), Aleksandra Pilka (MEP Assistant working for Krystyna Łybacka), Stéphane Cornet (MEP Assistant working for Claude Rolin), Andrej Korpar (Trainee at Mr Zvert office), Vappu Kaarenoja (Political Advisor at European Parliament), Judith Wind (FEECA), Antti Reinsalo (ESN).

Apologies: Helga Trüpel (Greens), Krystyna Łybacka (S&D).

1. Words of welcome from MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP)

Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP) stressed the need to emphasize the benefits of lifelong learning and to find common work targets. The key questions are where should we put education, what sector of lifelong learning are we talking about and what are the working methods. The point of this Interest Group is to create links between different policies which have an impact on education.

2. Rationale for setting up the interest group and political context, Regina Ebner (EAEA)

When Mr. Juncker announced in September 2014 the distribution of portfolios among the nominated commissioners: the new College now counts seven Vice-presidents, each leading a project team. The aim of this new design is to improve policy coherence and operating efficiency. They are steering and coordinating the work of a number of Commissioners in compositions that may change according to the needs and as new project develop over time. Unfortunately, that creates more problems than it solves, because it reduces the individual units' possibility to be creative and reduces flexibility when working on initiatives in the field of education.

Moreover, there is another change in administration: adult education policy and vocational training moved from DG EAC to DG EMPL and thus, under the supervision of the respective Commissioner¹. In this new configuration, different sectors of education are divided between two different Commission portfolios and departments, adding steps in the decision-making process. Synergies are utterly needed in order not to weaken the LLL agenda further.

¹ The parts of Unit EAC A3 (Skills and Qualification Strategies; Multilingualism Policy) dealing with Skills and Qualification, and of Unit EAC B2 (Vocational Training and Adult Education; Erasmus +) dealing with Vocational Training and Adult Education policy move from DG EAC to DG Employment, Social Affairs and inclusion (EMPL).

Therefore, this Interest Group aims to help us to remind the European institutions of the importance of a comprehensive approach and that we need more cooperation on lifelong learning. On the one hand, the new structure with the new President of the European Commission brings people together but on the other hand it reduces the possibility of individual units to be more creative. The key question is how flexible it will be in the future to work on initiatives? Unfortunately, no one seems responsible now regarding the theme “inclusive education for inclusive societies”. [Gina Ebner](#) welcomes the [Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#) but it should not only be targeted at schools. Non-formal learning and adult education can make a big contribution to promoting citizenship and common values among adults.

3. Round table

The following issues were discussed in this meeting, based on which these action points emerged:

- **Social and civic participation, employability and higher education;**
- The issue of **learning mobility** and **intercultural dialogue**. We should support physical mobility competences.
- **Social issues** and **citizenship, well-being and health**. It is a huge issue in Europe now. People cannot be productive and cannot work if they do not have high levels of well-being.
- In addition, it is important to focus on **older people**. The mental capital of older people can solve many problems such as the crisis, we have thus to include them because they have so much to offer. **Intergenerational learning** and family learning are very important.
- **Workplace learning** and the connection between **learning mobility** and **family learning**.
- **Soft skills** are fundamental because they make people more employable. We have to put the “**learning to learn**” aspect firmly on the agenda. Everything is now tied up with formal education and it this is wrong. We should not forget **non-formal and informal learning**.
- We need to have concrete proposals in order to start **pressuring our Prime Ministers and the Ministers of Education**. We need to have a big impact in each Member State.
- We need to promote **the creative and innovative potential of people** through non-formal and informal learning in ways that are relevant to employability (we should not only focus on digital).
- We should integrate [the EU agenda for adult learning \(2012-2020\)](#) which serves as the means for increasing the opportunities for **participation in adult learning** in all kinds (formal, non-formal and informal learning) whether to acquire new work skills for **active citizenship**, or for **personal development and fulfilment**.

4. Work Plan for 2015-2016 and internal rules, Audrey Frith (EUCIS-LLL)

In term of process

Audrey Frith explained that the Interest Group should meet 3-4 times a year with well-defined topics for each meeting. Besides, it has been decided to select **only one topic per meeting** in order to propose concrete actions and to present an innovative vision of the topics. We also need key interventions for external experts (OECD, UNESCO...).

At the beginning of our meetings, one of the members of the Interest Group should provide a summary of the previous meetings in order to explain exactly what has been done before and to provide enough information that we do not have to start from scratch. Background document should also be provided to participants to ease the discussion.

The Interest Group approved the focus of 2015-2016 “Inclusive education for inclusive societies” and the holistic approach with complementary goals such as employability, civic participation and social inclusion.

Planning next meetings: topics, methods and timing

The next one will take place in June. The 3rd meeting will take place in autumn:

2nd meeting: **Inclusive learning and inclusive society** (in July)

This topic aims to contribute to the upcoming Council Conclusions on inclusive education.

3rd meeting: **Societal challenges** (in autumn)

Based on the Paris Declaration, what should we concretely proposed?

Other important topics for 2016

- Partnership with international organisations. This topic shall be further discussed by the Interest Group.
- Learning mobility, teaching methods, and learning experiences.
- Intergenerational learning and family learning.
- Cultural awareness.
- Health and well-being.

Internal rules

We do not really need to have internal rules but we should write a page to explain **who we are** and **what is our aim**. We also should stress that the Interest Group is open to all MEPs, **from different political groups**. We can also make a web page to present the Interest Group with pictures of the members and make a statement explaining why MEPs are supporting this Interest Group as well as a campaign at some point with some pictures/stickers “**I Love LLL**”, “**I am still learning**”.

Timing

We will create a doodle poll in July to find out what is the best timing for the meetings. In addition, we should appoint vice-chairs from different political groups in order to have an impact in all the groups.

5. Expected outcomes

- Watch dog activities.
- It is important to know what we exactly want to achieve.
- Interest Group Policy recommendations i.e. to the **Luxembourgish Presidency Council Event on early childhood education and inclusive education** and the **revision of EU directive on education** and anti-discrimination.
- Make sure that DG EAC and DG EMPL work together (cooperation and link with both DG EAC and DG EMPL in order to safeguard the LLL approach and to combat inequalities).