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European Economic and Social Committee

Background - briefly about the EESC

344 members divided into three GROUPS

- **Group I – Employers**

- Public and private sectors of industry, commerce, finance, etc. (large companies)

- **Group II – Employees**

- National trade union confederations

- **Group III – Various Interests**

- Farmers, consumers, the social economy, craftsmen and SMEs, social and environmental NGOs, the professions... - here I represent the Czech Council of Children and Youth.

The activities of the EESC

- The role of the Committee is to issue opinions
 - (approx. 150 per year)

Its consultative role and its dialogue with civil society organisations...

...make the EESC one of the most active protagonists and promoters of...

... PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY.

EESC and validation of non-formal education/learning

- Several EESC opinions tackled the topic, but so far not in a complex way:

- SOC 291 – Adult Learning

„(need for) the expansion of non-vocational adult learning, i.e. the non-formal and informal learning opportunities that people – those in employment and others – need to further their overall personal development and strengthen democratic citizenship.“

- SOC 356 – Cross-border mobility for young people

„With a view to the validation and recognition of both formal and non-formal learning, the Lisbon convention on recognition needs to be formally recognised, signed and ratified.“



- SOC 227 – Key competences for lifelong learning

Besides supporting the general objectives, the EESC feels that it is especially important to ensure that young people dropping out of school should have the opportunity through non-formal training programmes of receiving assistance in acquiring the key competences outlined in the proposal.

- SOC 365 – Education for inclusion...

Non-formal education is very often based on non-hierarchical, participative pedagogical forms and working methods as well as being closely associated with and run by civil society organisations. The very nature and bottom-up approach of non-formal education has proved an effective tool for combating poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, the EESC wishes to underline the significant role of non-formal education in the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy.



- SOC 349 – An EU Strategy for Youth

„Recognising the skills obtained through volunteering activities is essential (including recognition in formal education). Accumulated non-formal skills and knowledge can be used both on the labour market as well as to improve participation in civil life.“

„In order to make learning more attractive and efficient for young people and to acknowledge the role of non-formal learning, the following issues should be addressed and followed:

- *introducing non-formal learning methods in formal education,*
- *creating easy transitions between formal and non-formal learning opportunities,*
- *steering young people towards learning through experience,*
- *linking schools with local youth work,*
- *putting the young person at the centre of the learning process,*
- *recognition of the skills obtained through volunteering and non-formal learning (the Youthpass certificate is a good example and this should be expanded to cover more actions and activities, including outside the Youth in Action programme),*
- *A clear system for assessing the skills acquired through non-formal and informal education should be put in place.“*



My personal involvement in the topic

- Bringing the concept of non-formal education and its recognition to the political debate (as a former chairman of the Czech Council of Children and Youth) – to the strategies, i.e. Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic.
- Coordination of recognition of non-formal education within the ESF funded project „Keys for life“, targeted to (mostly voluntary) youth workers – www.kliceprozivot.cz. The project includes mapping of skills, definition of competence portfolios for every position in youth NGOs, creation of „partial competences“ within the NQF, deliberations with business and educational institutions on their recognition and of certificates, self-evaluation tools for youth workers.



A couple of questions arising from experience

- With whom do we communicate on recognition? State, business representatives, educational institutions? What are their reactions? Can we influence enough their thinking? Are they ready to change their mindsets?
- How do we ensure the quality of recognized/validated non-formal education/learning?
- To what extent does recognition/validation help other groups of people than the fresh graduates trying to find a place on the labour market?



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