20 ANNIVERSARY LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

A RENEWED MANIFESTO FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

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DISCLAIMER

The following Manifesto is not positioned to be an all-encompassing, exhaustive list of priorities and areas to focus on. It represents a selection of those enabling factors considered by civil society in education and training to be the most important in achieving its vision for lifelong learning. Any additional aspects are not deemed as less important, but rather their focus would be outside of the scope of civil society in education and training or would not be prioritised as much as the contents of this Lifelong Learning Manifesto.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lifelong Learning Manifesto was developed during a process that commenced in January 2025 and concluded in November 2025. It was co-created by the Lifelong Learning Platform members, Steering Committee and Secretariat with contributions and consultations from Lifelong Learning Platform's partners.

All members of the Lifelong Learning Platform have been consulted across four focus groups to define the structure and main themes of the Manifesto. These meetings were organised between April and May 2025. The moderation and framing of the meetings has been developed by the Lifelong Learning Platform Steering Committee and Secretariat based on desk research, trend analysis and a literature review of all Lifelong Learning Platform's publications. The aim was to ensure coherence and consistency with the current policy positioning of the Lifelong Learning Platform, while also identifying the needs for the future.

Based on the focus groups, the Lifelong Learning Platform Secretariat drafted the Manifesto which was open for consultations with all its members in June 2025. Moreover, select stakeholders and partners were invited to provide their inputs on the draft considering that the Manifesto also defined the way in which the Lifelong Learning Platform would engage in collaboration and partnerships with the broader education and training sector.

The feedback and consultations period was concluded with a High-Level Policy Debate, organised on 1 July within the European Parliament under the auspices of the Intergroup on the Future of Education and Skills for a Competitive Europe. The European Commission Executive Vice-President, Roxana Mînzatu, opened the consultative event where contributions from DG EAC, DG EMPL, OECD, UNESCO, Cedefop, ETF and Eurydice were rounded up by interventions from education and training stakeholders. The outcomes of the consultations were re-discussed with the Lifelong Learning Platform members during the General Assembly on 2 July.

A final adaptation of the Lifelong Learning Manifesto was developed by the Secretariat in July 2025, with a validation period opened for the Lifelong Learning Platform membership in August-September 2025. Members' validation ensured that they had adopted the document in October 2025. The final version of the Manifesto was published in November 2025.

You can find below a list of all organisations that contributed to the development of the Manifesto:

- European Commission, cabinet of the Executive Vice-President Roxana Mînzatu
- European Commission, DG EAC
- European Commission, DG EMPL
- European Commission, ETF
- European Commission, Cedefop
- European Commission, Eurydice
- European Parliament, Intergroup on the Future of Education and Skills for a Competitive Europe
- OECD
- UNESCO
- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
- EASPD
- Business Europe
- ENQA
- Cooperatives Europe
- SwissCore
- Academic Cooperation Association
- European Federation of Education Employers
- International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
- IndustriALL
- Eurochambers
- Eurocities
- Skills Alliance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLLP) marks ten years since its first Manifesto and twenty years since its founding. Today, we renew our call for a Europe where learning truly lasts a lifetime and belongs to everyone. This new Manifesto sets out a **ten-year vision for lifelong and lifewide learning** as a human right and a public good. It calls for bold action to ensure that education and training systems empower people to thrive in rapidly changing societies, strengthen democracy, and support Europe's ambitions.

Europe faces pressing challenges: inequalities in access to learning, polarisation and democratic backsliding, the environmental crisis, digital transformation, gender imbalances, and demographic shifts. Minor adjustments will not be enough. What is needed is a bold, systemic approach to learning that values joy, curiosity, resilience, and inclusion, and that sees learning as both a means to personal growth and a cornerstone of social cohesion while supporting economies. We want a Europe that champions a culture of learning "from cradle to grave" and "across all walks of life" where every person can learn, re-learn, and share knowledge throughout their lives. This is a Europe where **lifelong learning is not just a concept, but a driving force behind equity, innovation, sustainability, and peace.**

To realise this vision, the Manifesto sets out 20 principles and 10 bold actions, under 4 pillars:

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Redefining inclusion

Ensuring no learner is left behind, by recognising diverse needs, valuing all forms of learning, and embedding wellbeing at the heart of education.

Boosting participation

Strengthening community learning, global citizenship education, and democratic engagement, while giving learners and educators a voice in governance.

Empowering learners for resilient societies

Advancing learner-centred approaches, transversal competences, sustainability, digital inclusion, and strong support for educators.

Advancing systemic cooperation

Building a common language, coherent policies, effective governance, and stronger international partnerships for lifelong learning.

In the next decade, Europe needs courageous reforms, sustained investment, and inclusive governance to make lifelong learning a lived reality for all. This Manifesto provides a **roadmap to 2035 with 10 bold actions**; from creating lifelong learning entitlements to scaling up EU programmes that finance education and training, such as Erasmus+, strengthening civil dialogue, and embedding sustainability and democracy into education. Lifelong learning is not a silver bullet, but it is the foundation for resilient societies and empowered individuals. With this Manifesto, LLLP calls on European and national leaders to act decisively so that, by 2035, every person in Europe can say: **We live in a truly lifelong learning area.**

INTRODUCTION

Celebrating a culture of lifelong learning

> No one is born fully-formed: it is through self-experience in the world that we become what we are.
>
> **Paulo Freire**

In 2025, we celebrate ten years since our first Manifesto, twenty years since our founding as the Lifelong Learning Platform, as well as the 25th anniversary of the first European Commission Memorandum of Lifelong Learning (2000). Building on the legacy of the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning and the 2023 European Year of Skills, the European Education Area and the Union of Skills reveal the need for all stakeholders to improve their process alignment, learn from each other, and provide tailored approaches to learners that foster a culture for continuous learning. In parallel to the EU policies and vision of lifelong learning, **civil society launches its own vision for the next ten years** which reinforces the demands for a proper lifelong learning approach to education and training, one which considers learning as a continuum, from cradle to grave, and one which focuses on the development of competences that allow all people to thrive and seek learning as a good in itself. This vision unequivocally underlines that lifelong learning is a human right and a public good, requiring adequate public funding to be accessible to all. It also defines learning in all its forms, whether formal, non-formal or informal, taking place at all stages in life and resulting in an improvement or update in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

A **renewed Lifelong Learning Manifesto** is needed to address the evolving and urgent needs of today's society, while also continuing to encourage people's thirst for knowledge and discovery. The curiosity and inquisitive nature of human beings made us who we are; it shaped the world around us and brought the most significant innovations. If curiosity has been a catalyst, the building of an entire ecosystem around it was needed. Innovation in education must be critically assessed for its societal impact and guided by clear ethical boundaries. It must contribute to fighting mistrust in science, protecting the planet, ensuring that human rights are respected and that each person can thrive and develop through holistic lifelong learning.

The complex set of factors around leadership, collaboration, infrastructure development, investment, adaptability and further research has turned human curiosity into useful progress and innovation. But at the same time, people experience new fears and uncertainty about the future. The goal of the renewed Manifesto tries to balance these feelings by recognising people's fear, while advancing a culture of lifelong and lifewide learning as a way to address adversity and fulfil aspirations. To this end, it will contribute to building a learning society, where a culture of continuous learning throughout life is championed and made accessible for all individuals and organisations. Lifelong and lifewide learning will be based on interconnections between existing sectors and levels of learning and on equal valuation of all forms of learning.

What does lifelong learning bring to the new challenges and developments?

The continuous learning process keeps people active, brings joy, sparks curiosity, fosters personal self-development and helps them contribute meaningfully to their communities, broader society, and the environment. Where people are more engaged in learning, innovation thrives[1] but is also shaped responsibly and challenges injustices embedded in the systems.

A holistic approach to learning strengthens resilience, while supporting mental health and wellbeing. It reduces the risk of poverty through better employment, income, health, and life expectancy. It equips people with competences to thrive in a professional life of their choice, which further enhances life satisfaction.[2] Strong support and investment in quality early childhood education and care, quality education and inclusive systems when supporting individuals,[3] have been consistently linked to lower welfare dependency and higher public revenues. Each additional year of learning increases the return on investment across all countries.[4] A learning society, therefore, can meaningfully address two of Europe's most significant current challenges: the 1 in 5 Europeans at risk of poverty or social exclusion,[5] which extends to 1 in 4 when referring to children,[6] and rising income and wealth inequality.[7]

Lifelong learning empowers people to navigate societal changes and take part in democratic life. Growing polarisation[8] and rising disengagement from civil and political life are serious threats. As lifelong learners, individuals are better equipped to understand political developments, make informed choices and shape democratic processes. It also fosters critical competences to counter cybercrime, disinformation and misinformation, securitisation, and hate speech, key to resisting political extremism and promoting peace. It contributes to a broader notion of security, enabling people to respond with resilience and problem-solving to natural disasters, global health emergencies and other global crises.[9] It supports participation in both society and economy, reinforcing strategies for empowerment, inclusion and opportunity.

A renewed commitment to lifelong learning enables coordinated responses to today's pressing issues. It can help counter democratic backsliding and strengthen civil society, while supporting EU enlargement through inclusive learning cultures embedded in transnational cooperation in education. Enlargement will lead to new reforms in education and training policymaking as the size and span of education and training systems grow with new EU Member States. Lifelong learning can drive the green and digital transition, including the ethical use of AI, by equipping Europeans to rethink energy systems and embrace technological change, while ensuring social cohesion and supporting a just transition. It must also promote intergenerational learning, considering the demographic crisis in which Europe finds itself. As life spans grow, Europe's ageing population deserves renewed attention towards their learning needs. Finally, the Manifesto is built on gender mainstreaming, ensuring every policy and action promotes gender equality and challenges stereotypes in the sector and across learners more broadly.

Simply offering access to learning is not enough. Europe must look at **how** lifelong learning is delivered, **who** it reaches, and **what** it truly achieves. Minor policy adjustments won't be sufficient. What's needed is a bold, comprehensive vision. This doesn't mean starting from scratch, but rather acting with urgency and purpose. The path was already charted decades ago by Jacques Delors; what we lack today is the political courage to follow through and make lifelong learning a reality for all. Lifelong learning is not a silver bullet for all challenges. Still, it represents the basis for empowering people to take coordinated action across multiple domains to address the challenges discussed. Most importantly, it supports personal growth, helping individuals build the maturity, resilience, and understanding needed to face difficulties and live together in peace and mutual respect.

1. Why is education more important today than ever? Innovation
2. Living conditions in Europe - life satisfaction and quality of life - Statistics Explained - Eurostat.
3. The future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU - European Commission.
4. Public returns from education | OECD
5. Living conditions in Europe - poverty and social exclusion - Statistics Explained - Eurostat.
6. 1 in 4 children in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion - Products Eurostat News
7. Inequality Trends in Europe
8. The political dimension of social cohesion in Europe | European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; The Media and Polarisation in Europe: Strategies for Local Practitioners to Address Problematic Reporting
9. European Commission. Safer Together: Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness.

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Pillar I

Redefining inclusion in lifelong learning: with and for all

Learners with special needs, vulnerabilities, in disadvantaged situations and/or underrepresented require additional support to attain their rights, but current local, regional, national and European policies insufficiently respond to the specific learning needs of learners with diverse backgrounds; therefore, the social cohesion gap continues to widen.

LLLPlatform proposes five principles to ensure intersectional[10] inclusion in lifelong learning:

Making wellbeing the journey and destination of learning

Wellbeing is a prerequisite for full participation in learning, successful societal participation and living a fulfilling life. People need to feel healthy, secure, wholesome and have a sense of belonging to engage in learning and progress eagerly. **Wellbeing must be a central objective of lifelong learning**, elevating it across all sectors and formats of learning to the same status as academic achievement, ensuring its presence in curricula, assessment, learning outcomes and services. This requires **reframing the importance of socio-emotional, ethical and spiritual dimensions of learning** across all lifelong learning sectors.

Prioritising wellbeing refocuses the mission of learning towards providing the foundation for human dignity, peace, sustainability and social justice. Though a separate principle linked to inclusion, it must be acknowledged that wellbeing permeates all other principles and pillars, being the basic precondition for learning.

10. Intersectionality from Oxford English Dictionary: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.

Designing truly flexible learning pathways

The diversity of learners and the recognition of their diverse needs mean that learning cannot be limited to a single environment or solely to formal education. To ensure that all can participate in learning, it is crucial to **create different access routes, adapted to each learner's profile, and facilitate seamless movement from one learning environment to another.** This requires the consideration of **all forms of education and training as equally important** for the personal and professional development of all (principle 11). This process can be facilitated by the creation of tools (including AI[11]) that smoothen transitions across formal, informal and non-formal learning, providing different entry points to all types of learners. While full qualifications remain essential, modular learning opportunities offer flexible entry and re-entry points, especially valuable for adults, career changers, or learners in vulnerable situations. The tools and paths require **career and lifelong guidance to aid learners in developing agency and identifying the right opportunities and choices for them**. What defines flexible learning pathways is the centrality of the learner and supporting them to navigate the interwoven pathways to learning. Potential actions to support the flexibilisation of pathways include, but are not limited to, recognising prior learning, micro-credentials and digital badges. Beyond improving learning spaces, efforts must be taken to adapt more spaces to become learning spaces. Workplaces must be re-envisioned as continuous learning hubs, supporting learners to engage in learning through job design audits, work-practice vouchers for learning, or similar initiatives.

11. See the AI usage in Poland's work on the NQF and in Estonia's Skill Compass.

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Validating and recognising learning as a continuous process for inclusion

Valuing and recognising all forms of learning is a prerequisite for inclusive education and training systems and must be upheld as a right for all. Recognition empowers all learners to reflect on, plan and take ownership of their journey, reinforcing a culture of lifelong learning. We need **robust systems for validation and recognition of competences, qualifications, and non-formal and informal learning** to help those who are farthest from learning opportunities, such as adults missing basic skills, certain groups of migrant and international learners, NEETs, and other traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged learners, to name a few. To achieve this, we need **user-friendly, well-funded validation systems across the EU** - adapted in their approach to the specific needs of each sector of learning - **linked to career guidance, financial incentives, skills intelligence, evidence-informed approaches, flexible assessment practices, and upskilling pathways**. Validation and recognition rely on shared language, standards, trust and community (principle 17). For validation and recognition, we must look outside education and training, and acknowledge the multidimensional nature of learning, drawing on practices occurring in the health or social sector.

3

Ensuring equal access through tailored, inclusive education policy

Ensuring equal access to learning for all, regardless of background, means recognising and addressing the diverse and intersecting challenges that learners face. **Intersectionality must guide all policymaking and data collection in education and training to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches and ensure no one is left behind**. A significant barrier to equal access is the lack of basic skills. These learners must be supported through community-based learning, workplace training, and lifelong guidance services. **Social policies must be better aligned with education and training policies**, while supporting the positive role of stakeholders such as cooperatives and civil society in tailoring services to individual learners rather than broad demographic groups. Particular attention is needed to close the **gender gap** in STEM and VET, and for **learners of migrant background** - especially involuntary migrants such as refugees and asylum seekers - who frequently underperform or are excluded from later stages of learning. **Learners with (in)visible disabilities,** ensuring adequate support for their participation. All learners should have access to a diverse range of non-profit education and training providers that uphold equity, universal access, and quality learning. Fair allocation of resources across providers is essential to ensure that learners can benefit from options suited to their needs and interests. Early childhood education and care, as well as primary education, play a key role in later participation in lifelong learning. Efforts must be made to ensure universal access to quality provision, especially for vulnerable families and caregivers. This targeted attention must be expanded to families, parents and guardians with young children, especially those struggling for different reasons. Targeted measures should address language and cultural barriers, digital exclusion, and the needs of post-crisis populations.

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Promoting diversity in the content, format and administration of lifelong learning

A learning model shaped by dominant societal norms risks excluding marginalised groups and limiting the richness of the educational experience for all. **Decolonising curricula** is essential to acknowledge diverse knowledge systems and challenge dominant narratives, and to embrace a plurality of ways of knowing. **This shift must go beyond content, embedding equity and cognitive justice into institutional structures, pedagogies, and values.** Curricular reform also plays a key role in tackling gender stereotypes and promoting intersectional inclusion, empowering learners to engage with the world around them critically. Recognise **digital inclusion** as a driver of participation in lifelong learning. Ensure that digital education and training offers are designed and delivered in accordance with **universal accessibility principles**, including web accessibility standards and inclusive user experience for older adults, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. **Diversity must also be reflected in the composition of educational staff**, with more professionals from minority and underrepresented backgrounds empowered to lead and contribute. **Inclusive teaching approaches** should respect varied learning styles and lived experiences, supported by dedicated resources and holistic guidance services. Promoting diversity and decolonisation is not an add-on but a foundation for meaningful innovation, inclusion, and global citizenship, enabling lifelong learning systems to respond to contemporary challenges with equity, creativity, and resilience. A just approach to innovation also requires rethinking whose knowledge counts.

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Pillar II

Empowering learners to build resilient societies

Society is changing quickly, and while curricula in education and training have updated their content, innovative pedagogies and andragogies[12] have not yet been widely adopted. As a result, many learners do not have access to learning environments that help them fully participate in society. While often seen as inherently positive, innovation is not neutral; it reflects the values and power structures of those who shape it. This means going beyond market-driven goals and embedding ethical considerations, equity, inclusion, and sustainability at the heart of educational innovation from the outset, ensuring that no learner is left behind.

LLLPlatform proposes five principles to continue innovation in lifelong learning:

Advancing the learner-centred approach

Relevant learning experiences empower learners to contribute to their society actively, but this requires fostering transversal competences - cutting across disciplines and supporting lifelong learning. This can happen in learning environments where **learners' voices, interests and needs are meaningfully included through active participation**. Learning methods must be adapted to **support dialogue during learning, joint priority setting, and approaches such as experiential learning, project-based learning and mission-oriented learning.** These methods should be **co-designed by learners** in cooperation with and under the guidance of educators. While the approach benefits learners of all ages, its implementation across the EU remains limited. Therefore, additional attention must be given to younger children, ensuring they are aware of their rights and exposed early to innovative pedagogies that support the development of active citizenship competences. The foundational work in early education is critical for lifelong learning, enabling more advanced forms of learner-centred approaches.

12. The method and practice of teaching adult learners.

6

Focusing on key and transversal competences

The true collaboration among stakeholders in education and training hinges upon a common **purpose for learning. This Manifesto proposes this as ensuring that each learner develops the key competences for lifelong learning**, according to the **Council Recommendation published in 2018**. These competences for the future better equip all learners to welcome change and adapt constantly. Therefore, education and training stakeholders, from all learning environments, ought to ensure that their offer of learning builds upon transversal competences. This includes the **promotion of learning approaches that foster transversal competences such as cross-curricular approaches, reliance on practical, craft-based and vocational learning practices, and innovative forms of assessment.** These are consistent with the transdisciplinary approach of STEAM, which is preferred to STEM considering the transversal competences that can be developed with a broader transdisciplinary approach and the way it fosters the systemic thinking underpinning the disciplines. Principles 8 and 9 will connect to the key competences agenda, but will receive additional attention, given that they have been identified as having a greater future impact.

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Mainstreaming learning for sustainability

Learning for sustainability provides learners with the capacity to safeguard the environment while developing resilient societies and social and economic cohesion. This envisions sustainability broadly, relating to a variety of elements in lifelong learning, with a particular focus on environmental sustainability and climate change education in formal, non-formal and informal learning across this principle. **Learning for sustainability needs to be mainstreamed, cross-curricularly, across all learning programmes**, ensuring that all stakeholders in education and training embody its principles. Therefore, **education and training institutions should divest from economic actors that harm the environment, and understand the global impact of local actions and various chains of production.** The mainstreaming of learning for sustainability must be accompanied by the inclusion of **experiential learning as well as of nature-based learning, but also a focus on formative assessment** to assess the development of competences linked to sustainability. This mainstreaming must look outside formal education as well, by relying on, but not limited to, family learning, local community events, collaboration with other stakeholders working on sustainability, and community learning centres. Learning for sustainability is associated with a just transition.

8

Advancing digital inclusion through balanced and comprehensive digital learning

With only 56% of the population having basic digital skills,[13] closing this skills gap remains a priority. Digital learning is a public good, and requires national and EU public funding for Open Education Resources to remain so and to aid all learners, regardless of background, ability, age, or other identifying factors, to access public and private services digitally. However, technology is not neutral; it can reproduce biases and inequalities if its design and implementation do not prioritise inclusion, accessibility, and rights. This implies **recognising digital access and skills as enablers of participation** in learning, civic life, and employment, as well as promoting accessible **digital learning environments**, aligned with universal design principles and supported by inclusive pedagogy. Learners require critical thinking competences to make **ethical and informed uses of these tools, including artificial intelligence (AI)**, while they have to be supported for active and responsible participation in digital communities. Digital citizenship education should be employed to promote media and AI/algorithmic literacy, knowledge of the risks and opportunities in the digital realm, including the ecological impact of digital tools, the power structures in data use, AI governance, data protection and digital rights. Lifelong learning can help promote **digital wellbeing**, according to principle 1, aiding learners to strike a balance between overexposure to and healthy usage of digital tools, while knowing their rights to access offline alternatives. Beyond learners, education and training institutions need support to enhance learning delivery, infrastructure, equipment, staff competence development or simplify administrative procedures. The targeted actions needed for the digital transformation should be aimed at closing prominent digital divides based on geography, gender or age. This must be supported by **investment in local digital competence centres and community digital hubs** as key infrastructure to support basic skills development and lifelong learning.

13. 56% of EU people have basic digital skills - Eurostat.

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Strengthening the educator profession

A new vision for lifelong learning must recognise and value the unique role of all those working in education and training,[14] from early childhood education and care up until senior education, in all formats of learning, including education and training institutions' leaders and parents as educators. This requires respecting and supporting educators' agency by **guaranteeing access to quality initial training and continuous professional development (CPD)** that responds to societal changes such as digitalisation, sustainability, and inclusion. CPD should be integrated into daily work, collaborative, free from logistical barriers, and appropriately incentivised, especially in sectors where staff juggle multiple roles. Educators must have the freedom to innovate, supported by **fair working conditions, decent pay, flexible career paths, and meaningful evaluation systems focused on growth rather than control**. Their profession should be **intellectually stimulating**, not reduced to test-driven instruction, and should empower them to address societal challenges. Promoting **collaborative leadership and professional learning communities** is essential, as is addressing gender imbalances across education sectors. A strong educator profession is vital for a just and future-ready lifelong learning system. This is connected to principle 14, as educators and leaders of education and training institutions need to be supported to set up distributed/collaborative leadership and the workplace as professional learning communities.

14. An educator is defined as anyone who professionally guides and supports learners throughout their learning process. This broad definition goes beyond teachers and instructors in formal education settings to include facilitators, trainers, coaches, and other figures who facilitate learning in non-formal settings or informal settings. According to LLLGlossary - Review of Lifelong Learning Terminology.

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Pillar III

Boosting participation in and through lifelong learning

More people are participating in education and training than ever, and they are further empowered to participate in society actively, but there is a rising tide of misinformation and extremist political views; therefore, an overload of information without a matching learning offer can lead to shrinking civic spaces that prevent people from actively participating.

LLLPlatform proposes five principles for active participation in lifelong learning:

Giving equal value to all learning environments

Learning increasingly takes place across diverse settings, formal, non-formal, informal, community-based, workplace, and digital, which must be better connected and equally valued as part of an inclusive learning ecosystem.[15] To foster an authentic culture of lifelong and life-wide learning, **policies and practices must move beyond traditional silos and promote a learning ecosystem where all spaces, regardless of where or how learning occurs, are recognised, supported, and integrated**. This means that **no learning path must be seen as a second-class option**, but rather as an option within an extensive menu that allows for seamless transitions. Achieving this requires better collaboration among all stakeholders, governments at all levels, employers, education providers, and learners themselves. Public funding models should reflect this interconnected reality by supporting cross-sectoral initiatives that combine learning spaces, including smaller, community-based providers, while ensuring larger-scale actions and upscaling initiatives. This is an opportunity to bring other spaces into the fold, such as workplaces, which must become learning spaces, but also spaces that provide peer-to-peer support, especially for digital or sustainability learning, such as makerspaces, community digital hubs, digital cafes, and informal media-based learning, among others.

15. 21st Century Learning Environments - LLLPlatform Position Paper 2019.

Advancing community learning for all

Learners excluded from education and training, or who do not engage in learning, require different approaches to boost motivation. Given the complex and fragmented nature of the learning offer in the EU, there is a need for a **one-stop shop where various education and training stakeholders collaborate across sectors** to provide easily accessible learning services through learning ecosystems. **Community-based learning opportunities** foster the participation of those not usually engaged, among others, while providing a tailored learning experience to the needs of the immediate context. It can address the demographic crises in EU regions by increasing their attractiveness, by setting up hubs for community learning that advance intergenerational learning and provide more opportunities for older people. Such community learning centres can engage in outreach in the spaces where learners lacking basic skills are, to facilitate their smooth re-entry into learning opportunities. They can collaborate with workplaces to provide basic skills in informal and familiar settings. Besides community learning centres, **UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities** is an inspiring example. In all cases, cities and/or local governments play a central role in tailoring lifelong learning policies to local needs, and this requires elevating the status of such loci of decision-making while boosting **multi-level governance in lifelong learning**.

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Fostering active societal participation

Active participation in society requires an understanding of democratic institutions, human rights, and civic engagement. Today, however, citizenship education must go beyond national boundaries. Learners need to understand global interconnections, which can be supported through intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and the promotion of global citizenship education (GCE). **Mainstreaming GCE** across all forms of learning - formal, non-formal, and informal - reinforces democratic values. It builds learners' capacity to contribute to a more inclusive, tolerant, and fair society. It strengthens their ability to resist extremism and defend fundamental rights. **GCE should include topics such as democratic culture, peacebuilding, culture, and critical media literacy, linking local realities to global challenges**. These themes should be integrated across the curriculum and aligned with other key competences. To ensure that social participation is learned through practice, increased funding for non-formal education providers working alongside schools and institutions is essential.

13

Ensuring educators' and learners' involvement in governance

A new vision for lifelong learning requires a new way of making decisions, one that involves those most affected by them. **Educators and learners must be treated as equal partners and included in all stages of lifelong learning decisions**, from design to implementation and evaluation, in a transparent, responsible, and meaningful way. This means adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to policymaking and promoting[16] shared leadership within each education and training institution. Participation should start at institutional level and extend to national and supra-national policymaking. **Learners and educators should be supported to engage meaningfully in these processes**, starting with child participation in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ensuring opportunities for elderly learners. Local communities must be actively involved too, with learning solutions tailored to their needs. Representative bodies can take on this role - co-creating and monitoring decisions on learners' behalf. These bodies must have adequate resources and engagement processes. Finally, **education and training stakeholders, including learner representatives, need training and dedicated funding** to help them participate effectively and influence decision-making.

16. 21st century challenges for the educator profession - LLLPlatform Position Paper 2024.

Design a coherent, harmonised civil dialogue mechanism at all levels

The diversity of the lifelong learning process and stakeholders involved cannot be captured solely by social dialogue or by existing consultative mechanisms for education and training providers. **There is a need for an institutionalised process for civil dialogue at the national and European levels**, so that the voices of all stakeholders in education and training are heard and acted upon, and decision-making transparency is ensured. This can enhance existing reforms in education and training by allowing those impacted by them or working directly on the ground to fine-tune proposals according to the intended beneficiaries' needs. A robust, harmonised system of civil dialogue with a special emphasis on representative stakeholder organisations is bound to **boost intergenerational dialogue and learning, bringing stakeholders together to collaborate, irrespective of age**. Such civil dialogue will depend on **increasing learners' civic competences and promoting European citizenship education,** as highlighted under principles 7 and 13. Moreover, civil dialogue on this scale requires multi-level governance, while lifelong learning programmes and policies at local and national levels must be better linked and more coherent, so they can reinforce each other and boost participation in decision-making from the local to the European level. It is time to make art. 11 of the Treaty on European Union[17] a reality by redistributing decision-making power and ensuring innovation in education and training is co-created with those most affected by it.

17. The text of article 11 is available in the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union.

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Pillar IV

Advancing systemic cooperation

The term lifelong learning is referenced more often across national and European policy initiatives, and the current political agenda supports the creation of a culture of lifelong learning. Still, the term remains limited to learning in adulthood for many. Therefore, the EU misses, at large, a vision for cross-sectoral collaboration of stakeholders in education and training.

LLLPlatform proposes five principles to transform the understanding of lifelong learning:

Adapting data collection and monitoring approaches for inclusivity

A significant challenge in education and training systems is ensuring each learner participates, mainly due to **missing granular data on particular societal groups**. This must be addressed, ensuring complete data privacy and avoiding stigmatisation. It is essential to clearly define what data is needed, why it is needed, and how it will be used. **An EU-wide strategy for data collection and monitoring should be put in place, with Member States working together to ensure consistency and comparability.** A more holistic approach is needed, linking data on skills and learning outcomes with information from formal education systems. Countries should invest in building their capacity to manage and use education data effectively. Finally, data collection must include the perspectives and voices of learners, providers and practitioners, gathered through civil society networks.

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Adopting a common language of lifelong learning

To achieve lifelong learning from cradle to grave, we need coherence across education and training sectors and formats to allow seamless transitions. This should start from developing a **common language in lifelong learning**, which requires establishing similar criteria and processes for quality assurance suitable for each sector, developing synergies between each approach, setting up a common terminology for learning outcomes and a common framework for competences that applies across all learning formats, settings and environments. A first step would be building a **common platform of concepts and terms, and mainstreaming training based on standard terms**. Glossaries and terminological guides must be aligned with each other, and further synergies should be created across communication strategies. The objective is not to develop new tools contributing to a common language, but rather to reel in existing ones and facilitate better synergies to pave the way towards a common language.

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Achieving policy coherence on lifelong learning

Lifelong learning depends on the intersection between all levels and sectors of learning as well as between all formats of learning environments. It is present across all policies at the EU, national and regional levels. To this end, there needs to be an **increased inter-ministerial and/or inter-departmental collaboration at the national and EU level**, while funding associated with various reforms must work in synergy with existing funding in education and training. A **whole-of-government approach**, from the local and up to the European level - operating like multi-level governance - is required, so that learning needs required by other sector-specific reforms can be embedded coherently with existing education and training policy and legislative frameworks. This policy coherence must not limit the fact that education and training sectors have their particular place within the lifelong learning continuum, avoiding standardisation, but rather approaching policy coherence constructively, in a sector-sensitive way, to ensure links between sectors. Each sector must reconsider its contribution to lifelong learning in an increasingly porous system.

18

Establishing governance structures for cooperation in lifelong learning

Effective collaboration between education and training stakeholders requires structured processes supported by adequate resources. Since all stakeholders face increased workloads, it is essential to provide targeted support to help them build and maintain coordination across sectors. LLLP explored the idea of **national and regional Lifelong Learning Platforms**. While the format may vary, intentional efforts to support[6] cross-sector collaboration are needed to bring Jacques Delors' vision of lifelong learning to life. Initiatives such as learning cities/regions and learning communities offer practical examples of systemic cooperation. More broadly a **whole-of-government approach** is needed at both the European and national level, recognising that every policy area is connected to people's learning journeys. **Multi-level governance** from local to EU level ensures consistent strategies that lead to solutions adapted to local needs. **Civil and social dialogue** must be part of all education and training decisions. In particular, social dialogue should go beyond wages and working conditions to include access to skills development and career support.

19

20. Advancing the internationalisation of lifelong learning

As education and training are shaped by different stakeholders at local, regional, national, European and global levels, stronger **cross-border collaboration** is essential. It is vital to ensure that each education and training institution has an **internationalisation strategy**, or refers in their work to an overarching strategy developed by an authority/organisation/network in which they operate, detailing the process for building international partnerships and cooperation, but that is intertwined with developments in curricula or academic environment. As isolationism gains momentum, European lifelong learning needs to strongly make the case for the benefits of internationally connected and collaborating education and training systems. Through this process of internationalisation, **lifelong learning within the EU can better align itself with and ensure contribution to the aims of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 4**. Moreover, a crucial element for internationalisation remains **learning mobility**, for both staff and learners, providing targeted investment for those most in need to access mobility and safeguarding the physical aspect of learning mobility, relying on blended learning but never substituting it with virtual exchanges.

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ROADMAP TO 2035:

Delivering a new vision for lifelong learning

To make this Manifesto a reality and deliver on a new vision for lifelong learning, we propose a roadmap built on the above principles, with a shared responsibility to enable systemic reforms on policy coherence, whole-of-government approaches and the commitment of all stakeholders for the coming ten years. We have a decade of transformation for lifelong learning to deliver 10 bold actions to realise our 20 principles:

I. Ensure inclusive and equitable access to learning for all ages and backgrounds.

1 Update the **EU's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion** with a dedicated chapter for lifelong learning and focus it on the inclusion of all people living in the EU.

2 Upgrade the **Lifelong Learning Glossary (LLLGlossary)** to develop a common language for learning outcomes, qualifications, skills taxonomies and validation and recognition at the EU level, drawing from existing initiatives/resources, such as the European Qualifications Framework. Develop a **Digital Competence Profile**, harmonised with Europass, ESCO, and DigComp. It should be developed to promote transparency, interoperability, and the recognition of digital skills across EU Member States.

3 Develop an **EU Agenda for educators**[18] linking it with existing resources, such as the OECD TALIS study findings, to ensure maximum relevance for all types of educators. Once established, contribute to the development of a framework for its implementation.

18. Educators are all those who professionally guide and support learners in their learning process, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. It does not refer only to learning and teaching personnel, but also to all professional profiles engaged in facilitating the learning and teaching context.

II. Foster competences for resilient societies: life, green, citizenship and digital competences

4

Advance the implementation of the **Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning** by boosting synergies between LifeComp, DigComp, GreenComp, EntreComp, and similar EU-level recognised competence frameworks. Mainstream them across EU Member States, provide the necessary support materials, and develop competence frameworks for the other key competences. Provide an accessible and comprehensive **EU platform** to facilitate the exchange of transferable practices and instructions for the implementation of best practices at local, regional and national level on key competences development.

5

Establishing an **EU legislative competence over citizenship education** and defining an EU-level process for civil dialogue with education and training stakeholders.

III. Levelling-up systemic and cross-sectoral collaboration

6

Set up regional/national **Lifelong Learning Labs (LLLabs)** for cross-sectoral cooperation in education and training to involve stakeholders in decision-making on lifelong learning,[19] and pilot the implementation of **Community Lifelong Learning Centres**[20] under cross-sectoral management.

7

Build a **platform of lifelong learning practices and cooperation** to serve as a blueprint of how cross-sectoral cooperation in lifelong learning operates.

8

Ensure the participation of education and training stakeholders and their civil society networks in the **governance of policymaking at the EU**, national, regional and local levels, strengthening **policy coherence** and avoiding fragmentation.

19. Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Platform - LLLPlatform.
20. Implementing a holistic approach to lifelong learning | CEDEFOP and LLLP

IV. Lifelong learning entitlements: boosting participation for all

9

Establish **individual learning accounts as a universal entitlement to lifelong learning**, ensuring everyone can access quality education and training throughout life. Support their implementation with quality microcredentials.

10

Achieve a **five-fold increase of the Erasmus+ budget** in the next Multiannual Financial Framework and ensure **20% of total public expenditure** on education and training according to commitments made by the EU Member States to UNESCO.

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EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICYMAKING:

Lifelong Learning Platform's resources supporting the Manifesto

2025 - Statement on the Union of Skills: Are we honouring Jacques Delors' vision for lifelong learning.
2025 - Erasmus+ Coalition Common Demands on Future Erasmus+.
2024 - Position Paper on the 21st Century Challenges for the Educator Profession: a call for system change
The changing role and challenges faced by education and training professionals
2024 - Reaction on European Year of Skills 2023
2024 - Reaction on the Action Plan on Labour and Skills Shortages

2024 - Reaction on Europe on the Move: assessing the real impact and ambitions behind the new EU learning mobility targets
2024 - Statement on PISA and PIAAC Results: The irony of being surprised by what we were expecting - a continuous decline
2024 - Op-Ed on Where are education and training in the follow-up of the Conference on the Future of Europe
2024 - Op-Ed on Invest in learning to reap its benefits: EU and national funding in the coming years

2024 - Input Paper on the Review of the Digital Education Action Plan
2023 - Position Paper on Key Competences for All: a lifelong learning approach
2023 - Statement on Children as First Lifelong Learners: a holistic approach to early childhood education and care
2022 - Position Paper on Investment in Education and Training: A Public Good for All
2022 - Reaction on Council Recommendations on learning for the green transition and sustainable development, and on a fair transition towards climate neutrality
2022 - Reaction Individual Learning Accounts and Microcredentials
2022 - Statement on Pathways to School Success
2021 - Position Paper on Rethinking Assessments: Prioritising Learners' Wellbeing
2021 - Reaction on Digital Education Action Plan
2021 - Reaction on the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights
2021 - Statement on Conference on the Future of Europe
2020 - Position Paper on Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Societies
2019 - Position Paper on 21st Century Learning Environments
2019 - Briefing Paper on Implementing a holistic approach to lifelong learning: Community Lifelong Learning Centres as a gateway to multidisciplinary support teams

2018 - Position Paper on Building Synergies between Education and Culture: Fostering a true partnership at all levels for inclusive societies
2017 - Reaction on Key Competences Framework for Lifelong Learning Review
2017 - Position Paper on Reimagining Education for the Digital Age
2017 - Statement on the Future of Europe
2017 - Statement on Improving and Modernising Education: Weaving principles of inclusiveness throughout education systems
2016 - Position Paper on Learning Participation Improving Quality, Access and Outreach
2016 - Position Paper on Education to Foster Intercultural Understanding and Solidarity in Europe
2016 - Position Paper on Integrating Refugees and Migrants through Education: Building bridges in divided societies
2015 - Gender equality - Success factor for lifelong learning strategies
2014 - Position Paper on A Common Approach to the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning
2013 - Key Messages on Education and Citizenship
2013 - Position Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for Better Socio-Economic Outcomes
2009 - EQF and NQF: Tools for Learning Continuity?
2009 - Lifelong learning, a key to achieving European active citizenship?

ABOUT LLLP

The **Lifelong Learning Platform - European Civil Society for Education** (formerly EUCIS-LLL) was born in 2005 as a response from civil society organisations to the definition and implementation of a European policy in the field of education and training in the so-called "Open Method of Coordination".

2001

In 2001, several educational networks had come together to share their experience and expertise around a Europe-wide consultation on the EU "Lifelong Learning Memorandum". This cooperation became systematic when the Platform was established as a permanent organisation in 2005 and headquartered in Brussels. For over 20 years now, the Lifelong Learning Platform has been playing a key role in structuring and increasing the input of civil society on European policies in education and training, promoting a vision of inclusive education systems and stressing the relevance of non-formal and informal learning next to formal education.

2009

The European Commission formally acknowledged the Lifelong Learning Platform in 2009 as a "unique representation" of lifelong learning of the various education and training actors organised at EU level.

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2011

The European Commission formally acknowledged the Lifelong Learning Platform in 2011 as "in a unique position to support European networks in education and training to work collectively at European, national and local levels and to contribute to a structured policy dialogue within the open method of coordination in education and training".

2017

In 2017 the Lifelong Learning Platform's campaigns in favour of more robust investments in education were cited by the European Parliament.

Gathering more than 40 European organisations active in education and training and representing all education sectors and stakeholders, the Lifelong Learning Platform is today the most legitimate interlocutor of the EU institutions in the field, decisively contributing to the definition of EU policies.

lllplatform.eu