



*European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning*  
**EUCIS-LLL**

**General report**



**Annual Conference**  
**14 May 2012 - Leuven, Belgium**

**Social Innovation for Active Inclusion**

**Lifelong Learning Contribution for a Better Tomorrow**



# About us



EUCIS-LLL

*The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) brings together 31 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education. Together they represent millions of students, school heads, parents, human resources professionals, teachers and trainers, reaching out to hundreds of millions learners all over Europe and beyond.*

*EUCIS-LLL was created with the purpose of involving the different actors as much as possible in the dynamics of discussing and implementing the policies and actions of the European Union. It acts as a resource centre and a space for knowledge exchange, facilitating cooperation between institutions and civil society organisations. It wishes to offer the possibility for the European citizen's voice to be heard on educational issues and, drawing on the expertise of the networks that make up the platform, to bring concrete solutions for potential ways in which the decisions made by the European Institutions can be implemented. It is in a unique position to support European networks in education and training to work collectively at all levels and to contribute to a structured policy dialogue within the open method of coordination in education and training (Education and Training 2020). Such dialogue is essential for the future development of an EU that is closer to its citizens.*

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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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# Introduction

Education and training systems in Europe are now at the forefront as one of the main drivers of growth in times of crisis. More and more is expected of them: equip the future workforce with the right skills but also become open and flexible so that no one is left behind. Active inclusion is one of the main objectives of the EU2020 Strategy and education and training systems need to adapt to the paradigm shift towards a life-long and life-wide approach to learning to become more inclusive and tackle the challenges of the next decade. The recent focus on learning outcomes cannot be concretised without social innovation: new ideas and practices shall emerge so that access and participation, core values of EUCIS-LLL, become central in the modernisation process of European systems for better social cohesion, active citizenship and economic competitiveness. As EUCIS-LLL believes that civil society is the main agent of change, this conference has been organised to enable and highlight an exchange of good practices and a stimulating multi-stakeholder gathering.

More than 100 actors from the different sectors of education and training from all around Europe reflected upon innovative ways to combat educational disadvantages and fight youth unemployment. The conference also provided a specific insight into the opportunities for intergenerational learning, in the context of the current European Year 2012 on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

## Words of welcome



**Gina Ebner**, President of EUCIS-LLL and Secretary General of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), opened this 2012 Annual Conference by welcoming the participants and thanking the partners (Leuven University and City Council). She greeted the speakers that she knows are committed to lifelong learning and introduced and thanked Pierre Mairesse from the European Commission, who kindly accepted to replace Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou.

**Pierre Mairesse**, Director of “Lifelong Learning and 2020 Strategy”, DG EAC, European Commission, began his intervention by acknowledging the valuable work of EUCIS-LLL and guaranteeing the Commission’s support for the platform’s work.

**Education and training have never been higher on the European agenda** and therefore belong to the key success factors for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. **Mr Mairesse underlined the importance of the commitment of civil society and educational providers to keep inclusive growth as a top priority.** The Commission is doing a great deal for social inclusion: recent recommendations on early-school leaving, on early childhood education and care and on the modernisation of higher education are also tackling inclusion. Themes such as inclusive education, special needs or migrant learners are important to the Commission which is working towards more inclusion in each sector in a horizontal perspective, not forgetting vocational education and training.



**The cross-policy approach is also essential for social innovation.** This transversal work shall also be done by **working with all stakeholders including civil society.** Social innovation is indeed by definition an example of partnership for new educational approaches. Mr Mairesse has seen many good examples of social innovation across Europe, from bottom-up approaches in Copenhagen to learning communities in Spain (liaison schemes between parents and teachers). The Commission is willing to support innovation in education and training because those new approaches and opportunities will enable our learners to acquire new skills and competences. This support will be expressed through the current Lifelong Learning programme but also the future “Erasmus for All” programme. Projects fostering social innovation have already been set up and experimentation should be top-down as well as bottom-up. The focus for the coming years will be on tackling early-school leaving and enabling creative learning environments. Social innovation shall be used to nurture the policy-makers’ thinking.

## Keynote Speeches

### “Coping with social inequalities: the challenges for European education and training systems”



Prof. Dr. Ides Nicaise, from the University of Leuven, started his intervention by illustrating educational disadvantages in a European perspective with some key figures to conclude that early-school leavers had twice as much chance of being at risk of poverty than their peers. **Combating poverty is also educating as an essential social objective.** Indeed, low literacy leads to the poverty of adults, of their children, then to poor education and therefore to the poverty of the next generation. In a comparative analysis of European Member States, one can see that **this cycle can be broken depending on the design of education systems.** For instance, social mobility in education in Northern European countries is higher than in Eastern countries; or the systems characterised by an early selection typically lead to stronger inequalities.

Mr Nicaise expressed severe concerns about the Lisbon strategy that had failed, according to him, to foster more social inclusion (partly due to the fact that our knowledge societies would have favoured high-skilled workers, consequently making the demand fall for low-skilled labour). Therefore **knowledge societies are not necessarily fair ones** and Europe 2020 could do better if the balance is found between **knowledge-intensive growth** (encouraging innovation, R&D, etc. to boost the demand for high-skilled labour) and **knowledge-extensive growth** (investing in education and training, mainly for basic skills to raise the supply of skilled labour for greater equality).

**Education is indeed the redistribution of knowledge and generates more equality if emphasised. The debate has to do with two visions of equality: egalitarianism and meritocracy.** The Commission has indeed done a lot (ET2020 benchmarks, strengthened the Open Method of Coordination, Council conclusions 2010 on the social dimension of education and training, etc.) but needs to do even more in the following fields: early childhood education and care (focus on quality), early school leaving, inclusive education (systems are still much segregated for disadvantaged learners such as people with disabilities), adult learning (focusing more on basic skills) and migrant children.

As for early-school leaving in particular, the Commission’s strategy is rather disappointing inasmuch as the results will only be seen over the very long term: a much more ambitious strategy has to be launched, not only focusing on people entering the labour market; a large scale second-chance education and qualification programme for adults is needed.

The main message of Mr Nicaise is therefore that **we can do more, and especially for adults. There is room indeed for stronger coordination between social inclusion and educational policies at the EU level.**

## “Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion for education in Europe”



**Ramon Flecha**, Professor at the University of Barcelona, began his intervention by quoting Mr Zaragoza, the former UNESCO President, who advocated **a more proactive attitude based on scientific evidence instead of a constant diagnosis of poverty.** We need to shift our approach from best practices to successful actions; that is, actions that obtain the best results in various contexts and lead to evidence-based solutions. He highlighted several of these actions, such as heterogeneous classrooms with more adults (interactive groups), family education (language courses for migrant parents) or extended learning times (homework clubs). The successful actions enable learners from a disadvantaged socio-economic background to enjoy the same educational resources as their peers. Besides,

their benefits are visible in other fields such as health, housing, social and political participation. Therefore Mr Flecha strongly **recommended fostering educational policies based on successful actions, basing teachers’ training on scientific evidences and promoting the actions which achieve better results with the same resources.**

**Interventions from the audience** punctuated the keynote speakers’ presentations and some key issues emerged from the debate:

- Complementarity between bottom-up and top-down approaches is essential;
- Even if work is increasingly seen as a commodity, educational systems are not only aimed at improving employability and benchmarks should be also oriented towards EU-CIS-LLL values such as access and well-being;
- The focus should also be on the quality of the teaching profession;
- The supply of low-skilled workers should not necessarily be an objective because this labour force is also needed; besides, better education may not always lead to better wages and access to the labour market; yet a better education is not only about skills, it also leads to active citizenship;
- Stronger mainstreaming of lifelong learning is needed in European policies; it starts with capacity-building and provision.

# Workshop 1

## Access and participation in education and training: combating educational disadvantages

Facilitator: **Christopher Clouder**, European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education (ECSWE)  
Rapporteur: **Mélanie Schoger**, European Federation for Education and Culture (EFEC)

Many examples of **vulnerable groups at risk of being disadvantaged in education & training systems** can be found nowadays, as statistics speak for themselves in the OECD area: students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background are twice as likely to be low performers.

Women are still lacking in study fields such as mathematics and sciences because gender stereotypes are persisting. Only 4.6% of the population aged 55-64 have participated in education and training activities across the EU in 2009. These figures emphasise the urgent need to **take social aspects of education and training into account** in order to foster more inclusive systems, especially in times of budget cuts. Youth, women, older people, migrants, people with disabilities and many other groups should not be left aside. It is a question of equity and efficiency as well as a basis for the cohesion and competitiveness of our societies.

**The targets set by the EU2020 Strategy are ambitious:** the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion should be reduced by 20 million while the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40% and an average of at least 15% of adults (age group 25-64) should participate in lifelong learning. This is not possible without developing and supporting innovative strategies to include as many individuals as possible within our education and

training systems. We cannot ignore the benefits of learning for 80 million Europeans with disabilities, more than 20 million migrants, almost 80 million low-skilled workers and the almost 25 million people out of work in the European Union – nor the fact that our systems fail to adapt to the needs of a large number of individuals mainly from within these groups. If education and training systems cannot solve all socio-economic problems alone, systemic and organisational reforms can have a real impact. They can support for example learning innovation through initial and continuing teacher training, second chance schools or popular and adult education.

Many **very successful practices** take place around Europe that ought to be better supported and known about. Most of the time these are the result of an individual initiative or that of a small group of people who want to find solutions. That's when **social innovation** takes place. Very often, they reflect another way of looking at existing problems, for instance, based on the idea that there are no disadvantaged learners but rather inadequate learning environments that ought to be adapted. This workshop was aimed at reflecting upon innovative solutions to target vulnerable groups of all ages and reduce school failure by focusing on learners' full potential. At a second stage, the participants were invited to make some policy recommendations at the national and European level.

## Key Messages

A discussion was launched on the integration of marginalised groups in education and training: how can we guarantee inclusion and how can we have a positive effect on the concerned groups when education is a “soft target” for governments all across Europe? All groups agreed on the importance of the following points:

- *Stop working in a deficiency model:* rather than having a negative preconception about the concerned groups, the starting point should be that everybody has something to offer. A true dialogue without the victimisation of any participating group should be fostered. Openness about the different backgrounds is necessary without stigmatisation.
- *Make good practice accessible:* innovation in education & training still lacks accessibility. It is necessary to spread information more efficiently and widely both for actors in the field as well as stakeholders at institutional level. EUCIS-LLL and other civil society organisations can function as such resource centres. Their work is crucial and can save a lot of time, money and energy for users, as well as providing institutions with the necessary information. On an institutional level, civil society representatives should further be allowed to participate in the EU expert groups on the concerned subjects.
- *Favour diversity and a transversal approach in education & training:* a transversal approach combining formal and non-formal education is seen as being most efficient for the inclusion of marginalised groups. Furthermore, diversity in the learning on offer and possibilities of education and training programmes is seen as a key aspect to inclusion.

## Case studies

### **Aurelie Baranger, Autism Europe, «ExchangeAbility project»**

Set up in 2009 and supported today by eight sections of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), ESN International and several partner organisations such as Autism Europe, “Exchangeability” is essentially aimed at providing youngsters with disabilities the opportunity to participate in ESN activities at all levels. Through this involvement, the students are enabled to experience the intercultural atmosphere associated with the exchange programmes (“internationalisation at home”) that they usually have more difficulties finding than others due to several obstacles such as stereotypes. ESN’s goal in a broader perspective is increasing mobility for students with disabilities by making student life abroad accessible for them.

*Autism Europe is an international association founded in 1983 whose main goal is to advance the rights of persons with autism and their families and to help them improve their quality of life. With more than 80 member associations of parents of persons with autism in 30 European countries, the association defends their interests in European decision-making and raises public awareness on autism.*

**Itxaso Tellado Ruiz de Gauna, Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen, (member of the European Association for the Education of Adults, EAEA), «EDUCAROM»**

The project «EDUCAROM» from the Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen was awarded the Golden Grundtvig Award in 2009 by the European Commission. The association developed, together with its partner organisations, a comprehensive teaching kit for adult learners with “Europe” as its topics. The kit is aimed at adult learners in the context of literacy programmes. It incorporates Roma in the conception of the material and includes a module on Roma history and culture, whereas the kit is aimed at both Roma and non-Roma students. EDUCAROM is highly innovative in the way that it prepares adult training centres for the specific challenge of Roma learners and promotes the learning of the Roma language in Spain at the same time.

*The Roma Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen is a non-profit organisation created in 1999 by Roma and non-Roma women from various backgrounds, to tackle social exclusion of Roma women. Mainly active in Catalonia (Spain), the organisation combats gender discrimination and racial, social, political and economic exclusion of those women through monitoring courses, cultural exchange groups, congresses, etc.*

**Fabio Nascimbeni, MENON Network, and Livia Turzo, European Distance and e-Learning Network (EDEN), «EQUNET – Working for an equitable access to Higher Education in Europe»**

EQUNET is a research project aiming at increasing access to higher education for marginalised and non-traditional groups based on the principle of equity. Formed with the support of 8 associations, 4 umbrella organisations and 4 research institutes, it was conceived as an independent research and networking initiative targeting different kinds of learners (traditional students, migrants, adults...) and the outcomes highlighted several barriers such as the educational background, socioeconomic conditions or structural problems in higher education such as admission standards. EQUNET is one of the first projects tackling the issue of equity in higher education via the building of an original evidence-based advocacy network.

*MENON is a non-profit European research and innovation network created in 1999 and working in various fields including education, lifelong learning and knowledge societies.*

*EDEN is the European Distance and e-learning Network, a non-profit organisation established in 1991, with now more than 200 institutional members. It aims to share knowledge and improve understanding amongst professionals in distance and e-learning and to promote policy and practice within and outside Europe.*



## Workshop 2

### Challenges and opportunities for migrants within education and training systems

Facilitator: **Päivi Vartiainen-Ora**, Työväen Sivistysliitto (TSL) - Finland, member of SOLIDAR  
Rapporteur: **Blandine Smilansky**, European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO)

The last decade has seen a substantial increase in the movement of people within and between countries, globally and within Europe. According to both international and national data, **many migrant children in the European Union suffer from an educational disadvantage** in comparison to their native peers: early school leaving is more common among them and enrolment in higher education is lower. What is even more worrying is that in some countries second-generation migrant pupils show lower school performance than the first generation. This indicates that the social divide may deepen over time. At the same time, there are clear signs that tendencies towards **segregation along socio-economic lines** intensify, as socially advantaged parents tend to withdraw their children from schools with high numbers of migrant pupils. This situation may undermine the chances of young migrant pupils for successful integration in the labour market later in life. Migrant adult learners also face **many educational obstacles**, as they have to acquire knowledge and competences for professional purposes often not in their native language but also develop intercultural skills to adapt to their new environment.

Without migration, the economy would face major labour and skill shortages in many key areas. However, where migration coincides with poverty and social exclusion in a community, it can exacerbate under-

lying tensions. Furthermore, the current economic crisis could exacerbate xenophobic feelings in Europe. Even if it is difficult to act on individual choices, **policies can have an impact**. Some studies have shown for example that the same minority group is more or less successful in different EU countries or that some countries succeed better than others in reducing the gaps in educational attainment levels. In general, research shows that migrant pupils perform better in **systems where equity is a priority** in education as they are likely to be most effective in responding to their particular needs. **Comprehensive strategies** across all levels and strands of the system work best as partial measures may simply transfer problems from one segment of the system to another. There are huge disparities between Member States as regards migration so peer learning has a great added value at EU level. Some policy measures have been encouraged by the EU such as interventions at an early age or support for language learning/teaching. The recommendations that were made by the Council to the Member States in 2009 could be revisited: what was implemented at national and European level? Did migrant learners really become a priority of the Education and Training 2020 work programme?

Adapting to the presence of high numbers of migrant learners poses a range of **challenges at the level of the**

**educational institution** as well. Research shows that most institutions are often missing out the opportunities brought by this diverse population.

As the Council stated in 2009, it is time to reflect upon the integration, motivation and empowerment of migrants of all ages in formal and non-formal education so that they can access equitable, personalised and quality learning. We have to answer both the question of equity and of quality. It is important to share practices and learn from each others' experiences

on how to ensure that our education and training systems are more inclusive. Many educational institutions have adopted specific approaches in order to ensure the full integration of diverse students, some have developed **partnerships with local communities and the parents** and have learnt from the experiences of **adult or popular education** movements that already work with migrant communities. The aim of this workshop is to look at these innovative initiatives.

## Key Messages

- As the debate on migrants is dependent on the images different communities construct of each other, it is important to take time for preparation and self-analysis of the staff in educational and training systems before they work with migrant learners. They have to be made aware that they have prejudices of everybody; they need to clearly identify and express them.
- An approach based on mutual learning is essential between migrants and the rest of the population; in the classroom, it can be done through various methods such as buddy support (child teaching another child) or activities where one has to present the other's culture and/or way of life; in the workplace, by mentoring and shadowing systems. Learners with a migrant background need specific support to benefit from educational and training opportunities on an equal-footing with others. Such support can be class assistants or liaison teachers making the link between families and other teachers; or more connections between schools and associations carrying educational initiatives.
- Language learning, a key to integration, should not only happen in formal settings but should be integrated to other learning processes (learning by doing approach, learning at home thanks to the internet).
- At the policy-level, enabling learning mobility for teachers is a powerful way to prepare them to work with migrants and people with a migrant background. They can thus integrate this paradigm of mobility into their very practice in the classroom. A history teacher who had opportunity to be trained abroad might for instance be more interested to work on migration history with students.
- A lot of work also still has to be carried out into the recognition of prior learning in the country of origin. Harmonisation of national systems through the European Qualification Framework has to be accelerated in order to allow a smooth transfer of credits, etc. Stakeholders should work on a basis of trust.

## Case studies

### Deirdre Sullivan, National Parents Council Primary – Ireland, member of the European Parents' Association (EPA), «Supporting Migrant Parental Involvement in the Irish Primary Education System»

«Supporting Migrant Parental Involvement in the Irish Primary Education System» is a project run in 2008/2009 aimed at providing information and support to third-country national parents of children who are in primary education. The Irish National Parents Council staff visited 31 drop-in centres during the project. The innovative approach was to support migrant parents to become full members of their school community and the project sustainably changed the way the organisation worked.

*The **National Parents Council of Ireland** represents parents' views on all issues they may be concerned about for their children at school. The organisation works for their rights and empowers them so that they can take responsibility and make choices about their role as educators.*

### Mohammed Hamra, Maison des jeunes de Sainte Walburge (Liège, Belgique), «Collectif Mixité (Action Group for Diversity)», member of CONTACT 2103.

Enable young girls and women to become active citizens is the main aim of Collectif Mixité that gathers approximately ten Maisons des jeunes in the Liège area. The Collectif goal is to facilitate the access to Maison des jeunes for girls, so that they can find their place there, feel free to talk and be respected and therefore make them obtain the role they deserve in the public space. Collectif is a place for expression and exchange, a tool for emancipation, sharing and tolerance towards other cultures. There is no feminist or radical connotation in Collectif but simply a will to help girls find their right place towards boys, in the Maison des jeunes structure or within society and their projects for life.

***CONTACT2103** is an international non-governmental organisation founded in 1998. It was created by organisations active in the field of youth to achieve a common and co-ordinated policy at the European level.*



**Geoff Scaplehorn, European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET), «Diversonopoly – a tool to increase intercultural education».**



«Diversonopoly» is a tool to help education practitioners confronted with mixed groups of learners to increase intercultural education and reduce xenophobia and racism. It is shaped as a board game that can easily be downloaded to emphasise the positive and beneficial effects of diversity. The project also encourages the exchange of best practices in the field of intercultural learning and understanding in adult education. The game format is highly creative inasmuch as a broad public can reflect upon diversity and tolerance in a playful way.

***EfVET** is an uniaue European-wide professionn al association created by and for providers of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in all European countries.*



## Workshop 3

### The opportunities of intergenerational learning in lifelong learning

Facilitator: **Inga Menke**, European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL)

Rapporteur: **Hans Daale**, European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)

The **European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012** provides a good framework to reflect upon the participation of older people in education and training and the benefits of intergenerational learning for them and their younger peers. Population ageing will continue with its accelerating pace in the next decades. In 2060, half of the population will be aged 48 years or above. These trends will require some considerable societal adaptations regarding work, family life and social protection. Rising life expectancy, combined with low birth rates, also imply a changing balance between younger and older people, a shift that is currently being accelerated by the fact that the large baby boom cohorts are reaching their retirement age. Learning can contribute to addressing the challenges of the ageing societies. But supporting lifelong learning for older people requires a global and **holistic policy approach**. To maximise the potential of learning in the later periods of life, lifelong learning needs

to be promoted in all stages of life. Today, we are far from this paradigm shift. 9.2% of European citizens aged 25-64 were involved in learning in 2009 which is far from the EU2020 Strategy target of 15% by 2020, especially considering that the 55-64 share accounted for half of those learners that year.

Education and training of those who are retired should be considered a priority in responding to the demographic challenge. Social innovation means producing **solutions to equip our ageing population** with knowledge and skills, especially in times where lifetime jobs do not exist anymore and retirement times are being postponed, as well as **sharing them**. Instead of being seen as a burden, older people can become **an asset**. An inclusive approach comes with enabling peer learning with younger people, as **the competences acquired throughout a whole life should be valued and transferred to the next generation**. Active ageing in a lifelong learning



perspective is thus about empowering the older learners by increasing their participation in education but also about reconfiguring their roles as potential teachers.

Learning in later life can take place in a variety of contexts. Throughout Europe **new pedagogical approaches** are being developed to increase their participation in learning activities as well as making use of their life experience. At the organisation level, it is important **adapt to their learning needs** considering the diversity of senior learners, in particular as regards vulnerable groups

such as older women, migrants and socially excluded older people. Some educational organisations are already **opening up** to a more varied public and have adapted their learning provision. Finally we can outline the potential role that retired citizens can play in our societies as **volunteers** for instance. Many innovative projects in Europe are run by and/or for seniors. The aim of this workshop to look at these innovative initiatives and to learn from each other's experiences. At a second stage, the participants were invited to make some policy recommendations at the national and European level.

## Key Messages

The discussion initiated was even more fruitful given all the different generations participating in the workshop. The concept itself of intergenerational learning has been questioned: is it simply bringing together young and older people?

- Intergenerational learning is something that needs to be well-defined and structured, with clearly identified target groups; it does not only take place within the family circle.
- At the individual level, the perception on elderly people should change. Older people are not a problem but still have valuable skills for society.
- At the organisational level, helping each other also means including representatives of different generations in teams, organisations, networks, like young people in boards and older people should be given a chance to act as volunteers. Organisations shall also be diversified in terms of nationality and gender. Besides, more exchanges should occur between organisations from all countries through platforms like EUCIS-LLL.
- At the national level, strategies for intergenerational learning linked with lifelong learning policies are needed along with an appropriate budget, as well as a continuous exchange of good practices to multiply successful models; national civil society platforms on lifelong learning could be set up for this purpose.
- At the European level, research needs to be deepened on a European vision of intergenerational learning. In practice, an expert group could be created, good initiatives and projects need to gain more visibility, an exchange of good practices should be more coordinated so that we can avoid duplication and build on from them.

## Case studies

### **Magali Verdier, European Federation for Education and Culture (EFEC), «Lire et Faire Lire - senior volunteering helping pupils in partnership with schools»**

Lire et faire lire (“Read and make read”) is a programme supported by the eponymous organisation set up to develop intergenerational solidarity and the pleasure to read among children in schools and other educational structures like day care. 50+ volunteers, trained by experts from a coordinating university, come to schools to organise reading sessions with small groups of pupils. Inspired by an example of good practice in Brest in 1985, Lire et faire lire is now developed in each French department by coordinators from two important national civil society networks. Lire et faire lire is presented in this conference as an inventive way to promote French youth literature as well as enhance intergenerational exchange by encouraging dialogue between children and retired people.

*EFEC is a federation gathering non-religious educative associations from 8 European countries. It represents the European branch of the International Teaching, Education and Popular Culture League that gathers 20 organisations worldwide.*

### **Alessia Rogai, ARCI Italy, member of SOLIDAR, «eScouts – Intergenerational Learning Circle for Community Service»**

eScouts is an Intergenerational Learning Circle for Community Service made up by eight partners, whose goal is to develop an innovative intergenerational learning exchange between elderly and young volunteers, centred on the development of the digital competences of the eldest and on the guidance to the youngest via social media. That should enable them to better face their upcoming adult life challenges with the support of various local organisations such as youth and elderly associations, with a broader objective of producing a transversal impact over the communities they are serving. The project aims therefore at using ICT as a vehicle for the promotion of intergenerational exchange in the line of the European “Digital Agenda for Europe”.

*eScouts consortium consists of eight European partners who have different but complementary expertise and work experiences related to education and learning. Learn more at [www.escouts.eu](http://www.escouts.eu)*

**Gabor Dombi, INFORUM (Forum of Hungarian IT Organisations for Information Society), European Parents Association (EPA) – Hungary, «Grandparents-grandchildren IT contest»**

The Grandparent-Grandchild Competitions of Informatics is an inter-generational solution to raise public awareness of computers and the internet usage among older people. It has been held eight times (regional and national competitions) so far across Hungary and have involved 1500 families. The question of the quality of life and the use of computers of the elderly has come into the spotlight thanks to this competition.

**INFORUM** (Forum of Hungarian IT Organisations for Information Society) has been fighting for years for making the elderly citizens equal in rank in the information society. It is a member of EPA that gathers the parents' associations in Europe which together represent more than 150 million parents.



# Workshop 4

## Education and training role and contribution to alleviate youth employment

Facilitator: **James Higgins**, European Youth Forum (YFJ)

Rapporteur: **Veeli Oeselg**, Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

Because young people have been the most affected by the economic crisis in terms of employment rates, youth employment is today at the core of the European Employment Strategy in line with the Europe 2020 objectives. In January, the European Council made recommendations for the phenomenon **to be tackled in the next European Semester**. Yet despite this policy focus that is even stronger since the crisis (for instance, the Youth on the Move flagship initiative gave rise to the Youth Opportunities Initiative in 2011), the share of young unemployed people keeps on rising. The most recent statistics show that **youth unemployment across the Union has risen up to 22.4% in February 2012** (compared to 21% last year) while employing youth remains a top priority for Europeans. In this context, education and training systems are given a central role.

**Active inclusion of youth in the labour market can take several forms** throughout innovative ideas to value dual quality apprenticeships systems, narrow the gap between education and business, make vocational education attractive, promote the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, enhance the benefits of mobility, etc. At policy-level, concrete ideas are emerging such as **raising the age limit for compulsory education, but also to bring those who dropped out** (i.e. the so-

called the NEET population ‘not in employment, education or training’) back to school by **changing teaching methods and re-motivating potential learners**. It comes to invest more in the **quality** of our education and training systems (for instance by an increased use of the European Social Fund) in order to **modernise them** and operate a **paradigm shift towards learning outcomes** so that even the most educationally disadvantaged feel they have a place in the system but also in the labour market in a close future.

Social innovation has in that sense an essential role to play. New practices have emerged first to keep young people in education by motivating them and **combating early-school leaving**, especially for the most vulnerable groups. Yet education and training cannot solve the challenge of youth employment alone and a partnership approach is needed so that all stakeholders and sectors unite their ingenuity and strengths to reach the 2020 targets. This workshop was aimed at reflecting upon innovative solutions to ensure that young persons are well equipped for the labour market and do not fail in the educative systems. At a second stage, the participants were invited to make some policy recommendations at the national and European level.

## Key Messages

- Change in the education system to tackle youth unemployment has to be supported by national governments, for instance by improving the reputation of some sectors like VET.
- There should be more flexibility between academic studies and VET so that students can choose more freely. People need to acquire practical skills to enter the labour market. There is a need for a more holistic approach to offer broader learning opportunities in order to be prepared for different kinds of jobs and tasks. Knowledge acquired through non-formal learning is also essential and validation mechanisms should be urged. An efficient guidance system is part of the solution as well.
- Cooperation from stakeholders is highly important and civil society organisations should function as a mediator between youth, businesses and higher education institutions. Moreover, we should also see the NGOs as potential employers.

## Case studies

### **Ton van der Bruggen, Employable Arbeidsmarktconsultancy (The Netherlands), “The role of the employer in combating youth unemployment”**

The case study highlighting the role of the employer enables the sharing of several “working/learning” programmes of employers that have been set up for the unemployed, as part of an active policy of socially responsible entrepreneurship. As a matter of fact, the situation for young people out of school in the Netherlands is catastrophic and such programmes like the “Learning in context” are intensive approaches with a practice and theory component in combination with relevant work experience. The innovation lies also in the fact that those projects have been set up for young people with a low level of education and those who have dropped out school, as well as other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, minorities or female learners.



**Gizem Karsli, European Students' Forum (AEGEE), «Youth UnEmployment project – the European School of Entrepreneurship»**

The Youth UnEmployment project has been designed to help young people aged between 18 and 30 to increase their employability. In a context of crisis where youth employment has become a top priority for the European Union, the project seeks to lobby for the recognition of voluntary work and non-formal education as work experience. Indeed, students contribute to the society as volunteers but their work often remains unrecognised by their university and their future employers. Thanks to this forward-thinking project in the field of non-formal education recognition, young people will therefore be empowered to transform their skills and preferences into employment.

*AEGEE is a European students' association with 13,000 members in 40 European countries that strives for a united Europe without mental borders and prejudices to other cultures.*

**Joël Bonamy, Foundation of European Regions for Research in Education and Training (FREREF), «School Re-enrolment - political action to fight school dropout»**

The innovative approach of FREREF to school dropout assumes that life vicissitudes have a lot to do with giving up on learning and that this phenomenon should be seen in an holistic perspective, taking into account fundamental elements such as motivation, self-confidence, etc. FREREF has investigated around twenty life stories to comprehend how this process of disengaging and reengaging functions and to draw up an inventory of support practices for re-engagement. The working group that conducted the research met from 2007 to 2010 in the framework of a FREREF (five European regions) - Quebec. The regions agreed on nine common principles that should guide their political action on accompanying re-enrolment and provide a common culture on the subject, while respecting the specificity and operational framework of each member. This led to the creation of professional and personal knowledge for participants as well as the empowerment of the practitioners.

*FREREF is a network of European regions for exchange and cooperation in the field of education and training. It engages all actors of the educational world: local decision-makers, social partners, researchers, practitioners and various professionals.*



## Policy Feedback

**Joke van der Leeuw-Roord, EUCIS-LLL Vice President and Executive Director of the European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO)**, led the general report of workshops' key messages and took over what had been said in the morning: indeed, education and training are today a top priority on the European agenda and crucial to tackle their relation to poverty. Successful actions are innovative and creative solutions and the workshops have underlined the necessity to make them visible and coordinate exchanges of practices. EUCIS-LLL has worked in this direction with a feasibility study on National Stakeholders' Forums and LLL-Hub. In that sense and in many others, EUCIS-LLL and other European civil society organisations have real EU added-value and therefore their work should be supported financially at the European level.

**Agalianos Angelos, Unit A3 "Jean Monnet and Equity in Education and Training", DG EAC, European Commission**, specified that the Commission is actually working on concrete actions to improve the situation in Member States in the field of social innovation. He pointed out three main dimensions where education and training and social innovation can be linked. First, social innovation is needed in educational provision, targeting for instance special needs' learners. Second, there is an educating dimension of social innovation in the sense that this is a creative, collaborative process. Finally, there is a need to educate on social innovation and education and training systems have to nurture it. This is an aspect that has not been really discussed so far. Furthermore, the discourse on social innovation is narrowly linked to the role of the public and private sectors and the privatisation of the public service. This is a concern that we need to keep in mind.

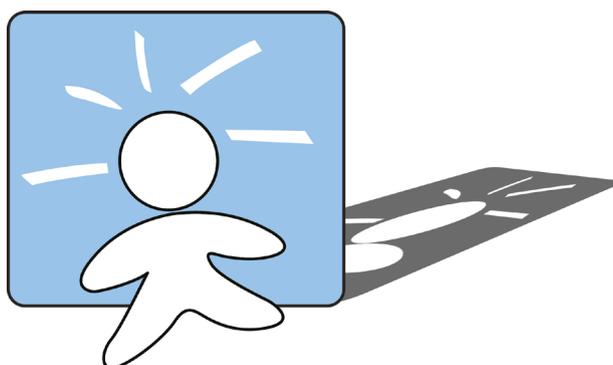
The Commission is actually preparing a new initiative on strategies to combat educational disadvantage in Europe that will be published in November, together with an initiative on "Rethinking skills". This will highlight key issues and present concrete national good practices.

**Kyriakos Costeas, Attaché for Education, Culture, Youth, Cyprus Permanent Representation to the EU**, presented some innovative practices in education and training from Cyprus. Cyprus has indeed launched deep educational reforms for comprehensive changes to create a democratic focus in the national education and training system for equal opportunities. The national policies take into account early-school leaving as a top priority against educational disadvantage and since this problem is linked to others outside the school walls, the national approach tries to be holistic. All stakeholders should work together towards more integration in our education and training systems and in society in general. This goes through several measures: education and training policies should enable all citizens to acquire and develop job specific skills. Better transitions should be worked on between education and training sectors and vocational education and training should be made more attractive through new apprenticeship schemes. Cutting expenses to solve the crisis is not the solution; investing in education and training is.

Some interesting questions and comments came from the audience. As reflected upon during the public hearing EUCIS-LLL organised on social innovation, civil society organisations are the best partners to foster creative solutions. Partnerships with civil society were well established during the European Year of Volunteering and the same should be done in the upcoming years.

**Gina Ebner, EUCIS-LLL President**, concluded the conference by thanking all the participants for the inspiring projects presented and the food for thought that emerged from this conference. Social innovation is key for active inclusion and civil society is indeed a crucial partner to foster it in our education and training systems.





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