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Learning EU at school**European Parliament resolution of 12 April 2016 on Learning EU at school (2015/2138(INI))**

(2018/C 058/06)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
- having regard to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing ‘Erasmus+’: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Decision No 1093/2012/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on the European Year of Citizens (2013) ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 390/2014 of 14 April 2014 establishing the ‘Europe for Citizens’ programme for the period 2014-2020 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (‘Paris Declaration’) of the informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers of 17 March 2015,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’) ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 26 August 2015 entitled ‘Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’)’ (COM(2015)0408),
- having regard to the Commission Implementing Decision of 14 September 2015 on the adoption of the 2016 annual work programme for the implementation of ‘Erasmus+’: the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport (C(2015)6151),
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 28 and 29 November 2011 on a benchmark for learning mobility ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 15 September 2015 entitled ‘Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)’ (COM(2015)0429),

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 325, 23.11.2012, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 115, 17.4.2014, p. 3.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 31.

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- having regard to the Commission Communication of 27 April 2009 entitled ‘An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering — A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities’ (COM(2009)0200),
 - having regard to the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 May 1992 on education and training policy in the run-up to 1993 ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 26 September 2006 on initiatives to complement school curricula providing appropriate support measures to include the European dimension ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 September 2008 on improving the quality of teacher education ⁽⁵⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0021/2016),
- A. whereas education is a fundamental human right and a public good that should be equally accessible to all;
- B. whereas the main role of education is to form fully aware citizens and therefore goes beyond the fulfilment of the economic targets of EU and national strategies;
- C. whereas the objectives of education include preparing individuals for life and active citizenship in increasingly complex, demanding, multicultural and integrated societies;
- D. whereas, according to a 2014 Eurobarometer opinion poll, 44 % of European Union citizens feel that they have limited understanding of how the EU works and 52 % of Europeans believe that their voice does not count in the EU ⁽⁶⁾;
- E. whereas only 42,61 % of EU citizens, and only 27,8 % of 18-24 year-olds, voted in the last European Parliament elections, representing the lowest voter turnout since 1979 ⁽⁷⁾;
- F. whereas insufficient knowledge about the EU and poor understanding of its concrete added-value may contribute to the perception of a democratic deficit and lead to widespread Euroscepticism in Member States and candidate countries; whereas democratic deficits need to be addressed in order to tackle the growing gap between the voice of European citizens and the EU institutions;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 150, 15.6.1992, p. 366.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 306 E, 15.12.2006, p. 100.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 8 E, 14.1.2010, p. 12.

⁽⁶⁾ Standard Eurobarometer 81, Spring 2014: ‘Public opinion in the European Union’ (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_publ_en.pdf), p. 117 and 131.

⁽⁷⁾ http://www.eprs.sso.ep.parl.union.eu/lis/lisrep/13-EPRS-publications/2015/COMM_STUD_558351_UpdateReview-EN.pdf, p. 43-45.

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- G. whereas, according to the 2015 Special Eurobarometer 437, a vast majority of Europeans agrees that school lessons and material should include information about diversity in terms of religion or beliefs, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender identity ⁽¹⁾;
- H. whereas increased awareness about the benefits of European policies, such as free movement of people and services within the Union and EU mobility programmes, can help create a sense of belonging to the EU, community spirit and acceptance of multicultural and multinational societies;
- I. whereas successful education systems and curricula, together with increased influence and participation of Europeans in EU policy decision making processes, could create greater interest in EU affairs, and a sense of understanding and belonging, while contributing to tackling social divisions, cultural segregation and feelings of deprivation;
- J. whereas a majority of Member States have integrated learning about the EU into their curricula and teacher training programmes; whereas disparities between and within Member States continue to exist;
- K. whereas, in some Member States, while EU topics are generally taught across the different education levels and across various subjects of compulsory education, they primarily constitute a small part of the curriculum that a given teacher has to deliver;
- L. whereas the knowledge and skills of teachers and other educational staff about EU topics need to be developed further and updated through initial and ongoing training, and whereas, in this regard, educational institutions and teachers require effective assistance that is tailored and relevant to their particular needs;
- M. whereas according to 'Learning Europe at school', a study prepared by private consultancy ICF GHK for DG Education and Culture ⁽²⁾, it is primarily institutions and associations outside of higher education that are involved in delivering teacher education on EU issues;
- N. whereas the Erasmus Impact Study presented by the Commission in 2014 demonstrates the positive impact mobility in education and internationalisation of studies has, not only on curricula and employability, but also in terms of knowledge of Europe, the development of a sense of European citizenship and a positive attitude towards Europe, and on voting in the European elections;

A European dimension in education

1. Underlines the increasing importance of a European dimension in education across the different disciplines, levels and forms of education, while stressing the need for a broad and in-depth understanding of the concept which takes into account its complex, dynamic and multi-layered nature, with learning about the EU at school being a crucial component;
2. Emphasises that an EU dimension in education is crucial to help citizens better understand — and reconnect them with — the EU, and can deepen the role of the values set out in Article 2 TEU and strengthen the voice of the Union in an interdependent world;
3. Emphasises the need of understanding and promoting attachment to the fundamental values of the European Union; points out that knowing and understanding the common history and values of the EU and its Member States is a key for mutual understanding, living together peacefully, tolerance and solidarity, and also for understanding the core principles of the European Union;

⁽¹⁾ Special Eurobarometer 437, 2015: 'Discrimination in the EU in 2015' (<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/68004>), p. 100.

⁽²⁾ <http://www.eupika.mfdps.si/Files/Learning%20Europe%20at%20School%20final%20report.pdf>.

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4. Points out that the EU should be more visible, and better integrated, in teaching materials and extracurricular activities, given its impact on the everyday life of its citizens; considers that content explicitly related to the EU can add substantial value to school curricula and to the personal development and growth of learners;
5. Emphasises the need to use active and participative teaching methods tailored to learners' age, levels, needs and interests, and to exploit fully the opportunities offered by the information and communication technologies and the media, including social media;
6. Underlines that an EU dimension in education should enable learners not only to acquire knowledge and develop a sense of belonging and European citizenship skills, but also to engage in a critical reflection on the EU, including through learning about EU fundamental values, based on the rule of law and human rights, EU governance and decision-making processes, and how these influence their Member States and their democratic participation; encourages the use of European Youth Parliament roleplay games to help children and students understand the European processes and raise their awareness of European issues;
7. Draws attention to the fact that the EU has been shaped by its Member States, with their unique histories and cultures, and that the development of the Union remains inextricably linked to its Member States; highlights, at the same time, the contribution of different cultures to the European societies and heritage;
8. Notes that the impact of the EU on the Member States is considerable, and that learning about the EU at school should reflect both the role of Member States in the development of the EU and the influence of the EU on national developments;
9. Points out that the Member States and the EU have to lead by examples to all actors involved in teaching and learning EU at school, by practising core European values of social inclusion and European and international solidarity;
10. Recalls the need to ensure, enhance and broaden initial and ongoing, professional, lifelong development opportunities for teachers and educators and to provide them with appropriate support and resources in order to enable them to incorporate an EU dimension into their teaching, in particular with regard to history and citizenship education, as well as to implement learner-centred strategies and to adapt their teaching methods to the needs of learners;
11. Stresses the need to promote and encourage multi-lingual and intercultural competences of educators, as well as mobility opportunities, peer-to-peer learning and exchanges of best practices among teaching staff, for instance through the organisation of European-level seminars;
12. Stresses the role of universities in the preparation and training of highly qualified and motivated teachers and educators; calls for encouragement and support for the actions of the Member States in their efforts to provide possibilities for specialised qualification courses within universities, open and accessible to enrolled students as well as to practicing teachers and educators;
13. Stresses the importance and the potential of a European approach to the teaching of history, while bearing in mind the competence of the Member States in this area, as some historic events were determinant in the emergence of the European ideals and values; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support history societies and centres for historical research, in order to highlight the value of their scientific contribution to European history and their role in keeping schoolteachers up to date;
14. Calls for the House of European History to develop, especially for students and teachers at all levels of education, specific programmes, instruments and activities that build up a cogent narrative of European integration and its basic values;

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15. Calls for an urgent renewal and strengthening of EU citizenship and civic education in both current and future Member States, with the aim of equipping learners, by means appropriate to their age, with relevant knowledge, values, skills and competences, empowering them to think critically and form well-informed and balanced opinions, exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities, including the right to vote, value diversity, encourage intercultural and interreligious dialogue and be active and responsible citizens;

16. Points out that increased student and parent participation in school governance can contribute towards tackling discrimination and strengthening sustainable participatory democracy and citizenship, fostering trust and cooperation between various actors; calls on educational institutions to introduce, and increase the scope of, democratic governance, also by means of giving a bigger weight to the voice of students' representations, since democracy has to be learned and experienced;

17. Stresses the need to enhance teachers' and learners' motivation and opportunities to learn more about the EU through their own first-hand experiences, such as school visits to other countries, visits to the European institutions, contacts with EU officials, traineeship opportunities for students within the EU institutions, and through media education, such as the European Youth Portal, making full use of the new information and communication technologies and open educational resources;

18. Calls to make full use of the opportunities offered by digital technologies to further develop cross-border teaching, through digital courses and video conferences, in order to facilitate the discovery for students of other points of view and approaches regarding their disciplines;

19. Underlines that the learning of foreign languages can play a crucial role in increasing intercultural awareness and providing citizens with the skills needed to live and work in an increasingly complex and globalised world;

20. Highlights the crucial role of non-formal and informal learning, including youth work, volunteering and inter-generational, family and adult learning, as well as sport as a pedagogical instrument, in developing social and civic skills, competences and behaviours, and in shaping responsible and active European citizens; underlines the need to recognise and validate such competences within formal learning and to create closer links between formal, non-formal and informal learning;

21. Calls for the adoption of an intercultural approach to education policy capable of enabling the genuine integration of immigrant students into schools based on mutual knowledge of different cultures and the construction of shared common values;

The role of the Union

22. Encourages the Commission to continue its support for efforts to develop and promote an EU dimension in education as well as the mobility of educational actors, and to actively disseminate information — including information on relevant funding opportunities and available studies and reports — to key stakeholders and citizens; encourages, in this regard, the better use of new communication technologies and media, including social media;

23. Calls on the Commission to provide a common framework, and to prepare guidelines with concrete examples, for learning about the EU in order to foster objective and critical thinking about the benefits of the European Union for its citizens, while respecting Member States' competence in the field of education and training;

24. Asks the Commission to encourage further research to ascertain how the EU is currently taught in schools across Europe, how it features in curricula and exams, and whether (a) teachers and educators have sufficient access to relevant EU programmes and actions for professional development, lifelong learning and platforms for exchange of best practices, and (b) funded actions to incorporate efficient school learning about the EU do have an impact on schools in the end;

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25. Calls on the Commission to encourage, support and facilitate networks that promote, and are involved in, learning about the EU at national, regional and local level, as well as exchanges of best practice between these networks at Union level, and to identify areas of improvement;

26. Calls on the Commission to facilitate an exchange of best practices among the Member States as well as candidate countries, with regard to the EU dimension in education and combating discrimination and prejudice in educational settings, including by evaluating teaching materials and anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies;

27. Underlines the major role of Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens and Creative Europe in promoting education and training, language skills, active citizenship, cultural awareness, intercultural understanding and other valuable key and transversal competences; stresses the importance of these programmes in strengthening European citizenship and the need for increased and adequate financial support for these programmes, greater focus on their qualitative outcomes and wider access to mobility, paying special attention to teachers and other educators, young people with different socio-economic backgrounds as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and people with special needs;

28. Recalls the wide range of actions offered by the Erasmus+ programme, as well as its popularity and recognition by the general public, in particular as regards the mobility of students as part of their studies; calls on the Commission and the Member States to raise awareness about those parts of the Erasmus+ programme that are less well-known, such as the European Voluntary Service;

29. Welcomes the Commission's 2016 Work Programme for the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme and its commitment to concrete actions in following up the Paris Declaration, in particular those aimed at increasing the impact of Erasmus+ on fostering active and democratic citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, including stronger support for civil society organisations in their key role in citizenship education;

30. Calls on the Commission to enhance the pedagogical aspects, and the responsiveness to schools' needs, of projects funded via the Jean Monnet projects by making sure schools can apply directly, and by providing funding for a longer period of time, such as three years, in line with the way Jean Monnet Modules are funded; calls on the Commission to make the Jean Monnet Module action available to teacher-training institutions and to encourage such institutions to incorporate them in their programmes;

31. Notes that the Union is currently undergoing a crisis in its democratic legitimacy, not only because Europeans have insufficient knowledge about the EU mechanisms, but also because their voices are removed from decision-making processes; stresses that, in order to regain its legitimacy, the Union must halt the breakdown of its democratic structures and re-establish the link with its citizens;

32. Calls on the Commission to implement the Europe for Citizens programme in an efficient way in order to fulfil the objectives of a democratic and more inclusive society, thereby reinforcing citizen participation in decision-making processes;

33. Calls on the Commission to monitor closely the impact of all EU programmes on developing participants' sense of citizenship and civic participation;

34. Asks the Commission to develop further, and to promote as widely as possible, the eTwinning, EPAL and School Education Gateway virtual platforms, and to continue supporting and developing other digital platforms, such as Teachers' Corner, in order to facilitate access to high-quality, easy-to-use and up-to-date teaching materials that are relevant to EU-learning and available in all EU languages;

35. Asks the Commission to facilitate a critical review of the material currently available on the Teachers' Corner platform by educators currently engaged in teaching, and by academics specialised in EU studies, in order to ensure quality and appropriateness;

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36. Highlights the role that the information offices of the European institutions play, and welcomes their commitment to fostering relations with the Member States, with national, regional and local educational institutions, and with youth organisations and media, in order to bring them closer to each other and to ensure that young people understand the role the institutions play in their daily lives;

37. Calls for an open and shared debate between the Commission and cities, and local and regional authorities, regarding the connection between school systems and urban models, as a way to understanding the effects of different approaches to intercultural relations in Europe today;

38. Encourages the Commission to promote learning EU at school as a recommendation to be put forward as soon as possible in negotiation processes with candidate countries for EU membership;

The role of Member States

39. Encourages Member States to support, review and update their education systems — and all forms of EU-related curricula content at all levels of education, including vocational education and training — with a view to strengthening the EU dimension in close collaboration with all relevant actors at EU and national level, while strongly encouraging regions and local authorities to do the same, in particular when they have direct competences in educational systems;

40. Encourages the Member States to support all possibilities of conveying more information about the EU to learners as well as to teachers and other educators through formal, non-formal and informal learning, and to fully exploit and complement EU financial instruments, programmes and initiatives in this regard;

41. Asks Member States to take further action to promote intercultural, non-discriminatory and inclusive education and citizenship values in school and university curricula;

42. Calls on the Member States to increase investment in quality education, also by means of greater partnership with the private sector, and to promote equal opportunities for all, and to provide all educational and training institutions, as well as teachers and other educators, with the support necessary to empower them to introduce and continuously develop an EU dimension in education from an early age that goes beyond the class room;

43. Calls on the Member States to ensure equal and inclusive access to innovative and high-quality formal and non-formal education for all learners, as well as lifelong learning opportunities; calls, in this regard, on the Member States to adopt the 2008 proposal for a directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, which would protect against discrimination on these grounds in education;

44. Calls on the Member States to involve migrants, refugees and faith communities in respectful and empowering citizenship-building processes, ensuring their participation in civic and cultural life;

45. Calls on the Member States to encourage and facilitate high-quality training on EU topics for teachers, other educational staff, youth leaders and trainers, also by means of allowing them to spend part of their formation in another Member State, and by ensuring the recognition of their competences to teach about the EU, for example by creating and promoting a 'Euro Teacher' label award;

46. Considers that the Member States, in dialogue and cooperation with educational actors, should seek opportunities to exchange ideas and examples of good practice in integrating an EU dimension into their educational programmes, in order, inter alia, to boost young people's knowledge and understanding of the process of building EU citizenship and the EU institutions, thereby enabling them to see the Union as an integral part of their living environment that they can and are expected to shape;

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47. Urges the Member States to acknowledge and support social partners and civil society organisations, in particular youth organisations, in bridging the gap between the EU institutions and the European citizens in a structural and sustainable way, promoting and strengthening participatory and direct-democracy tools;

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48. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
