Role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values

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The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report by Julie WARD (S&D, UK) on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values.

Members argued that a European Union approach should take stock and resume the excellent work initiated during the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and encouraged all stakeholders to **establish an up-to-date, clear, policy-related definition of intercultural dialogue**. They stressed that a genuine intercultural and interfaith dialogue encourages positive and cooperative interactions, promotes understanding and respect between cultures, increases diversity and respect for democracy, liberty, human rights as well as tolerance for universal and culture specific values. Members advocated that the EU, acting as global peace actor, **should include culture and cultural exchanges and enhance education in EU external relations and development policy**.

Intercultural, interfaith and value-based approach: Members advocated that fostering an intercultural, interfaith and value-based approach in the educational field should be encouraged in order to address and promote mutual respect, integrity, ethical principles cultural diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, including through exchange and mobility programmes for all. Intercultural dialogue may significantly contribute to the improvement of democracy and the development of greater and deeper inclusivity and **sense of belonging**.

Enhancing the teaching of intercultural dialogue: Members considered that increasing public investment in inclusive, quality and accessible formal, non-formal and informal education is the **first step to providing equal access and opportunities for all**. Formal, non-formal and informal education and access to lifelong learning not only provide knowledge, skills and competences, but should also help learners to develop ethical and civic values and become active, responsible, open-minded members of society. Members stressed the importance of participation in sports and volunteering activities in stimulating the development of civic, social and intercultural competences.

Members encouraged mobility specifically for teachers from primary and secondary levels in order to share experiences. The role and importance of the Erasmus+ programme which fosters a European awareness among young people and creates a sense of common belonging and a culture of intercultural dialogue was emphasised.

Members also noted the **essential role of teachers** in strengthening – in cooperation with families – social ties, generating a sense of belonging and helping young people to develop ethical and civic values.

Support to NGOs, human rights organisations: Members recognised the need to provide sustainable and structural support to NGOs, human rights organisations, youth organisations and training institutions to **challenge extremism** through social cohesion and inclusion, active citizenship and empowerment and participation of youth.

As regards the combat against discrimination, Members affirmed the need, when dealing with the issue of intercultural dialogue and education, to keep a gender perspective and to take into account the needs of people suffering multiple forms of discrimination, including people with disabilities, people identifying as

LGBTI and people from marginalised communities. Member States are called upon to involve marginalised communities, migrants, refugees and host communities as well as faith and secular communities in respectful and empowering inclusion processes.

Diplomacy and intercultural dialogue: Members called on the Commission to mainstream cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue **in all EU external relations instruments** and in the EU development agenda. They called furthermore on the EU and the Member States to strengthen cooperation with other European and international organisations such as the United Nations and its related agencies, in particular UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR and called for more cooperation with national cultural institutes.

Cultural identity and refugees: Members invited the Member States and the Commission to **prevent extremism**, such as xenophobia, racism and all forms of discrimination and marginalisation through community cohesion measures that are able to successfully challenge economic and social inequalities. They recommended that the EU cooperate in making learning and schooling accessible for refugee children by continuing to support programs on access to education in humanitarian crises and to ensure the integration of migrant students in Europe. In parallel, Members stressed the **family role** in the preservation of cultural identity, traditions, ethics and the value systems of society, and stressed that the introduction of children to the culture, values and norms of their society begins in the family.

Intercultural dialogue as a strong and committed political objective of the EU: Members called on the Commission and the Council to adopt intercultural dialogue as a strong and committed political objective of the EU and therefore guarantee EU support. They encouraged the Commission and the Member States to further prioritise initiatives directed towards supporting cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and education, and to fully exploit EU financial instruments, programmes and initiatives, such as the Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe and Horizon 2020 programmes, EU neighbourhood policy and external relations instruments.