



The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI)

Position paper

“What could the European Union do to help its member states ensure that their education and training systems, and more specifically, their apprenticeship setups, help citizens **understand and appropriate common European values** as well as promote fair societies based on solidarity?”

For more information

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CESI shares the opinion of the European Commission concerning the fact that extremism and radicalism are a scourge, which not only causes the loss of numerous human lives but also undermines the values of our society itself, such as freedom, equality and tolerance. National security services are limited to simply *reacting* to individuals who have already been radicalised. However, both upbringing and education play a key role in the shaping of values, through the teaching of knowledge and know-how to young people, allowing them to actively participate in the construction of their individuality and identity.

Although CESI wishes to make the point that the transmission of values should be considered a responsibility that is shared by all the various players concerned (i.e. families, governments, municipalities, local players, personnel in the field of education, school heads, etc.) and that it is therefore important that the blame for issues resulting from the non-respect of European values should not simply be put on teaching staff, we believe that the world of education represents a favourable environment to guide people into becoming the responsible citizens of the future through its fundamental influence on their personality and individuality.

Moreover, CESI wishes to highlight the fact that training the workers of tomorrow as well as future citizens represents an investment in human capital. As a result, this requires significant investment in education, namely in human resources, because working conditions for teachers should be seen as a social investment.

We live in a society that grants great worth to human dignity and all related values. In our daily lives - which may be somewhat dull at times -, it is important to remind ourselves of the fundamental values that have been acquired and defended throughout Europe's history. CESI wishes to underscore the fact that the acceptance of diversity should not run against the respect and recognition of our European values.

In order to promote social inclusion and common European values by means of education and informal learning, CESI is of the opinion that the following factors should be taken into account:

1. Action on the level of education and training systems

a. Theoretical teaching

Changes to the curricula in place should be considered. CESI believes that both the **European spirit as well as the discovery of other religions and their common values** should be placed on the agenda of every school system across the E.U., whether it be via a specific and in-depth subject matter taught in schools and that is the same in every country, or by means of the (compulsory) integration of these ideas into subject matters that are already on the curricula, such as history, philosophy, civic education, ethics, etc. Contents could focus on European history on the one hand (e.g. history of the European Union, ideals and objectives of the founding fathers, etc.) and the history of religions on the other. Taking into account the increasing power of social media and networks in our societies, especially among young people, real schooling about media should be given from the youngest age possible, thus reinforcing the students' ability to think critically and preventing the uncontrolled dissemination of radical narratives.



b. Teaching and critical thinking

Clearly, a theoretical course alone will not suffice to help young people construct their values and identity. From a teaching point of view, for greater effectiveness, it is necessary to **confront young people face to face with certain values**. This teaching approach involving both ethical questions and concrete situations would grant students the **understanding that values are not isolated precepts**, but that they are an integral part of human activity. The role of the educational system should not only be to transmit values, **but to provide young people with the ability to think about them**. For these reasons, CESI believes that it is crucial to:

- **make changes to the period of time given to theoretical classes in order to make room for thought-provoking informal learning, teaching young people to think and put into practice the values in question (by means of extra-curricular activities, volunteering (social and civic engagement))** from the very beginning so that tolerance, mutual respect and civic responsibility become natural values from the youngest age possible;
- **give young people more opportunities to participate in certain decision-making processes** (student committees), organise school events to bring the various school-related players together (i.e. families, students and school staff) and make room for dialogue, cultural events, school exchanges, etc. This type of constructive approach that strives to create a pleasant atmosphere would permit **to put into practice some of the values taught**, and it would allow students to experience important moments for both their future social and professional lives.

2. Action on the level of teaching staff

The education and training sectors play a crucial role in the development of young people's critical thinking skills. Both families and teaching personnel share the difficult task of guiding the young when shaping their ideas and identity. Indeed, nowadays, in addition to their main mission, i.e. the transfer of knowledge and skills, an increasing number of educational personnel is expected to act as intermediaries, moderators in debates and in situations of conflict. The teaching of values can also take place via the teachers themselves and their human skills, i.e. their "narratives". Such skills require adequate training. In this context, CESI believes that it is fundamental to:

- **ensure that both basic and continuous teacher training that focuses more on diversity, the history of religions and the values shared by the various religious communities present in the European Union be provided**. For a long time now, CESI has defended the importance of intercultural training for all public employees whose daily tasks involve interacting with other cultures (including teachers and other teaching staff) and that it should be organised and encouraged by employers;
- **support teaching staff by means of external experts for some subject matters (e.g. civic education, ethics, history of the E.U., history of religions)**, so that these specialists may provide an "outsider's viewpoint" and moderate debates with the students on specific subjects and topical issues. These could be national experts, speakers from other countries, or individuals who are active on the European stage (e.g. from the European institutions or specialised networks such as the "RAN – Radicalisation Awareness Network");



- **promote diversity among teaching staff.** Greater diversity in personnel recruitment would strengthen intercultural awareness, and consequently, it would promote exchanges with certain students and open the door to dialogue amongst colleagues on common values – values that are not simply taught, but experienced. In the face of growing multiculturalism and religious diversity in our societies, the mission of schools should be to create an environment where one can learn while accepting diversity;¹
- **the more intensive promotion of experiences of foreign countries for teaching staff via the Erasmus+ programme,** by informing a larger public about the various possibilities provided and simplifying both access to the programme and the required procedures. Participation in this type of enriching experience on both a human and professional level should be encouraged nationally and on the level of school management.

3. Action directly related to the European Commission

CESI appreciates the fact that the issue of teaching values is currently the object of increasing attention from the European Union. Within this framework, CESI recommends:

- **more communication on the European level concerning the tools that have already been developed and the more intensive promotion of successful events in place.** This will also require **more investments in order to be able to disseminate and promote the use of certain practical tools for professionals in the member states.** In our point of view, important instruments such as the eTwinning platform (which was awarded the European Prize) or country-specific handbooks for teachers and educational staff published by the RAN² are insufficiently used, or not applied in a uniform or satisfactory fashion by the players in the field in certain countries;
- **greater ease of access (i.e. less complexity) to the actions and financing provided by Erasmus+.** Having recognised the importance of this funding, it is crucial to simplify or explain the administrative steps to follow in the case of Erasmus+ in more detail, which remain too complicated for some players in the field do not possess the resources required to make the best use of this option.

¹ However, CESI wishes to discourage any policy that would lead to “segregation” in schools. As the study issued by the CULT Committee of the European Parliament, “ [Teaching Common Values in Europe](#) ” (June 2017), separating students into different groups depending on their abilities was not constructive. Indeed, this considerably reduced the opportunity to exchange and make discoveries about social and cultural differences.

² A specific example: the translation into all official E.U. languages of certain practical tools, such as the report on teacher training of 2017 of the RAN EDU group would allow a larger number of professionals in the field to be reached, and thus increase its practical use and efficiency:

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran-ran-edu/docs/ran_edu_guide_training_programmes_helsinki_01-02_03_2017_en.pdf