

ACTIVITY REPORT

TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS FOR DEMOCRATIC EUROPE

27 SEPTEMBER 2018 | EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS

Education, training and lifelong learning are essential not only for student but also for teachers and educators all across Europe. EU leaders have shown their support for identifying education and skills as a priority for European cooperation last year in [Gothenburg](#) when calling for the creation of [European Education Area 2025](#), focused on a higher level of education and training for better democratic participation centered on EU values.

SOLIDAR Foundation, and the European Parliament's [Youth Intergroup](#), organized a roundtable discussion at the European Parliament held with policy-makers, civil society and education experts to discuss what were the main challenges in the

teaching profession related to the promotion of democratic culture and values of the European Union and how the EU can address the issues. Furthermore, the discussion focused on how policymakers and civil society can cooperate in supporting teachers and educators in accessing professional development that could enable them to effectively deliver and promote the EU project on the national and regional level.



Teachers' training to promote inclusive education and reduce inequities in schools

Our first speaker was director Zuzana Schreiberova, who runs the [Multicultural Centre Prague \(MKC\)](#) in Czech Republic as a platform to promote the coexistence of different cultures and diversity in society, with a focus on civic education and skills to enhance the democratic culture.

In Czech Republic, as Zuzana explains, there is no unified concept of civic education for all public learning spaces, *“or anything equivalent to the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), as attempts to establish such an agency would end up with accusation of indoctrination.”*

[The 2004 biggest education reform](#) in Czech Republic meant that fixed curricula were replaced by framework education program, which meant greater flexibility for implementation of school education programs; however civic education is mostly provided by NGOs and civil society. Despite insufficient state support for inclusiveness through civic educational training, “recently the Center against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats, a unit of the Ministry of the Interior, has recognized that people whom trust the state and democracy are more resistant to fake news and other types of manipulation,” Zuzana Schreiberova tells us.

In Belgium, exactly 5 years ago, an association has sprung up to combat inequities and enforce inclusive education in poorer areas as necessary to strengthen democratic life in Europe. *“The latest PISA results shows that there is a real urgency to reduce inequity in access to learning as we know that at the age of 15, students who are in schools with a lower socio-economic index are lacking behind for an average of three years when compared to those students whom are in privileged schools,”* explains Caroline de Cartier, director of the association.

[Teach for Belgium](#) is an association with support from the Ministry of Education as a pilot-project and is financed through foundations, businesses and private donors. Its main goal is to bring new postgraduates to the teaching profession to bring them to schools which have a low socio-economic index. Since then, Teach for Belgium has offered to tens of young grads each year to follow a practical training course to teach in schools where there are difficulties over sciences, maths or Flemish. The training is a 5-week training course and involves on-the-ground teaching without having passed the official civil service competition exam.

Ekarina Efimenko, programme officer in the [European Trade Union Committee for Education \(ETUCE\)](#), tells us that it is necessary for teaching democratic values and active citizenship to take a whole school approach which would include the local community with parents, students, teachers and staff. ETUCE has in recent years focused on E-safety and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for teachers along with recommendation to push for new innovative methods to enhance digital skills and non-formal and informal learning. In the framework of their project [EU Convince](#) they analyse a national situation how education trade unions should react to the radicalization tendencies in our society and use their influence upon national education systems to restore meaningful civic education. The final conference of the project presenting the outcomes and recommendation will take place in Warsaw in 2019.

The valuable input from the side of policymaker was brought by S&D MEP, and member of the Youth Intergroup, [Brando Benifei](#). He highlighted initiatives such as Erasmus+x10, Implementation of the European Pillar of social Rights and [Child guarantee](#) that all contribute to social Europe





that offer equal opportunities to its citizens. *“We need an indisputable educational democratic life in the face of rising nationalism, and that is why we have pushed for greater public investment, for strengthening funds as part of the [Erasmusx10](#) campaign.”* Mr Benifei cooperates actively with Italian as well as with European civil society movements and organizes regularly events to bring the EU institutions closer to people. He added that the crucial battle to bring more democracy to Europe will be the next European elections where the S&D group will [fight](#) for Europe that is the land of human rights, dialogue and shared responsibility in solving conflicts and fight strongly against those promoting nationalism, dominance, racism and exclusion.

The roundtable discussion gave SOLIDAR Foundation and participants an opportunity to discover best practices and solutions at national, regional and EU level. As a European umbrella organisation, we need to look for sustainable ways to enable further cooperation between public authorities and civil society organisations (and specifically between formal and non-formal education) to strengthen teachers’ support and continuous professional development. Additionally, **cross-sectoral partnerships** and **upscaling of programmes** at a national level are needed to ensure teachers and educators have the necessary tools to become active citizens and promote EU values and projects.

