



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

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

Chaired by Silja Markkula, President of the European Youth Forum

Friday 11 March 2022, 9:00-11:00

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The meeting took place in a hybrid format and was web-streamed (recording available [here](#)). The Chair welcomed participants and explained that the aim of the meeting was to discuss recommendations allocated to the Working Group following the last session of European Citizens' Panel on "A stronger economy, social justice and jobs/Education, culture, youth and sport/Digital transformation" in Dublin. The key focus of the meeting was to hear citizens' presentation of recommendations and to gather feedback. As regards the issue of recommendations overlapping several Working Groups, the Chair explained that a solution would be proposed later. In terms of organisation, the Chair proposed to structure discussions around the following clusters: education, youth, sport, multilingualism, cultural exchanges and environmental education, digitalisation. The Chair specified that these clusters may later evolve and were only set to facilitate discussions.

2. Presentation by citizens of the recommendations from European Citizens' Panel 1, followed by a discussion

The representative from the Dutch National Citizens' Panel first presented the 3 recommendations proposed by the panel:

- Encourage studying abroad while ensuring that students integrate themselves in their host country and taking measures to avoid brain drain
- Leave issues such as culture and sport to Member States
- Improve language learning and enhance cultural exchanges, with respect for each other's diversity

Regarding the recommendations of the European Citizens' Panel, the first cluster about education focused on additions to the curriculum (recommendations 5, 15, 18, 33), with education on soft skills, internet dangers and the environment, as well as on the harmonisation of educational standards (recommendations 3, 37). Citizens presented the corresponding recommendations and the following points were raised as feedback:

- WG members generally supported the recommendations, in particular the ones dealing with soft skills and mutual recognition of diplomas. Several speakers also mentioned minimum standards for education.
- A number of suggestions were made to include other elements. A common idea was to add civic education, or education on European history and values, to the curriculum. Citizens responded by saying that this idea was underlying all recommendations. Education on economic and financial issues / entrepreneurship, and non-formal/informal education were also mentioned. Some members regretted the lack of emphasis on life-long learning. Others considered important to

advance on the European Education Area, mentioning higher education and links with science and research.

- In addition, the topic of competences sparked debate. Several members emphasised that education, including issues such as school subjects/curricula, were a national, and sometimes regional or local competence. On the other hand, some believed that a stronger coordination or harmonisation in the education field could be beneficial.

Regarding the topic of youth, citizens presented two recommendations (4, 6), on providing high school students an opportunity to visit companies and non-profit organisations as observers, and on preparing plans to minimise the impact of crises on young people. The following feedback was given by WG members:

- Reactions to the recommendation on observatory visits were somewhat mixed. Some members praised the idea in its ability to better connect students to the labour market and brought examples from existing schemes in some Member States. Others asked for clarifications regarding the purpose of the visits, considering important to distinguish between career guidance for pupils, and internships/apprenticeships, which could not start at an early age and needed to be paid.
- Some members suggested adding the European Citizens' Panel recommendation no 1 on minimum wages in the discussion to tackle the issue of sub-minimum wages for young workers.
- As regards the preparation of crisis plans, members supported the idea, mentioning the importance of digital access and platforms. They also made suggestions for implementing it in the current context, as regards receiving young Ukrainian refugees in schools and universities and speeding up the recognition of the diplomas of asylum seekers.
- More broadly, as regards youth, some additional ideas were raised, such as creating a European civic service and the institutionalisation of relations between the EU and European youth organisations.

For the topic on sport, one recommendation (29) dealing with a better promotion of the health benefits of sports was presented. The feedback was the following:

- Members welcomed the idea and its potential for health policies.
- More broadly, on the topic of sport, members also mentioned the importance of sport for community cohesion and inclusivity, promoting local sports and cross-border exchanges in sports for ordinary people, as well as including EU symbols during international competitions.

As regards multilingualism, citizens presented recommendations (32, 38) proposing the promotion of multilingualism and language learning in school and to make English a core subject. WG members had the following reactions to these recommendations:

- Overall, members supported the idea to better promote multilingualism.
- Some speakers commented on the choice and level of languages taught. Notably, some members expressed the idea that aiming for a C1 level for all students in their second EU language was too ambitious. Other members considered that sometimes it would be more practical to teach another language than English as a core subject, for instance a neighbouring language.
- A few members called for the protection of regional and minority languages to be covered.
- With the broader aim of promoting language learning, the idea of extending the European day of languages to a week or a month was proposed.

On the subject of cultural exchanges and environmental education, two recommendations (35, 36) were presented, which suggested creating a platform with teaching material about the environment, and making exchange programmes more accessible. As feedback, the following points were raised:

- Members welcomed positively both recommendations.

- As regards the creation of a platform, some members considered that the existing platforms could be improved or better promoted, possibly through a multimedia approach.
- A member regretted the lack of recommendations about culture and suggested to go further on the topic with the creation of a programme to renovate the cultural heritage, a European status for artists and developing the DiscoverEU programme by adding a “cultural pass”. The role of the New European Bauhaus initiative was also highlighted.

Regarding digitalisation, citizens presented two recommendations (41, 48) proposing to promote education on disinformation and online safety, and education to improve critical thinking among Europeans. The following feedback was given by WG members:

- They emphasised that the recommendations touched upon important and relevant topics.
- Several suggestions were made as regards their implementation, such as mapping new learning technologies, using existing tools and platforms, as well as making some special communication efforts to reach young people. Adding media education in the European Education Area was also mentioned.

3. Concluding remarks of the Chair

The Chair concluded the meeting by explaining the next steps of the process, noting that the Common Secretariat would put together the inputs gathered during the Conference and that draft proposals would be prepared on this basis. WG members will be able to discuss these draft proposals during the next Working Group meeting.