



**European Committee
of the Regions**

SEDEC-VI/033

129th plenary session, 16-17 May 2018

OPINION

Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- supports the general vision of a European Education Area and agrees that education and culture are major factors in making Europe more resilient in the context of accelerating globalisation and current geopolitical trends;
- suggests that the level of government in charge of setting the education curriculum for schools place additional focus on the cultural and ethnographic aspects of history, with a critical and philosophical analysis of universal values within diversity, and include a section in the curriculum on the European Union;
- calls for the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage to be included in strategic initiatives supporting regional cultural development;
- calls for topics relevant to the digitalisation of society to be given greater prominence, in order to familiarise learners with coding concepts and introduce competences , not only pragmatic but also ethical, critical and analytical in the field of cyber security, social networking and media literacy;
- strongly supports boosting the Erasmus + programme with the aim of doubling the number of participants, reaching out to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2025 and expanding towards lifelong learning and educator mobility;
- strongly supports priority measures to build inclusive and connected higher education systems and calls for particular attention to be given to peripheral universities and those in the outermost regions and to cross-border cooperation. The underlying assumption should be the belief that no university is peripheral and all universities are or should also be regional

Rapporteur:

Tanya HRISTOVA (BG/EPP), Mayor of Gabrovo Municipality

Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture: The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017

COM(2017) 673 final

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

COM(2018) 23 final

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture

I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Recital (2)

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|---|---|
| (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. | (2) Inspired by these values, the Union has succeeded in bringing countries, <i>their regions, cities and rural areas</i> , 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. |

| <i>Reason</i> |
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| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 2

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Recital (3)

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| (3) The Union <i>and</i> 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. | (3) The Union, its Member States, <i>as well as local and regional authorities</i> , 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 <i>at all levels of governance</i> , undermine trust in the rule of law and democratic institutions, and hinder a common sense of belonging within and amongst our European societies. |

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| Reason |
| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 3

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

Recital (4)

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| | <i>(5) Local and regional authorities have a key role to play in education and culture policies due to their proximity to Europeans, as they are the level of governance perceived the closest to the citizens on the ground. Local and regional authorities need therefore to continue to play a pivotal role in implementing and adapting the proposed measures and reforms, as well as to be included in the early stages of the decision making processes to guarantee an efficient and effective outcome and ensure that the added value of EU education and culture policies are felt on the ground.</i> |

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| Reason |
| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 4

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

Recital (12)

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| | <i>(13) In this context, it is also worth underlining the critical importance of looking into regional disparities and economic and social consequences that arise from skills gaps and mismatches in the EU when designing reforms of the education and training systems.</i> |

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| Reason |
| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 5

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Recital (13)

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| (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. | (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 <i>and equip local and regional authorities with the necessary tools to ensure an efficient implementation on the ground.</i> 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. |

| <i>Reason</i> |
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| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 6

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Recital (15)

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| (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. | (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 <i>and within</i> Member States. Virtual mobility, especially through the e-Twinning network, is an excellent tool to enable direct contact between pupils <i>and students</i> , and shall be used on a larger scale in the following years, and in combination with physical mobility. <i>In this context also suggests introducing new and expanding the scope of existing opportunities for cultural mobility.</i> |

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| Reason |
| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 7

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Article 2

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| | 3. make use of the proximity of local and regional authorities to Europe's citizens and the fact that they are best placed strategically to analyse and respond to the specific needs of the various cultural groups in their territory and to lay the groundwork for effective intercultural dialogue and promotion of common values; |

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| Reason |
| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 8

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Article 4

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| 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. | 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 and ensuring that equal opportunities and access to quality education are provided for every student including for those with linguistic, religious, ethnic or other minority backgrounds; (b) providing the necessary support and guidance to pupils and students according to their needs, including those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, those from a migrant background, including refugees who wish to integrate as European Union citizens , those with special educational needs and highest achieving learners; (c) addressing the specific needs of learners in geographically and demographically challenged |

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| | <p><i>EU regions, including those from outermost regions;</i></p> <p><i>(d) facilitating the transition between various educational levels and enabling the provision of adequate educational and career guidance, as well as providing a process of lifelong support and training opportunities for all learners;</i></p> <p><i>(e) providing the necessary support for a stronger role for language learning already in the primary school curricula as language acquisition is not only deemed most effective at an early age, but poor language skills are also considered one of the major obstacles to free movement of people and the creation of a workforce relevant to the needs of the European economy;</i></p> <p><i>(f) enabling young people to acquire and develop additional skills by means of formal and non-formal learning, as this does not only enhance young people's employability by better matching their skills to the needs of the labour market, but also enables them to contribute more actively to solidarity projects and to shape Europe's future.[1]</i></p> <p>---</p> <p><i>[1] CDR 851/2017 - Investing in Europe's youth and the European Solidarity Corps.</i></p> |
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| <i>Reason</i> |
| Further enhancing, in some respects, the focus of the specific educational needs and equal opportunities, while adding the dimension of lifelong guidance and training, as education should not be limited to a certain age of learners. |

Amendment 9

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Article 6

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| 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 | 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 |

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| <p>of the Member States of the Union;</p> <p>b) an understanding of the origins and functioning of the Union;</p> <p>c) the participation of students and teachers in the e-Twinning network and in cross-border mobility, especially for schools;</p> <p>d) projects on the ground to raise awareness of the European Union in education centres, notably through direct interaction with young people.</p> | <p>of the Member States of the Union, <i>including the rich fabric of sub-national structures, so as to foster an understanding of a common European cultural heritage;</i></p> <p>b) an understanding of the origins and functioning of the Union, <i>including their rights as EU citizens;</i></p> <p>c) the participation of students and teachers in the e-Twinning network and in cross-border mobility, especially for schools;</p> <p>d) projects on the ground to raise awareness of the European Union in education centres, notably through direct interaction with young people <i>at local and regional level as the governance level closest to them;</i></p> <p><i>(e) a life-long learning attitude, which includes but is not limited to adult education, that fosters a mindset of continuous inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge and excellence that can be cultivated as early as primary (or pre-primary) education and should be integrated into all stages of education</i></p> <p><i>(f) a stronger focus to be given to topics relevant to the digitalisation of the European society in order to familiarise learners with coding concepts and introduce competences in the field of cyber security and media literacy;</i></p> <p><i>(g) the intention of providing every student in Europe with at least one entrepreneurial experience in order to increase entrepreneurial and project- and inquiry-based learning practices in both formal and informal education.</i></p> |
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| Reason |
| The diversity of sub-national structures in the EU Member States is an essential element of the EU's political and cultural heritage and a key reference point for developing active citizenship based on EU citizenship rights. |

Amendment 10

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

Article 7

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
| Support teachers and teaching | Support teachers and teaching |

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| <p>7. Enable teachers, school leaders and academic staff to promote common values and deliver inclusive education, through:</p> <p>(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; <i>and</i></p> <p>(b) promoting exchanges and peer learning programmes as well as guidance and mentoring for teachers and academic staff.</p> | <p>7. Enable teachers, school leaders and academic staff to promote common values and deliver inclusive education, through:</p> <p>(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;</p> <p>(b) promoting exchanges <i>of best practices</i>, and peer learning programmes as well as guidance and mentoring for teachers and academic staff, <i>as well as mobility via the Erasmus+ programme[1]; and</i></p> <p>(c) <i>promoting measures to facilitate exchanges between teachers and parents/carers in order to strengthen the connections between the school and the family/home environment and to foster a permanent dialogue, which is crucial for learners' successful integration into the school environment and their overall socialisation.</i></p> <p>---</p> <p><i>[1] COR-2017-03139 - SEDEC-VI/029: Modernising school and higher education.</i></p> |
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| <i>Reason</i> |
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Amendment 11

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching
Article 11

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
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| | <p><i>12. Ensure that all public institutions, schools and educational establishments in the EU are equipped with the necessary high-speed broadband infrastructure and digital equipment, in particular those located in geographically, demographically or socially challenged areas, in order to avoid increasing educational and cultural gaps in the digital age.</i></p> |

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| <i>Reason</i> |
| Self-explanatory. |

Amendment 12

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

Article 15

| <i>Text proposed by the Commission</i> | <i>CoR amendment</i> |
|---|---|
| 15. assess and evaluate the action taken in response to this Recommendation, <i>in particular</i> through the ET2020 framework, including the Education and Training Monitor. | 15. assess and evaluate the action taken in response to this Recommendation <i>on an annual basis via the European Semester process and</i> through the ET2020 framework, including the Education and Training Monitor. |

| <i>Reason</i> |
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| Including this dimension into the European Semester process would allow for efficient monitoring and evaluation of advances in the field. |

II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General comments

1. supports the general vision of a European Education Area and agrees that education and culture are major factors in making Europe more resilient in the context of accelerating globalisation and current geopolitical trends;
2. also agrees on the need to foster support for the core set of values on which the European Union is based and to which all EU member states have subscribed upon joining the EU; underlines in this context the importance of the continued and shared commitment to upholding these values as an essential element of European identity, which requires an active European citizenship rooted in the diversity of cultures;
3. emphasises that education and culture have a broad impact on all areas of life and specifically on strengthening society, and so are key tools for bringing about greater cultural integration between Europeans, thereby fostering social inclusion and notes that citizenship education is an essential element in this regard and stresses that awareness-raising about EU citizenship among the general public should be aimed primarily at young people¹;
4. stresses that the primary responsibility for education and culture policies lies with the Member States and with their regional and local authorities and that EU action in line with Article 6 of the TFEU should only complement, support or coordinate the action of Member States and

¹ CDR 1319/2017.

provide regional and local cooperation initiatives in this field. Underlines that any EU action in this area must be fully justified from a subsidiarity and proportionality standpoint;

5. highlights the role of culture as a key shaper of identity, and thus the need to address strengthening European identity through culture in order to sustain the legitimacy of the democratic structures at European level, and thus supports initiatives for mutual awareness and familiarisation among Europeans of the intrinsic value of cultural and artistic expression, in order to strengthen the common cultural components of our European identity;
6. points out that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in education and culture policies due to their proximity to Europeans and insists that they continue to play a pivotal role in implementing and adapting the proposed measures and reforms;
7. considers that as it stands, the proposed measure does not appear to raise any subsidiarity concerns and underlines the importance of upholding the proportionality principle to ensure that no new financial or administrative burdens are generated, while at the same time ensuring a strong financial support for education and cultural heritage policies and programmes in the upcoming MFF;

European agenda

8. agrees with the importance of the key developments listed, pointing out that they are not independent, and calls for research to be carried out into the ways in which they are co-dependent;
9. the importance of the Europe Direct network should be emphasised with regard to awareness and dissemination of the European integration project, as its objectives include that of providing information on the project to EU citizens;
10. fully supports enshrining in the European Pillar of Social Rights a right to education and training as a fundamental social and human entitlement²;

European identity and awareness of cultural heritage

11. stresses the importance of the values of the EU contemplated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights – human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity - in order to achieve the common good, therefore calls for greater inclusiveness, respect of the spiritual and moral heritage of the peoples of Europe and valorisation of initiatives that promote the better living together;
12. restates the importance of focusing attention and resources on awareness and dissemination of European culture, history and identity. To this end, it is proposed that the "Europe for citizens" programme be extended so that a larger number of relevant initiatives can be supported;

² CDR 3141/2017.

13. highlights the importance of citizens' participation in the EU political action and, as it is expressed in the report on "Reaching out to EU Citizens: a new opportunity", stresses the essential role of "the concept of 'community', which embraces the local, regional, national and international contexts that individuals live in to create a common public space, within which individuals can act together on a values-based foundation."³ Therefore, the European identity and shared values should complement existing regional and national notions of belonging in order to promote a multilevel citizenship, as it is provided in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty;
14. reiterates the importance of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage in promoting cultural awareness, as well as and the role of culture both in strengthening European identity and in supporting inclusion;
15. calls out for a stronger engagement with Member States, as well as their regions and cities in order to develop a European vision and promote a higher visibility of EU projects and initiatives, which is currently undermined by an often nationalisation of the successes and Europeanisation of the failures of the EU, as President Juncker stressed in his 2016 State of the Union Address;
16. calls for specific measures to preserve, develop and popularise Europe's traditional arts and crafts, living heritage and history, as well as other cultural and artistic initiatives and activities that form part of the culture of contemporary European society and which foster a shared identity, due to their interactive nature which facilitates learning by doing and cultural engagement;
17. therefore calls for the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage to be included in strategic initiatives supporting regional cultural development, increasing mutual knowledge and opening up new opportunities for sustainable cultural tourism. Such initiatives could be financed by the Creative Europe programme, thereby supporting the dissemination of European cultural heritage beyond 2018;
18. urges that the European Heritage Label be harnessed by this initiative to strengthen European identity, establishing closer ties between the label and the regions, clarifying the selection procedures for new candidate locations for the label, making it more widely known and providing it with effective means of dissemination;
19. suggests introducing new and expanding the scope of existing opportunities for cultural mobility for all regions, including more remote areas such as the outermost and insular regions;
20. underlines that local and regional authorities are best placed strategically to analyse and respond to the specific needs of the various population groups in their territory, to lay the groundwork

³

"Reaching out to EU Citizens: a new opportunity" (p. 10), by Luc Van den Brande, CoR member and President Juncker's Special Adviser on outreach towards citizens (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reaching-out-to-citizens-report_en.pdf)

for effective intercultural dialogue and to boost awareness and facilitate people's access to the shared European culture;

21. emphasises the importance of finding new uses and applications for cultural heritage, developing the cultural and creative industries and ensuring specialist training for those who will work in the cultural sector in the future;
22. highlights the role of culture as an instrument for bringing peoples together, forging cultural and linguistic links. It is also a tool that can encourage political and economic dialogue, as it fosters mutual understanding and builds trust, interest and respect between countries;
23. points to the importance of passing European culture and the values stemming from it on to young Europeans;

Education

24. points out that digitalisation of society in Europe might prove to be – in education too – the EU's most transformative endeavour at present. This is a gradual, multidimensional process which has to develop not only the classroom experience of students of all ages, but also communication, evaluation, governance and administration, data collection and analysis at all stages of education;
25. draws the attention to the effects of the misuse of digital resources, which can become a dangerous propaganda instrument in the hands of anti-democratic forces; welcomes therefore the European Commission Communication on "Tackling online disinformation: a European approach"⁴, which echoes overall the four principles of "transparency, integrity, participation and collaboration", as identified in the Report "Reaching out to EU Citizens: A New Opportunity"⁵;
26. is concerned that, in the Commission's words, "many schools do not yet have access to high-speed connectivity and digital equipment". This is aggravated by the fact that many of these schools are located in regions with demographic, geographical and social challenges – including the insular, remote and outermost regions - and will increase educational gaps rather than decreasing them unless swift measures are taken;
27. highlights that digitalisation introduces additional requirements for teachers in terms of skills and competences and that stakeholders need to prepare the educational workforce timely and appropriately in their education and training; at the same time, points out that this might provide opportunities for innovative teaching methods and interaction;

⁴ COM (2018) 236 final.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/reaching-out-to-citizens-report_en.pdf

28. further cautions that increasing digitalisation also increases the attack surface and the impact of possible cyber threats, which is further aggravated by the critical and private nature of the data that schools collect and operate with;
29. with respect to the previous point, strongly recommends that the concept of "security by design" should be applied to both educational software and any software or databases used by educational institutions; transparent policies for the collection and storage of personal data should be introduced;
30. recognising that initial attitudes, values and identity are formed to a large extent within the family and the larger home environment in general, encourages the creation of measures to work actively with the parents, strengthening the connections between parents and school and the "whole school approach" in general;
31. points out that poor language skills are a major obstacle to the free movement of workers and stresses that lifelong learning initiatives and introductory and continuous language learning programmes enable the workforce in the European Union and its professionals to better match the needs of the labour market;
32. draws attention to the fact that language learning is deemed much more effective at an early age, and calls for language learning to play a stronger role in the primary school curriculum;
33. suggests that the level of government in charge of setting the education curriculum for schools place additional focus on the cultural and ethnographic aspects of history, with a critical and philosophical analysis of universal values within diversity, and include a section in the curriculum on the European Union, highlighting the role of human rights, European citizenship as an ideal and cosmopolitanism as components of the Union; thus suggests to further collaborate with cultural players at local level, for instance to draw up a cultural education plan supporting work on school curricula and a cultural route presenting the local cultural and art offering;
34. furthermore calls for topics relevant to the digitalisation of society to be given greater prominence, in order to familiarise learners with coding concepts and introduce competences, not only pragmatic but also ethical, critical and analytical in the field of cyber security, social networking and media literacy;
35. supports the intention of providing every student or apprentice in Europe with at least one entrepreneurial experience, possibly in another EU country, and recommends an increase in entrepreneurial and project- and inquiry-based learning practices in both formal and informal education, as well as in businesses, associations, foundations or any other type of private or public body, thereby fostering the entrepreneurial and creative spirit. Therefore calls for further cooperation between schools, the private sector and third-sector bodies, and also calls for designing educational programmes that aim to match students' skills with labour market needs;

36. supports the measures to ensure equal opportunities for every student and apprentice and reduce inequality, and advises that in-depth research be performed into the underlying causes for these inequalities in order to improve the efficacy of European initiatives in the field;
37. advises explicitly pointing out that "going beyond equal opportunities" should be understood as "providing equitable opportunities" as a means to ensure inclusion, which requires resolute action. Such action cannot be limited to treating the outcome of issues like inequity, under-representation and exclusion by rebalancing the educational opportunities. Instead, authorities should be aiming their measures at solving the underlying causes and helping the affected citizens and communities to overcome them. Local and regional authorities, being closest to the European citizens should be empowered to research, design and implement such measures according to the specific needs of the local communities;
38. underlines the critical importance of looking into the regional disparities, laying down common foundations within the EU Member States' education systems, and thereby avoiding the economic and social consequences that arise from skills gaps and mismatches in the EU when designing reforms of the education and training systems. Furthermore points out that in order to reconnect with grass-roots level organisations, the EU needs to fully recognise and exploit the know-how of civil society representatives⁶;
39. reiterates the importance of creating a common framework for the recognition of informal and non-formal education in order to facilitate the creation of relevant national procedures;
40. strongly supports boosting the Erasmus + programme with the aim of doubling the number of participants, reaching out to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2025 and expanding towards lifelong learning and educator mobility in order to guarantee mobility for all students under equal conditions, regardless of where they live, including those from remote, insular and outermost regions;
41. advises that in order to counter disinformation campaigns and trending fake news, European institutions should be encouraged and facilitated to respond quickly and proactively provide relevant data in a comprehensive form. Better mechanisms for answering citizen questions and concerns can be also implemented with the help of modern web technologies;
42. points out that in order to provide equal access to Erasmus+ resources, every European citizen should have equal access to information and support. Thus special arrangements should be made in order to reach out learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Providing local and regional authorities with the possibility to assist citizens and organisations from their community to participate in the programme has the potential to assist the widening of Erasmus+ in a sustainable and efficient way;
43. advocates for activities aimed at the increase of the administrative capacity of existing Erasmus+ offices such as short-term staff exchanges, administrative information days and others deemed necessary, in order to decrease the competence gap of the Erasmus+

⁶ Van den Brande, Reaching out to EU Citizens: A New Opportunity, p. 14.

administration in the different educational institutions which in turn leads to inequality of opportunities for the students of those institutions;

44. suggests the inclusion of activities belonging to the field of citizen science and the philosophical way of thinking that comes with it within the scope of Erasmus +, due to their relevance to lifelong learning, their ability to build powerful peer role models and their importance for promoting the humanities, social sciences and STEM;
45. points out that lifelong learning includes but is not equivalent to adult education. Adult education addresses the education needs resulting from the transformation in work for an expanding adult population, as well as other knowledge and societal skills in the context of lifelong learning. It depends on a mindset of continuous inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge and excellence that can be cultivated as early as primary (or pre-primary) education and should be integrated into all stages of education;
46. is aware that boosting Erasmus+ will require ambitious financing and simpler procedures in order to achieve the programme's objectives; in that respect recognises that the UK is currently a major participant in the programme and hence calls for the ongoing negotiations to enable UK regions and local authorities to continue to participate in European cooperation programmes post 2020 in the same vein as other non-EU Member States already do;
47. strongly supports priority measures to build inclusive and connected higher education systems and calls for particular attention to be given to peripheral universities and those in the outermost regions and to cross-border cooperation. The underlying assumption should be the belief that no university is peripheral and all universities are or should also be regional;

Key policies

48. welcomes in general the key policy suggestions advanced by the European Commission and underlines the importance of involving and listening to European society as a whole, and especially young people when designing education and cultural policy reforms;
49. warns that strengthening the European dimension of Euronews is a step in the right direction, but this can only be one part of a much more comprehensive policy and strategy on media and information, responding to recent societal and geopolitical developments.

Brussels, 17 May 2018

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Karl-Heinz Lambertz

The Secretary-General
of the European Committee of the Regions

Jiří Buriánek

III. PROCEDURE

| | |
|---|--|
| Title | Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture |
| Reference(s) | COM(2017) 673 final, COM(2018) 23 final |
| Legal basis | Article 165 TFEU; Article 166 TFEU; Article 167 TFEU |
| Procedural basis | Rule 41(b)(i) |
| Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter | 15 November 2017 |
| Date of Bureau/President's decision | 27 November 2017 |
| Commission responsible | SEDEC |
| Rapporteur | Tanya Hristova (BG/EPP) |
| Analysis | December 2017 |
| Discussed in commission | 21 February 2018 |
| Date adopted by commission | 21 February 2018 |
| Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity) | Majority |
| Date adopted in plenary | 17 May 2018 |
| Previous Committee opinions | Modernising school and higher education ⁷ Investing in Europe's youth and the European Solidarity Corps ⁸ Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations ⁹ A New Skills Agenda for Europe ¹⁰ Recognition of skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning ¹¹ European higher education in the world ¹² Rethinking Education ¹³ Erasmus for All ¹⁴ Promoting the active citizenship of young people through education ¹⁵ |
| Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation | N/A |

⁷ CDR 3139/2017.

⁸ CDR 851/2017.

⁹ CDR 511/2016.

¹⁰ CDR 4094/2016.

¹¹ CDR 3921/2014.

¹² CDR 5961/2013.

¹³ CDR 2392/2012.

¹⁴ CDR 400/2011.

¹⁵ CDR 173/2007.