

Brussels, November 2022 - Lifelong Learning Platform - European Civil Society for Education - Reaction to the Council Recommendations on learning for the green transition and sustainable development and on a fair transition towards climate neutrality

Last June, the Council approved two key Recommendations in the framework of the European Education Area and the Skills Agenda: the [Recommendations on learning for the green transition and sustainable development](#) and the [Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality](#). It is reassuring to see the two Recommendations being released together as they form two important pillars in the much needed changes in all education and training systems covering the lifelong learning continuum.

Learning for sustainability rhymes with lifelong learning

At the Lifelong Learning Platform, **‘we welcome the call to support learners of all ages** to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live sustainably, change patterns of consumption and production, embrace healthier lifestyles and contribute – both individually and collectively – to societal transformation’. It is reassuring to see the explicit recognition in the Commission’s proposal of applying a **‘lifelong learning approach to learning for environmental sustainability** with hands-on, engaging and action-based ways of learning which foster (i) knowledge, understanding and critical thinking (cognitive learning); (ii) practical skills development (applied learning); and (iii) empathy, solidarity and caring for nature (socio-emotional learning)’. It is however regrettable that this recognition was not added in the final text from the Council.

Despite being renamed from *‘learning for environmental sustainability’* to a title more focused on the green transition, it is positive to see that the Recommendation maintained its orientation towards **forming whole-persons meaning someone who can act following a sustainability mindset in any environment in which they find themselves**: work, communities, family, etc. This is important as sustainability competences are key not just to face the current green and digital transitions but any future societal, economic or environmental transformation.

There are [different understandings across the EU](#) regarding climate change, environmental and sustainability education which might hinder the scaling up and mainstreaming of much needed content and approaches. It is encouraging to see as one of the main goals of the Recommendation the **articulation of a vision and shared understanding at EU level** on the deep and transformative changes needed in education and training for which the development of the competence framework was planned. The Lifelong Learning Platform participated actively in the consultation process which was part

of the [GreenComp](#) development. LLLP supports the fact that a **holistic approach to sustainability was maintained, which is illustrated by not only focusing on specific technical skills but encompassing transversal competences**. This, in turn, has the ability to support learners in all learning environments and all stages of their lives.

LLLP deeply appreciates the aims to facilitate the sharing of the expertise and best practices that policy-makers, researchers and educators have at system and institution level and the support of initiatives at EU level to foster learning for sustainability. In the last year, the [Education for Climate Coalition](#) grew as a community bringing together these actors, forming different sharing spaces both at EU and national level, ensuring that expertise and practice reach a wider European audience. LLLP wants to see the Coalition become a catalyst also for **bringing together different sectors of education to their activities, and providing ample room to non-formal and informal sectors, while covering a wider age range**. In a similar vein, the different Working Groups of the European Commission should coordinate their work better, especially among the different Directorate-Generals, to ensure that the perspective on learning for sustainability is bridged across the different age groups and through all learning environments, rather than being limited to formal schooling.

Most importantly, it is motivating to see the encouragement of investment for the effective implementation of all these efforts. **We wish to see that establishing sustainability as a priority area in education and training brings along much needed (public) investment** to effectively implement high-quality lifelong learning for sustainability in a broad variety of learning environments from the formal to the informal and non-formal. Increased funding will be paramount to support educators to facilitate learning for sustainability, and education and training providers to effectively integrate sustainability across all their activities. As the Recommendation indicates, Member States will need to agree on the mobilisation of national and EU funds for investment in infrastructure, training, tools and resources. The EU and its Member States [need to invest more and better](#). This will again require more policy coherence at all levels, and at the EU level in particular, to ensure better coordination between the funding instruments available in this area, including but not limited to Erasmus+, LIFE, Horizon Europe, and Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR).

Training for sustainability: lifelong learning opportunities for all

LLLP is pleased to see that, in parallel, the **Council approved the Recommendations on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality** bridging the gap between climate neutrality objectives and calls for social justice. LLLP has always called for breaking down silos and the work between DG EAC and DG EMPL will ensure the lifelong learning approach is supported and all learners benefit from it. However, despite lifelong learning being the 1st principle of the EPSR and given the urgency of climate crises, the non-binding Recommendation limits itself to only *'inviting'* national governments to adopt and implement comprehensive and coherent policy packages addressing the employment and social aspects of the green transition including **'equal access to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning, as well as equal opportunities'**. This non-binding characteristic clashes with the concrete and enforceable legislative proposals of the Fit-for-55 package (key file addressing greenhouse gas

emissions), making it a slippery slope for Member States to sacrifice social policies to comply with the binding measures of the European Green Deal.

Despite this, it is encouraging to see that the calls to Member States include integrating the employment and social aspects of the green transition in national skills strategies and adapting education and training curricula according to **occupation-specific and transversal skills needs**. The adaptation of curricula must work towards expanding transversal competences' development and recognition, **ensuring that learners are equipped to adapt to any societal change**, including any labour market developments, without short-sightedly adapting learners only for a specific labour market configuration at a given time.

We also welcome the support for **ensuring access to affordable essential services and housing** through, among others, energy efficiency improvement measures, well-designed tax incentives, grants and loans, together with related advice, and adequate mobility and transport policy and support measures. **Learners can only exercise fully their right to education if there are the proper conditions to do so**. This precondition is important for both being able to attend formal schooling but also to have adequate places of learning outside of the school system as learning happens lifelong and life-wide.

As with the Council Recommendation on Learning for Sustainability, **LLL endorses the call to deploy adequate funding to contribute to the implementation of measures** delivering a fair green transition and ensure an optimal use of existing instruments and funding at national and EU level. Without adequate public investment, Member States will fail to deliver on economic, societal and environmental goals, especially for those in vulnerable situations who are hit the hardest.

Breaking down the silos: education and training for sustainability

One of the key success factors for both Recommendations will be the joint work between DG EAC and DG EMPL, and other relevant DGs, as well as their efforts in simplifying the process through which Member States can adopt the contents of the Recommendations. At the same time, the Commission must ensure that Member States follow a path of stakeholder engagement. LLLP is delighted to see the calls from both Recommendations to this end. **LLLP hopes to see actual promotion of partnerships with different civil society organisations and cooperation with relevant stakeholders** when aligning strategies and plans in education and training with the green transition and sustainable development, including those related to curricula, assessment and educators' initial training and continuing professional development. We will monitor the effective involvement of civil society in all stages of policymaking. To this end, **an expansion of the social dialogue model to apply to the civil society, securing a civil dialogue as well, would be essential** to ensure all education stakeholders have the ownership over any transformative policy. This is a crucial dimension for both Recommendations as learners and educators involvement in decision making processes is key for their effective implementation, ensuring inclusiveness and sustainability of the actions.

For the Lifelong Learning Platform it is clear that **the implementation process and measures will be as important as the Recommendations themselves**. Therefore we expect to concretely see integration in policymaking via the European Semester, which must ensure regular formal exchanges with civil society and other stakeholders in the drafting of the Country Specific Recommendations. Similarly, appropriate

investment in monitoring, research and evaluation will be crucial, as LLLP calls for concrete qualitative and quantitative indicators and targets at different levels of the implementation and impact of these initiatives by making use of existing tools or the creation of new ones. **The reporting of these indicators and targets must be transparent and available to all stakeholders.**

We must ensure that the European Education Area and the Skills Agenda walk hand in hand as working in silos would end up hurting the possibilities of achieving our common goals around education and training. In turn, **we must ensure that the European Green Deal is underpinned by people- and planet-centred education and training policies** that support the achievement of social goals together with economic and environmental goals. Failing to accompany climate action policies with inclusive and fair social policies will only bring about more instability and leave the most vulnerable without a fighting chance. People are aware, interested, motivated and engaged, so it is time to empower them to take part in the transformative change that is required to prevent the permanent effects of the climate crisis.

Next Steps

- **Ensure continuous policy coherence in the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development and on a Fair Transition towards Climate Neutrality.** The development of sustainability competences should be treated in a holistic, lifelong learning manner, ensuring the development of a predisposition towards acting sustainably in parallel with developing sector-specific competences.
- **Better link EU funding with the development of green competences.** Develop monitoring solutions through the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility to ensure that nationally funded initiatives revamp education and training infrastructure but also contribute to pedagogies and andragogies, the expansion of learning environments towards informal and non-formal ones and equitable access to learning for sustainability competences. The monitoring solutions must include qualitative and quantitative targets and they must be transparent and available to all stakeholders at all times.
- **Boost national level financing for the development of green competences.** Member States must ensure clearly earmarked funding dedicated to improving learning for sustainability and reshaping the entire education and training system for a meaningful mainstreaming of this transversal topic in a lifelong learning manner.
- **Break silos in learning for sustainability.** This transversal topic requires all education stakeholders to be involved in the policy making and implementation processes to ensure learners' needs are properly reflected and that all people have ownership over the structural and comprehensive changes needed for overhauling education and training systems for sustainability promotion. A whole-government approach is required at EU, national, regional and local level to build policy coherence around the topic of learning for sustainability.
- **Expand learning for sustainability to all ages and types of learners.** Ensure collaboration and synergies across the different learning environments and education and training sectors so that a seamless inclusion of learning for sustainability can permeate the entire lifelong learning path. All education stakeholders need to share good practices, while this process of learning should not be reserved only for the young learners that find themselves in formal schooling.

For more information, please contact the LLLP Secretariat: policy@lllplatform.eu +32 289 32 515

The [Lifelong Learning Platform](#) (LLL-P) is an umbrella organisation that gathers over 40 European networks active in the field of education and training, coming from all EU Member States and beyond. Currently these organisations represent more than 50 000 educational institutions covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Established in 2005, LLL-P promotes a vision of lifelong learning based on equity, social cohesion, active citizenship and personal development. The Platform works as a space for knowledge exchange between its member networks and uses their expertise to discuss and feed in EU policy-making, making sure that European citizens have their voice heard. In that sense LLLP contributes to a better understanding and dialogue between the grassroots level and European institutions.

