



STRENGTHENING COMMON EUROPEAN VALUES THROUGH EDUCATION WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE TELL US?



NESET II and EENEE Conference
Brussels, 22 November 2018

CONFERENCE REPORT





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The conference ***Strengthening Common European Values through Education. What does the Evidence tell us?*** was co-organised by the Network of Experts on the Social Dimension of Education and Training (NESET II), the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE), and the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). It was held in Brussels, at the Madou Tower¹, on November 22. The conference programme and further information are available at <http://nesetweb.eu/en/activities/conference/>.

This report was written in December 2018 by Gintvilė Valansevičiūtė on behalf of the Conference Committee. It is based on notes taken during the NESET II/EENEE Conference by the following rapporteurs:

- Alina Makarevičienė, PPMI
- Ana Silva, CEPS
- Dalibor Sternadel, PPMI
- Gintvilė Valansevičiūtė, PPMI



OPENING PLENARY

Welcome by the coordinators of NESET II and EENEE

Dr Dragana Avramov, Scientific Coordinator of NESET II and Director of PSPC (Population and Social Policy Consultants)

Prof Ludger Woessmann, Scientific Coordinator of EENEE and Director of Ifo Center for the Economics of Education

EENEE and NESET II are two advisory networks of experts funded by the European Commission. Both networks aim to contribute to the improvement of decision-making and policy development in education and training in Europe, by advising and supporting the European Commission in the analysis of social and economic aspects of education policies and reforms.

The networks' coordinators introduced the work carried out by the networks over the past year, and its link with the topic of the Conference: "Strengthening common European values through education".

Welcome by the European Commission

Mr Jan Pakulski, Head of Unit, Evidence-Based Policy and Evaluation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission.

The European Commission opened the Conference by presenting the Commission's role in relation to the networks and their work, and to its role in discussing the topic of this year's Conference.

For the EC it is a stimulating process to be able to request first-hand critical analysis on different topics from a range of highly experienced academics. Importantly, by having different sources of information, in recent years the Commission has been able to move to evidence-based policy making. DG EAC has seven knowledge providers, among which are NESET II and EENEE. The networks provide academic literature reviews, drawing insights from them and bringing forward prominent discussions that are taking place in the field of E&T. The networks have licence to bring topics forward before the institutions start working on them; for example, the topic of *bullying* was brought to the Commission's attention by NESET II.

Nowadays, however, evidence is used for an array of purposes. The Commission's initial objective was to equip people with as much information as possible; however, where and how people access facts – and how they use them – is now becoming a challenge. It is important to look at today's political and social reality and question how it is possible that people are driven to extreme ideas and violence. The EC believes in the importance of investing in social integration and in building social values. Thus, the topic of the conference is about strengthening these common values.

The year 2017 has already seen a strong commitment to this topic, with education placed at the centre of the 2017 Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth², and the focus of the 2018 Education and Training Monitor³ being on citizenship education and civic competences. This was further enhanced by the Council Recommendation of May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching.

² European Commission Concluding report on *Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth*, Gothenburg, Sweden, 17 November 2017.

Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/concluding-report-social-summit_en.pdf. President Juncker's address in the Summit can be accessed here: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/president-juncker-social-summit-fair-jobs-and-growth-2017-nov-17_en.

³ European Commission, *Education and Training Monitor 2018*. Information Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en.

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Keynote address⁴

Prof Gert Biesta, Professor of Education, Brunel University London, and University of Humanistic Studies, the Netherlands.

Common or uncommon European values?

We currently face a need to focus on the common values that make living together a possibility. As pointed out by the President of the European Commission in his 2017 State of the Union address⁵, Europe is more than just a single market, and it has always been about values. The Treaty on European Union⁶ states that the EU was founded on values, and that these values are common to Member States. In considering this, Prof Biesta raised thought-provoking questions on the ownership, communality and education of these values. In particular, he asked: “What is teaching? What is common? And what are values?”

Prof Biesta expressed the notion of *civic education* as a form of “strong socialisation”, ushering newcomers into a community. Community - with regard to the origin of the word - is based on the idea of “walling”, protecting those *inside* and separating them from those *outside*. However, questions arise as to whether democracy is and should be such a community – and whether citizenship education acts as a gatekeeper to this type of community. We often refer to the values of communities that outsiders need to learn, but maybe what we should be talking about is national states as communities that encompass “uncommon values”.

It was with these questions in mind that Prof Gert Biesta divided his presentation into three parts: the notion of citizenship and democracy; the role of education; and the status of democracy.

Citizenship and democracy

There are three important ways to consider **citizenship**:

- The social approach, focusing on social cohesion and social integration.
- The moral notion, based on responsibility and participation that promote the education of responsible citizens.
- The political approach, which is the democratic approach.

One should keep two things in mind when talking about **democracy**:

1. Democracy is an invention. Democracy is not part of human nature; it is a construction. It is a political project, and hence the democratic way of life is not necessarily rational. Democracy is a way to organise our civic lives, by recognising that we do not all live our lives in the same way. Thus, it is not about bridging all opinions; it’s about living in plurality and bringing an orientation for these options based on liberty, equality and solidarity.
2. Democracy is not a matter of choice. Democracy shouldn’t become an expression and a count of preferences (which is majority rule), but the transformation of what is desired (by individuals or groups) into what can be considered desirable. The objective of democracy is to figure out what people want, and transform that into what we can collectively sustain.

⁴ Biesta, G. (2018), Keynote speech on “Teaching Uncommon Values: Education, Democracy, and the Future of Europe” in NESET II and EENEE Annual Conference *Strengthening Common European Values through Education. What Does the Evidence tell us?*. Available at: <http://nesetweb.eu/en/presentations-2018/>.

⁵ European Commission, *President Juncker delivers State of the Union Address 2017*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/president-juncker-delivers-state-union-address-2017-2017-sep-13_en

⁶ European Union *Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012M%2FTXT>



An intrinsic message behind democracy is that “you cannot always get what you want”. The public domain implies a certain self-restraint, together with painful learning and internalising. If we try to live democratically, it is not about establishing a common ground, but a common world in which we try to live with the unknown.

Education

Prof. Biesta argued in his key note that democracy requires a sense of “being at home in the world”; of being comfortable with the unknown. Thus, democracy can never be simply about maximising your own desires, but includes attending the needs and desires of others, too. This, however, is not just a political but also an educational issue.

It is important to understand that “in the world”, one meets resistance and differences among people. The second important aspect is that “the world” is not a construction – it is real. However, realising that the world is not what we want it to be can cause frustration. Reactions to this realisation can include either pushing and trying to make the world change into what we desire, or taking a step away from the world. With the former, we risk breaking the world; with the latter, we risk disappearing from it. The challenge, then, is to stay in the middle. That is the task with which education needs to help, and it is what democracy asks from us.

The way in which education can help us to maintain this middle ground is by teaching “*grown-up-ness*” to adolescents; *that is*, how to be in the world without putting oneself at the centre of the world. We should teach children how to be grown-ups, which is not about leaving your desires behind, but about finding the desires that can help us live together.

What is the process of teaching grown-up-ness?

1. Interruption role. Present students with things that they were not looking for, because they did not know they *should* look for them – helping them to meet the world.
2. Suspension role. Make space and provide time for students to come into a relationship with the world, and with their own desires: practising *grown-up-ness*.
3. Sustenance. Support children in staying in the difficult middle ground, and help them to experience that what is difficult in the short term, may be the better option in the longer term.

We need schools to be places in which children can fail and try again in order to “fail better”, and to practice what it means to “be at home in the world”. This is where democratic education happens. However, democratic education starts not at school but much earlier and without many words – for example, by working with materials, in gardening, caring for animals and working together. All of these activities teach democratic behaviour.

The Status of Democracy

If democracy is seen as a historical political project, it becomes very hard to provide arguments as to why it is a good way of life. Many values are linked to democracy, but those values only work as arguments with those who already believe in democracy. The main goal, therefore, needs to be not to bring children to democracy, but to make them *want* democracy, to want democratic values.

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SESSION 1 - Inclusion and social cohesion

Moderator: **Dr Dragana Avramov**, Scientific Coordinator of NESET II and Director of Population and Social Policy Consultants (PSPC)

Discussants:

- **Ms Jelena Jovanović**, Policy and Research Coordinator, European Roma
- **Ms María Vieites Casado**, Coordinator of SEAs4ALL and STEP4SEAS, Community of Research on Evidence for All (CREA), teacher and educational psychologist

The Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching⁷ aims to promote common values at all levels of education, and to foster inclusive education. However, it remains a challenge for many countries to ensure quality mainstream education and training for all. Thus, a significant educational gap persists. This session was devoted to understanding the role of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in integrated work that benefits disadvantaged groups such as Roma, and how social exclusion affects school achievements of children from disadvantaged background.

The Role and place of ECEC in integrated work benefiting vulnerable groups such as Roma

Dr Hester Hulpia, Researcher at VBJK (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years), and at Ghent University

Dr Jana Huttova, Member of NESET II and self-employed consultant, researcher and expert evaluator

The integration of services has become a hot issue. It is also on the EU agenda (e.g. in the Commission Recommendation on investing in children⁸, and the European Pillar of Social Rights⁹), as it is seen to provide answers to the complex needs of families today. One service alone can no longer deal with the multifaceted problems faced by families in vulnerable situations. The integration of services is a more effective approach to dealing with these problems, and the basic provision of ECEC plays a crucial role in integrated working. However, working together in an integrated way is not self-evident; certain preconditions should be met at the levels of: (1) shared vision and goals; (2) leadership, management and competent workforce; (3) policy framework and sufficient funding; and (4) participation of families.

Extreme poverty, unequal access to ECEC, together with the discrimination and segregation that many Roma children experience, put them in risk from a very young age, and even before they are born. Addressing their complex and specific needs requires a comprehensive, integrated and multi-sectoral approach. More precisely, Dr Huttova presented a model of comprehensive early-years intervention for Roma children and their families that is based on integrated services, including prenatal and postnatal health; early learning; parenting support and adult education; as well as play and stimulation programmes for toddlers. This model, which provides a comprehensive approach to ECEC for Roma children, recognises the need for a balanced combination of universal policies promoting the well-being and development of all children, and targeted policies directed at but not stigmatising the most vulnerable families.

⁷ The Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0607\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0607(01)&from=EN)

⁸ Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013H0112>

⁹ Communication from the Commission on Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights, COM(2017) 250 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0250>



The causes of test score gaps between Roma and majority children in Europe

Dr Balázs Váradi, Senior Researcher at the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis

Based on evidence of a large and statistically significant gap in achievement in test scores between black and white children in the United States, Kertesi-Kézdi (2014) assessed the gap in standardised test scores between Roma and non-Roma students in Hungary. The results revealed that this gap is comparable to the size of the black-white test score gap seen in the US in the 1980s. The factors correlating with general segregation were segregation across schools, within a school, and variation in school quality.

School segregation of Roma children is present in a number of EU countries, namely Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Hungary and Slovakia, segregation has been increasing since 1989. The ethnic test score gap in Hungary is almost entirely explained by social differences in income, wealth and parental education. Two major mediating mechanisms are:

- The home environment of Roma children is less favourable for their cognitive development.
- Roma children face lower-quality educational environments.

Research results suggest that in order to improve skills development among Roma and other disadvantaged children, policy actors should: (1) design additional policies aimed at alleviating poverty; and (2) implement interventions that tackle the mediating mechanisms mentioned above.

Highlights from the discussion

The discussion started by addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups and policies aimed at breaking the circle of interlinked factors such as parental education, income level and segregation. At the policy level, the challenge is how to deliver integrated services to those most in need, without fostering further segregation, and also how to transfer and scale up effective practices. The participants agreed that future initiatives should focus not only on targeting services for specific (vulnerable) groups, but also on desegregation and behavioural change among the rest of society. Examples from several Member States show that engaging local authorities and stakeholders is important for the transformation of schools, and in the fight against segregation. However, political processes at local level do not always address the problem effectively, and can even make segregation worse. In this case, action at national or even EU level may be necessary to tackle the problem.

The participants emphasised that integrated working and the integration of services are not just important for children, but for the whole family. Some families or communities resist becoming the recipients of services and receiving the benefit of integrated services. Thus, a need exists both for guidance on how to involve such families, and for policies that target specific reasons for such resistance. Evidence shows that the involvement of families in decision making can be an effective way to improve overall participation. In addition, greater participation by Roma children in ECEC should be exploited to improve access to other (health and social) services. The quality and accessibility of ECEC for Roma is more important than for other groups, as is the continuity of services: visiting at home at age 0-3, followed by transition to ECEC services, pre-schools and schools without segregation.

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The participants emphasised that fostering tolerance and “opening minds” is also a broader societal issue, and that education alone may have limited capacity to promote such change. Various stakeholders and sectors, including social policy, the labour market, the integration sector, health policy and others need to work together to ensure equity and inclusion in society. The participation of Roma in academia, research, policy and decision-making contributes to their bridging role between Roma communities and decision-makers.

The main recommendation from this discussion was the need for an overall shift in policies at national and local levels to acknowledge the importance of ECEC in integrated working for inclusive education. Participants called for more evidence on conditions to help implement and test effective policies in different contexts.

Relevant sources

- Bonin, H. (2017). ‘The Potential Economic Benefits of Education of Migrants in the EU’, EENEE report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [Available here](#).
- Vandekerckhove, A.; Hulpia, H.; Huttova, J.; Peeters, J.; Dumitru, D.; Ivan, C.; Rezmoves, S.; Volen, E. (2019). Role and place of ECEC in integrated working, benefiting vulnerable groups such as Roma, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Van Driel, B.; Darmody, M.; Kerzil, J. (2016). ‘Education policies and practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU’, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [Available here](#).

¹⁰ The presentation was based on the report: Cefai, C.; Bartolo P. A.; Cavioni, V.; Downes, P. (2018). *Strengthening Social and Emotional Education as a core curricular area across the EU. A review of the international evidence*, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/AR3_Full-Report_2018.pdf



SESSION 2 - School curricula, learners' experience and democratic participation

Moderator: **Dr Miroslav Beblavý**, Deputy Scientific Coordinator of EENEE and Associate Senior Research Fellow and Head of Unit, CEPS

Discussants:

- **Ms Janet Looney**, Director of the Institute of Education and Social Policy and joint editor of the *European Journal of Education*
- **Mr Marco Daniele**, Vice-President and External Relations Director, European Students' Forum (AEGEE)

The school environment influences the ways in which young people's values are formed. It operates as the initial environment in which learners experience democratic participation for the first time. During this group session, there were two presentations addressing complementary issues on the topic of soft skills. The first presentation focused on social and emotional education (SEE), while the second discussed civics education and civic skills. Speakers were quick to point out that even though these areas touch in part and are often confused, they are not the same.

Strengthening social and emotional education as a core curricular area across the EU¹⁰

Prof Carmel Cefai, Director of the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, Professor at the University of Malta and Member of NESET II.

Analysis of the literature shows that SEE results in an improvement in social and emotional (SE) competences, as well as in pro-social attitudes and behaviour, and a decrease in expressions of anti-social behaviour, delinquency, anxiety and depression. In addition, although schools argue that they do not have enough time for SE learning as they need to devote it to academic skills, researchers have showed that children who are more socio-emotionally skilled generate better results in academic subjects as well. SEE was concluded to be effective across the school age range but especially during early years, and across geographical settings (urban/rural) and ethnicities.

Following on from their positive finding concerning SEE, the authors of the report developed a holistic framework to ensure the effectiveness of SEE, encompassing:

- Balanced curriculum (SEE should be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum as well as integrated in the other academic subjects)
- Supportive classroom and school climate (teachers need professional development to improve their own relational and cultural competences, and to help create positive learning environments)
- Early-age intervention
- Active children's voice in learning
- Active engagement of parents
- Improving staff competences and wellbeing through education and support
- Targeted interventions (children with additional SE needs should receive extra support)
- Implementation of quality measures
- Qualitative adaptation of curricula to ensure they are culturally sensitive.

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Civics for common values

Prof George Psacharopoulos, Professor, Georgetown University, USA

Among the benefits of civic behaviour, Prof Psacharopoulos indicated political engagement and voting, respect for the law, lower criminality, better institutions, environmental awareness, trust, delegation, volunteerism, social entrepreneurship and productivity. In particular, he emphasised the benefits of increased trust, which reduce transaction costs, promote delegation and reduce the need for monitoring and policing.

The author also indicated three main determinants for instilling common values: (1) socioeconomic background; (2) civics as a specific subject in the school curriculum; and (3) tacitly absorbing values from subjects in the general school curriculum. Prof Psacharopoulos concluded that fixing problems in the general education system – e.g. improving its quality and reducing early school leaving – would induce civic behaviour and promote common values.

Highlights from the discussion

The discussion began with Ms Janet Looney pointing out that the papers were linked by a shared emphasis that although schools admit SE and civics education are important, they claim not to have enough time for them. In addition, she noted a number of other issues related to the teaching of these competences. A trend exists in the EU to involve education stakeholders in answering methodological questions about teaching, particularly when educators are required to instil competences that are very difficult to teach. Thus, one of the biggest concerns is how to prepare the teachers.

In addition, both speakers and audience noted that the fact that SE competences are not assessed internationally (and most of the time, not at a national level either) is also one of the reasons why these skills are considered less important. It was acknowledged, however, that assessing them would raise questions as to how to do so. Here, the importance was noted of not repeating the mistakes made with cognitive subjects (notably, comparing student to student). Self-assessment tools were mentioned as potential options, as well as evaluating children's persistence in "trying to learn".

SE and civic skills should be seen as supporting the learning experience and cognitive learning. This link is beneficial at both the individual level (for student outcomes) and the societal level (the financial advantage of spending money in prevention, rather than addressing problems arising from criminality, mental health problems, unemployment and social exclusion among others). The suggestion was raised of teaching these skills through general education subjects rather than a topic-specific subject, while some defended a combination of both topic-specific and integration into general education.

The session also benefited from the presence of student representative Mr Marco Daniele, who brought to the discussion issues such as mental health; the holistic approach to education (acquiring the skills needed to be an adult); the importance of extra-curriculum activities such as volunteering; and the role and importance of non-formal education. He pointed out that non-formal education is usually more accessible and flexible, and takes a different approach from the teaching and learning experience. While he agreed that non-formal education cannot be the only answer, he maintained it offers tools that could perhaps be integrated into formal systems. Mr Daniele suggested two options for cooperation between formal and non-formal systems: a situation in which non-formal education trainers are integrated into schools, or the possibility of teachers from the formal education system learning non-formal education methods.



Relevant sources

- Cefai, C.; Bartolo, P.A.; Cavioni., V; Downes, P. (2018). 'Strengthening Social and Emotional Education as a core curricular area across the EU. A review of the international evidence', NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [Available here.](#)
- Golubeva, I. (2018). 'The links between education and active citizenship/civic engagement', NESET II Ad hoc report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [Available here.](#)
- Psacharopoulos, G. (2018). 'Education for a better citizen: An assessment', EENEE Analytical Report No. 35, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [Available here.](#)

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SESSION 3 – EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Moderator: **Dr Mehtap Akgüç**, Research Fellow at CEPS

Discussants:

- **Mr Eduardo Nadal**, Programme Manager, ETUCE
- **Mr Frank Mockler**, Head of Programme Standards at the ECDL Foundation

Technology is changing the way we learn, as well as what and how we teach. Moreover, technology has major implications for politics and civic engagement. This session looked at the ways in which technology has impacted civic engagement, and the role of education in promoting the use of technology to enable higher democratic participation. The session covered both positive and negative aspects of the links between technology and education and, as far as possible, discussed the solutions arising from this link.

Teaching media literacy in Europe: evidence of effective school practices in primary and secondary education

Prof Julian McDougall, Professor and Head of the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice at Bournemouth University, UK, and Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

Media literacy education (MLE) is still in a fragmented state across schools in Europe: it is not taught as a standalone, mandatory school subject in any EU country – and most states have not adopted a media education curriculum. Nevertheless, in the current context of the spread of disinformation and ‘fake news’, children (and all citizens) need to develop proper competences to navigate these fast-changing environments. Research shows that education in media literacy (ML) can have positive outcomes on students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes in analysing and critically understanding the media and disinformation. Teaching and learning practices for media literacy education can involve various classroom-based methods (e.g. active inquiry, discussion-based learning, collaborative learning and educational leadership, game-based learning, etc.). However, there is also an urgent need for action from the Member States via:

- Developing dynamic and holistic ML curriculum
- Investing in research into good practices for the teaching of ML to build resilience to disinformation
- Defining and adopting a clear connection between media and digital literacy (DL) policy, curricula and teacher education
- Investing in large-scale collaboration initiatives between media literacy educators, data analysts, social media platforms, journalists and NGOs
- Bringing the best practices of short-term, small-scale media literacy partnership projects into the formal school curriculum for all students
- Supporting the inclusion of media literacy competences in the next OECD PISA evaluation criteria



Education outcomes enhanced by the use of digital technology

Prof Gráinne Conole, Head of Open Education, National Institute for Digital Learning, Dublin City University

In the context of the increasing presence of digital technologies in education, some important questions arise: how does digital technology enhance teaching and learning? What are the enablers for the successful use of digital technology? What are the implications for policy and transformative curriculum reforms? Technologies are reshaping the way we acquire skills – we are moving from remembering knowledge to thinking critically. The millennial generation are forced to become adaptive learners in the face of fast-paced change. This has brought new forms of learning, such as Open Education Resources (OERs) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which mix technology with formal education and revise the roles of teachers and learners. Technologies has enabled many benefits in teaching and learning, from better interaction and communication, to help with retention, higher engagement, providing timely and targeted feedback and personalised learning experience. However, because technology is not a single entity, no single all-encompassing answer can be provided to the question of its impact on educational outcomes.

To exploit the potential of technology in education, some things should be kept in mind. These include:

- Digital learning ecology is complex, thus further research is needed to understand its complexity
- There is a need to understand affordances and how they support pedagogy
- Learning support needs to match learners' needs and the context of learning
- Assessment needs to support deep learning that is purposeful, active, authentic and meaningful
- Targeted and authentic Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) is needed, as teachers' mindsets mediate technology implementation
- Impact of leadership and institutional cultures – need to align with factors for the successful update of digital technology
- Refocus and change mindsets from education *in* change to education *for* change

Highlights from the discussion

Mr Eduardo Nadal began the discussion by underlining that the concept of digital citizenship varies widely across Europe. He also highlighted the importance of reaching rural/disadvantaged areas with ICT; increasing digital literacy / media literacy education; supporting ML and breaching the digital divide; and promoting ICT-critical thinking and digital citizenship. Prof Conole also reminded the room of a big issue with digital learning and social inclusion: despite the rhetoric, the majority of MOOCs are taken by people who are already well-educated.

Mr Frank Mockler was interested in how to make space for teaching DL and ML in an already very busy curriculum. He also commented on the concept of dynamic literacies, and noted that while literacy is changing, shifting, it is hard in practice for stakeholders to design and adapt their programmes. Speakers said that it is important to make use of vast exposure to media and understand that the more people read, the more critically literate they will become. Thus, teachers should not try to discourage young people from using their phones. A more effective way to teach dynamic literacies is by working with them, in school or family contexts. One should allow young people to use their experiential expertise and combine it with teachers'/educators' critical thinking. Evidence shows that more time on screen can be useful, but it is important to have this time together.

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A large part of the discussion focused on teacher training, including questions about what kind of training should teachers receive to feel confident in using ICT in learning, and how to effectively support teachers to implement MLE practices. Based on a schools' survey on ICT in education in Europe, most teachers are developing their digital competences on their own, in their free time. While there is no evidence of growing professional networks, Teaching & Learning Collaboratives (TLCs) were noted. The speakers responded to these concerns, suggesting to reward teachers and incentivise their proactive learning. Evidence was also noted of teachers training in DL competences relating to e-safety, technical competences, plagiarism, etc. However, the cultural dimension was missing from training, which is problematic, since pedagogical and socio-emotional aspects are important as a complement to the teaching process (with ICT coming in addition).

Remarks were also made about competence frameworks such as DigComp, and their role in the context of fast-changing skills and teaching practices. The concern was whether these frameworks can fossilise or restrict learning developments. Speakers noted that frameworks are useful in designing school curricula, and can influence teaching and learning. The latest NESET II report on media literacy shows that competence frameworks start with competences for accessing media, and end with agency, which shows that competences can help in putting frameworks into action.

Finally, policy approaches to tackle disinformation were considered. Prof McDougall stated that engaging partnerships between media organisations and education (often through project funding) has been proven to be effective. The EU has been the most prolific supporter of such projects. Prof Conole added that the sustainability of ML projects is crucial, and can be a condition for funding support (Ireland, for instance, has a project selection criterion concerning sustainability).

Relevant sources

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- McDougall, J.; Zezulkova, M.; van Driel, B.; Sternadel, D. (2018). 'Teaching media literacy in Europe: evidence of effective school practices in primary and secondary education', NESET II report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [Available here](#).



CLOSING PLENARY

Panellists:

- **Dr Dragana Avramov**, Scientific Coordinator of NESET II and Director of PSPC (Population and Social Policy Consultants)
- **Dr Miroslav Beblavý**, Deputy Scientific Coordinator of EENEE and Associate Senior Research Fellow and Head of Unit, CEPS
- **Mr Jan Pakulski**, Head of Unit, Evidence-Based Policy and Evaluation, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
- **Ms Janet Looney**, Director of the Institute of Education and Social Policy and the joint editor of the European Journal of Education

Relevance of fostering common European values

Historically, countries have based their education systems on their values and the directions of progress the societies wished to achieve. Although plurality is good and necessary for democracy, if one describes the European Union as a project, at least some values are required – otherwise the project will lose its meaning. Europe needs to have some conversation about values in order to move forward. Thus, the important question that remains to be solved is what, and how much, national policy agendas can do to foster civic societies.

Takeaways from the conference

The panellists and the audience reflected on the key messages from the conference. Some more general remarks included the need for more data on what different generations think about Europe and its values; what overall direction the EU is moving in, in terms of values; and what effect civic education has.

Others highlighted more precise takeaways, such as different approaches to civics, and to social and emotional (SE) education in different European countries. Although Member States share an understanding that it is important to teach these skills, significant variation exists between countries in terms of the teaching time devoted to civic education.

Differences among the Member States were also seen when discussing the practices and space dimension of integration. An important question was raised as to how well integration works in different spaces, bearing in mind the engagement of various stakeholders: parents, educators and local authorities. At this moment in time, initiatives work better in some European geographic spaces when they come from the EU; however, in other parts of Europe local initiatives might work better and offer greater potential to be scaled up. This in turn underlines the importance of adapting approaches to integration initiatives in different countries.

STRENGTHENING COMMON EUROPEAN VALUES THROUGH EDUCATION

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE TELL US?

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Brussels, 22 November 2018

Issues to be addressed in the future

The European Union faces several challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure effective practices to strengthen common European values.

One of the issues highlighted is a lack of freedom in education to choose what one wants to study. For example, gender education was recently banned as a university programme in Hungary. Although trust was mentioned as one of the emphasised common values during the group sessions, examples such as this raise doubts as to whether some institutions deserve to be trusted.

Participants also noted that education systems lack a more holistic approach to the EU market. It is important to think about what happens to students after education, and how schools can equip youth for better outcomes.

The relationship of education to the overall EU market can also be seen from another angle: after the economic crisis, many sectors blamed the EU for ineffective management of the crisis, for unemployment and other economic difficulties. In Spain and other countries, the crisis touched many families – leading to negative associations with European values in some students' minds. In this context, it is ineffective to talk about common European values for people who want *less Europe*. In addition, controversy exists when discussing values of tolerance, trust and freedom while little is done to address exclusion, discrimination, sexism etc. Thus, in some spaces it may be more important to first address these problems, rather than to talk about values. However, many of these issues relate not to facts but to what people perceive, and what messages they receive from national politicians – which cannot be controlled at the EU level.

Another less controllable – and thus, highly important – issue, is the way in which digital technologies are reshaping and amplifying non-formal education. While it offers many benefits, technology also brings drawbacks. Children are learning through uncontrolled and one-sided sources: websites usually operate on the basis of algorithms that display content according to what the user has already shown they liked, rather than offering different perspectives on certain issues. This leaves education stakeholders unable to ensure good education outcomes for all.

The closing plenary session and overall conference was concluded by Mr Pakulski's final comment, which provided a set of recommendations for the way forward:

- Promote active citizenship and ethics education
- Enhance critical thinking and media literacy
- Use existing structures, or develop new ones, to promote the active participation in schools of teachers, parents, students and the wider community
- Supporting opportunities for young people's democratic participation and an active, critically aware and responsible community engagement.

The recommendations, taken from the *Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching*, encompassed the evidence presented and topics discussed during the conference. Mr Pakulski also noted that, as part of fostering common European values through education, further steps should be taken towards examining the way we train teachers to transmit these values. In particular, emphasis should be given to: (a) how well-equipped teachers are to integrate children from various backgrounds; and (b) teacher training in ICT.



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the Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training (**NESET II**)
<http://nesetweb.eu>



the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (**EENEE**)
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