Learning EU at school

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The European Parliament adopted by 482 votes to 146, with 76 abstentions, a resolution entitled ‘Learning EU at school’.

According to a 2014 Eurobarometer opinion poll, **44 % of European Union citizens feel that they have limited understanding of how the EU works** and 52 % of Europeans believe that their voice does not count in the EU: only 42.61 % of EU citizens, and only 27.8 % of 18-24 year-olds, voted in the last European Parliament elections, representing the lowest voter turnout since 1979.

Parliament considered that an insufficient knowledge about the EU and poor understanding of its concrete added value might contribute to the perception of a democratic deficit and lead to widespread Euroscepticism. **In order to tackle the growing gap between the voice of European citizens and the EU institutions**, the resolution recommended the following:

An enhanced European dimension in education: Members emphasised that an EU dimension in education is crucial to help citizens **better understand – and reconnect them with – the EU** and strengthen the voice of the Union in an interdependent world.

An EU dimension in education should enable learners not only to acquire knowledge and **develop a sense of belonging and European citizenship skills**, but also to engage in a **critical reflection** on the EU, through learning about EU fundamental values, based on the rule of law and human rights, EU governance and decision-making processes.

Members encouraged the **use of European Youth Parliament role-play games** to help children and students understand the European processes and raise their awareness of European issues

The resolution made the following recommendations, inter alia:

- **the EU should be more visible**, and better integrated, in teaching materials and extracurricular activities;

- **active and participative teaching methods** should be tailored to learners’ age, and levels, exploiting fully the opportunities offered by the information and communication technologies and the media, including social media;

- teachers should be provided with **appropriate support and resources** in order to enable them to incorporate an EU dimension into their teaching;

- **multi-lingual and intercultural competences** of educators should be promoted and encouraged, as well as mobility opportunities, peer-to-peer learning and exchanges of best practices among teaching staff, for instance through the organisation of European-level seminars;

- options for **specialised qualification courses** within universities should be provided.

Stressing the importance and the potential of a **European approach to the teaching of history**, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to support history societies and centres for historical research, in order to highlight the value of their scientific contribution to European history and their role in keeping schoolteachers up to date.

The role of the Union: Parliament noted that the Union is currently undergoing a crisis in its democratic legitimacy, not only because Europeans have insufficient knowledge about the EU mechanisms, but also because their voices are removed from decision-making processes. It stressed that, in order to regain its legitimacy, the Union must halt the breakdown of its democratic structures and re-establish the link with its citizens.

In this regard, Parliament asked the Commission to:

- continue its support for efforts to develop and promote an **EU dimension in education as well as the mobility** of educational actors;
- actively **disseminate information** – including information on relevant funding opportunities and available studies and reports – to key stakeholders and citizens;
- provide a **common framework**, and to prepare guidelines with concrete examples, for learning about the EU, while respecting Member States' competence in the field of education and training;
- encourage **further research** to ascertain how the EU is currently taught in schools across Europe, and how it features in curricula and exams;
- **facilitate networks** that promote learning about the EU at national, regional and local level, as well as **exchanges of best practice** between these networks at Union level;
- ensure increased and adequate financial support for Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens and Creative Europe, which play an important role in strengthening European citizenship;
- monitor closely the **impact** of all EU programmes on developing participants' sense of citizenship and civic participation.

Parliament highlighted the role that the **information offices** of the European institutions play in fostering relations with educational institutions, and with youth organisations and media, in order to bring them closer to each other and to ensure that young people understand the role the institutions play in their daily lives.

The role of Member States: the latter were asked to:

- **support, and update their education systems** with a view to strengthening the EU dimension in close collaboration with all relevant actors, while strongly encouraging regions and local authorities to do the same;
- support all possibilities of **conveying more information** about the EU to learners as well as to teachers and other educators through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- take further action to promote **intercultural, non-discriminatory and inclusive education** and citizenship values in school and university curricula;

- involve **migrants, refugees and faith communities** in respectful and empowering citizenship-building processes, ensuring their participation in civic and cultural life;

- acknowledge and support **social partners** and civil society organisations, in particular youth organisations, in bridging the gap between the EU institutions and the European citizens.

Parliament asked Member States to encourage high-quality training on EU topics for teachers, by allowing them to spend part of their training in another Member State, and by ensuring the **recognition of their qualification** to teach about the EU, for example by creating and promoting a **Euro Teacher** label award.