

On 17 March 2015 Education Ministers and Commissioner Navracsics adopted the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, which calls for the mobilisation of the education sector to promote inclusion and fundamental values. It establishes a list of concrete objectives to be pursued at national and local level and defines four overarching priorities for cooperation at EU-level:

1. Ensuring young people acquire **social, civic and intercultural competences** by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship;
2. Enhancing **critical thinking and media literacy**, particularly in the use of the Internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to discrimination and indoctrination;
3. Fostering the education of **disadvantaged children and young people**, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs;
4. Promoting **intercultural dialogue** through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.

The follow-up of the Declaration is a key priority in the cooperation between the Member States and the European Commission in the field of education and training (ET2020 framework), and youth as set out in the Joint Reports¹. The Commission will undertake a series of concrete measures in 2016 and 2017, as set out below:

1. Mobilising funding

In 2016, Erasmus+ is making more than EUR 400 million available to transnational partnerships to develop innovative policy approaches and practices at grass-roots level. Within this envelope, priority is given to projects that address the objectives of the Paris Declaration². A dedicated call³ supporting the dissemination and upscaling of good practices from grass-roots level was published with an envelope of 13 million euros.

¹ <http://europa.eu/CN74hT>

² http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node/44_en

³ <http://europa.eu/!gM69nf>

As part of the 2017 **Erasmus+** budget, the Commission will be proposing to further pursue the priority focus of 2016 through both mainstreaming and dedicated action supporting the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

2. Better knowledge and policy support

The Commission will create a better knowledge base, reinforce the collection of evidence at EU level and provide reinforced policy support related to inclusive education as well as to the teaching of social and civic competences. This will be done, in particular through:

- Developing a **policy framework for promoting inclusion and fundamental values through education** and an **online-compendium of good practices**, as part of the ET2020 Working Group on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. The objective is to provide concrete guidance to policy-makers and practitioners on the ground through practical tools, which consolidate the available knowledge on promoting inclusive education and fundamental values;
- The annual **Education and Training Monitor**⁴, which captures the evolution of Europe's education and training systems by bringing together a wide array of evidence in one report;
- A newly launched study on **citizenship education across Europe** to be undertaken by the **Eurydice** network of the Commission, which will provide a comprehensive overview of the structure, content, and practice of citizenship education in Member States (2017);
- Further stimulating evidence based policy making, the Commission has already released a report⁵ by **the Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training**, which examines how European education systems can better prepare future citizens for tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility. It highlights key success factors and includes successful examples from several different Member States that can serve as concrete sources of policy inspiration.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor_en.htm

⁵ <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

3. Teachers and schools

Schools can make a major contribution to inclusion and better prospects in life. It is here that young people from different backgrounds can come together and sow the seeds for mutual trust and respect. Apart from developing a wide set of skills, schools can be an environment where diversity is seen as an asset, where controversial issues can be openly debated and where fundamental values are understood and embraced. Teachers have a key role: they need to be prepared to see diversity as an opportunity in the classroom. The Commission will boost support mechanisms to schools and educators, notably through:

- Enhancing the use of **eTwinning**⁶, connecting teachers and classrooms across Europe, to step up support to teachers and foster exchanges, in particular with the aim of promoting fundamental values and citizenship. The online e-Twinning platform has already reached 300,000 teachers and is the largest teachers network in the world. eTwinning will be further deployed in some strategic third countries to foster intercultural dialogue among teachers and pupils from an early age;
- Establishing a **network** under the Erasmus+ programme to allow direct contacts with positive role models for young people, such as entrepreneurs, artists, sportspersons, as well as formerly radicalised people. Thanks to EU funding, these role models will go to schools, youth and sport clubs and prisons to speak and bond with young people;
- Expanding the **European Toolkit for Schools**⁷, which is a new online platform, offering good practice examples and resources on how to introduce collaborative approaches in schools to improve inclusiveness and achieve success for all. It will be further developed during 2016 to include additional functionalities and translations in all EU languages;
- Encouraging more **teacher training courses** on citizenship education through Erasmus+. The objective is to empower teachers to deal with today's more diverse classrooms and to bring into practice the Paris Declaration principles, with

⁶ <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

⁷ www.schooleducationgateway.eu/europeantoolkitforschools

particular attention to promoting inclusion, fundamental values, civic and social competences and non-violence.

4. Higher Education

Students and staff of higher education institutions play an important role in engaging with their communities through institutional and grass-roots initiatives and by providing spaces for discussion. The Commission encourages higher education institutions to **award credits for volunteering** and to **develop curricula that combine academic content with civic engagement**. Some institutions already allocate credits for volunteering and civic engagement during or following an Erasmus mobility stay. The Commission will provide opportunities to share good practices on these topics.

5. Youth work, volunteering and virtual exchanges

Youth work is a particularly powerful tool as it can reach out to the most vulnerable young people and bridge the gap between society and individuals in need of support. Participation in youth work brings tangible benefits not only to society, but also to the individuals involved, since it helps develop a series of skills and competences, including empathy, tolerance and civic responsibility. The Commission will therefore step up support to youth workers and organizations in particular through:

- **Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges** to promote online engagement with young people outside the EU with the aim of reaching 200,000 young people by 2019. These virtual Erasmus+ exchanges would connect young people from Europe, the Middle East and Africa and provide a structured platform for cross-cultural awareness, understanding and cooperation, run by trained moderators;
- Developing a **specific toolkit**, with practical guidance, methods and case studies for training youth workers and youth organisations to reach out and work with young people at risk of marginalization (2016). It will include methods to im-

prove the resilience of young people, to detect signs of violent radicalization and to handle conflicts in a non-violent way to be adapted to the specific local environments and needs. The toolkit will be developed by the expert group on the contribution of youth work for fostering active citizenship, preventing marginalisation and radicalization;

- Strengthening the **European Voluntary Service**⁷. For 2016, priority will be given to support projects promoting diversity, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, common values of freedom, tolerance and respect of human rights, and to projects enhancing media literacy, critical thinking and the sense of initiative of young people. The Commission will also open the Service to an even broader range of young people and organisations building upon its increased budget as from 2017 onwards;
- **Reinforcing support to grass-roots youth projects** in Erasmus+. The Commission will step up its efforts to involve new actors, such as municipalities, allowing the scaling-up of local initiatives within larger cross-border partnerships.

6. Sport

Participating in sport can be an effective way of integrating into a community and developing a sense of belonging. In addition to the many positive values sport conveys, it can be a safety net for young people out of education or employment and on the margins of society. Supporting local actors who promote inclusion through sport, especially in the most deprived areas, is of crucial importance. The Commission will therefore promote successful and innovative projects through a **European Award for social inclusion in sport** (2017).

⁷ https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering_en