



EUROPEAN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH FORUM 2015

REPORT

*New priorities for European cooperation
in education, training and youth*

Brussels, 19 - 20 October 2015

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Key messages from the Forum

- **Key challenges facing the education sector** in the coming years include further work to implement the Declaration of March 17 on **promoting citizenship and the common values** of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education ('Paris Declaration'), and work to ensure the central objectives are achieved. We, as a group of dedicated stakeholders and organisations in this sector, must focus in particular on promoting fundamental values and social cohesion in order to counter increased marginalisation and radicalisation.
- The current **migration crisis** has led to divides between Member States, but all need to unite if a successful solution is to emerge. The education sector will come under increasing pressure to support these people to integrate into societies, to guarantee all young people find their place in schools and to ensure that all migrants have access to learning opportunities. One of the most significant challenges will be to ensure that all migrants have the chance to learn the language of instruction, whilst also respecting multilingualism for these groups.
- There remains a need to continue the work that has already commenced on trying to get more young people into employment, to reduce early school leaving, to tackle the skills gaps between teachers and children and to reduce higher education drop-outs. There is clearly a great deal of work ahead for the sector. The discussions at the forum focused on **implementation** and what could be done across Europe in these areas.
- The role of **teachers**, trainers and other front line staff is vital when considering marginalisation, intolerance, racism and radicalisation. Teachers need training to deal with the demanding situations that they face. Examples of successful training programmes could be rolled out more widely in Europe. Teachers will be empowered if given the resources and training to engage in intercultural dialogue. Furthermore, they need support to deal with more challenging pupils, who are often those most likely to drop out from education, and better ICT training to keep up with fast-paced developments. We should see teachers' learning on a continuum and support professionals in this sector with resources and dedicated time so that they can continue to develop and collaborate with one another.
- **Schools and educational institutions** as a whole are important centres in which to promote and teach social and civic values and cooperation with others. It is essential that all education is inclusive. Schools and institutions need to be mixed, or linked with others from different areas or backgrounds, in order to raise awareness about diversity. Successful projects that have addressed radicalisation already exist and need to be further disseminated.
- It is also clear that we need modern schools and modern training environments to match the needs of the labour market. Everyone involved needs to be open to **new methodologies and experimentation**, and we must ensure that the right skills are developed and delivered to match the needs of the current labour market. There is also a need to de-stigmatise the upskilling of adults, and to ensure the promotion of Vocational Education and Training (VET) so that it is no longer seen as a 2nd class education.
- Amongst other key actors are **parents**, who should be seen as co-educators and a resource, and who should be included as partners in our work. Family, friends and society are all important influences on a young person. Additionally, **young people** should be engaged so that they can be an active part of the solution to the challenges facing the education sector. In many areas, such as digital skills, they are already ahead of adults.

- **Non-formal education** should also play an important role, as whole communities can come together to work on projects and promote inter-group contact and dialogue. Youth groups and faith-based organisations were all noted as other settings in which youth work and non-formal education takes place. These groups are also important in encouraging the participation of newly arrived children and young people in our societies.
- The overwhelming message is that the key actors cannot achieve success on their own, and **collaboration** is essential. All relevant stakeholders must be involved, and examples of best practice, as well as of failures, must be shared. This is vital for informing policy, and the information gathered from stakeholders needs to be properly disseminated.
- There is also a need to **develop policy more collaboratively** and inclusively. For example, by using tools such as working groups, peer learning activities, thematic events and evidence building. Erasmus+, the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, can be a key tool to foster policy cooperation. Policy also needs to ensure equity, and it needs to recognise qualifications from all over the world, especially for the countries from which many are now fleeing.
- **Evidence** remains important when considering examples of good practice, and how policy might be used to implement these more widely. All those working in this area need to ensure that we evaluate the work that we are doing properly, and gather evidence to support such up-scaling of successful projects. Furthermore, preventative methods to tackle radicalisation and marginalisation need to be further researched as these are vital for the youth of today.

1 Summary of the sessions, panels and workshops

The fourth edition of the European Education, Training and Youth (ETY) Forum took place in Brussels on 19 and 20 October 2015. The theme of the Forum was *New priorities for European cooperation in education, training and youth*. The event hosted forward-looking discussions to agree on the most effective and efficient ways to implement the priority areas for European cooperation in education and training 2016-2020 (ET 2020). It also sought to discuss the specific contribution that various stakeholders can have in this process, and to consolidate constructive cooperation with representative stakeholder organisations in order to secure their ownership in implementation. These reforms are needed to tackle the challenges of the education and training systems, in particular for young people, and to restore growth and prosperity. The Forum gathered 460 participants representing different types of stakeholders and organisations active in education, training and youth.

1.1 Opening session

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, opened the Forum with a video statement. He highlighted the importance of building a Europe that is open, diverse, cohesive and tolerant. Young people play a vital role here, he stated, and therefore education, training and youth policies are crucial.

Given that 1 in 6 young Europeans are neither in employment, nor in education or training, President Juncker stressed the need to get young people to work. Creating jobs and re-installing growth is the priority of this Commission, as well as creating a Europe that scores an AAA social rating. He emphasised the need for modern schools and modern training programmes to develop young people, and to ensure that they are ready for a modern labour market.

Additionally, President Juncker emphasised the need for education, training and youth policies to focus on our common values. The European Commission and the European Education Ministers emphasised in March, after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the special responsibility of schools, teachers and trainers who are working on the frontline. They are directly confronted by marginalisation, intolerance, racism and radicalisation. He stressed that if everyone worked together, we could overcome these obstacles. He concluded that there is a real need for all actors involved to put these priorities into practice. He invited teachers, trainers, youth workers, parents, and professionals everywhere across Europe to join forces in this work.

Jens Nymand-Christensen, Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture in the European Commission, emphasised that since last year's Forum, Europe had been challenged beyond its expectations. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, there was greater recognition of marginalisation, which can lead some into radicalisation. The aim of the European Commission, he said, is to have an inclusive Europe, where everyone belongs. He stated that any approach to address marginalisation and the risk of radicalisation in Europe should include joint cooperation in education, training and youth policies, both at European, national and regional levels.

In relation to the Greek crisis, he believes it is important for the European Commission to show that Europe would stand together in trying to reach out to the Greek population.

In relation to the current refugee crisis, which has led to significant divisions between Member States and between institutions, it is the primary objective of the European Commission to pull all Member States together. Mr Nymand-Christensen stressed the importance of offering these people opportunities to develop and learn new skills within an educational framework, including newly arrived migrants that do not speak our languages. Education and youth policies are crucial from this perspective.

He then said that there was a need to consider the follow-up to the Paris Declaration on European, national and regional levels, and to deliver at the grass-roots level. There is a

need for dialogue between different groups to stimulate a better mutual understanding, to foster ownership of fundamental values and to combat all forms of discrimination.

Mr Nymand-Christensen highlighted that while education is a key tool for integration, it can also increase social divisions when it does not address diversity effectively. There should be a greater emphasis on inclusive education, he said, and on education's potential to develop social, civic and intercultural competencies in our increasingly multicultural societies.

He stated that last year's Forum was an opportunity to gather stakeholders' views on the future of ET 2020, which has been included in the joint reports that the European Commission recently adopted (the draft ET 2020 report and the youth report). This Forum, however, has a more ambitious aim, he said, to develop ideas on how to implement these priorities. Key challenges he noted included early school leaving, challenges that teachers are facing in terms of a rapidly changing environment, digital skills and the skills gaps between children and teachers, drop outs from higher education and the broader challenge of inclusion and tolerance. Finally, he echoed President Juncker's call for active engagement.

1.2 Innovative ideas for education, training and youth

1.2.1 TED-like talks

1.2.2 A. Clare Ryan (Principal of St. Leo's College, Carlow) on Early-School Leaving

TOPIC: How schools can prevent Early-School Leaving (ESL) and promote school success for all learners by adopting more collaborative practices.

Using an empty desk and chair as a prop, Ms Ryan focused on students who are not only physically absent, but also those who are psychologically absent from schools across Europe. She said that ESL was an important challenge because of the loss of potential and the loss to society, as well as the personal cost to the well-being of a young person.

She spoke of key areas to focus on concerning best practice:

- **Parents** are co-educators and we should look at ways to include them as partners, so that they too are a resource.
- **Teachers** are key because different learning practices can either enhance learning, or exacerbate it. We should all work to assist teachers, especially in terms of early school leavers, as these pupils are often the most challenging and difficult. We need to consider how we can sustain these professionals in schools.
- **School leaders** also have a significant impact on the outcome of children's learning, and we should consider how to sustain this group of professionals. She thought that school leaders needed to work to show that as a school, all children (including those who are more challenging) are cared about, that none are given up on and that all families are supported.
- **Innovation** is key and we should support schools to be more innovate and creative. The analogy of Irish dancing was used, which was not seen to be very exciting until someone who thought differently re-crafted the dance to improve it. This, she thought, needed to happen in education. Things need to be done differently and done better, with a whole-school approach.

1.2.3 B. Marco Snoek (Professor at the Knowledge Centre for Teaching and Education at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences) on Teacher Education

TOPIC: Teacher education: some good practice examples and key messages related to teacher education.

Mr Snoek used an image of Superman and a poster from the film 'Waiting for Superman' as props to suggest that, in the field of education, the role of teachers is akin to that of Superman. He considered that the current challenges facing education all came down to teachers. He said that we need to consider to what extent we support teachers, and how, as at the moment we are not doing a good enough job.

Key messages:

- **Teaching as a continuum:** Currently we expect teachers to be able to do everything at once after teacher training. We need to consider that if we do this, we imply that there is nothing left to learn, and we have created a 'non-learning profession.'
 - We need to see teaching on a continuum and consider how we support it.
- **Collaboration between teachers:** We have structured school environments that leave little time for teachers to liaise with one another, or to work on their own development. We have created a case of professional isolation.
 - A key priority is to focus on teachers; their development and cooperation.
 - School leaders need to focus on enhancing the learning of teachers.
 - Teachers and school leaders need to change their mind-sets.
- **Teachers cannot do it on their own:** We ask the impossible of teachers if we ask them to do everything on their own.
 - We need to reorganise the way we are teaching, and reorganise schools, to develop a collaborative profession.

He closed his talk by considering how, overall, we can address these key areas. Mr Snoek said that we cannot change mind-sets with a top-down approach, and we cannot enforce collaboration with rules and regulation. He stressed the importance of talking, of sharing responsibilities and of trusting each other with these responsibilities. He argued that we need to find consensus on these three key areas. He suggested a link to the policy making guide he authored, where he tried to identify essential policy actions. Finally, he invited the audience to consider the challenges facing teachers and education, and to discuss these within their own national contexts, so that they might identify what they can each do to help teachers.

1.2.4 **C. Mitja Jermol (UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Education, and a head of the Centre for Knowledge Transfer at Jozef Stefan Institute in Slovenia) on Open and Innovative Education**

TOPIC: How innovative technologies can change the ways of teaching and learning if they are promoted in a strategic and systematic manner.

Mr Jermol spoke about the need for a mechanism to change something as rigid as our current education systems. He suggested that open education was such a mechanism, and highlighted the flexibility that it could also bring to an existing education system. He spoke with reference to an example in Slovenia of the first world-wide initiative for open education.

Some background information on the project which led to a world-leading European portal:

- They had to take actions to ensure they had the appropriate licences, and to overcome reluctance from professors to have their lectures and other materials recorded and shared.
- They considered education projects financed by public money, of which there were a huge number, and which they could see would make up a large body of knowledge.
- They then had to engage stakeholders and work to gain formal political support. They started to listen to one another; to inform, listen, share and collaborate in order to change things systematically.

He outlined 3 key points to consider when thinking about open education as a tool:

- **We do not listen to young people.** We think we know how they learn or what literacy and digital literacy are. Young people, however, are getting together and constructing complex systems of their own.
- **Open educational resources.** This concept does not only presuppose that the content is free, but also that the necessary legal permissions are acquired to retain and to redistribute the materials that are made available.
- **Artificial intelligence tools** can now be used to extract information from content, and to understand the user on the other side, e.g. they can understand an individual's learning goals. This allows for personalised learning.

Mr Jermol is now interested in looking at the changing role of schools to learn what is next for the role of teachers and schools in the open education world. He encouraged participants to make contact with him to learn from their successes and also their mistakes.

He concluded that he considers the role of the current adult generation to be to help open the closed systems that humanity has set up. Education, he thought, was one of these. It is important to do this because today's children now live in a different, more open world.

1.2.5 **D. Florian PECENKA (Counsellor for Higher Education, Head of Unit Science and Research, Austrian Permanent Representation, Brussels, Belgium) on improving Completion Rates in Higher Education**

TOPIC: Improving completion rates in higher education, and key policy messages derived from a country-focused workshop.

Mr Pecenka opened his talk by inviting the audience to consider the philosophical question of how we can successfully bring young people through their studies, and ensure that they do not drop out along the way.

He started to explore the reasons why people take a break from, or drop out of, education, through reference to research in several European countries. He said that while much data had been collected it was often difficult to compare and analyse these as one collective data set, as this does not allow examination of different contexts that may be relevant. A key fact was that most drop-outs from higher education occur in the first year, and the second highest figure is in the fourth year.

He then asked: What and who plays a role? (Using research done in the USA)

- **The school:** discussed a 'matchmaking system' project used to try to help pupils at schools pick courses and subjects that are well suited to them.
- **Universities:** discussed the role of mentoring.
- **Family, friends and society:** these are key influences on a young person, as well as the supporting role of teachers and academics.

Mr Pecenka stressed that overall, the more deeply integrated and the more invested students are in their studies, the more likely they are to make it all the way through higher education. He did not consider that there was one solution to resolve the overall challenge of higher education drop-outs. Rather, he argued that all key actors (as listed above) need to come together to talk and to discuss, and that each can work towards positive outcomes, together developing a solution.

He concluded his talk by emphasising that the most important thing we can give young people is education.

1.2.6 E. Lisa SERERO (Responsible for development at CoExist, France) on Social Inclusion and non-discrimination among young people

TOPIC: Social inclusion and non-discrimination among young people.

Ms Serero opened her talk by explaining that she would address racism across Europe through using a specific example from France that she has been involved in.

She explained that in France, 50% of racist attacks are anti-Semitic, and there has been a continuous increase in racist violence over the last 20 years. She said that she thought this trend would continue for a while longer. It is just one step to move from stereotypes to hate-filled actions, and stereotypes are where all of the discussions around racism and related actions should start.

The project in France wanted to create places for young people to have dialogue. The project outline:

- **Breakdown young people's stereotypes** in schools, in a free and safe space.
- Children should be able to **express stereotypes freely**, and then talk about them.
- This will allow children to eventually **deconstruct their stereotypes**.

The process involves:

- Encouraging children to be more nuanced and to question sources in terms of thinking for themselves and of others.
- Children come to realise that those who have stereotypes in their heads, and those who are victims of stereotypes, are the same person.

Ms Serero stressed that the children of today are the future leaders of Europe, and therefore projects such as this are key. She wants the future citizens of Europe to respect the society they live in, and that is why this work is so important. She said that it was within our abilities to decrease racism, and that each person in the room was part of the solution.

She closed her talk by encouraging everyone to look for local initiatives that address stereotypes, and to encourage more people to attend them. This, she concluded, will lead to a more tolerant Europe for the future.

She welcomed the audience to contact her for further information about the project.

1.3 Panel discussion on enhancing inclusion, fundamental values and active citizenship: the role of education, training and youth work

This panel was composed of **Prof. Jagdish Gundara** (moderator), President of the International Association of Intercultural Education, **Youssef Himmat**, President of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations, **Robin Sclafani**, Director at CEJI - A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe, **Yvonne Heselmans**, Executive Director of The International Debate Education Association IDEA-NL, and **Robin Andersson**, Team Leader of the Tolerance Project of the Segerstedt Institute at the University of Gothenburg.

The **main messages** emerging from the discussion in the Panel are summarised below:

- **Intercultural dialogue:**

Teachers: They do not always have the training for this to happen in the classroom. Key is to empower them and give them the resources needed. Guidance and training is also needed on how to navigate debate around difficult issues. A critical reading of the media is also a crucial skill for young people, so that they can decide what to carry with them from what they see in the internet.

- There are suites of training programmes available to increase mutual understanding between different religions and beliefs. These have trained over 400 trainers across Europe to work with target groups in schools. More time and money is required. To make a critical difference to schools and educators these need mainstream European policies to bring them in.
- Projects have shown that teaching children to debate and make their own cases heard, and supporting them to engage in their local community, can be very useful for children to take forward their own positive actions for change.

Schools: we need to overcome schools that are not mixed, and ideas were shared about linking classes from different schools.

Young people: can play a role and be an asset, e.g. through mentorship of other young people. They should not be seen as the problem, and can be the means of change if we engage with them properly, beyond a superficial dialogue.

Non-formal education: Much can be done when you go beyond dialogue; people need to talk about action. When a community focuses on core projects, and works together, inter-faith contact starts to occur, perhaps even unconsciously. Schools and communities need to be opened up and made broader, and there needs to be more engagement for example with the local government and the police.

Inter-faith dialogue needs to occur at a small-scale level. Erasmus+ is an example of where there is the opportunity for this to happen. There have also been barriers to such dialogue, as it has sometimes been difficult to find and engage those people who are *not* interested in working together. It is, after all, those people who are *not* convinced who need the interaction. Some examples referenced used taster sessions and the support of youth workers to successfully engage these young people.

- **Inclusion:**

We need to focus on all individuals in terms of communications with communities and inclusive educational policies, instead of solidarity, which promotes divisions between winners and losers. We must think about educational measures that ensure equity for all. All agreed that we cannot exclude people who have views we do not agree with. We need to keep dialogue open, and show different perspectives and debate.

We need to engage in issues of belief and faith in Europe to consider how to reverse current divides on religious and secular lines. Inter-faith understanding of a superficial nature has no place. We need to ensure that in Europe we are not entrenched in these narrow identities, and so we need to focus on establishing connectedness, not divides.

Inclusion needs to be taught and experienced in schools. Teachers need to understand what this is and what tools can be used in order to improve it. The relationship between schools and families also plays a key role. We need to move to thinking of the school as central to the community. All members of a community must play a part, as it is too much to ask of any individual group of actors. The issue of multilingualism is also essential to social inclusion and intercultural dialogue in education.

- Example of The Tolerance Project – working to encourage tolerance while fighting extremism and racism. It is not yet clear if this could work in contexts where the tolerance of other minority groups needs to be encouraged.

Overall there is a lack of empirical evidence in this area. We need to now gather evidence and start to address these issues. We need to consider examples such as this one, and see if we can apply them at larger scale, without labels, to whole communities, for all related issues and challenges.

- **Education:**

Education has its own intrinsic value separate from training and skills. This has been overlooked and needs to be addressed. There was much discussion about different skills

and pedagogies that can be used in this area. Teachers and educators need to be able to take this forward.

We need to look at knowledge in a more creative way to reconstruct it, so that it is more about humanity. In this way it might better tackle the challenges currently faced.

1.4 Workshops

1.4.1 The workshop process

Ten workshops covered different topics related to the key challenges currently facing the education, training and youth sector. Each workshop was supported by a facilitator, who guided the discussions, and a rapporteur, who noted the emerging key messages. The workshops were interactive, focussing on the contributions of participants. Two presentations informed the process, one from an independent introductory speaker and one from a European Commission expert.

Various ideas for how to consider the way forward in these areas emerged, and were presented in the following afternoon session of the day by the workshop rapporteurs. The key messages from each workshop are summarised below.

1.4.2 Workshop findings

The rapporteurs were invited to summarise the key findings from their workshops, followed by a general discussion and comments from the plenary.

1.4.3 Summary of Civil Society Meeting

To open the session, a summary was given of the dedicated Civil Society Meeting (took place in the morning of 19 October 2015). The following elements were emphasised:

- The importance of empathy is key, and is also a challenge to social inclusion. We have to overcome our own feelings to reach out to potentially violent radical groups.
- Self-esteem is also important, and the value of it has been demonstrated in projects such as the Circus School in Portugal.
- Many things are put on the shoulders of schools in order to fix what does not work in society. This will not work; outreach and related activities must reach beyond schools with links to lifelong learning.
- We can enrich policy making through networks and partnerships.
- We need outreach to show citizens that they can do something. For education, training and youth, it needs to be in a more institutional form. We also need more evidence and detail to understand how the work we are doing can contribute to inclusion and social cohesion.

1.4.4 Workshop highlights

The rapporteurs from each workshop presented the following summaries:

Workshop 1. Basic skills for all.

There is a lot of understanding of basic skills, and it was agreed that every basic literacy strategy should include digital skills, and the interrelatedness of all skills.

Workshop 2. High skills for knowledge society.

Various student-based and creative learning approaches were discussed. Co-operation with employers and better support for teachers is needed.

Workshop 3. Towards more inclusive learning environments.

Complexity: there should be a more inclusive environment from strategies. Pragmatism: there is a need for evidence. Holistic: we should consider the bigger picture view.

Workshop 4. Promoting active citizenship and fundamental values, such as tolerance, non-discrimination and respect of diversity through education.

Dialogue is important and so is being open-minded. We live in a more polarised world and diversity should be at the centre of this. We should all re-think our own perspectives; teachers, pupils and all members of communities.

Workshop 5. Innovation in education: better ways to learn, teach and build partnerships in the digital age.

The idea was to create a virtuous circle: create more challenging partnerships (e.g. schools with neighbourhoods); this helps better deployment at scale of digital and online learning opportunities; this in turn creates openness and transparency, and feeds in to the first point once more.

Workshop 6. Empowering teachers and trainers for better learning outcomes.

There was discussion of empowering teachers, and giving them the tools and knowledge they need. The most important thing teachers need is time to develop themselves.

Workshop 7. Making learning pathways more flexible: recognition and validation of all forms of learning.

There is great enthusiasm for validation of informal and non-formal education and many examples of good practice. There are a range of mechanisms that could be used at EU level, but there needs to be coherence between them.

Workshop 8. Innovative investment in education and training.

The European Investment Plan is the opportunity to get more money invested in the education and training sector. We need to look at possible large-scale projects that are in need of financial investment.

Workshop 9. Cohesive communities promoting youth participation in democratic life.

We need to change our mind-set and stop seeing young people as a problem that needs to be solved. They are agents with the potential to make changes in their own right, and we should give them a formal say and a seat at the table.

Workshop 10. The impact of sports and culture related activities on learning outcomes.

There are tools available and these should be used to support a whole range of different policy areas.

A more detailed summary of each workshop is available in Annex A.

1.5 Way Forward – Political conclusions

High-level round table: Next steps as seen by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council Presidencies

This panel was composed of **Tibor Navracsics**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, **Silvia Costa**, Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education, European Parliament, **Claude Meisch**, Minister for National Education, Children and Young People and Minister for Higher Education and Research, Luxembourg, and **Jet Bussemaker**, Minister for Education, Culture and Science, The Netherlands.

The **main messages** emerging from the discussion in the Panel are summarised below:

Overall vision for cooperation in Europe:

Commissioner Navracsics shared a vision based on employability and citizenship. He wanted to see more cohesive and thus more powerful societies in the future. Ms Costa highlighted that she would like education and culture to help more with unemployment as a specific priority. Minister Meisch said that he wanted to see young people at the centre of the process in education. Minister Bussemaker emphasised that she wanted to focus on the effective use of skills and ensuring that new skills, and the right skills, are being developed and delivered.

It was noted that education and training plays a key role in social cohesion and integration. This can create a better backdrop in terms of employability, as young people have better skills and then the labour market is easier for them to navigate.

Greater integration of the job market is also needed in education policy, and there should be recognition of credits and qualifications across Europe. This work is especially important in the context of current migration challenges.

More collaboration is needed between stakeholders. There should be more partnerships between schools, universities and businesses. Also, between education providers, e.g. schools, reception centres and activity centres, such that the young person is always at the centre of the process. Parents are key stakeholders who need to be more involved, and there should be greater cooperation within governments too.

In schools, we need to ensure that continuous learning occurs for teachers. The education sector is not open-minded enough and needs to be stimulated in order to open up schools and classrooms. We also need to learn from young people themselves (e.g. digital tools).

Inclusive education:

The main challenge highlighted was to avoid marginalising young people so that in the future there is less risk of them becoming radicalised. More research is needed into preventative methods.

In terms of migration, the panel said that we must all focus on the education of young people. We also need to increase efforts and resources to organise education for these groups, to integrate whole families into our societies. Children should be integrated into school systems as soon as possible. Learning the language of instruction (through formal and non-formal learning) is essential. Children's own cultures are still important and should be kept and respected, but all need a common language for school, to integrate and to be a citizen.

Education systems must be open to all and must also teach social skills and build common understanding that can form the founding basis of communities. Education is not just about knowledge and skills but also about citizenship, so that young people can take on new ideas and listen to each other. Citizenship programmes from primary school onwards may be useful. Teachers are often not used to addressing these aspects, and lack experience and tools for integrating migrants. They need relevant training and innovative methods.

Schools cannot work alone; they need support from the local community, national and international best practice. An inter-cultural approach is necessary to reorganise, diversify and to create open spaces and bridges between people. This will ensure that they have common values, and these bridges can reduce the likelihood of future conflicts.

Education and skills:

Basic skills were said to be at the core, without which it is difficult to cope in a fast-changing world. Also important are transversal skills.

Networks need to be developed with entrepreneurs, to show young people how industry today works. Working and learning on the job also needs to be stimulated. For this, there are innovative schemes that teach citizenship and languages outside the classroom, in the working context. These will help to bridge the world of education and training with the reality of the labour market.

VET should not be seen as a second class education. Efforts are needed across Europe to change the image of VET and show that this kind of training can be creative, inspiring, and well-paid.

The idea of a European student card was also discussed, to allow easier and more equal access to services and opportunities. This would contribute to building a European identity amongst students.

1.6 Closing remarks

Commissioner Navracsics closed the Forum by reminding that in order to address the current challenges faced in Europe, education, training and youth policies play an important role through reinforcing people's skills and through promoting social inclusion. He said that both formal and non-formal actors in education, training and youth are needed to provide innovative learning, and to help people acquire social as well as practical skills. He concluded by saying that this work is also vital to ensure a high competitiveness of Europe.

Annex A: More detailed workshop highlights

All materials from the presentations made at each workshop can be found here:

<https://education-training-youth-forum.teamwork.fr/en/programme>

Workshop 1: Basic skills for all

The challenge: Europe's low levels of basic skills attainment hamper economic progress and severely limit individuals in their professional, social and personal fulfilment.

It was agreed that digital skills should be considered as basic skills together with reading, writing and numeracy. 'Digital literacy is the new literacy.' Also, any strategy or programme for enhancing basic skills should take the interrelatedness between reading, writing and computer skills into account.

A. School education:

- Children should be considered in the centre and the other actors should be considered as partners; both should work together. The actors identified were parents, teachers, formal and non-formal education institutions, peers, community centres, social services and social partners. Frameworks enabling partnerships between these actors should be developed. This should also be across sectors (employment, education, etc.).

B. Adult education:

- It is important to de-stigmatise upskilling of adults. When adults hear 'basic skills' they tend to be ashamed to attend trainings for acquiring such skills.
- It is very important that learning basic skills happens in a variety of contexts, includes other skills and is in a neutral environment, for example in libraries, and community centres where people feel comfortable.
- Learning should also be brought to places where adults feel at ease (e.g. homes, workplaces, religious centres). An example of an approach that works in different contexts is Telecentre Europe: in telecentres young people teach the elderly digital skills and the elderly teach the young life skills in return. These can also be applied in companies, including ICT companies, where it is called 'reversed mentoring'. This approach increases mutual understanding and tolerance and puts the individual in both roles – that of learner and that of mentor.

C. Migrants of all ages:

- For migrants of all ages three needs were identified:
 - 1. Diversity management programmes (both in schools and on the job).
 - 2. Recognition of previous competences (as everyone comes to Europe with some skills).
 - 3. Promoting participation, especially of children and youth.

Workshop 2: High-level skills for the knowledge society

The challenge: How can higher education institutions and their staff best support a more diverse student population to acquire the kinds of knowledge, skills and competencies that they will need to succeed?

A. Programme structures, designs and teaching approaches for transversal skills

- Various student-based learning approaches were suggested:
 - i. Project-based learning (students are given a project from the industry and/or real world and asked to create, manage and develop the project)
 - ii. Problem-based learning (students are presented a real-world problem and asked to come up with a solution)

- iii. Role-based learning (students are encouraged to approach their studies from a specific professional role)
- There was agreement that teachers in Europe operate in different contexts, so there is no one approach for raising the prestige of teachers and innovating teaching practices.
- There is a need to raise the awareness of teachers about transversal skills. Is there a measurement tool for measuring transversal skills, to raise awareness of these skills and to be built into the curriculum?

B. Cooperation with employers and work-based learning:

- More project-based collaborations are needed.
- We need to ask industry for feedback (e.g. curriculum development).
- Interactive database with information on all EU funded projects that includes industry in order to offer best practice examples of cooperation.
- More meetings and seminars are needed to present best practices and also failures.

C. Better support for teachers:

- Teaching depends on context.
- Teachers need freedom to innovate.
- Incentives are needed to increase the prestige of the profession (Member States must step in).
- Reward good teaching practices.
- External collaboration with industry, NGOs, etc. to encourage more professional development for teachers.
- More ICT training for teachers (most are 'digital immigrants' whereas their pupils are 'digital natives').

Workshop 3: Towards more inclusive learning environments: facilitating equal access and addressing the diversity of learners

The challenge: While most EU countries have made progress in this area, a significant educational gap persists and access to quality education for all remains a challenge.

A. In schools:

- Rethink what schools are for: unlock human potential; emancipation through education.
- Professional development for teachers and school staff. Be open to innovation.
- Diversity is the new normal. We need to consider and respect each learner profile.
- Importance of creativity and imagination, as leverage to entice learners' identification.
- Need to open schools to wider community: community schools are a better model.

B. Migrant background perspective:

- Respect and support multilingualism of learners.
- Involve parents and families.
- Value children's personal experience and resources they bring to the classroom.
- Support measures for children moving from school to school.
- Reflect on model of 'European Schools': idea that children study part of the curriculum in their language of origin is interesting.

C. Special needs perspective:

- Need to support young here to get higher qualifications.
- Need for truly inclusive learning environments, with adequate support staff and individual learning programmes.
- Platforms and dialogue, combined with support for learning mobility are needed.
- Advantages of employing people with special needs need to be widely understood.

D. Socioeconomic disadvantage perspective:

- Open doors and hierarchies to create positive learning environments.
- Work on more detailed data, not only in layers (EU, regional, provincial).
- Holistic approaches applied in non-segregated environments.

Conclusions:

- Need for universal design and individual learning programmes; for truly inclusive/universal learning environments where disadvantaged learners of all backgrounds receive the support they need to succeed, according to their specific learning needs. Schools need to change completely.
- A holistic approach to education policy covering all types and levels of education in a lifelong learning perspective is crucial.
- The need for cross-policy synergies to overcome the limitations of narrow, disciplinary, territorial thinking and policy, and against educational disadvantage. To be combined with better monitoring of inequalities in education.
- A community approach to education is needed. Need for redistribution of opportunities and resources towards the more disadvantaged communities and schools. Need to involve the disadvantaged groups in decision-making.
- Need to better prepare education professionals for equity and inclusion.

2.4 Workshop 4: Promoting active citizenship and fundamental values, such as tolerance, non-discrimination and respect of diversity through education

The challenge: The growing diversity of European societies poses a number of opportunities, but also significant challenges. Peaceful co-existence of various cultures, minorities and migrant groups is increasingly becoming a challenge.

A. Addressing active citizenship and fundamental values in the field of education:

Challenges

- Increasing diversity and inequalities of learners.
- Marginalisation increasing the risk of radicalisation.
- Bullying and discrimination reinforced by prejudices and stereotypes (teachers and students).
- Teachers lack tools for conflict resolution, intercultural understanding and mutual respect.

Opportunities

- Education as long-term investment laying the foundations of active citizenship.
- Democratic schools make students feel welcome, safe and empowered.
- Partnerships between formal and non-formal education offer flexibility, adaptability and innovative approaches to development and implementation of good practice.
- A whole-school approach: commitment at all levels (formal and non-formal education).

B. Good practices for promoting active citizenship and fundamental values through education

Social and civic competences, democratic values and fundamental rights

- Promoting a school culture of well-being, student participation and general prevention.
- Dialogue, conflict resolution and critical thinking through practical and interactive exercises.
- Civic competences as a transversal approach in teacher training and school curricula.
- School networks involving parents, youth workers, police officers, local officials, etc.

Intercultural understanding, mutual respect, tackling stereotypes and racism

- Awareness-raising of different cultures and religions to foster intercultural understanding.
- Interaction with civil society and different social groups through panel discussions, interviews, guest lectures, study visits and dedicated workshops in schools.
- Intercultural activities as a way to discover common values and create alliances.

Tackling radicalisation

- History teaching as a holistic tool for fostering critical thinking and mutual understanding.
- Reaching youth through digital technology and teaching (social) media literacy.
- Mentorship, social mediation and peer group discussions on sensitive issues.

Conclusions:

- EU level cooperation can help to mainstream policies, provide supporting research and disseminate good practices and tools.

2.5 Workshop 5: Innovation in education: better ways to learn, teach and build partnerships in the digital age

The challenge: Across Europe initiatives are underway to boost digital skills of teachers and learners, but huge challenges remain, and Europe lags behind other parts of the world.

A. Collaboration:

- Push boundaries of collaboration and go beyond 'like with like' partnerships. Partnerships that are more challenging to establish (e.g. Higher Education with municipalities) may offer greater potential to address the big challenges.
- Partners from very different sectors of society widen perspectives and each can contribute not just to designing solutions that are more comprehensive, but also by bringing their own resources (people and monetary) to the table, to deliver projects of scale and significance. Such projects can also bridge the formal/informal aspects of education.

B. Digital/online learning:

- Once solid partnerships have been established, the route to scaling up good examples and to sustainability is enhanced through digital/online learning and community building.
- Online education at scale (e.g. MOOCs to support lifelong learning (informal and formal), or professional development courses such as those provided for teachers by EUN Academy).

- Open Resources in general, including OER and other digital repositories (cultural, heritage, museums, etc.) can play an important part in underpinning online learning and civic engagement generally. When considering 'education' we should think about OeR (with a small 'e') to reflect the fact that many educationally valuable repositories are created and hosted by organisations that are not specifically in the education sector.

C. Professional development:

- At scale is critical to meet the needs of the very large numbers of people working on the frontlines of education, youth and civil society work.
- This challenge can be addressed through investment in large scale online courses and through online community building to support peer learning and sharing of practices. Ability to localise and to adapt for many languages is key to success.

D. Transparency:

- As we build our trust and reliance on digital/online approaches, we can expect to see greater transparency in what is actually happening.

Conclusions:

- We should be striving for a *virtuous circle* that involves: 1) Building more comprehensive, but challenging collaborative partnerships, which lead to 2) A better basis for the deployment at scale of digital platforms to support multi-partite communities and their CPD and life-long learning needs.
- This should be in a manner that provides greater openness and transparency, which closes the circle by positively reinforcing the idea of comprehensive, collaborative partnerships.

2.6 Workshop 6: Empowering teachers and trainers for better learning outcomes

The challenge: The teaching profession has lost much of its attractiveness across Europe, and many countries are struggling with staff shortages.

The discussion focused on how to empower teachers and trainers for better learning outcomes:

A. Create space:

- In fast changing education systems, empowerment is about creating spaces and opportunities for teachers to perceive their own power, or lack of power.
- Through interaction with others, and with the right knowledge and tools, teachers begin to develop their power and their abilities to act and change their situations.

B. Collaborate:

- All the projects discussed in the workshop showed the advantages of teacher interaction with, and between, other teachers, school leaders, pupils, parents and other stakeholders.
- There need to be opportunities for collaborative experiences for all teachers.

C. Practical advice:

- To engage teachers, initiatives need to focus on practical advice and tools that are based within the teachers' experiences.
- Initiatives, projects, advice and tools must also develop and sustain teachers, so that they can reflect on their practices.

D. Evidence:

- All initiatives, projects, advice and tools must be based on evidence. Evidence should also be gathered to further guide policy developments.

E. Training:

- Four overarching points on teacher training were made:
 - The importance of empowerment starts at initial teacher education and continuous throughout professional development.
 - Education and training systems must be based on trust; trust of teachers and trust between teachers.
 - Empowerment requires resources, but positive results could be achieved with small amounts of resources.
 - Above all, teacher and trainer empowerment requires time. Whatever activities are developed, they must be used within normal workloads, and not just require the goodwill of teachers, as this can be finite.

2.7 Workshop 7: Making learning pathways more flexible: recognition and validation in all forms of learning

The challenge: A key challenge for validation of non-formal and informal learning is to be able to capture the diversity and richness in a reliable, valid and credible way – enabling the individual to make full use of the experiences s/he has made in education, work and in society in general.

A. What is needed:

- Use competencies to drive the use of tools. Your added value is your soft skills; a general agreement of common soft skills.
- Acknowledge the context of learner, e.g. engaged namely in video gaming.
- Assess the process and application of learning, not just the elements.
- Alienated youths – this should not be political, there is a real need to engage with this group at a local level. Work is needed not just on skills, but as a holistic approach. If we can change things for them they can become out advocates.
- European and Youthpass – the Youthpass should not just be used in EU projects, thus making learning paths more flexible and more targeted. It could also be aimed at school leavers.
- There should be enough support without too great a cost – e.g. peer learning.
- Coordination and a network is needed:
 - Inclusive weekly groups at EU and or national level to build trust. These should bridge formal education, civil society and business.
 - Champions could be used for different communities in these workgroups to provide information; to promote resources and opportunities. Also need to bridge the world of employers, and consider soft skills.

B. How to go about this coordination effort?

1. Acknowledge stakeholders'
 - Perspectives: e.g. citizens, clients, teachers, employers, civil society groups (and their contexts).
 - Languages: consider what persuades; showcase champions; traineeships; coaching and networks; ambassadors.
 - Contributions: look at evidence – soft skills are key, e.g. confidence.
2. Work on visibility and trust: avoid alienation. Requires resources.

3. Create inclusive working groups – act as umbrella organisations, e.g. may work from a community building.

4. Use Non-Formal Qualifications (NFQs), agreed competencies – 'magnetic force of tools.' Challenge them to communicate from European to national level and also to citizens.

Conclusions:

- We need to pull together studies, tools and mechanisms for working with young people.
- We need to build coalitions for raising learning societies, and we need to recognise volunteering activities and the contributions of SocialErasmus¹.

2.8 Workshop 8: Innovative investment in education & training

The challenge: How can we ensure that education and training is able to take advantage of the private investment opportunities available through the Investment Plan for Europe?

A) Infrastructure as a hook:

- Idea to use infrastructure as a hook to bring in financial stakeholders and experts, which can then be built on with requirements for other key elements.
- Perhaps requirements could be imposed to ensure that projects consider the 'soft' as well as the 'hard' in their investments.
- Could the advisory hub be used to ensure that the public sector knows how to negotiate a good contract?

B) Innovation:

- Innovation as the basis for making any investment attractive – need to bring all elements together as A) suggests, but in a creative and innovative way to ensure it has impact.
- Alongside this, we need to ensure implementation and the mainstreaming of ideas that have been developed and that have been innovative.
- To qualify for the European Investment Plan, there has to be something in the project that is innovative – either in the processing / financing structure / infrastructure project / risk. As long as there is something innovative, we can up-scale and mainstream examples of best practice.

C) Measurability:

- We must do the above in a measurable way. If we want active education and training stakeholders we must do this. We need to make examples known and consider what the benefits/savings are.
- We need to identify the income stream, and do a cost-benefit analysis. It is difficult to measure the return on investment with a long-term perspective in this field.

D) Bundling:

- When bundling to allow small projects to qualify, there needs to be someone to take responsibility and to do the packaging. Ideas for how to 'bundle' included:
 - Look at educational and regional authorities.
 - Take a project to the portal – someone may be interested.

¹ SocialErasmus is an ESN (Erasmus Student Network) international project.

- Advisory hub could give guidance.
- Need calls to require / promote creation of education and training networks.
- Could regional universities take the lead in forming clusters?
- Investment platforms could be used as they could propose a model of packaging for people to apply; there could be a role for the Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture) here.

Conclusions:

- Key barriers preventing organisations from handing in proposals include: They need an idea or something concrete to use; Other sectors have a pipeline of projects already whereas we do not; A lot of work on communication and dissemination is needed as organisations are not aware of this plan and what they could use.
- There is an urgency to do something here, or education will be left behind. Perhaps, therefore, where there are considerable barriers, we shouldn't pursue these avenues now.

2.9 Workshop 9: Cohesive communities: promoting youth participation in democratic life

The challenge: Encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

A. Strengths in the sector:

- Genuinely youth-led activities can inspire other young people.
- Youth organisations can empower young people and teach valuable life skills.
- Intergenerational and multicultural barriers can be overcome by youth organisations.
- Well-equipped, supported youth workers play a vital role in youth development.
- Cross-sectoral cooperation is important in the youth field (link NGOs, Govt, EU, etc.).
- Non-formal education (NFE) needs recognition; plays an important role in youth development.

B. Weaknesses in the sector:

- Reaching marginalised young people is difficult, and youth organisations are often self-selecting.
- NFE & Volunteering often not properly recognised or valued in the youth sector.
- Young people do not have a sufficiently formal role in decision-making.
- We need to improve the link between the European and local levels.
- Legitimacy and mandate of youth organisations can be questioned.
- There is limited funding available.

C. Opportunities in the sector:

- Young people themselves! Recognise their creativity and potential.
- Erasmus+ and other schemes can improve poor funding access.
- Civic education can be vital for the next generation of young people.
- Social media and ICT technologies to reach young people and get their input.
- Structured Dialogue is underused/alien to most young people.
- Pooling resources of stakeholders (e.g. this forum) to develop expertise.

D. Key success factors:

- Political will and support.
- Expansive citizenship education to tackle problems at their root.

- Mobilisation of civil society.
- Mind-set change: young people are a resource (not a problem). They need to be formally involved and have a real say in decisions made.
- Sharing between stakeholders: close cooperation is vital.
- Financial support for the sector, youth organisations and youth workers.
- Recognition of NFE and volunteering.

Conclusions:

- We need a mind-set change: young people should be seen as equal collaborators.
- This means more direct decision-making influence for young people.
- Resource support is essential: young people and youth organisations need these in order to be empowered.
- Citizenship education is crucial in empowering young people to participate. This should be mandatory in schools and be supported in Non-Formal Education.

2.10 Workshop 10: The impact of sports and culture related activities on learning outcomes

The challenge: Consider the initiatives stemming from the sport and culture worlds that could relevantly complement actions within the education and training fields.

The group considered how physical activity and participation in grassroots sport activities could contribute to better learning outcomes. It also considered how sport and culture could contribute to tackling youth radicalisation, violence and discrimination, as well as how cultural activities could promote understanding and respect for other cultures.

Discussion focused on 3 topics:

- Culture – paving the way to inclusiveness and diversity.
- Physical activity for education.
- Culture, sport and open societies.
- There were many examples of best practice that the group shared in these areas.

Conclusions:

- Culture and sport should be recognised by decision-makers as efficient tools for other sectors, in particular in education, training and youth work.
- Culture and sport related activities can bring an additional angle and are indispensable elements in the efforts targeting youth radicalisation, and can contribute to promoting civic, intercultural, social and relational competences.
- Cultural and sport organisations should be involved in cross-sectoral cooperation, aiming to address challenges of the education and training systems and youth policies.