Manifesto building the future of learning in Europe

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF **LEARNING** IN **EUROPE**

MANIFESTO

A humanistic and holistic approach of learning, from cradle to grave, is of continued relevance in today's world and a viable foundation for the rethinking of education in knowledge intensive societies. Adopting a vision, whose rationale is not limited to a single objective, but comprehends its multiple facets is not only relevant but also necessary in today's context. Europe is undermined by populism, religious fundamentalism and economic turmoil; and the global race for innovation and recent inflow of migrants are yet additional factors education policies need to grasp. The Lifelong Learning Platform believes that it is only by taking all these factors into account that education policies will have a real chance of building inclusive societies.

Lifelong learning answers many challenges of modern societies. The traditional pathway "school, work, retirement" is no longer the norm. Most individuals undergo several transitions in their lives, going back from work to education, working and studying simultaneously or volunteering, in their home country and abroad. Consequently there is an increasing demand for qualifications and for flexible and inclusive learning environments.

LEARNING MOBILITY

basic skills

empowering educators

Quality Education

Arts & Culture

GUIDANCE AND MENTORING

DIGITAL LITERACY

NON-DISCRMINATION

Global Education

transformative power

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The offer and scope of learning opportunities have already been broadened, for instance, thanks to the development and use of digital technologies. But inequalities persist in European education and training systems where vulnerable groups such as migrants are particularly disadvantaged[1]. Consequently, the participation of adults in lifelong learning has been stagnating for many years[2]; 20% of the EU's working age population has low literacy and numeracy skills[3], not only reducing by half these people's chances to be employed, but also to access basic welfare services, participate in democratic life or develop a sense of social cohesion[4]. Education is a smart investment for Europe so long as equity becomes its regulating principle.

Educational institutions should be encouraged to open their doors, adapt to learning diversity, and build sustainable partnerships to allow individuals to build their own learning pathways. The paradigm shift to lifelong learning means recognising that learning is taking place in various contexts. It implies changing the ways we teach and learn, the ways we assess learning and the ways we work and live together. It should encourage the process of building learning societies where participating in education is highly valued and encouraged by public authorities and families.

1. Cohesion policy and marginalised communities, Opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for the Committee on Regional Development (2014/2247(INI)), 25 June 2015;
2. Eurostat data, 2013;
3. PIAAC, the survey on adult skills, OECD 2013;
4. The OECD also shows correlations between educational attainments and life expectancy - OECD's "Society at a glance. OECD social indicators: the crisis and its aftermath", 2014.

This Manifesto is addressed to policy-makers and educational actors from all over Europe in order to take action to make lifelong learning a reality for all!

We see three main areas of reforms:

- Building inclusive and democratic educational systems
- Widening access to quality education for all citizens
- Increasing the relevance of education to modern societies

For each area we propose five concrete measures that are essential when developing lifelong learning strategies.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

1 Making citizenship and global education, as well as intercultural and interreligious dialogue, priority areas of European Union and national education policies...

The transformative power of education has a major role to play in building inclusive and democratic societies. We have to engage people in a critical reflection and dialogue, and empower them to tackle past, present and future social and political challenges such as sustainable development. Today, young people feel their voice does not count and an increasing number of them express societal disinterest while a minority seeks shelter in radical movements. Educational systems should aim to make them engaged as active citizens, able to stand up for human rights and democracy.

2 Eliminating prejudices and discrimination in educational settings based on gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status...

Inequalities are increasing within our educational systems where vulnerable groups are particularly disadvantaged. Efforts should be made to desegregate our educational institutions, giving equal opportunities to all. It is also important to take into account non-cognitive factors such as habits, values and poverty to understand and overcome educational under-achievement. Besides, clear strategies should tackle prejudices and stereotypes to help prevent further discrimination, hate speech and bullying by ensuring those issues are dealt with (e.g. when creating curricula, teaching materials and when planning activities in partnership with specialised organisations).

3 Implementing and strengthening a democratic governance of educational institutions and enhancing learner participation...

The governance of educational institutions can be improved with the help of a meaningful participation of learners, families and communities. Giving learners a voice will contribute to putting our values into practice through experiential learning and strengthening their participatory skills, fostering active citizenship and thus more democratic societies. Learners in collaborative learning environments tend to perform significantly better than those in competitive and individualistic situations. This leads to an upward spiral as higher achievements in education lead to a higher motivation to learn throughout life.

4 Turning learning mobility from an exception into a rule at all levels of education and for all educational actors (learners and educators) throughout their lives and regardless of their socio-economic background...

Learning mobility plays an important role in developing transversal competences, especially social and intercultural ones, and in promoting a sense of European belonging. EU mobility schemes are indeed strongly associated with the benefits of EU citizenship. Proper investment has to be made so that learning mobility becomes the rule instead of an exception for both learners and educators. For that we need to ensure that access to mobility programmes is possible for all regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. However, widening access to mobility programmes should not be at the detriment of their quality.

5 Use of arts and culture in education in order to tackle social challenges and to enhance personal development...

Cultural engagement is a key contribution to the acquisition of transversal competences such as "cultural awareness and expression"[5] so crucial to foster one's creativity, imagination and sense of appreciation of cultural diversity. It can also increase motivation to learn via original and innovative vectors and increase well-being and self-confidence. This goes through the improvement of educators' training by sensitizing them to the importance of culture and favouring their collaboration with artists.

5. Key Competences Framework, European Commission, 2006.

WIDENING ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL CITIZENS

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Ensuring a solid and quality (early) education for all, equipping learners with basic skills for life, as well as supporting increased adaptability and second chance opportunities for adults...

Everyone should leave formal education with solid basic skills. This will not only prevent early school leaving but also being caught in a "low skills trap" in adulthood. Today almost one adult in five in Europe still does not know how to read and write properly while we know the huge impact that has on their employment prospects, their social and civic participation as well as their health and well-being. For those who have already left school, quality educational programmes should be publicly funded, offering new opportunities for adults.

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Implementing outreach strategies based on easily accessible information and quality guidance and counselling services to involve current non-learners in lifelong learning...

About 80 million people have low or basic skills, but lifelong learning benefits mostly the more educated[6]. We have to raise awareness on the benefits of lifelong learning and stimulate one's motivation to participate in learning activities by offering information and solutions in everyday life settings (e.g. in local communities or the workplace) with the support of community organisations. The combination of quality and coordinated guidance and counselling services, and the support offered by peers and mentors is proven to be successful.

6. Europe 2020, A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, European Commission, 2010.

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Expanding flexible and open learning pathways and learning provision, such as evening classes and distance learning...

A greater flexibility in learning – in relation to location, delivery and learning methods (e.g. using distance learning, digital technologies, blended learning and work-based learning) can serve to attract and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners[7]. It has the potential to enhance learning and widen opportunities for participation especially for socio-economically vulnerable people, including low-skilled workers. In this regard a more efficient coordination of social, employment and educational policies is crucial, for instance to overcome work-family conflicts that especially affect women.

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Implementing approaches based on learning outcomes, supported by comprehensive quality assurance systems, and coordinating existing transparency tools (ECVET, EQF, etc.)...

Transformation of teaching and assessment practices towards a learning outcomes and competence-based approach facilitates the transparency and transition between different educational systems. Many tools have been developed in isolation; in order to allow individuals to better measure their progress and opportunities, and capitalise on the learning outcomes gained in different contexts we have to better coordinate them. Such tools have to be supported by quality assurance systems and be embedded in a framework of national qualifications in order to build trust across sectors and actors, including employers.

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Fostering the setup of validation and recognition mechanisms for non-formal and informal learning and putting in place adapted assessment methods...

Although 20% of the EU adult population have low literacy and numeracy skills, many have gained competences through non-formal and informal paths[8]. Validation of non-formal and informal learning gives opportunities for new opportunities, improves access to education and enhances motivation to learn. It also contributes to tackle unemployment, and achieve a better match between jobs and skills by acknowledging those acquired outside of the formal education system. It can be a concrete answer to the needs of specific groups such as migrants as their qualifications and foreign work experience may not be fully recognised in the host country.

7. Final evaluation of the HEFCE-funded Flexible Learning Pathfinder projects, Steve Outram, 2011;
8. OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) report, OECD, 2013.

INCREASING THE RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION TO MODERN SOCIETIES

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Developing further the use of innovative methods that support collaborative learning and well-being in a learner-centred approach...

We need to shift to more creative solutions such as experiential learning and learning by doing and better take into account learning diversity in order to raise engagement levels and improve educational achievement. Pedagogy that enhances well-being builds positive relationships between educators and learners and is responsive to the individual needs of learners. It is about considering the learner as an equal partner and giving him/her a voice. Moreover, the use of collaborative methodologies such as project-based learning and teamwork contributes to the development of transversal competences, including entrepreneurial mindsets, that are so important today.

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Every European citizen should have access to digital technologies and learn basic digital and media competences by mainstreaming them in formal education and supporting non-formal training providers, especially those working with disadvantaged groups...

It is essential today that all citizens acquire digital and media competences in order to ensure their interactions with new technologies are positive and enriching. The inclusion of media literacy in compulsory education curriculum is of particular importance[9] in order to equip children with tools to raise their critical thinking and decision making and to counteract possible negative sides of the digital world. Digital technologies can also enhance the learning experience and support creativity and interactivity and increase motivation to learn. It is essential to enable educators to develop the use of technologies in an age-adapted and transversal way (e.g. when learning languages, math or literature).

9. Media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society, European Commission, Recommendation of 20 August 2009.

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Equipping learners with the necessary skills by making sure educators can teach and assess key competences for lifelong learning...

Learners should be equipped with the transversal skills that will allow them to cope with rapid social and economic changes (e.g. sense of initiative, learning to learn, resilience, risk-taking and problem-solving) and deal with increasing job uncertainty. Transversal competences such as civic and social competences should be particularly highlighted as they support learners' capacity to think critically and creatively. Their use and formative assessment should be a priority for all sectors and included in teacher training.

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Fostering quality partnerships with the world of work, as well as civil society and academic and local communities...

It is important to provide learners with models, by asking employers and civil society actors to share their experiences with them. More placements and internships should be made possible during formal education as it supports "learning by doing" and improves the transition to the labour market (e.g. thanks to local hubs between educational and economic actors). Partnerships with non-formal education providers and learners' involvement in volunteering activities can increase opportunities for learners to develop key competences and should particularly be acknowledged and encouraged by educational institutions.

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Empowering professional and non-professional educators, providing them with quality lifelong training and quality working conditions...

Professional and non-professional educators play an essential role in preparing future generations for modern life and through their commitment they serve as important role models. The teaching profession in particular should be a respected profession again – which means looking seriously at its working conditions and involving educators in the design of educational policies and tools. Educators need further support with teaching and assessing soft skills and using collaborative pedagogies. Furthermore, peer-learning among educators, and with other actors in relevant fields, should be supported.

WHY **WE BELIEVE THAT LIFELONG LEARNING** IS OF CONTINUED **RELEVANCE** TO ADDRESS **XXI CENTURY CHALLENGES**

Lifelong learning is a structuring element of the knowledge society and contributes to support social cohesion and active citizenship, personal development and well-being, as well as Europe's efforts towards a smart, inclusive and sustainable competitiveness.

- In our modern life, the "school – work – retirement" pattern no longer exists and that is why individuals need to continuously learn to adapt more easily to often numerous transitions in their life especially considering the rapid ageing of the EU population and later retirement age.
- With technology significantly impacting our everyday life, we need to make sure that everyone is able to become digitally and media literate.
- We need to widen access to education within our societies, especially in later phases of life, because skills gaps and learning inequalities are increasing while participation in adult education is stagnating in many EU countries.
- There is a crucial need for transversal skills in today's world, not only to strive in a more diverse labour market, but also to be fully active as a citizen and to live a meaningful and dignified life. Social, civic and intercultural competences require a particular emphasis in response to political/societal disinterest and the rise of radical and extremist movements.
- We need to make sure that knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning are valued and recognised, since more and more learning is taking place outside of formal education.
- Today individuals engage in learning activities in different ways and learning environments should be designed and facilitated to cater for such variations. This implies a greater emphasis on learner participation, motivation and resilience. Formative assessment should help focus more on the learning process and allow different ways of demonstrating learning (i.e. declarative methods, observations or simulations).
- To build a European area of lifelong learning we have to ensure transparency and recognition of qualifications and skills around Europe and improve the quantity and quality of opportunities to go abroad, thus supporting the mobility of all citizens throughout their lives regardless of their socio-economic background.

These issues are complex and answers have to be adapted to local realities, however we believe that the development of comprehensive and sustainable lifelong learning strategies can contribute to map such challenges and give coherence to many policy actions already being done.

WHAT DO CITIZENS THINK?

90% think lifelong learning is important

80% support an integrated approach, looking at employability, personal development, active citizenship and social cohesion

The majority thinks it is for all ages and that they learn best in informal settings only 40% think it should be for young people only

45% think it should be for those who failed at school

Eurobarometer 185, Lifelong Learning; Citizens' Views, 2003

80%
support an integrated approach, looking at employability, personal development, active citizenship and social cohesion

WHAT DO EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS THINK?

95%
said that it would be useful to have national platforms for cooperation in education

88% understand lifelong learning as any kind of learning taking place throughout life, be it formal, non-formal or informal

87% would like to get more involved in EU debates in the field

Only 19 % of repondents said that EU institutions take often or always their views into account

Only 44% of respondents believe lifelong learning is a priority in their country, while 97% of them believe it should be a priority

95% said that it would be useful to have national platforms for cooperation in education

EUCIS-LLL Survey and Feasibility Study on National Stakeholders' Forum, 2012

LLL **SUCCESS FACTORS**

CROSS-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS and CIVIL DIALOGUE

Implementing lifelong learning implies working across sectors and with different actors at all levels – European, national and regional/local. This is particularly important at the grassroots level in order to reach out to local communities and especially to disadvantaged groups. Changing mindsets and fostering cooperation within public authorities is a key to public sector innovation[10]. Partnership, involving communities, social partners and civil society organisations should come with clear mechanisms of dialogue and should be specifically supported by national and EU programmes such as Erasmus+.

AWARENESS RAISING

We have a collective responsibility to raise awareness on the importance of lifelong learning and show that we are all still learning! Many initiatives exist across Europe such as the Lifelong Learning Weeks or Lifelong Learning Days/Festivals. It is also about engaging local communities and learning ambassadors. We believe that much more efforts should be made to attract public attention on the wide benefits of lifelong learning for instance by launching an EU-wide campaign on the benefits of learning and notably on the role of education in building inclusive and tolerant societies.

LONG-TERM and STRATEGIC FUNDING

We need a secured and sustainable funding of education. The Education and Training Monitor 2015 shows decreasing national budgets in the field since 2011 whereas we all know that investing in people is a way out of the crisis and a long-term investment for the future of Europe. Besides, we need long-term lifelong learning strategies; introducing than withdrawing policies damage the perception of individuals and put a strong burden on the shoulders of implementing bodies.

10. The Innovation Imperative in the Public Sector, OECD, August 2015.

WHAT SHOULD THE **EUROPEAN UNION** AND **ITS MEMBER STATES DO?**

ASSESS PROGRESS

Fifteen years after the "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning", the Lifelong Learning Platform invites EU institutions and Member States to take stock of the progress made, identify challenges ahead and adopt comprehensive and sustainable lifelong learning strategies in partnership with civil society.

PURSUE EFFORTS

The «Memorandum on Lifelong Learning» was adopted more than ten years ago by the European institutions to provide guidelines to Member States on the implementation of lifelong learning strategies. The idea was to build "a European Area of Lifelong Learning". Where are we now? Many Member States have adopted national strategies linked to important reforms such as the development and referencing of their national qualifications frameworks to the European one ("EQF") and the adoption of the EU Council Recommendation on the validation on non-formal and informal learning in 2012. Lifelong learning is considered to be the area where EU cooperation showed the greatest added value (2014 "ET2020" Survey). Unfortunately, implementing comprehensive lifelong learning strategies is still a challenge in Europe; today only half of the Member States are reported to have one in place[11].

COORDINATE and DEVELOP A COMMON STRATEGY

Implementing such strategies requires a strong political will to coordinate political instruments as well as working in partnership between educational, social and employment sectors and between policy-makers and civil society organisations. We thus call for a strong commitment to implement comprehensive lifelong learning strategies by making sure synergies are made between policies and by creating dialogue mechanisms between actors including civil society organisations.

11. Commission staff working document, accompanying the Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), August 2015.

ABOUT THE LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

The Lifelong Learning Platform (previously EUCIS-LLL) 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 around a 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 10 years now, the Lifelong Learning Platform 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 predecessors.

The Lifelong Learning Platform 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 39 organisations, the Lifelong Learning Platform is today the most legitimate interlocutor of the EU institutions in the field of lifelong learning. It 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.

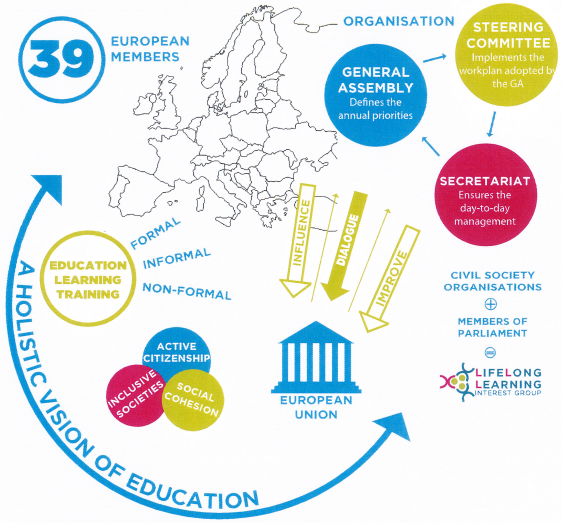
Vision

The Lifelong Learning Platform promotes 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 platform 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

Building the future of education!



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LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

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