



European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning

EUCIS-LLL

Manifesto to European Political Parties EU Elections 2009

Who are we?

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) gathers 19 European networks working in education and training. Together, these organisations cover all sectors of education and training including networks for higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers. Through its members, EUCIS-LLL embodies lifelong learning.

The platform was created with the purpose of involving the different educative actors as closely as possible in the dynamics of discussing and implementing the policies and actions of the European Union. Its goal is to offer the possibility for the European citizen's voice to be heard on educational issues, and, leaning on the expertise of the networks that make up the platform, to bring concrete solutions for potential ways in which the decisions made by the European Institutions can be realised.

Why a manifesto on lifelong learning?

The European Commission supports, develops and implements lifelong learning policies with the aim of enabling countries to work together and to learn from each other. It does so through the "open method of coordination" while respecting the full competencies of Member States in education and training. **It is clear that the EU has a growing influence on national lifelong learning policies. Members of the European Parliament, as representatives of Europe's citizens, should ensure that EU decisions respect EU citizens' interests.**

Too often, lifelong learning is limited to adult education or to vocational training while it should encompass the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning in a life-wide perspective. It shall not be limited to economic growth and competitiveness but shall also aim to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. **Investment in lifelong learning (LLL) is of utmost importance notably in times of economic recovery.**

The European civil society platform on lifelong learning, would thus like to invite future deputies to foster and adopt policies that are owned by the citizens and respond to their needs [A], to increase access to learning continuity [B], to recognise the social dimension of education and training [C] and to contribute in the implementation of inclusive and coherent lifelong learning strategies at national and European levels [D].



A] Adopting policies that are owned by the citizens and respond to their needs

- Implementing stakeholders' regular consultation at all levels.
- Recognising the role of civil society organisations and networks working in education and training.
- Encouraging volunteering for stakeholders in education and training.

B] Developing access to learning continuity

- Securing coherence between the policy level fostering LLL strategies and the LLL programme.
- Evaluating the way EU funds are managed.
- Setting up unique national contact points to inform citizens on learning mobility.
- Investing in mobility programmes to give everyone the chance to access learning mobility.
- Strengthening education in European citizenship.
- Setting up "Lifelong Learning Weeks".

C] Recognising the social dimension of education and training

- Promoting a balanced approach to lifelong learning.
- Recognising the social dimension of lifelong learning as a key challenge for EU cooperation.
- Fighting the phenomenon of segregation within education and training systems.
- Cooperating on the protection or the creation of safe learning environments in the EU.
- Supporting an increased and sustainable investment in LLL targeted for those facing a higher risk of marginalisation.
- Contributing in the recognition of access to LLL as a fundamental right in Europe.

D] Implementing inclusive and coherent lifelong learning strategies

- Supporting the transition to learner-centred systems based on a learning outcomes approach.
- Developing transition tools.
- Improving teacher working conditions.
- Supporting partnership approaches and local innovative practices.
- Setting up a European Institute for Lifelong Learning.
- Strengthening and coordinating guidance and counselling services.
- Evaluating EU tools and initiatives and monitoring their implementation.
- Encouraging Member states to show strong political will in implementing reforms.
- Encouraging peer learning activities between member states.



A] Adopting policies that are owned by the citizens and respond to their needs

- 1) Implementing regular consultation processes with relevant stakeholders** at local, national and European levels. These consultations should be organised with the appropriate resources (time, information etc.), so that a true process can take place, and cover the procedure from the drafting to the implementation of actions.

At EU level, for example, the European Commission's proposal to organise annual Stakeholders' Forums in education and training should be encouraged and developed. The European Parliament could also further develop its own tools such as the public hearings or the Citizens' Agora. If the **Treaty of Lisbon** is ratified by all the Member States, the new Treaty will include an **article 11 which brings recognition of the reality of participatory democracy**. We therefore expect Members of the European Parliament to adopt a clear stance regarding our expectations in terms of civil dialogue¹.
- 2) Recognising civil society organisations and networks at EU level** working in education and training for their role in promoting and supporting the creation of a Europe of knowledge. More generally, we invite Members of the European Parliament to support the implementation of a more structured civil dialogue in order to reinforce EU democracy and to involve citizens in the European integration process. For instance, EUCIS-LLL with other organisations, would like the Members of the European Parliament to support the initiative to create a **European statute of association**.
- 3)** Many of the people working for stakeholder organizations actually do so on a voluntary basis. It is very difficult for them to get involved in voluntary work, notably in European organisations that lack financial support. This represents a barrier to their participation in consultation or policy discussion processes. The Members of the European Parliament could **adopt positive legislations** (i.e. "leaves of absence") **for stakeholders to be able to fulfil their tasks and to become more active**.

B] Developing access to learning continuity

- 1) The way the European Lifelong Learning Programme is organised prevents the implementation of transectoral networks or projects.** If the educative programmes from the period 2000-2006 have been gathered into an integrated programme, the barriers remain the same. For instance, it is divided into four main sub-programmes (Leonardo, Comenius, Erasmus and Grundtvig) with a transversal sub-programme which is very limited. We invite Members of the European Parliament to launch a reflection on the question whether more transectoral actions should be launched in the next budgetary period. This would give more **coherence between the policy level that supports lifelong learning strategies and the programme level which mainly supports sectoral projects**.
- 2) The management of EU programmes at EU level** needs to be evaluated and notably the development of European agencies such as the Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture. European organisations and their national associations see a risk in the fact that there is an **increasing institutional disconnection between the policy and the programme**

¹ EUCIS-LLL supports the manifesto "For a genuine civil dialogue" that will be officially launched by a group of civil society organisations and platforms in Brussels on 14th April 2009.

levels. For instance, more transparency is requested on the way calls for proposals are evaluated; quality feedback should be given. We would also like Members of the European Parliament to ask the European Commission to solve the **problems of late-payments** of EU-funded projects and contracts and to limit the use of restricted calls for proposals.

- 3) **At national level, there is a lack of coherence and information about EU programmes.** Different agencies give information on the different programmes, so that it is very difficult for learners and families to have a global perspective on the different opportunities. We therefore invite MEPs to support the idea of implementing **unique national contact points to inform citizens on learning mobility.** Of course, these national contact points should not replace other thematic national agencies, for example the Youth in Action programme Agency, but be complementary.
- 4) **Investing more in mobility programme.** MEPs should continue to encourage Member States to invest more in the construction of a European era of knowledge and of citizens for the period 2014-2021, particularly in the EU budget review process. The European Parliament should also continue to **outline the unequal access to mobility programmes,** largely limited to the most privileged. Many studies have shown the positive impact it has on individual's personal, social and professional development. We thus invite the Members of the European Parliament to use their budgetary power to promote an **EU budget defined according to the general interest** and not to national interests. EU programmes should aim to give everyone the possibility of accessing mobility which implies sufficient financial support and information.
- 5) More generally, there is a lack of knowledge about EU institutions. **Education to European citizenship should be reinforced, especially in formal education** but also in teacher continuing and initial training. Education plays an important role in increasing interest and involvement in Europe. If we want a true European citizenship, citizens need to understand and own the broader political system they are part of.
- 6) **Better communication about EU tools and initiatives.** Members of the European Parliament are aware of the need to reinforce communication around European policies. This is particularly true in the field of education and training. We thus encourage MEPs to support the setting up of "**Lifelong Learning Weeks**" in all Member States. The European Commission, in partnership with Member States and civil society organisations, could organize these weeks (i.e. the Green Week) at national and local levels. These weeks would aim to raise awareness on the European dimension of learning and to break the barriers between the different sectors of education and training.

C] Recognising the social dimension of education and training

- 1) **The employment and labour market dimensions of lifelong learning are often too dominant in EU legislation.** We would like Members of the European Parliament to consider that lifelong learning also aims to serve individuals' personal development and encompasses civic, social and economic facets. Lifelong learning does not only serve economic goals and competitiveness but the quality of life generally. It should be both a tool and a goal in itself. The **division of competences** between the Member States and the EU contains a risk that the EU will adopt texts that are too much oriented to the labour market as this is within their competence – and lifelong learning is not. **Members of the European Parliament should promote a more balanced approach to lifelong learning.**
- 2) The Lisbon strategy identifies key challenges for the 21st Century: globalisation and competitiveness, demographic patterns in the EU (ageing population and migration flows),

rapid changes in the nature of the labour market and the ICT revolution. We believe that **social cohesion, and notably social happiness and the quality of life, should also be identified as a key challenge.** For instance, **access to quality education for all** could have been recognised as a strategic challenge in the Updated strategic framework for EU cooperation in education and training². Even though efforts are made, the number of persons who do not achieve upper secondary level is too high and the number of adults accessing adult education is still too low. This inequality is also reflected within companies, access to employer funded training is often limited to those who are already well qualified. We would thus like the Members of the European Parliament to consider that **unequal access to education leads to unequal societies with high economic and social costs.**

- 3) **For instance, persons from a migrant background** often face socio-economic disadvantages that education and training systems tend to reproduce. Throughout the EU, we can observe a **phenomenon of segregation within education systems that has disastrous effects on social cohesion.** Initiatives coming from civil society, aiming to reduce segregation should be supported, also financially, by the Member states. We would like Members of the European Parliament to consider that **guaranteeing quality education and training for all EU citizens will allow the EU to address the socio-economic challenges confronting it.**
- 4) European societies have undergone very rapid change and become more and more complex. Recent news have clearly shown how some schools are facing violent situations. We would thus like Members of the European Parliament to launch a reflection on **protecting or creating safe learning environments in the EU.**
- 5) At national level, Member States should provide an **increased and sustainable investment in education and training, targeted on those facing a higher risk of marginalisation.** Members of the European Parliament should remind governments that a sustainable financing of education and training represents a long term investment for the future of Europe and should not be considered as a budgetary variable. Many studies have shown the high costs of not investing in education and training in terms of income tax, health expenditure and public aid, crime rates or delinquency. Education and training promote **more inclusive, tolerant and democratic societies.** It is a key element of the **European social model that MEPs shall help to preserve notably in times of economic crisis.**
- 6) **Members of the European Parliament should contribute to the recognition of access to lifelong learning as a fundamental right in Europe!**

D] Implementing inclusive and coherent lifelong learning strategies

- 1) Members of the European Parliament should support **the transition from traditional education and training systems to learner-centred systems.** That means that education and training systems should adapt to individual needs and demands rather than the other way round and that pluralism of provision should be respected. This is even more important when dealing with access to mainstream education for persons with fewer opportunities or with special needs. It also means that an individual should be able to move from one system to another allowing him/her to follow open-ended and inter-connected **flexible learning pathways.** Mobility is not only geographic but also sectoral, for example, being able to

² "An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training", Communication from the Commission, COM(2008) 865, 16 December 2008.

move from higher education to vocational training, from on-the-job learning to formal qualifications, etc.

- 2) Hence the importance of **developing tools facilitating these transitions** and notably certification processes such as the validation and recognition of prior learning. Because non-formal and informal learning is happening everywhere, at all times and throughout life, the **recognition of prior non formal and informal learning** is crucial and has the potential to foster the knowledge economy agenda by improving the level of qualifications of individuals, making them happier and improving their standard of living. This process involves many actors and relies on multi-facetted approaches.
- 3) In this context, education and training systems should no longer be based only on the duration of studies but on **learning outcomes**. This means evaluating what a learner knows, understands or is able to do at the end of a learning process. This supports a greater equality as well as the stronger recognition of people's informal and non-formal learning. Social and emotional education need to be recognised in that frame. Furthermore, we invite Members of the European Parliament to encourage Member States to **rethink assessment systems** as some can be discouraging lifelong learning attitudes.
- 4) Teachers need to be prepared for such shifts and for rapidly changing environments, but **access to professional development and training remains unequal in Europe**. For example, many teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach in culturally diverse settings. We would like Members of the European Parliament to encourage Member States to invest in initial as well as in continuing teacher training. More generally, we invite them to open a broader discussion on **teachers' working conditions and the enhancement of their status in society**. Improving teacher working conditions (time, professional development, leadership, empowerment, facilities and resources) will improve student learning conditions and help retain teachers.
- 5) Of course, teachers alone cannot address all the challenges ahead and systems should rely on a **learning community**. Education and training systems should be based on a **partnership approach**. The learners, the family, the educative community, including Institutions as well as the HRD professionals inside the business and non-profits organizations, should be involved. The territorial and human dimensions of education and training are key elements to consider. Local innovative practices exist throughout Europe and should be identified and supported by public authorities.
- 6) **At EU level, a European Institute for Lifelong Learning** could provide a forum for a regular and permanent consultation of stakeholders. It would have the objective of promoting the implementation of a coordinated and responsible policy on lifelong learning at European level and should be organised and administered with full cooperation between all stakeholders, including the representatives of organised civil society. This institute should not represent another agency but rather a permanent network of stakeholders in education and training³. We invite Members of the European Parliament to support this practical initiative.
- 7) These developments will lead to more open and flexible pathways, which mean that, more than ever, learners will need to find the relevant information, guidance and counselling. **Guidance and counselling should be considered as a tool to make lifelong learning a**

³ Contribution of the Liaison Group between the European Economic and Social Committee and European civil society organisations and networks on the renewed Lisbon Strategy 2006-2008.

reality. Members of the European Parliament should thus encourage Member States to speed up the reforms in order to strengthen and coordinate their guidance services.

- 8) These systems are also meant to be open to the rest of the world. The EU has notably developed a number of tools to facilitate learning mobility and the recognition of curricula and qualifications in Europe. We believe that **existing tools and initiatives should be evaluated** in the frame of the renewed Lisbon strategy before launching new ones. We also ask Members of the European Parliament to **monitor the implementation of the tools at national level.** The **European qualification framework**, for example, is a translation grid for qualifications throughout Europe that supports cross-border mobility by simplifying comparison of the content and profile of qualifications. It covers learning as a whole, in particular learning which takes place outside formal education and training institutions. Given its non-binding nature, it is very important that **Members of the European Parliament follow-up its implementation** at national level and notably watch that non formal and informal learning are taken into account and that the relevant stakeholders are involved in the process.
- 9) Indeed, the **Open method of coordination (OMC)** has no obligations for Member States to implement the tools developed at European level. This can lead to a **lack of coherence in the implementation.** As the Updated Strategic Framework clearly puts the focus on implementation for the next period (2010-2020), this means a challenge for the different levels to ensure the necessary coherence. **It will need strong political will, which we ask Members of the European Parliament to support.**
- 10) **Peer learning activities between Member States need to be strengthened.** Member States should value this opportunity to learn from others' good and bad experiences. We would also like the European Parliament to encourage the European Commission and the Member States **to go beyond sharing good practices!** Furthermore, they should **cooperate more systematically with international institutions** such as UNESCO, the OECD or the Council of Europe that are also working on issues related to lifelong learning.

These are only part of the changes linked to the implementation of lifelong learning strategies. This notably requires a **change in mentalities** from learning providers, learners, politicians, etc. **Furthermore, lifelong learning strategies need to be defined and implemented in coherence with other policies** (social, youth, economic, etc.).

Members of the European Parliament should voice the need to translate slogans into practice!

Members of the European Parliament should be a voice on EU challenges and report on EU policies at national level. There is a wide range of different experience in Europe. It is time now to build together efficient and inclusive education and training systems. Civil society organisations are willing to face this challenge in partnership with EU deputies and all relevant stakeholders.



The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning is a gathering of 19 European networks working in education and training:



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