Council of the European Union

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of 19 and 20 November 2026: Education and skills for democratic resilience *- Information from Romania, supported by Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Spain, Luxembourg and Slovakia*

Education and training are central to how our societies and our citizens adapt to a rapidly changing world marked by technological revolutions, environmental and economic shifts, but also by demographic transitions, conflict and widening inequalities.

In 2023, the Council called on member states to further **promote common European values and democratic citizenship**, in all levels and types of education and training[1]. **The new cycle of European cooperation for 2026–2030** assigns a strategic role to education for democratic citizenship in defining the European Education Area, with **digital competences** and **education for democratic citizenship** identified as the second strategic dimension of the EEA, and with citizenship as one of the five basic skills to be pursued in education and training.

1 Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship, 23 November 2023.

The **European Preparedness Union Strategy** recognizes the role of education in fostering an informed and resilient population, while the **European Democracy Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies** emphasizes that engaged and informed citizens, together with an active civil society, form the foundation of strong and resilient democracies. **The Union of Skills** and the **Action Plan on Basic Skills** recognize citizenship competence as one of the core foundations of education and training.

Education equips pupils with **knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values** that anchor them within a historical context and value-based democratic society, which can serve as a strong safeguard against misinformation and disinformation. Education also fosters a greater ability to recognize behaviors – including those online – designed to manipulate and distort an individual's relationship with the world, society, or family.

Basic skills are also instrumental as necessary foundations for building the skills and mindsets needed to solve complex, interdisciplinary problems but also to flexibly adapt to future uncertainties.

In this context, promoting **education for democratic citizenship**, including **media and digital literacy** and **critical thinking**, is therefore essential for enhancing the ability of citizens of all ages to identify risks and threats, navigate the information environment, access reliable information, exercise their democratic rights and participate in democratic processes.

Our children need to develop active participation, civic responsibility and democratic values, and this can only happen in **a safe and inclusive school environment** that encourages pupils' active participation.

Furthermore, schools can offer pupils **a sense of belonging,** of being part of a community, protecting them against isolation, marginalization and vulnerability.

We call for **strengthened cooperation between member states on how education systems can support our democratic societies**, and welcome the European Commission's support for targeted actions, including the development of a competence framework on the EU dimension of education for democratic citizenship and dedicated peer counselling, in the work programme of the next cycle's working groups.

In order to support these efforts, we need to bring together relevant stakeholders at the national and regional level, as well as local communities, to collaboratively address challenges facing democratic societies through education under the umbrella of a **European learning and innovation lab on education and skills for democratic resilience**.

Areas for action should include:

- **Reaffirming the importance of education for democratic citizenship and strengthening competences for democratic resilience** through meaningful experiences of participation, dialogue, cooperation and respect for pluralism, both in and outside schools, in line with a whole school approach.

- **Strengthening critical thinking, digital competences, media and AI literacy, and responsible online engagement as** effective tools against disinformation and manipulation. This should also include practical skills to recognise and respond to online risks, including harmful interactions, exploitation and manipulation, and awareness of available support and reporting mechanisms.

- **Invest in teachers training in this field and dedicated pedagogical modules for teaching citizenship as of early age.**

- **Fostering schools' ability and capacity to manage disagreements, diversity, and conflicts** as part of their day-to-day educational practices, as well as to provide safe spaces for open debate.

- Investing in **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** to foster emotional regulation and healthy behaviors.

- Contribution of pupils, teachers, and school staff well-being to creating a **safe, inclusive, supportive, and positive learning environment** in which everyone can thrive.

- **Strengthening foundational skills** as an essential basis for critical thinking, individual autonomy and democratic participation at local, regional, national and European level.

- **Fostering partnerships between education, employers and communities** through collaborative projects, mentoring, intergenerational learning and civic participation initiatives that strengthen democratic competences across educational, professional and community settings, at local, regional, national and European level.