



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 25 March 2022, 9:00-11:30; 14:00-16:00

1. Introductory remarks of the Chair

The meeting took place in a hybrid format and was web streamed (recordings available [here](#) and [here](#)). After welcoming participants, the Chair explained that the aim of the meeting was to discuss draft proposals prepared based on the recommendations of Citizens' panels. The Chair proposed that the meeting would be structured by going through the measures one by one.

Additionally, she announced that the 4th Report of the Digital Platform came out. She highlighted new inputs or emphasis in this report regarding work precariousness and youth unemployment, social and geographical disparities in the access to tertiary education and culture, an "EU wide museum pass" which would fit disabled persons' needs, professionalism of cultural practitioners, gender equality in sports and less known sports. She encouraged Working Group members to keep the report in mind.

2. Intervention by the Spokesperson

The Spokesperson of the Working Group intervened to present initial draft proposals and explain the methodology followed during their elaboration. She underlined that some elements needed further discussion, as they were not expressly mentioned in the recommendations of citizens' panels or overlapped other Working Groups.

3. Presentation and discussion on the initial draft proposals with a view to presenting draft proposals to the Plenary on 26 March

In the ensuing debate, participants had the list of draft proposals at their disposal and discussed each measure following the order of the text.

Regarding the cluster on education, several members of the working group underlined the notion of "European Education Area" and the need for funding. Following points were then raised:

- One member of the Working Group said that the principle of equal access to education and long life learning, as well as recognition of degrees and professional skills should expressly refer also to refugees.
- The word "harmonisation" of level of education raised some scepticism, and it would be advisable to have it replaced by "coordination". .

- As stated in the ECP's recommendation, Member States should agree and adopt a certified minimum standard of education in core subjects commencing in primary school.
- The need for improving the mutual recognition of degrees, not to forget professional skills (for instance in the fields of environment and digital. A European framework for apprenticeships based on specific modules could also be mentioned.
- The proposals should state a right to training at the working place.
- The EU should champion the recognition of formal and informal learning, for example drawing on the example of the UNESCO's "city of learning award", and building upon the critical role that Sport associations as well as culture and youth organisations can play in this. In this context, these organisations themselves should be better recognised.
- Under development of future-proof education and life-long learning in Europe, several members in the Working Group insisted that there is a need for a comprehensive plan. Some of the suggested modifications included: complementing civic education with courses about European history, EU values and the EU's role in the world; referring to "STEAM" (including arts and humanities) rather than to STEM. There were also suggestions to combine all the measures concerning critical thinking and digital education within a same measure, with several adjustments: use a more specific term than "scepticism", refer to "media literacy" rather than to digital education, remove the reference to "disinformation" (which could be understood as an encouragement to censorship), and mention combatting bullying and racism..
- Regarding teaching techniques, a request to remove participative video games was made, or to refer to "gamification" instead of "video games".
- In regards to the training of teachers, it was suggested to mention their mobility through the Erasmus Plus programme and to create a platform giving access to teaching material and knowledge built up in Europe. Some participants called for teachers to have more of a mentoring role with students and to be more up to date with social media. It was also suggested to replace the term "support" by "evolve existing programmes" or "support systemic and continuing quality training".
- Under access to internet for all children and families, several suggestions of rewording were made, such as adding the term "broadband" and deleting the reference to the pandemic to keep the measure broad. Some speakers also called to extend the scope of the measure to all individuals, including for the purpose of work.
- Finally, in regards to the information platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences, several participants raised the idea of including solutions for young people and to move it to the cluster on youth. It was also suggested for the platform to gather information on all existing programmes and available opportunities.

For the cluster on youth issues, participants made the following comments under each measure:

- Regarding participation and representation of young people, some of the suggestions included: replacing the term "continent" by "European Union, adding "decision making" to "democratic processes", putting in place a systematic "Youth test system" in order to assess the impact of European legislation on young people (referenced in the latest platform report),. The idea of lowering down the voting age for European Parliaments elections, possibly with the wording of the European Parliament and under the condition of strengthening civic education and education on the EU in the curriculum was discussed in depth.
- Several speakers called for a more nuanced wording regarding "observatory visits" (which should never sound as a giving a green light to child labour) by: limiting the length of the visit, possibly removing the reference to subsidies, and linking these visits to a career guidance and mentoring

framework as part of formal education. Additional ideas included creating a European civic service with mobility, encouraging dual formations, and addressing the European Youth Guarantee in a distinct measure.

- Under the compliance of jobs and internships to quality standards aspect, participants discussed the remuneration of internships. Support to banning unpaid internships was expressed within the Working Group, while paying attention to not reducing opportunities offered to young people, and the issue of internships within education would have to be further considered. An alternative could be to provide a public financial support to trainees.
- Volunteering activities, as distinct from jobs or internships would need to be promoted.
- In regards to equal access to social protection for young people, participants suggested to go further in terms of access to housing. Some members in the Working Group notably proposed to make housing or access to affordable housing a human right. A suggestion was made to foresee specific measures to protect orphans once they leave their orphanage due to their age.
- Under the prevention of brain drain, it was proposed that a country receiving an individual whose education was based on public funding could financially compensate the country of origin, although some members underlined the risk of undermining freedom of circulation in the EU. Another speaker suggested that “forced mobility” could be avoided by levelling wages across the EU.
- Finally, regarding crisis management measures targeting young people, a remark was made that scenarios could not be detailed as stated in the ECP’s recommendation.

For the cluster on promotion of European identity, speakers raised the following points:

- The world “culture” is missing in the title of the cluster, which should also refer to diversity.
- Another idea to develop a “culture of exchange” would be the European Culture Pass.
- In regards to promotion of multilingualism, speakers expressed the view that a more nuanced wording is needed as, not only the requested C1 level in English appears unrealistic, but also learning the language of the immediate neighbours especially in cross border areas, or of the national minority within the country, could be equally important. Several speakers insisted on better protecting minority and regional languages, possibly through a binding instrument. In this context, the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as a suggestion to create an agency dedicated to the protection of these languages were evoked.
- Regarding opportunities to share European culture, various suggestions were made: replacing “build their common European identity” by “explore their common European identity”, adding “without borders” after “share European culture”, with the precision “namely in the media field” - as it is always surprising that one can no longer access the same content as soon as one crossed an intra-EU border. However, another speaker expressed her reluctance regarding such a mention, as it would not serve the interests of authors. A suggestion was made to better celebrate Europe Day, namely at the local level.
- Finally, under the protection of the European cultural heritage, participants suggested the following ideas: referring to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to the European Green Deal, as well as to create a European statute of artists, and a specific programme dedicated to the protection of the European cultural heritage.

Lastly, a consensus was found on the creation of a fourth cluster dedicated to sports in connection with inclusiveness, education to a healthy lifestyle (mental health included), emphasising European identity, promoting a culture of exchange, and protecting cultural heritage (local and regional sports).

In the course of the discussion, Vice-President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas remotely intervened paying tribute to the work of the Working Group, especially on education. He expressed the Commission's support to the establishment of an European Education Area based on a common curriculum, and a common system of degrees, and underlined the contribution that a better funded and more widely Erasmus Plus programme represents. He described European culture as an "aggregate of our diversity" tied together around shared values such as banning of death penalty and social security that are at the core of a sense of belonging to Europe. He noted a push for a certain convergence in the field of culture *via* programmes such as Creative Europe, as well as for the promotion of the European cultural heritage by helping communalities, and protecting historical sites.

4. Concluding remarks of the Chair

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking participants for the fruitfulness of the debate. She explained that the further steps of the process will consist in a redrafting of proposals according to the remarks made on the initial draft within the Working Group, which the Working Group Citizens' spokesperson Marina Zelenetska and herself will agree on. These new proposals will be presented in the next meeting. Lastly, she reminded participants that the issue of overlapping recommendations was still being discussed and informed that more information will be given as soon as a solution is found.