

## EFEE POSITION STATEMENT

***“Promoting Social Inclusion and Shared EU Values  
through Formal and Non-Formal Learning”***

With this paper, the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) wishes to provide further input to the public consultation on “Promoting Social Inclusion and Shared EU Values through Formal and Non-Formal Learning”. EFEE is a dynamic organisation established in 2009 to represent the interests of employers in the strategic and highly diverse European education sector. We represent 33 education employer organisations from 17 European countries in all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education and research. This includes different national organisations, such as education councils and ministries of education, associations of VET colleges and universities and local and regional authority employers’ organisations.

EFEE deems it very important that with the Paris Declaration, the issues of promoting civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship, and promoting social inclusion and shared EU values, have been put high on the European agenda. It is clear that education has an important role to play in fostering social cohesion, preventing marginalisation and radicalisation, and helping young people to become responsible, open-minded and active members of our diverse society.

Last year, we further followed-up on the Paris Declaration by organising a Peer Learning Activity to Malta and issuing a position paper on “promoting civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship, as well as other relevant competencies, to facilitate the migrants’ inclusion and successful integration in the educational and socio-economic environment of the host countries”. September this year, we will organise a Peer Learning Activity to the UK on the related topic of “promoting social inclusion and achieving quality education”. EFEE therefore very much welcomes this public consultation by the European Commission and based on the outcomes of our work, we would like to provide further input with this paper to the consultation question *“What could the EU do to help Member States ensure that their education and training systems, and in particular the learning environments, help people understand and take ownership of shared EU values and promote fair and inclusive societies?”*

The EU has an important role to play in promoting peer learning, supporting the exchange of good practices and fostering mutual cooperation among key stakeholders in the education sector. Constructive exchanges on how to follow-up on the Paris Declaration are being facilitated within the framework of the ET2020 process and its respective working group and peer learning meetings. It is with great interest that EFEE contributes to these activities. However more could be done in our view to strengthen the engagement of key stakeholders in the education and training sector to this process. In particular, social partners in education - representing education employers and teacher unions - have an important role to play in further disseminating the outcomes of the peer learning exercises to work-floor level.

We therefore very much welcome the proposed actions of the recent Commission Communication “School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life” stating that the EC will *reinforce peer learning under Education and Training 2020 through a series of expert seminars and linking it to the European sectoral social dialogue in education*. Promoting social inclusion and shared EU values would in particular be topics on which social partners in education could make a valuable contribution. The follow-up of the Paris Declaration is one of the main themes of our joint European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education work programme. Moreover, via our membership we reach millions of teachers and school leaders in the EU. They play of course a pivotal role in making inclusive learning environments a reality.

It was concluded during our EFEE PLA to Malta that, in order to create open and inclusive learning environments, it would be beneficial to develop a policy framework within schools to identify shared values on diversity, equity, citizenship and non-discrimination, and to determine approaches on how to transmit them. Such framework should be developed on the basis of partnership, engagement and sharing of practical examples within the school community. The framework could be part of initial and continuous professional training programmes for school management, teachers and other staff working in schools.

Moreover, it is essential that all people working in schools should have their vocational and pedagogical competences (including civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship competences) regularly updated through participation in appropriate professional development programmes in order to be able to cope effectively with the changing needs of our diverse societies. Regarding the provision of civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship competences and the promotion of shared EU values, EFEE would advocate for an integrated approach; that is to say, integrating them in the overall school values rather than teaching them as standalone competences in one-off courses.

It is furthermore important to stress that a “whole society” approach is needed. It is important that schools are supported by the community (including political leaders) and the community is supported by the schools as educational institutions are very influential in promoting social values and fostering social cohesion. It should be made clear that these issues are not the sole responsibility of the education and training sector, but of the broader community, including employment, social and health care services, policy makers, etc. and that a structured approach is needed to respond jointly to the challenges. This requires a strong national vision, commitment and close cooperation at and between all levels (national, regional, and local) to make the strategy a success.

In order to support Member States to ensure that their education and training systems, and in particular the learning environments, help people understand and take ownership of shared EU values and promote fair and inclusive societies, the EU could further promote policy peer learning on the issues mentioned above. Moreover in order to stimulate the implementation of such policies, financial support via EU funding programmes would be needed.

With our reply to the consultation questionnaire and this paper, we hope to have made a valuable contribution to the consultation on “Promoting Social Inclusion and Shared EU Values through Formal and Non-Formal Learning”.



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