

Brussels, 2 October 2023 - "[Learners' first: Education for Today's and Tomorrow's Democratic Societies](#)" is the ambitious Strategy covering the next seven years of policy objectives of the Council of Europe (CoE). The Strategy was adopted on 29 September, during the 26th Conference of Ministers organised under the motto 'The Transformative Power of Education: Universal Values and Civic Renewal'; this programmatic document marks a welcome evolution in the works of the [CoE Steering Committee for Education \(CDEDU\)](#), as it is the first Education Strategy adopted by the Council of Europe.

LLLPP welcomes the vision underpinned by the Strategy, which **recognises education and lifelong learning as essential for democratic and resilient societies** and as an empowering means for individuals to develop personally and professionally while engaging meaningfully with society. The President of LLLPP, Elisa Gambardella expressed our contentment in her intervention at the Conference of Ministers, while stressing that the achievement of **an inclusive European Space of Citizenship Education** as set out in the Strategy will require a holistic vision of education, a sound acknowledgement of the different needs of diverse learners and communities and, not least, to be guided by democratic and multi stakeholders governance structures.

Along with our members EFIL, ESU, EURASHE, FEDE and OBESSU, LLLPP shared the eagerness of civil society organisations (CSOs) and education & training stakeholders networks to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy. CSOs have ample expertise to **bridge the existing gaps between formal, non-formal and informal learning**, which is a needed change to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. To this extent, this initiative should pioneer the long-awaited **establishment of frameworks for cooperation** between the three sectors of education, support **flexible learning environments** and access to quality citizenship education for all. This is all the more relevant thanks to the proposal for a **legally binding framework for citizenship education** that the Strategy aims to establish at European level. Throughout their interventions, civil society representatives didn't fail to express once again their willingness to contribute meaningfully to the policy-making, implementation and monitoring phases to make this Strategy a reality. This must be done in cooperation with the European Union aligning their agendas on citizenship education.

In addition, LLLPP and its members stressed the benefit of a **clearer ambition on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning** within the Strategy, and that it should be led by the aspiration to **reinvigorate funding for education**: since 2008 we have been working under the motto of "don't let education pay for the crisis" and yet we are far from investment that is structural, co-created and takes into account the real needs of learners in Europe. If anything, we live in times of increased **commodification of education**, which is incompatible with the objective of social responsibility. Similarly, the mention and appraisal of the **social dimension of the internationalisation of education institutions** through equal access to learning mobility opportunities must be applauded; once again, cooperation with CSOs should be sought after, leveraging on their expertise in providing such opportunities.

Education stakeholders need support and seek avenues for participation: while we are satisfied with the integration of ESU's proposal to create a **Student Rights' Charter** under the auspices of the

Council of Europe and create benchmarks for CoE countries, a specific **Declaration of School Student Rights** is still missing, and it would be a concrete step forward in having a more rights-based approach to education and participation.

Overall, this Strategy can help give back to education and lifelong learning their role in fostering social progress, democracy and wellbeing, while building more resilient societies: as civil society representatives we are eager to contribute to the achievement of its objectives.

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