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2018/0007 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

**on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of
teaching**

{SWD(2018) 13 final}

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

• Reasons for and objectives of the proposal

As President Juncker emphasised in his 2017 State of the Union address ‘*Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than the euro. It was always about values*’¹. As stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, ‘*The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail*’.

These common values are the bedrock of our national democracies and a reflection of who we are. In addition, they form the fabric of our Union that has bound countries, communities and people together in a unique political project, enabling Europe's longest period of peace. This has spanned from overcoming Europe's deepest divisions immediately after World War Two to Europe's reunification with Central and Eastern European countries after 1989. A peaceful, social and democratic Union is built on these values, which are not only valid within Europe, but are those that represent the Union in the world.

As highlighted in the Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe, “*by global standards, European societies are prosperous and affluent places to live. They have the highest levels of social protection in the world and rank highly in terms of wellbeing, human development and quality of life*”². Yet, although the Union is experiencing strong growth and unemployment is at its lowest level since 2009, when asked about the future, many express anxiety and concern, in particular for future generations. The Union and its Member States are faced with a variety of challenges, including populism, xenophobia, divisive nationalism, discrimination, the spreading of fake news and misinformation, as well as the challenge of radicalisation. These phenomena could pose a serious threat to the foundations of our democracies, undermine trust in the rule of law and democratic institutions, and hinder a common sense of belonging within and amongst our European societies

Our democracy can only function if it is legitimate in the eyes of the citizens it serves, both nationally and for the Union as a whole. There are worrying signs that the necessary knowledge of our common values and of the role of national and European democracy is not embedded enough, which risk leading to their erosion and challenges the cohesion of our societies in Member States as well as at the EU level. The promotion of these common values embedded in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union is vital to strengthen our national democracies and bolster our Union.

High quality and inclusive education and training, at all levels, is essential in ensuring social mobility and inclusion, in offering our citizens knowledge and skills to succeed in the labour market, but also in promoting the competences of critical thinking and a deeper understanding of our common values.

¹ State of the Union Speech, 13 September, 2017 — https://ec.europa.eu/commission/state-union-2017_en.

² See the Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe, COM/2017/0206 final, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reflection-paper-social-dimension-europe_en.pdf

In some Member States, education includes national civic instruction. This may include instruction on the reasons why Member States have chosen to voluntarily cooperate and integrate in a European Union. A lack of awareness of the EU's origins, the reasons for its creation and its basic functioning favours misinformation and prevents the formation of informed opinions on its actions. Moreover, knowledge about the social, religious and cultural diversity, and the heritage, traditions and political realities of one's own country, of other Member States and of other countries in the world, is essential for mutual respect, understanding and cooperation within and amongst Member States and with the world at large.

This will help safeguard democracy at all levels and in turn, contribute to a common sense of belonging at the European level.

This Recommendation is built on four objectives: promoting common values at all levels of education; fostering more inclusive education; encouraging a European dimension of teaching, without prejudice to the national prerogatives in this realm; as well as supporting teachers and teaching. It encourages Member States and the Commission to share good practice and information; and to develop policies at both national and EU levels. The commitments for Member States are of a voluntary nature and each Member State decides the approach to take in implementing them.

To achieve those aims and support Member States in their endeavour, the Commission will take steps to increase virtual exchanges among schools, notably through the e-Twinning network, and boost school mobility under the Erasmus+ programme. The European Structural and Investment funds can help to support teacher training or fund infrastructure that enables inclusive education.

• **Background**

The present Recommendation builds upon the Paris [*Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*](#) adopted at an informal ministerial meeting held in Paris on 17 March 2015. In the Paris Declaration, education ministers called for actions at all levels of government to reinforce the role of education in promoting citizenship and common values, strengthening social cohesion and helping young people become responsible, open-minded and active members of our diverse and inclusive societies³. They also identified four overarching objectives for cooperation at EU level:

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

³ Paris Declaration, 17th March, 2015 - http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20150316-paris-education_en.

This Recommendation also continues work set out in the Commission *Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism*⁴ that was adopted in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Europe. It underlined the important role that education plays in helping to identify and safeguard young people at risk of radicalisation and in helping to address its root causes.

Furthermore, the [Declaration of Rome](#)⁵ of 25 March 2017 asserts that the Union should be one in which *'young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent'* and which *'preserves Europe's cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity.'*

In the [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#)⁶ the Commission highlights the role of values in helping create a shared history in that *'the sacrifice of previous generations should never be forgotten. Human dignity, freedom and democracy were hard-earned and can never be relinquished. Even if the attachment to peace is not one that all of today's Europeans can relate to in the same way as their parents or grandparents, these core values continue to bind us together.'* This notion is further underscored by the idea that 70 years of lasting peace is a testimony to our shared values and mutual understanding.

The Commission recalled in its [Reflection Paper on Harnessing globalisation](#)⁷ that *'equal access to high-quality education and training is a powerful way of redistributing wealth in a society. This should start with a high standard of basic education and access at all ages to training and skills'*.

Ahead of the Leaders' Agenda discussion on education and culture held in November 2017 in Gothenburg, the Commission published as its input to the discussion the Communication on ['Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture'](#)⁸. The text stresses that *'it is in the shared interest of all Member States to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as a means to experience European identity in all its diversity.'*

- **Consistency with existing provisions in the policy area**

In addition to the above initiatives, the 2015 [Joint Report](#) of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)⁹ states that *'Education and training have an important role in ensuring that the human and civic values we share are safeguarded and passed on to future generations, to promote freedom of thought and expression, social inclusion and respect for others, as well as to prevent and tackle discrimination in all its forms'* and, furthermore, proposed *'inclusive education, equality, equity, non-discrimination and the promotion of civic competences'* as a new priority area for European cooperation in education and training.

⁴ Commission Communication on supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism; COM(2016) 379 final.

⁵ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/rome-declaration#>

⁶ White Paper on the Future of Europe Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025 (COM 2017(2025) final)

⁷ Reflection paper on harnessing globalisation, 10th May, 2017 - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/reflection-paper-harnessing-globalisation_en.

⁸ Commission Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture; COM(2017) 673 final

⁹ Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) New priorities for European cooperation in education and training (OJ C 417, 15.12.2015)

The Commission has implemented a wide range of specific measures and actions. This includes the setting up of the ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting citizenship and common values; the organisation of a ‘role models’ initiative of individuals who engage in activities to promote social inclusion and prevent exclusion and radicalisation; a tool kit for youth workers and youth organisations working with young people at risk of marginalisation; a European Award for Social Inclusion through Sport; and making available over EUR 400 million in funding annually through Erasmus+ for transnational partnerships to develop innovative policy approaches and practices at grass-root level, prioritising social inclusion, the promotion of common values and intercultural understanding.

Moreover, in the Investing in Europe’s Youth package¹⁰ the Commission set out its strategy for high quality, inclusive and future-oriented education with specific initiatives. In this context the Commission proposed actions related to inclusive education and the promotion of common values including the continued professional development of teachers, the further development of the European Toolkit for Schools as well as the use of Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 funds to promote good practices in the area of inclusive learning.

Other initiatives related to this Recommendation are:

- The 2013 Commission Recommendation [Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage](#)¹¹ which underlined the need to provide quality early childhood education and care and improve education systems’ impact on equal opportunities.
- The 2014 [Council Conclusions on a Work Plan for Culture 2015-2018](#) which prioritise EU policy collaboration on the contribution of culture to social inclusion, building on the commitments to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the European Agenda for Culture.
- The 2016 Council Conclusions on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training, in which Member States agreed that media literacy, critical thinking and digital competences are skills which are preconditions for active participation in democratic life and for enhancing employability and, as such, should be acquired by learners of all ages;
- The 2017 Council Conclusions on [the role of youth work in supporting young people's development](#), in which Member States agreed to strengthen the cooperation, peer learning and exchange with regard to the promotion and development of life skills among young people;
- The 2018 renewed Key Competences Framework for Lifelong Learning¹² which describes civic competences as the ability to act as responsible people and fully participate in civic and social life, based on the understanding of social, economic and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability. The higher prominence given to civic competence in this revision of the Key Competences Framework highlights the role of citizenship, democratic values and human rights in today's increasingly

¹⁰ Commission Communication on Improving and Modernising Education COM(2016)941; Commission Communication on School Development and Excellent Teaching for a Great Start in Life; COM(2017) 248; Commission Communication on a Renewed Agenda for Higher Education; COM(2017) 247

¹¹ Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage; 2013/112/EU

¹² [REFERENCE TO BE ADDED ONCE ADOPTED]

connected global society. It recognises the importance of empowering individuals to act as responsible, active citizens able to contribute to peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies. In this context, media literacy and intercultural skills are further strengthened;

- The [2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) which aims to raise awareness of common history and values and encourage people to explore Europe's rich and diverse cultural heritage;
- The 2016 Commission's [Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals](#)¹³ which highlights that integration is key to the future wellbeing, prosperity and cohesion of European societies, and of common interest to all Member States;
- The 2017 Council Conclusions on building on [the Commission Communication of 12 April 2017 on the protection of children in migration](#), that underlines, the importance of equal, early access to formal, inclusive education including early childhood education and care;
- The 2016 [Council Conclusions on accelerating the process of Roma integration](#), which call on Member States to increase efforts to promote equal access to inclusive mainstream quality education.
- The 2017 Council Conclusions on inclusion [in diversity to achieve a high quality education for all](#), in which Member States agreed to put measures in place to promote a democratic and inclusive school culture, develop measures that allow the early identification and prevention of social exclusion and encourage closer cooperation between education and other relevant areas, such as culture, youth, sports, employment, welfare, security and other channels of work on social inclusion;
- The [European Solidarity Corps](#), which creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe. It brings young people together to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal challenges.
- The Council of Europe's 2016 [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#).

Consistency with other Union policies

The main aim of this Recommendation is to promote common values, inclusive education and a European dimension of teaching. It is complementary to the Commission's ongoing work on implementing the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#)¹⁴ in that the Recommendation further supports *'the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable [everyone] to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.'*

¹³ Commission Communication: Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals; COM(2016) 377 final

¹⁴ Commission Communication on Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights; COM/2017/0250 final

The present Recommendation is also consistent with the aims expressed in the [EU citizenship report 2017](#)¹⁵, where the Commission recognised that continuous efforts are needed to make sure that all EU citizens know their rights and can fully participate in the European democratic process. It stressed that promoting awareness of EU citizenship and the values attached to it among young Europeans reaching voting age and those acquiring the nationality of a Member State, and in society as a whole, requires a joint effort of all actors concerned at all levels — the Member States, including their local and regional authorities, EU institutions and civil society.

2. LEGAL BASIS, SUBSIDIARITY AND PROPORTIONALITY

• Legal basis

The initiative is in conformity with Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Article 165 states that the Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of their education systems. Article 166 states that the Union shall implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training.

The initiative does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments on Member States. Member States will decide, according to their national circumstances, how they implement the Council Recommendation.

• Subsidiarity (for non-exclusive competence)

While many Member States have put into practice various actions to support inclusive education systems and promote common values at the national level, more cooperation is needed at the European level.

The added value of action at EU level lies in the ability of the EU to:

- promote a common understanding as to the importance of common values;
- support the work of the Member States in order to implement actions at national and regional level to promote common values;
- fund mobility and twinning initiatives and other transnational projects;
- facilitate sharing of knowledge, expertise and good practice.

• Proportionality

The proposal reinforces a common understanding of values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching by demonstrating how they can be promoted through education. It allows Member States and the Commission to share good practice and information and to develop policies at both national and EU levels. As the commitments Member States will make are of a voluntary nature and each Member State decides the approach to take in implementing actions aimed at promoting common values, inclusive education and a European dimension in teaching, the measure is considered proportionate.

¹⁵ Commission Report on Strengthening Citizens' Rights in a Union of Democratic Change EU Citizenship Report 2017; COM/2017/030 final

- **Choice of the instrument**

A Council Recommendation is an appropriate instrument within the field of education and training, where the EU has a supporting competence and is an instrument that has been frequently used for European action in the areas of education and training. As a legal instrument, it signals the commitment of Member States to the measures within the text and provides a stronger political basis for cooperation in this area, while fully respecting Member State competence in the fields of education and training.

3. RESULTS OF EX-POST EVALUATIONS, STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- **Ex-post evaluations/fitness checks of existing legislation**

Not applicable.

- **Stakeholder consultations**

An online public consultation was launched on 19 May 2017 and came to a close on 11 August 2017. In total, **1 124 responses** were received, including over 200 position papers, which illustrated great interest in the initiative. The responses revealed virtually unanimous agreement (95 %) on the role of education in helping young people ‘understand the importance of and adhere to shared values’ and that the EU should help Member States in this task (98 %). The results of the consultation are available [online](#).

Key findings from the consultation included:

- The majority of the **respondents (62.6%) believe that education already plays a strong** role in helping young people to understand the importance of and adhere to shared values, but a significant share, almost **40% of respondents, think education could do more;**
- Almost all respondents (98%) agreed on the need to **promote inclusive education** that addresses the needs of all learners while only 16% felt that education was currently doing this. Great overall support was expressed for the EU tools. EU funding (93.3%), support to cooperation between schools and universities to promote innovation and modernisation (91.6%), student learning mobility (91.5%) and short-term exchanges for pupils in schools (88.2%) are seen as the most effective ones;
- Almost all respondents (93.2%) considered it important or very important for people to **increase their understanding of the EU’s** and other Member States’ history, culture and values in order to fully understand their role as responsible and active member of European societies.

In addition, a wide range of consultative meetings and events were held:

Meetings gathering Member States' input include: Meeting of the High-Level Group (senior education ministry officials) on 15-16 June 2017 (Estonia); and three Directors Generals' meetings: Higher Education meeting, 13-14 March 2016; and Schools meetings, 10-11 April 2016 (Malta) and 18-19 September 2017 (Estonia);

Events where input from stakeholders have been gathered include: the Jean Monnet conference, 15 November 2015¹⁶; a colloquium hosted by First-Vice President Timmermans in cooperation with Commissioners Jourová and Oettinger on media and democracy, including the role of ethical journalism and of media literacy for democracy and pluralistic societies¹⁷; Commission high-level dialogues with religious and non-confessional organisations dedicated in 2016 to integration and European values; a colloquium hosted by Commissioner Navracsics on Promoting Inclusion and Fundamental Values through Education, 26 May 2016¹⁸; and European Education, Training and Youth Forum¹⁹ and a dedicated meeting with civil society²⁰, 19-21 October 2016; Civil society organisations were also consulted in a dedicated participatory seminar in December 2015 and social partners and youth organisations in January 2016. Finally, the Recommendation delivers on the Conclusions of the 2015 Commission's Colloquium on Fundamental Rights devoted to preventing and countering anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hatred, including through education²¹.

Participants in the above-mentioned meetings expressed strong support and interest in exploring how inclusive education can help promote common values and the role that the European Union can play in this regard.

The ET2020 Working Group on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education held a series of peer-learning activities on these issues. Key messages from these peer learning activities included²²:

- Education should go beyond equal opportunities to ensure inclusion of a diverse range of learners and progress towards real educational equity;
- Values need to be experienced by students and educators. Values need to be lived not taught; democratic values need to happen in the classroom, through project-based learning for instance, and schools need to embrace active participation by students, parents, teachers and the wider community, in what is referred to as the "whole school approach";
- There should be more focus on value-based actions in the community for children at risk of exclusion; i.e. not only for early school leavers, but also for those who are suspended or expelled from one or more schools and marginalised. There were also calls for more support, including financial, for second/third chance initiatives, one-on-one learning adapted to individual needs, and mentoring for marginalised and excluded children.

¹⁶ See details at http://ec.europa.eu/education/events/20151109-jean-monnet-conference_en

¹⁷ See conclusions at http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2016-50/2016-fundamental-colloquium-conclusions_40602.pdf

¹⁸ See report at http://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/201605-colloquium-report-radicalisation_en.pdf

¹⁹ See report at https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/flash-report-ety-forum-2016_en.pdf

²⁰ See report at https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/flash-report-cso-day-2016_en.pdf

²¹ See conclusions at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/colloquium-fundamental-rights-2015/files/fundamental_rights_colloquium_conclusions_en.pdf

²² See key messages from peer learning activities on critical thinking and media literacy, social and civic competences, inclusive education and teacher education at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/citizenship-common-values_en

- **Collection and use of expertise**

This proposal is based on a wide range of reports and studies as well as expertise gathered through peer learning activities and meetings of the ET2020 Working Group on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

The work of the [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#)²³ aims to ensure equity, equal opportunities and the rights for all learners, in particular those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion, such as students with disabilities and/or special educational needs. This agency contributes to EU policy making through its various reports and publications, including on early childhood education, early school leaving among learners with special educational needs and empowering teachers to promote inclusive education.

The work of the [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#), which has a specific task of providing independent, evidence-based advice on fundamental rights and of communicating and raising awareness of fundamental rights, with a view to ensuring that the rights of people living in the EU are protected.

Evidence gathered from analytical reports by the NESET II academic network (Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training)²⁴ concluded that education and training systems that uphold high standards of quality for all, foster personalised, inclusive approaches that involve parents, support early intervention, and target disadvantaged learners, especially in mainstream education, can be powerful drivers of social inclusion. Similarly, the NESET II network highlighted that bullying is an affront to the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination and provided an overview of the most effective strategies and practices for preventing bullying and violence in schools across the EU²⁵.

The Eurydice report on ‘[Citizenship Education at School in Europe](#)’ (2017), carried out on behalf of the Commission, examined how citizenship education can be used to create engaging and interactive learning environments through the use of innovative pedagogies to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes young people need to become active citizens.

The [Education and Training Monitor](#) (2017) also underscored the need to make education systems more inclusive as students’ educational attainment largely depends on their socio-economic backgrounds.

As concerns the ET 2020 Working Group and its dedicated peer learning activities key messages worth noting within the context of this Recommendation include:

²³ This Agency is an independent organisation that acts as a platform of collaboration for the ministries of education of the EU Member States. Its main aim is to help them improve their educational policies and practice, through evidence based information and suggesting the implementation of inclusive based education policies. The Agency is funded through Erasmus+ funds and contributions from national ministries, 27 Member States as well as Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are members of the Agency.

²⁴ [Policy and Practices for Equality and Inclusion In and Through Education: Evidence and policy guidance from European research projects funded under FP6 and FP7](#) (2015) http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AR1_2015.pdf; [Education Policies and Practices to Foster Tolerance, Respect for Diversity and Civic Responsibility in Children and Young People in the EU](#)’ (2016) <http://nesetweb.eu/en/library/education-policies-and-practices-to-foster-tolerance-respect-for-diversity-and-civic-responsibility-in-children-and-young-people-in-the-eu/>

²⁵ [How to Prevent and Tackle Bullying and School Violence: Evidence and Practices for Strategies for Inclusive and Safe Schools](#)’ (2015), http://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AR2_2015.pdf

- Learning institutions should become an integral part of the local community and help foster closer cooperation with civil society, youth organisations, local authorities and the business sector to help educate young people;
- A democratic and inclusive learning culture which values diversity and allows space for dialogue and discussion on controversial issues is essential for socio-emotional learning and acquiring social and civic competences;
- Teachers need to be supported and empowered to manage diversity and develop the social and civic competences of learners, through initial teacher education, continuous professional development, practical tools and ongoing support and guidance.

- **Impact assessment**

Given the complementary approach of the proposed activities to Member State initiatives, their voluntary nature and the scope of the impacts expected, an impact assessment was not necessary and thus not carried out. Rather, development of the proposal was informed by previous studies, consultation of Member States and the public consultation.

- **Regulatory fitness and simplification**

Not applicable.

- **Fundamental rights**

This Recommendation aims to support Member States in their efforts to promote fundamental rights.

4. BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

This initiative will not require additional resources from the EU budget.

The use of EU funding programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens, to help fund individual learning mobility, virtual exchanges, cooperation projects and volunteering activities that serve to promote common values, inclusion and understanding of Europe, will be encouraged, where appropriate. This will be done in line with their legal basis and noting their respective financial capacity.

5. OTHER ELEMENTS

- **Implementation plans and monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements**

This Recommendation will be implemented through continuous collaboration within the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and any successor framework. The actions taken in response to this Recommendation will be subject to regular review through these frameworks, including in the Education and Training Monitor.

- **Explanatory documents (for directives)**

Not applicable.

- **Detailed explanation of the specific provisions of the proposal**

Taking into account the great variety of education systems and while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the proposal identifies a number of recommendations to guide Member States in coming up with the most effective measures to promote common values, provide inclusive education and include a European dimension to teaching in their specific contexts.

With regard to **promoting common values**, the proposal recommends that Member States

- Promote the provision of dedicated citizenship and ethics education;
- Enhance critical thinking and media literacy;
- Encourage active participation of students, parents and teachers in school governance and of young people in their local communities;
- Promote best practices such as those set out in the Council of Europe's Competences for Democratic Culture.

As regards **inclusive education** for all learners, the proposal recommends

- Including all children in education from an early age while supporting students with specific educational needs; offering flexibility in transitions between various educational levels; and ensuring sufficient educational and career guidance;
- Building on the expertise and support of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive education.

On the **European dimension of teaching**, the proposal recommends

- Facilitating learning about the EU and its Member States and promoting participation in mobility and e-twinning initiatives and in projects on the ground.

In order to achieve the above, the proposal recommends that teachers be supported with sufficient initial and ongoing training in civic education and inclusive pedagogies, and be facilitated in participating in exchanges and learning programmes.

The text suggests specific implementing measures that would help Member State authorities to meet these goals.

The proposal also welcomes the Commission's intention to support Member States in meeting the above-mentioned recommendations; including through funding learning mobility, mutual exchanges, cooperation projects, volunteering and youth work; peer learning and exchanges of good practice through the ET2020 framework; and developing the evidence base for policy reforms.

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 165 and 166 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

- (1) Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that ‘The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail’.
- (2) Inspired by these values, the Union has succeeded in bringing countries, communities and people together in a unique political project, enabling Europe's longest period of peace, which in turn has brought about social stability and economic prosperity. Member States' adoption of the values set out in the Treaty creates common ground that makes up the distinct feature of the European way of life and identity and gives the Union its place on the global stage.
- (3) The Union and its Member States are faced with a variety of challenges, including populism, xenophobia, divisive nationalism, discrimination, the spreading of fake news and misinformation, as well as the challenge of radicalisation. These phenomena could pose a serious threat to the foundations of our democracies, undermine trust in the rule of law and democratic institutions, and hinder a common sense of belonging within and amongst our European societies.
- (4) A lack of awareness of the origins of the Union, the reasons for its creation and its basic functioning favours misinformation and prevents the formation of informed opinions on its actions. Knowledge of the diversity of the Union and its Member States supports mutual respect, understanding and cooperation within and amongst Member States
- (5) Education at all levels and from an early age plays a pivotal role in promoting and teaching common values. It helps to ensure social inclusion by providing every child with a fair chance to succeed. It provides opportunities to become active and critically aware citizens, and increases understanding of the European identity.
- (6) At the Leaders' Agenda meeting in November 2017 in Gothenburg, European leaders discussed the importance of education and culture for the future of Europe. Informing this debate, the Commission set out its vision for a European Education Area and proposed a number of initiatives in its Communication on ‘Strengthening European

Identity through Education and Culture²⁶, which states that ‘*strengthening our European identity remains essential and education and culture are the best vectors to ensure this*’.

- (7) One of the objectives of the ET2020 framework for European cooperation in education and training²⁷, namely to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship, has been established on the basis that education should promote intercultural competences, democratic values and respect for fundamental rights, combat all forms of discrimination and racism, and equip young people to interact positively with their peers from diverse backgrounds.
- (8) The Paris Declaration²⁸ adopted on 17 March 2015 by European education ministers indicated the commitment by the Member States to promote common values, enhance critical thinking and media literacy, inclusive education and intercultural dialogue. Responses to an EU-wide public consultation²⁹ clearly show that inclusive education should be promoted. Only 16% of the respondents feel that education is currently achieving this goal; 95% feel that education should help young people understand the importance of common values and that the Union should help Member States in achieving this task (98%).
- (9) A 2017 Eurydice survey on Citizenship Education at School in Europe³⁰ shows that citizenship education is currently in the spotlight in a number of European countries. However, nearly half of the countries still have no policies on including citizenship education in initial teacher training. Therefore, teachers should be supported and empowered through measures to create an open learning culture and deal with diverse learning groups in order to teach civic competences, transmit Europe’s shared heritage, communicate common values and act as role models for learners.
- (10) Radicalisation leading to violent extremism remains an acute problem in several Member States. Promoting common values as a vector of social cohesion and integration, including through education policies, is an integral part of the solution. In order to support Member States in their endeavours, in July 2017, the European Commission established a High Level Group on Radicalisation³¹ to identify support measures, including in education.
- (11) The most recent results of the PISA survey³² and the 2017 Education and Training Monitor³³ emphasise the link between educational inequalities and students’ socio-economic background. PISA data illustrate that students from poorer households are three times more likely to perform worse than their wealthier counterparts and that students of migrant background are more than twice as likely to be low achievers as other students. To prevent the marginalisation of young people, it is vital to have

²⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-strengthening-european-identity-education-culture_en.pdf

²⁷ 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) New priorities for European cooperation in education and training (OJ C 417, 15.12.2015)

²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/results-citizenship-consultation_en.pdf

³⁰ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/6/68/215_EN_Citizenship_2017_N.pdf

³¹ Commission Decision of 27 July 2017 setting up the High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation. JO C252/3, 3.8.2017.

³² <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>

³³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

inclusive and fair education systems that foster cohesive societies and lay the foundations for active citizenship and enhance employability.

- (12) Eurobarometer surveys highlight a remarkably low level of knowledge of the Union. According to a 2014 opinion poll, 44% of people feel that they have limited understanding of how the Union works³⁴ while a 2011 survey shows that a relative majority feel they are not well informed about the European Union³⁵. The same study also revealed that a third of people do not know exactly how many Member States there are in the Union³⁶. Finally, the most recent Eurobarometer survey³⁷ highlights that 35% of respondents consider comparable education standards to be the most helpful for the future of Europe.
- (13) Against this background, it is of the essence that Member States step up their efforts to further implement all the objectives of the 2015 Paris Declaration. It is particularly important to continue promote common values as vectors of cohesion and inclusion, favour the implementation of participatory learning environments at all levels of education, improve training for teachers on citizenship and diversity and enhance the media literacy and critical thinking skills of all learners.
- (14) Ensuring effective equal access to quality inclusive education for all learners, including those of migrant origins, those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and those with special needs is indispensable for achieving more cohesive societies. In this endeavour, Member States could benefit from existing Union instruments, notably Erasmus+, the European Structural and Investment Funds, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, the European Solidarity Corps and Horizon 2020, as well as the guidance and expertise of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.
- (15) The Erasmus+ programme shows that mobility and cross-border contacts are the most efficient way to experience European identity. It is essential that all categories of learners benefit equally from the opportunities offered by this programme; notably through school exchanges between Member States. Virtual mobility, especially through the e-Twinning network, is an excellent tool to enable direct contact between pupils, and shall be used on a larger scale in the following years, and in combination with physical mobility.
- (16) Introducing a European dimension to teaching should aim to help learners experience European identity in all its diversity and strengthen a European sense of belonging complementing their local, regional and national identities and traditions. It is also important for promoting a better understanding of the Union as well as an understanding of its Member States.

³⁴ Standard Eurobarometer 81 Spring 2014, p. 117
http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_publ_en.pdf

³⁵ Standard Eurobarometer 75 Spring 2011, p. 48.
http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb75/eb75_publ_en.pdf

³⁶ Standard Eurobarometer 75 Spring 2011, p. 50.
http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb75/eb75_publ_en.pdf

³⁷ Special Eurobarometer 467, Autumn 2017, p 6: "*The majority think comparable living standards would be most helpful for the future of Europe (52%), and more than one third mention comparable education standards (35%)*",
<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2179>)

- (17) This Recommendation fully respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The content of this Recommendation is without prejudice to existing national initiatives in these fields, notably in national civic education.

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION

The Member States should:

Promotion of common values

1. increase the sharing of the common values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union from an early age and at all levels of education to strengthen social cohesion and a common sense of belonging at local, regional, national and Union level.
2. continue to implement the commitments of the Paris Declaration, notably through:
 - (a) promoting citizenship and ethics education as well as an open classroom climate to foster tolerant and democratic attitudes;
 - (b) enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the internet and social media, so as to raise awareness of risks related to the reliability of information sources and to help exercise sound judgment;
 - (c) developing structures that promote the active participation of teachers, parents, students and the wider community in school governance; and
 - (d) supporting opportunities for young people's democratic participation and an active and responsible community engagement.
3. make effective use of existing tools to promote citizenship education, notably the Council of Europe's Competences for Democratic Culture framework³⁸.

Provision of inclusive education

4. promote inclusive education for all learners, notably by:
 - (a) including all pupils in quality education from an early age onwards;
 - (b) providing the necessary support to pupils and students according to their needs, including those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, those from a migrant background, those with special educational needs and the most talented learners;
 - (c) facilitating the transition between various educational levels and enabling the provision of adequate educational and career guidance.
5. make effective use of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education³⁹ to implement and monitor successful inclusive approaches in their education systems.

Promotion of a European dimension of teaching;

6. promote a European dimension of teaching by encouraging:
 - (a) an understanding of the European context and common heritage and awareness of the diversity of the Member States of the Union;
 - (b) an understanding of the origins and functioning of the Union;

³⁸ Competences for democratic culture - Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies , (2016), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture>

³⁹ As set out Article 10 of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport,

- (c) the participation of students and teachers in the e-Twinning network and in cross-border mobility, especially for schools;
- (d) projects on the ground to raise awareness of the European Union in education centres, notably through direct interaction with young people.

Support teachers and teaching

- 7. Enable teachers, school leaders and academic staff to promote common values and deliver inclusive education, through:
 - (a) measures to empower teachers, school leaders and academic staff helping them convey common values, and promote active citizenship while transmitting a sense of belonging and responding to the diverse needs of learners; and
 - (b) promoting exchanges and peer learning programmes as well as guidance and mentoring for teachers and academic staff.

Implementing measures

- 8. Review, and where necessary amend, existing policies and practices in the field of education, training and non-formal learning with a view to acting on these recommendations;
- 9. Identify gaps and enhance public engagement, consultation and data collection with a view to improving evidence-based policy making on the social and civic dimensions of education and training;
- 10. Continue collaborating in EU strategic cooperation frameworks in the fields of education and training, youth, sport and culture through peer learning and exchange of good practices with a view to promoting common values;
- 11. Make effective use of EU funding instruments, in particular Erasmus+, European Structural and Investment Funds, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme and Horizon 2020 with a view to implementing these recommendations.

WELCOMES THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO:

12. support the Member States in implementing the provisions of this Recommendation through the available tools and funding instruments, particularly through school mobility and the e-Twinning network;
13. support national and regional policy reforms and practice improvements through the ET2020 framework for European cooperation in education and training and any successor framework;
14. develop and regularly review practical reference tools and guidance documents for policymakers and practitioners and support research and stakeholder engagement to fill knowledge gaps;
15. assess and evaluate the action taken in response to this Recommendation, in particular through the ET2020 framework, including the Education and Training Monitor.

Done at Brussels,

*For the Council
The President*