



Conference on the **Future** of **Europe**

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION, CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORT

Chaired by Silja Markkula, European Youth Forum

Friday 17 December 2021

1. Opening by the Chair

The meeting took place in fully remote format. The Chair explained that due to the postponement of the third session of European Citizens' Panel 1 on "A stronger economy, social justice and jobs/Education, culture, youth and sport/Digital transformation", the working group was not yet in a position to discuss the Panel's recommendations. The Chair also noted that shortage of interpretation services did not allow for the discussion of the four topics in small breakout sessions, as she had hoped might be possible. In order to better structure the debate, the Chair announced she would briefly introduce the four subjects by providing an overview of the previous discussions and input from the Third Interim Report on contributions on the platform. Members of the working group would be invited to highlight what they considered the most important issues under each topic and how these issues should be addressed, as well as flagging possibly missing issues. One member of the working group suggested also addressing research and science as a sub-theme of the topic "education".

2. Report by citizens from European Citizens' Panel 1 on the state of play of their discussions

A representative of the European Citizens' Panel highlighted the key points discussed by the panel's participants:

- The importance of facilitating cultural and other exchanges in order to promote a truly European identity, in particular by scaling up the Erasmus programme.
- The importance of improving access to and funding of education, and of teaching on digital and environmental issues; European common education standards should be encouraged, as well as improving access to scholarships.
- On sports, emphasis was put by the participants in the panel on insufficiency of access to physical activities.

3. Discussion on the Third Interim Report from the Multilingual Digital Platform and previous Working Group themes

In the ensuing debate, members of the working group highlighted the following main issues:

- Culture:
 - The importance of cultural identity, by protecting European cultural heritage and developing a common awareness of shared history was raised, with a focus on a forward-looking approach (promotion of European values). A suggestion was made to integrate the

protection of European cultural heritage in education on European history, while creating a link with the future through the New European Bauhaus. Considering the creation of common history textbooks was also mentioned several times.

- There were several calls to promote cultural exchanges, including in schools. The protection of artists and creation of a European status of artists was discussed, and the setting up of a European-wide platform for artists to present their work was suggested.
- Some speakers stressed the importance of protecting cultural minorities and especially languages.
- The need to encourage European content creation was raised. In this respect, new forms of expression in the digital environment, such as gaming, were mentioned.
- One participant called for the appointment of a specific 'Culture Commissioner'.

During the debate, the economic importance of the cultural field, as well as the already existing initiatives at European level were highlighted. Two members expressed the view that culture must remain a national competence. Many interventions insisted on the links to be made between cultural policies and other topics or policies: citizenship, education, youth etc.

- Youth:
 - Access of young people to quality jobs based on quality standards has been an overarching concern expressed within the working group which must be guaranteed. The importance of fair remuneration was stressed. Unpaid traineeships were widely seen as problem, and the idea of their banning through a legal instrument at EU level was mentioned. Some speakers suggested to provide financial incentives to businesses for offering quality traineeships.
 - Regarding existing EU instruments aiming to address youth unemployment, the need for an effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee was stressed.
 - Allowing young people to start working from the age of 16, or fostering the pursuit of their studies until PhD, were mentioned during the debate.
 - The housing issue that many young people face across Europe was also raised, as another condition for their ability to build an independent life.
 - A suggestion was made to create a European civic service as an extension of the European Solidarity Corps.
 - The representation of young people in decision-making spaces was also mentioned.
 - Other issues considered as especially relevant to young people included their access to mental health care; language learning; promotion of healthy lifestyles; fostering the acquisition of soft skills; better access to European-wide information on what universities and companies offer (European platform); and making green travelling in Europe easier (train).
- Sport
 - The two main aspects discussed in the working group were, firstly, the importance of sport to foster European identity - or more precisely a feeling of belonging to the EU - and, secondly, that sport nowadays has to be seen as a key element of health policy in general (including in the context of recovery after the pandemic). Ideas included EU teams in international competitions, the creation of EU sports events, the promotion of EU visuals in sport, and providing better information on traditional local/regional sports. The importance of inclusiveness in sport activities, especially regarding the LGBT community, was raised. Some speakers mentioned the European Week of Sport as a welcome initiative, however insufficiently advertised.

- **Education**

Under the topic “education”, members of the working group often developed ideas that were also mentioned under previous topics, such as cross-border mobility especially, which would involve a strengthening of Erasmus and offering exchange opportunities for teachers and children, as well as fostering the acquisition of language, digital and soft skills, and education on climate issues.

- A high-quality lifelong learning system in Europe, offered to all workers, including aging workers, or workers living in rural areas, and in all sectors, was a frequently made proposal during the debate. The aim is to make sure that the right to lifelong learning and training becomes a reality for everyone in Europe.
- There were also some calls for improving cross-border recognition of apprenticeships and vocational training at European level.
- Some speakers highlighted that schools should be safe spaces where one learns what citizenship means and about shared values (inclusiveness, fight against racism, democracy etc.).
- There were calls to develop a partnership with the professional sectors, in various respects: training in business models, raising citizens' awareness regarding new technologies, or fostering alternance between work and studying or training.

During the debate, a few speakers stressed that given the differences between education systems in Europe, and the fact that education remains a national and sometimes even regional competence, action in this field at European level should focus on exchange of best practices.

4. Closing by the Chair and plan for next meeting

The Chair concluded the meeting by summarising the main elements raised during the debate and positively noting the good interaction between the members. She expressed the hope that other formats could be used at the next meeting and proposed that the meeting be web streamed. She also highlighted that a summary would be circulated before the meeting, which would allow to build on the discussions held so far.