

Towards a European education – Critical perspectives on challenges ahead



See the full study

The declared aspiration of Europe to promote inclusive and open societies, through education and lifelong training is based on the corpus of key competencies which are at the core of educational policies in the EU. In its contribution entitled: "Strengthening the European identity through education and culture", the European Commission outlines the contours of a European Education Area (EEA) in which the role played by education is recognised as decisive, from early childhood to adulthood, for establishing a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The study:

offers an in-depth exploration of crucial themes for European educators and policymakers in the 21st century. In its final conclusions, this study provides recommendations and political priorities in 12 main areas of European education.

Main observations

- Two interlinked challenges for the development of the Union – the *green* and *digital* transformations – need sustained reflection and action, at all levels, on how Europe can respond properly to the risks and challenges ahead. This

requires renewed efforts for education and training and calls for greater attention to social and territorial disparities in the area of accessibility regarding education, mobility and employment. These disparities indeed cover de facto inequalities which fuel an inexhaustible sense of social discontent.

- To promote the ambition of enlightened critical thinking and an eco-citizenship concerned with sustainable development, there is a need to prepare and empower a newly educated workforce, at all levels of the system, and in particular at the school and classroom levels, in which teachers and leaders are to be equipped and supported in these major transitions.
- Physical mobility provides a wealth of benefits, including the development of personal and professional skills and competencies: increased

adaptability to changing environments, development of a sense of European citizenship, employability and labour market opportunities. Complementary, virtual and hybrid mobility can serve as an effective option to address challenges related to cultural awareness, intercultural collaboration, and transversal or soft skills.

- Incorporating a combination of physical, hybrid and virtual forms of mobility into the curriculum will enable students to gain greater opportunities to develop a sense of European belonging, acquire intercultural and linguistic skills, integrate an international learning



experience into their portfolio and have more opportunities to develop intercultural competencies, an open mind-set and critical thinking.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

The 12 main areas with the objective of promoting a **European Education Area**:

- I. **Promoting educational policies** at European level implies a **strong investment in public educational services** which are progressively more concerned with: the goal of **success and**



opportunities for all students; guidance and orientation services; personalisation of education paths; equity in mobility; better recognition of mobility; and better social integration.

- II. **Strengthening mobility programmes by combining physical and virtual mobility in a more balanced way** and improved recognition of international mobility in the educational and professional pathways of young people.
- III. **Working for the construction of a more inclusive and cohesive European education area**, by encouraging the participation of the most vulnerable learners and by supporting students in financial difficulties.
- IV. **Renewing citizenship education programmes** at a time of economic globalisation, cultural interchange and global environmental awareness, by mobilising the various tools of global citizenship education in schools, both instrumental and humanist, **in order to develop empathy and sensitivity to cultural and environmental diversity.**
- V. **Recognising forms of knowledge other than mono-disciplinary knowledge and encouraging school projects involving young people** through participatory, interdisciplinary, creative and transversal approaches aimed at promoting discursive critical capacities and concerted decisions and actions informed by knowledge, but also for the sake of the common good and wellbeing in sustainable societies.
- VI. **Reshaping initial and in-service teacher training and thinking of it as both a continuum as well as in terms of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).**
- VII. **Reinforcing the European and international dimension of the education of teachers, educators and leaders**, by developing agreements, exchanges and mobility of teachers during their initial training and across their career, through the **mutual recognition of qualifications for teaching at European level.**
- VIII. **Supporting the digital transformation of society by developing transversal content in media and information education**, at all levels, school and post-school, equipping young people with **a solid media and digital culture.**

IX. Reframing and refreshing the organisation of school work in changing societies:

without breaking away from school as an essential place for socialisation and interacting with others, reshaping its ecology and promoting more collaborative, productive, creative and inclusive workspaces, while also providing spaces for living and for consideration of major citizens' and societal issues.



X. Disseminating and promoting the understanding of common European values, based on social justice, deliberative democracy and cultural, religious and linguistic pluralism,

from a comparative and intercultural perspective, in order to promote the development of critical and reflective thinking on the situation of the world and the actors who compose it.

XI. Understanding and speaking two languages in addition to one's mother tongue, i.e. language of schooling, as an educational standard:

migration and mobility mean that linguistic diversity has never been greater in national territories of whatever kind, even in countries that are traditionally strongly monolingual.

XII. Reinforcing the mutual recognition of upper secondary education diplomas,

following the recommendations of the Council of the European Union, and exploring the possibilities for greater convergence of curricula, analysing the existing constraints and putting forward potential models for the development and uptake of such **common curricula.**

Key area for EU action:

- Construction of a more inclusive and cohesive European Education Area (EEA).
- Supporting the digital transformation of society.
- Disseminating and promoting the understanding of common European values.
- Understanding and speaking two languages in addition to one's mother tongue.
- Reinforcing the mutual recognition of upper secondary education diplomas.

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