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**ETUCE Position Paper on
Public consultation towards a "Council Recommendation on
Promoting social inclusion and shared values through formal and
non-formal learning"**

Adopted by the ETUCE Bureau on 12 July 2017

Context of the consultation:

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) has launched a [public consultation towards a Commission's proposal for a "Council Recommendation on Promoting social inclusion and shared values through formal and non-formal learning"](#) with the purpose to raise awareness on the importance of equipping young people with shared values and how education and non-formal learning can help achieve this aim in view of creating more socially cohesive societies.

The [online survey](#) has a total of 12 questions and is available in all EU official languages. Deadline for submitting replies is **11 August 2017**.

The consultation follows the implementation of the objectives of the [2015 Paris Declaration](#) on 'Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education'. It also relates to the Council of Europe's and OECD's thematic work on Democratic Citizenship Education.

ETUCE general views as regards a "Council Recommendation on Promoting social inclusion and shared values through formal and non-formal learning":

ETUCE welcomes this public consultations as it addresses important topics set as priorities in the ETUCE work-programme 2017 – 2020.

While the Council Recommendation covers all the Paris Declaration objectives, including inclusive education in a broad sense, this consultation focuses primarily on the **most effective ways of promoting ownership of shared values, as a new emerging priority**.

- ETUCE believes that the **good delivery and understanding of shared values** should also be at the core of the Council recommendation, as the **basis for the acquisition and ownership such as EU common values** of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination. EU common values help create a culture of tolerance and respect, which allow people from diverse backgrounds to live and build on a common future together.
- In addition, ETUCE underlines that **the promotion of shared values should be also accompanied by democratic citizenship principles**. Living in a constantly changing world does not only mean adaptation and assimilation to change. Thanks to democratic principles, active citizenship also means that people can and should not only influence politics and policy through elections, but also **actively shape and**

change society. Each generation must learn democratic principles, values, ideas and underlying concepts of rights and responsibilities¹.

ETUCE member organisations are invited to use this ETUCE position paper as a guidance for their reply to the questionnaire and to add relevant remarks from their experience. The ETUCE Position Paper should also be uploaded as a supporting document at the time of completing the survey.

[Following the survey structure, these guidelines are also divided into three different sections](#), as follows:

SECTION 1: Challenges and objectives (questions 1 – 6):

ETUCE's views on the challenges and objectives to be pursued in terms of education and training to help young people understand and adhere to shared values:

As regards the **challenges** envisaged to achieve the above-mentioned aim, ETUCE stresses in particular:

-The need for **additional appropriate teacher training** on Citizenship-related subjects such as intercultural dialogue, human rights or education for democratic citizenship. Indeed, improving teachers, academics and other educational personnel knowledge, skills and competences for teaching citizenship education subjects has been constantly identified as one of the major challenges to be able to **help young people to become active citizens and critical thinkers within their communities, to understand the importance of and adhere to shared values and to show mutual respect and appreciate diversity** at all educational levels, in particular, at secondary level.

-The need for **further (continuous) professional development of teachers**: Accepting that teaching controversial issues is part of teaching EU common values is an important task for teachers which implies that education policy must support teachers, academics and other education personnel in this endeavour. This also includes professional development of content on these controversies and appropriate teaching methodology (for a more dialogical way of teaching to deal, among other aspects, with diversity in the classroom).

-There is a need for schools to adapt to the changing contexts and fast-growing world, in which they operate, including the digital era and the increasing diversity among students coming from different realities and cultural backgrounds. ETUCE believes that all these issues require not only the **adaptation of school curricula to the local specificities and to the particular contexts**, but looking at more reflective, dialogical, critical, sensitive and participatory approaches in teaching methodology and **more diverse teaching (from a wider variety backgrounds) and learning process to address the needs of all learners and foster and achieve ownership of shared values.**

-With a view to ensure sufficient education personnel qualified to provide citizenship education, there is a need to **overcome the shortage of qualified teachers** and to make the teaching profession more attractive. This includes offering decent salaries and working-conditions and the recognition of the status and social function of teachers, academics and other education personnel as educators of future active and responsible citizens who are able to think critically.

¹ [ETUCE Resolution for Democracy \(adopted in the Conference of Belgrade in December 2016\).](#)

As regards the **objectives** envisaged to achieve the above-mentioned aim (notably, question 5), ETUCE highlights the following ones, in particular:

-Enhancing the acquisition of social and civic competences, fostering media knowledge, intercultural dialogue and mutual respect, and the understanding and ownership of fundamental values such as non-discrimination, democracy and freedom. Indeed, those social, civil and intercultural competences are transversal. From the ETUCE's perspective, within the context of the '[Key Competences Framework](#)' of the EU, those competences should not be considered as a target only of formal education and training both at school and tertiary levels but also as part of non-formal and informal learning and the competences should be acquired in all aspects of life in a cross way.

-Promoting inclusive education and training and fostering the education of vulnerable groups of learners, in particular, through supporting teachers, educators and leaders of education institutions in dealing with cultural diversity and reinforcing socio-economic mixity in the learning environment.

-Better equipping teachers, academics and other educational staff to be able to deal with challenging teaching tasks. This would imply valuing the role of teachers, academics and other education personnel and empowering them in the processes of facilitating the acquisition and appliance of key competences of their students, **in particular, by promoting active citizenship, critical thinking and civic engagement, by ensuring equal opportunities for all; and by reinforcing the sense of belonging to a wider society.**

-Facilitating students' competences assessment and recognition – Formal and non-formal learning environments: Assessing student skills and competences in citizenship education, in particular, when taught as a cross-curricular dimension of the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities (e.g. social volunteering), **at all levels of education**, remains challenging and needs to be tackled. In this respect, ETUCE points out that the acquisition of those civic, social, critical, digital and intercultural skills and competences of students, both in formal learning environments (typically, via the teaching of EU common values) and in non-formal learning environments (e.g. through extra-curricular activities such as participation in local community, field trips to cultural institutions, etc.) must be recognised both in schools and in tertiary education. Indeed, ETUCE believes that **extra-curricular activities are an excellent vehicle for transmitting EU shared values of respect, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, human rights and non-discrimination and for promoting social inclusion.**

SECTION 2: Effectiveness of policy approaches, tools and methods (questions 7 – 10):

ETUCE's views on the most effective policy approaches, tools and methods to create learning environments that embrace diversity, address the needs of all learners and promote knowledge and understanding of shared values:

ETUCE notes that teachers, academics and other educational personnel are facing obstacles to adapt their lessons and practices to the particular needs of diverse groups of newcomers (e.g. newly arrived migrants and asylum-seekers). **Autonomy is thus essential for teachers, academics and other education personnel to manage diversity.** In addition, **more diverse teacher and academic staffing** should be encouraged to facilitate the promotion of mutual respect and to influence schools and educational institutions' ethos in valuing differences and diversity.

However, **since education systems, as exclusive national competence of member states, are diverse in Europe – selecting a single and uniform model must not be the response.** Instead, teachers, academics and other education personnel could benefit from peer learning activities as well as exchange and dissemination of best practices on successful approaches on how to best facilitate the identification of learners' different needs and promote knowledge and understanding of EU common values.

ETUCE considers essential that all colleagues, at all levels of education, have their vocational and pedagogical competences (including civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship competences) regularly updated through participation in **appropriate and free-of-charge professional development programmes offered, built on public national investment, in order to be able to cope effectively with the changing needs of our multicultural and pluralistic societies.**

Within this context, **providing citizenship education and using curricula that enhance knowledge and understanding of shared values can be regarded amongst the most effective ways in achieving the above-mentioned aim.**

Furthermore, ETUCE points out that **the empowerment of teachers, academics and other education personnel to transmit shared values and to deal with difference, intercultural dialogue and diversity in the classroom and the support to teachers in learning innovative pedagogical approaches (e.g. to promote critical thinking, etc.) can be considered amongst the most effective ways in achieving the above-mentioned aim.**

As regards the learning environments and links with the local communities (question 10a and b); **the involvement of teachers and educators, parents and learners in the school life ('whole-school approach');** **the support of democratic learning environments to allow learners to experience democracy and mutual respect ('democratic school culture');** **and the encouragement of students/pupils to participating in extra-curricular activities and social volunteering can be regarded amongst the most effective tools/approaches.**

Nevertheless, ETUCE regrets that **this public consultation does not mention the role of social partners in education nor of social dialogue with education trade unions in the promotion of EU shared values and social inclusion.** It is of utmost importance to acknowledge the **crucial role and impact of the European and national sectoral social dialogue in education in shaping key policies** which are the highest relevance to develop inclusive education systems across Europe that embrace diversity, address the needs of learners, including those coming from a disadvantaged background, and promote the knowledge and understanding of shared value. Such collaborative approach to policy development and implementation has been widely acknowledged at EU level by the call for a 'new start' for social dialogue (EC, 2015).

SECTION 3: Added value of the EU Dimension (questions 11 – 12):

ETUCE's views on the most effective policy approaches, tools and methods on EU level to promote social inclusion and foster and achieve ownership of shared values through formal and non-formal learning (i.e. EU added value):

In helping people understand their role as responsible and active members of European societies, it is very important to **understand and own shared values of the EU and their rights and responsibilities as EU citizens.**

ETUCE stands out that one of the key elements in improving the delivery of EU common values and in fostering inclusion is to give stronger support to teachers and educational staff. Teachers, academics and other educational personnel play a pivotal role in imparting knowledge and common values and in giving support to students who come from vulnerable socio-economic or migrant backgrounds. **Enabling teachers, academics and other education personnel to cope with challenging tasks requires supporting research and sustainable national public investment on effective school leadership and a teaching profession that is based on excellent initial education, teamwork, and career-long professional development.**

As regards formal and non-formal learning environments, **the ‘whole-school approach’ has demonstrated to be extremely positive.** Indeed, ETUCE observes that when schools work together in formal and informal networks (with students, parents, families, school leaders and the broader school community), they can learn better from each other’s experiences, support each other, and become part of a larger education community. Creating opportunities for teachers of different schools to work together in networks can help them broaden their horizons and feel part of the larger education community.

With the purpose to **reinforce the EU added value**, ETUCE considers the **strengthening of the EU funding programme ‘Erasmus+’ as central, in particular, in order to finance further projects and activities aimed at promoting social inclusion** and helping to enhance pupils/students acquiring social, civil, intercultural competences of, including critical thinking, digital literacy and mutual respect, as well as helping to understand and own EU fundamental values such as freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination.

For this reason, it would also have a positive impact if the EU funding programme ‘Europe for Citizens 2014-2020’ adds a **new funding line for ‘Citizenship Education and EU common values’.**

Finally, ETUCE points out that there is also a need to use the opportunities of the European Semester to open up policy spaces where governments, European institutions and social partners can contribute together to co-produce targeted recommendations which meet the needs and the social demands of EU citizens, including their need to social justice and social inclusion through quality education systems. **However, this should imply a revision of the European Semester, balancing the current dominance of economic issues over education-related Country Specific Recommendations and societal demands.**

In relation to question 12 in Section 3 (i.e. Added value of the EU Dimension); the following question is posed: “What could the EU do to help Member States ensure that their education and training systems, and in particular the learning environments, help people understand and take ownership of EU shared values and promote fair and inclusive societies?”:

As a conclusion, ETUCE considers that the EU could help member states to achieve the above mentioned aims, by:

- 1.-Promoting research on opportunities for students to discuss EU fundamental values** of the communities that they are part of (on a regional, national and international level), both in subject areas and in extra-curricular activities at all levels of education;
- 2.-Promoting research on teacher commitment to teaching EU common values** across the EU member states;

- 3.-Calling member states to increase growth-enhancing investment in education both at school and tertiary levels, in particular with a view to ensure funding for national, regional or local programmes on citizenship education projects and activities;**
- 4.-Promoting social dialogue in EU Member States at national, regional and local level, in particular, consulting the role of education trade unions as regards the introduction and use of citizenship education in school curricula as well as teaching of EU common values;**
- 5.-Stimulating the development of innovative practices (and teaching approaches and methods) that can function as examples for teachers for the promotion of social inclusion, in particular, via peer learning and exchange and dissemination of best practices;**
- 6.-Calling member states to strengthen national/regional programmes relating to mobility and exchange of teachers, academics and students to help them experience different articulations of EU values such as democracy, freedom and tolerance in other learning environments in other EU Member States;**
- 7.-Stimulating the inclusion of initial and continuous professional training programmes on citizenship and EU common values in national/regional educational plans for school management, teachers, academics and other education personnel, supported by national education trade unions;**
- 8.-Encouraging national/regional/local raising-awareness campaigns or initiatives on active democratic citizenship;**
- 9.-Considering policy guidance or targeted advice for member states in the framework of the European Semester, aimed to identify challenges and best practices on shared values and to facilitate the upscale, transposition and wider dissemination of best practices on teaching approaches and methods on how to effectively transmit them, build on social partnership, engagement and sharing of practical examples within the whole-school community.**