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The Role of Education in Coexistence

ABSTRACT: *In the increasingly federalised European Union, cultural diversity has become both an asset and a challenge. From a cultural viewpoint, this diversity includes many dominant cultures, indigenous and national minority cultures, as well as immigrant community cultures, as a result of large population movements. There are similarities and differences between these cultures, and the states and, ultimately, the European Union must seek to strike a balance between them, avoiding confrontation, tensions, and clashes, while simultaneously creating social peace, solidarity, and loyalty. Important elements in this process are socialisation, adaptation, the application of integration policies, and, ultimately, education. Culture is a learned factor, as people acquire cultural patterns through socialisation, and education is one of the most important arenas for this socialisation. Education, if it considers the cultural differences in society, does so primarily by promoting the coexistence of cultures, building bridges between different cultures through the means of understanding, and thus promoting social justice. Currently, Member States in the European Union are addressing these challenges according to their own objectives and national needs. The study therefore examines in general terms how Member States are responding to the emergence of different cultures. It also takes into account the process of federalisation of the European Union, in which the question of how to respond to cultural diversity may become a common – and shared – concern for the European Union. The study therefore also looks at educational responses to cultural diversity in the European Union.*

KEYWORDS: acculturation, education, European Union, diversity, integration, inclusive education, minorities

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1. Introduction

The European Union is a culturally diverse entity. This diversity needs no further explanation, as we are aware that it is home to countless nations, nationalities, and majority and minority cultures. Member States are diverse as well, but at the level of the European Union, this diversity becomes multilevel: the majority, the dominant culture of each state, is only one culture among many, joined by the cultures of the various nationalities, indigenous communities, and immigrant groups. Looking at the history of the development of the European Union, we can see that diversity has been constantly increasing, mainly because of different population movements (whether we are talking about immigrants from third countries or population movements between Member States).

In an increasingly federalised European Union, cultural diversity is becoming both an asset and a challenge. Cultural differences can significantly affect many aspects of life.

Education, if it considers the cultural differences in society, does so primarily with a view to promoting the coexistence of cultures, building bridges between different cultures through means of understanding each other, and thus promoting social justice.

Increasing diversity necessarily implies the need to learn about cultural patterns that are different from our own to strengthen our ability to cooperate, manage conflict, and take advantage of diversity. This can be achieved through learned skills and processes, in which education plays a key role. At many levels, the challenge for education is to be able to effectively respond to and influence these processes. The federalisation process will reach a point where the focus will shift to the question of whether education should remain entirely within the competence of the Member States or whether the centre can promote it, as education also plays a key role in forging a sense of belonging to the European Union, in shaping a common identity, and in dealing with the impact of the high level of diversity on the European Union.

2. Protection or loss of culture

Cultures interact constantly with each other. Each culture has elements that are the same (or very similar) and others that are distinctive. For example, there may be minor differences between nationalities and the majority culture, whereas there may be major differences between the dominant culture and the culture of an immigrant group. This also includes cultural practices that are (or should be) declared unacceptable in Western cultures (e.g. there is a high degree of consensus on the condemnation of genital mutilation or child marriage).

The emergence of a different (alien) culture has always been a potential source of tension in the society and for the state. The source of this tension stems from the need to maintain sovereignty on the host side and autonomy on the alien side. This is because the experience of the differences between them (at the level of language, beliefs, rituals, daily life, etc.) creates a rupture in the original experience of homogeneity on both sides and raises the question of what the words and actions of the other person mean, whether the other person is a threat to the host, or whether the host is a source of danger to the alien.[1] Related to this is the diminishing state authority as a result of globalisation, which amplifies the fear that the presence of alien cultures works against sovereignty.[2]

The meeting of cultures with such a high degree of diversity necessarily implies the introduction and implementation of certain social organisation policies. Historically, this has been the case with the use of assimilation methods and the experimentation with integration mechanisms that have replaced assimilation policies.[3]

Traditionally, the state has favoured a certain level of homogeneity in society as a basic preference for its operations. This was based on the idea that cultural differences, that is, habits that differ from or do not conform to the cultural pattern promoted by the authorities, could be used to subvert national and political unity. In this process, political loyalty and trust were combined with cultural conformity, citizenship and cultural conformity were merged, and culturally diverse groups abandoned their original cultural customs to share their rights and goods.[4] Therefore, the state also contributes to the achievement of homogeneity (homogenisation) by active means. This includes the creation of cultural homogeneity from the 17th and 18th centuries onward (e.g. through the introduction of nationally based folk school education, the establishment of cultural institutions, the creation of population registers, language reform) and the formation of traditional ethnic groups into nations (ethnic homogenisation, where the creation of linguistic unity also played a role), typically through assimilation in its modern form from the 19th century onward. The further stages of homogenisation included religious and social unification, religious wars, the creation of state churches, and social movements.[5] These homogenisation trends were often interlinked. However, by the 20th century, states had typically abandoned national homogenisation, partly as a consequence of the failure of forced assimilation.[6]

However, this does not indicate the complete extinction of assimilation tendencies. The objective is less evident for national or indigenous groups.

1 Biczó, 2004, p. 19.
2 Falk, 2002, pp. 17, 23.
3 Berkes, 2024, pp. 14–19.
4 Bauman, 1997, pp. 54–55.
5 Berkes, 2020, p. 27.
6 Gulyás, 2018, pp. 21–25.

However, in the case of immigrants, the objective of the state is for immigrants to adopt, at least to some extent, the culture and customs of the majority society (*acculturation*). This process may only include some forms of integration policies but could ultimately lead to assimilation, that is, the disappearance of newcomers as a distinct group.[7] The greater are the frequency and breadth of contact with the majority culture and the extent of the dominant culture's numerical superiority, the higher the speed of this process becomes.

One of the most cited sociologists, Milton M. Gordon, distinguished seven stages of the assimilation process: 1) acculturation, where cultural patterns are adapted to the culture of the host society; 2) structural assimilation provides opportunities for broad access to the institutions of the host society (cliques, clubs, etc.); 3) assimilation through marriage; 4) identification assimilation, which is already associated with a sense of belonging; 5) attitudinal assimilation, which means a lack of prejudice towards the minority group; 6) behavioural assimilation, which means freedom from discrimination; 7) civil assimilation, lack of conflicts of values and power.[8]

Four main factors contribute to the loss of culture and its weakening: an independent economic base, demographic level, traditions, and the ability to preserve language. Of these, economic independence is most easily lost, while the original language that can be preserved to the final stages of integration.[9] Today, but even more so in the future, the challenge at the European Union level is to decide whether to promote acculturation or support the preservation of diverse cultures. This question is not just a matter for Member States, as the development of common asylum and immigration policies has been a source of increased diversity for some time.

Thus, although the extent differs by region, there is now an approach to *accommodation*, whereby the majority society gives up its rights and power to better accommodate minority cultures and improve their situation.

The difficulty in adapting is that the emergence of alien (foreign) cultures has led to the development of certain stereotypes[10] about these cultures, whether well founded or not, which do not necessarily have negative or hostile content; however, if the difference between groups is perceived as alien, otherness, and distinctiveness, it can trigger negative prejudicial thinking, which can lead to conflict situations.

According to Allport's scale, the first level of negative action resulting from prejudice is formed by negative verbal comments (*antilocution*). The next step is the avoidance of members of the disliked group, followed by discrimination, which is an active behaviour directed at the group and an institutionalised version

7 Carmon, 1996, p. 23.
8 Gordon, 1964, p. 71.
9 Boglár, 2002-2003.
10 Dranik, 2009.

of segregation. The fourth level is a physical attack, which is a violent behaviour, while the most serious level is extermination in the form of lynchings, pogroms, massacres, and genocide.[11] Hostilities are based on identity-based competition between groups, often for access to resources. Competition between groups leads to prejudice and discrimination, whereas cooperation reduces prejudice and promotes integration.[12]

Simultaneously, mutual cooperation and adaptation between groups can create solidarity among communities and loyalty to the state or society, which form the basis for social peace and the functioning of a diverse state (i.e. federation).

These processes are the root of the questions of which habits and social practices should or should not (or cannot) be adapted and what effect (e.g. increasing or decreasing opportunities and chances) this adaptation has.[13] The difficulty of translating these questions into the language of law is that while law must apply equally to all, while the essence of adaptation is flexibility, whereby two seemingly identical behaviours may not (must not) be judged in the same way by the state. [14]

3. The role of education

The link between culture and identity is established by the socialisation process, as a result of which the human personality – the identity of a person – is influenced by culture. In this way, habits and patterns of behaviour are formed, which then become the objects of the aforementioned accommodation.

Socialisation is the process of acquiring values and norms through which an individual adopts certain behaviours, reacts to certain situations by imitation, learns to adapt to environmental challenges, seeks understanding, and develops a set of values. Socialisation is a lifelong process; most patterns are established in childhood, and by adulthood key identity issues are clarified (but this does not mean that personality cannot change as a result of adult influences).[15]

In the process of socialisation, individuals adapt their personality traits, inclinations, and characteristics to the social framework. In a society where an individual is a member, the relationship between the individual and society is maintained and regulated by a sense of identity.[16] This sense of identity constitutes an identity. When, in the course of socialisation, an individual becomes part of a

11 Allport, 1954, pp. 14–15.
12 Esses et al., 2005, p. 227.
13 Lovett, 2010, pp. 243–267.
14 See e.g. Waldron, 2002, pp. 3–34.
15 Zsolt, 2005, pp. 35–37.
16 Papp, 2007, pp. 109–110.

group and develops an identity associated with it, he or she becomes a part of the components of culture and society.[17]

Every culture is comprised of six main elements: values, norms, beliefs, symbols, technologies, and languages. Values are a culture's collective ideas regarding what is good, right, wrong, desirable, or rejected. Values are also a central aspect of culture, with many similarities, but also vast differences in the way people seek to achieve their goals and realise their values. Different values can be found even within the same country; for example, some groups of people have individualistic values, whereas others value cooperation. Norms provide models to follow and guide human behaviour but also show a high degree of diversity. Beliefs are convictions, faiths, and ideas that have accumulated throughout human history and influence our daily lives. Religious customs strongly nuance the differences in human behaviour from one region to another and from one ethnic group to another. Technology includes a wide variety of objects, tools, instruments, machines, and electronic equipment, and technological developments have increased the diversity of human cultures. Human culture and civilisation are inextricably intertwined through the use of symbolic systems. Language, as a system of symbols, is a key element of communication between people, information transmission, and culture, being the mainstay of culture for transmitting cultural content.[18] Language is thus the vehicle of culture and key to its development.

If a state wishes to accommodate the needs of culturally diverse groups, it must consider these elements and adapt its instruments accordingly. Education is also an important aspect of this toolbox. Culture is a learned factor, as people acquire cultural patterns through socialisation and education is a key (although not exclusive) arena for this socialisation. Education, if it considers the cultural differences in society, does so primarily with a view to promoting the coexistence of cultures, bridging the gap between different cultures through means of understanding and, thus, promoting social justice.[19]

Solutions that focus on different cultures and harmonise their needs with those of the majority culture are a significant challenge, as they may require solutions that are unusual or alien to the usual methods and do not necessarily promise success. The diversity, constant variation, and specificity of the components make it difficult to develop universally applicable and workable solutions. Therefore, the focus is (and should be) on flexibility and adaptability rather than fixed patterns.

17 Byron, 2002, p. 442.
18 Torgyik and Karlovitz, 2006, pp. 11–13.
19 Berkes, 2020, p. 188.

4. Education focusing on the presence of different cultures

It is already a fact in all the Member States of the European Union, that the presence of different cultures is a major challenge for their education systems, which have existed and evolved for centuries. This challenge is greater in cases where large numbers of people with different customs, behaviours, and languages (e.g. newcomers because of the Arab Spring or currently Ukrainian refugees, whose number is more than 4 million in the European Union[20]) arrive over a short period of time and need to be integrated into the education system. In such cases, one of the greatest challenges is overcoming language barriers. While the issue of language rights is usually related to the preservation and use of the mother tongue by minorities and immigrant groups, we can also see examples of the needs and demands of the majority culture in this respect.[21] Overall, the mixed system of rules – consisting of legal norms and policy objectives – that Balázs Gerencsér calls the law of coexisting languages must be able to incorporate a number of preferences; that is, it must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to social changes and, at the same time, reflect the specific characteristics of countries.[22]

In the event that the European Union and its Member States promote adaptation solutions, this will also lead to the spread of so-called multicultural (intercultural) education[23] in the field of education.

20 Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine - monthly statistics https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Temporary_protection_for_persons_fleeing_Ukraine_-_monthly_statistics (Accessed: 28 July 2024). According to the European Commission, the number of refugees in the European Union is estimated at around 7 million, but it is unclear whether the statistics refer to all forms of asylum or only to those recognised as refugees. In addition, around 27 million of the EU population are currently non-EU citizens. Statistics on migration to Europe https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en#people-living-in-the-eu (Accessed: 28 July 2024)

21 See, for example, the Latvian example. Manzinger, 2024a, pp. 65–91; Manzinger 2024b, pp. 157–172.

22 Gerencsér, 2022, p. 13.

23 The literature is not consistent as to whether the two concepts are the same or not. Multicultural education and intercultural education are often used as synonyms (Nieto, 2006; Hill, 2007), while others indicate that there is a difference between the two. In the multicultural and intercultural literature it is often unclear what the concepts mean and whether they are referring to the same or different things. Often the difference in use seems mostly geographical. In Europe the preferred term is intercultural education while especially the United States but also the rest of North America, Australia and Asia use the term multicultural education (Hill, 2007; Leeman & Reid, 2006). However, in Europe there are differences between countries as well. For example, in Sweden and the Netherlands intercultural education is used while in Great Britain and Finland multicultural education is the commonly used term. Interestingly multicultural and intercultural education are often used as if the terms are universally understood and referring to only one type of education. As can be seen in Sleeter and Grant (2003) multicultural education can take

It should also be stressed that the application of multicultural solutions is fundamentally community dependent. Although the European Union is culturally diverse, its diversity varies. In some regions, national minorities are much more prevalent, there are no significant cultural differences, and the preservation of cultural, religious, and linguistic specificities is more about stopping the assimilation process, whereas in other areas, the integration of immigrants is a priority. The choice of instruments must be made accordingly, such as curriculum development, teacher training, the involvement of parents and local communities, and funding reforms (in which the European Union could also play a role, as it does by supporting targeted research, drawing up recommendations, and developing student and teacher mobility). Therefore, subsidiarity is of utmost importance in the choice of instruments and methods, and each Member State must make decisions in light of local communities and circumstances.

An important element of multicultural education is to combat racism, negative prejudice, and discrimination; create equal educational conditions for all students, regardless of their background; and help them acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to function effectively in a pluralistic, democratic society.[24] This is achieved by emphasising the factors that bind groups together while simultaneously seeking to reduce the risk of overpoliticising differences. This also requires that certain challenges, such as conflict management, teamwork, and adaptation, be addressed in depth.[25]

In the long term, multicultural education promotes integration – that is, integration at work, school, and society – and becomes an important cohesive force. Further, it is based on mutual awareness, sensitivity to global problems, and a sense of responsibility.[26] This is rooted in equal opportunity and the right to education.

In this form,

> multicultural education is not only a sensitivity to different races, cultures, social groups, different cultural values, but also a paradigm shift that implies the acceptance of different ways of thinking as values, and which simply takes pluralism, diversity of human thought and culture for granted. Multicultural education is characterised by inclusiveness (...), inclusive of all groups, from which no one can be excluded, and which is also beneficial and valuable for all (...).[27]

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many different directions. Likewise intercultural education is sometimes mostly focused on intercultural relations but at other times more structural issues are part of the focus. (Holm and Zilliacus, 2009, p. 11)

24 Peacock, 2015, pp. 6, 13.

25 Jones, 2000, pp. 111–125.

26 Torgyik, 2004.

27 Torgyik and Karlovitz, 2006, p. 32.

Multicultural education grew out of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s, which demanded the end of discrimination in schools. The next step was to demand that educational institutions reform their curricula to reflect the history, culture, and experiences of particular ethnic groups and that schools employ more ethnic teachers who could serve as role models for children. Therefore, the need for community supervision in schools has increased. The first educational programs tried to respond to these new needs without adequate preparation and without a comprehensive strategy, typically in the form of optional subjects, and was met with resistance in most cases. The next step was the emergence of educational demands by feminist movements to transform male-oriented curricula, followed in the 1970s by the demands of other marginalised groups: the elderly, the disabled, and sexual minorities.[28]

In the 1980s, multicultural education came to the fore, with researchers and activists becoming increasingly active on this subject. At this time, Banks developed the concept of educational equality, which included the study and transformation of all aspects of schooling. He soon joined Carl Grant, Christine Sleeter, Geneva Gay, and Sonia Nieto, who developed new programs based on the principle of equal access to education, going beyond the transformation of curricula to identify, discuss, and critique oppressive approaches to education; funding disparities; the classroom climate; discriminatory employment practices; and other symptoms of a difficult and oppressive education system. As an increasing number of people have recognised that the education system is seriously unequal and in need of reform, an increasing number of solutions have emerged, resulting in dozens of models and frameworks for multicultural education.[29] It is on this foundation that multicultural education emerged and spread to ethnically diverse countries. The concept is rather broad and adapts to the needs of the community concerned; therefore, there are many different solutions.

The experience of the initial period, which was still focused on the possible adaptation of the curriculum, showed that, if the lesson on the culture of each ethnic group was not sufficiently integrated into the curriculum (e.g. by allocating only one week) and only provided superficial information, it would do more harm than good because it would send the message that ethnic groups are not part of society and should be further marginalised. Recognising this, attempts have been made to present the life opportunities of ethnic groups rather than their ways of life (e.g. victims of victimisation and institutional discrimination). This has been followed by the advocacy of a more holistic approach, which not only presents the experiences of particular groups in an accurate and sensitive way but also allows these groups to learn about the experiences of both mainstream and other minority groups from the perspective of different ethnic, racial, or cultural groups, thus

28 Banks, 2016, pp. 3–5.
29 Gorski, 2012.

promoting a multiplicity of approaches. In addition to the curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the role of teachers as both cultural mediators and 'agents of change' in a multicultural education system. This requires teachers to possess social science knowledge, clear cultural insights, positive intergroup and racial attitudes, and appropriate pedagogical skills.[30]

Multicultural education covers more than simply adapting to a curriculum. Banks recognised the need to create the five dimensions when he realised that most teachers thought that multicultural education was merely the integration of content, when this was only at the entry level. Indeed, multicultural education is not just about introducing children to other cultures but also involves changing children's thinking, making them more critical, changing teachers' teaching techniques and strategies to meet the needs of children from different groups, breaking down prejudices, and transforming the entire school environment.[31] The five dimensions of this are content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structures.[32]

Content integration: Teachers use examples and information from different cultures to support the content of their subjects. In the process, they consider how the knowledge elements they choose will be integrated into the existing curriculum, the framework within which this knowledge will be transmitted, and the target group: minority students only or majority students as well.

Knowledge construction: The teacher facilitates understanding and processing students from different ethnic groups and cultures.

Prejudice reduction describes students' attitudes and strategies towards racial and ethnic groups. An equal-opportunity pedagogy is followed by the educator when he facilitates the academic achievement of students from different racial, ethnic, and social groups. They find a method that will best improve the achievement of minority students who come from low-status population groups and lag behind the majority of students in learning.

An empowering school culture: The culture of the school, teaching/learning style of the teachers (examination methods, choice of textbooks), atmosphere, structure, and physical environment of the institution.

Paul C. Gorski, another key researcher in the field of multicultural education, summarised the principles of multicultural education below, based on the most important authors in the field (i.e. Nieto, Banks, Sleeter, Grant):

- Multicultural education is a political movement ensuring social justice for historically disadvantaged students;

30 Banks, 2006, pp. 93–97, 101–103.
31 Banks and Tucker, 2019.
32 Banks, 2009, p. 15.

- Multicultural education recognises that while, in some cases, classroom activities are consistent with multicultural educational philosophies, social justice is an institutional issue that can only be achieved through comprehensive school reforms;
- Multicultural education insists that comprehensive school reform can only be achieved through a critical analysis of systems of power and privilege;
- The fundamental aim of multicultural education is to eliminate educational inequalities;
- Multicultural education is a good form of education for all students.[33]

For multicultural education to achieve its goals, it must develop competencies that enable individuals to contribute effectively and appropriately in a multicultural situation based on their specific approaches, knowledge, skills, and thinking.[34] This type of education results in multicultural transformation; that is, when an individual is able to interact effectively with others in culturally diverse environments and situations.[35]

Gorski also developed guidelines to achieve multicultural education. The first is to challenge existing programs. This goes beyond considering simple changes in curricula or programs as multicultural education because multicultural education is a holistic process and such solutions, separated from the larger process of transformation, cannot be considered multicultural education per se. The second guideline is to move forward, whereby the educator must constantly ask him/herself how his/her work moves education towards equality. If they cannot answer this question, they should consider using the resources allocated to multicultural education for programs that do not challenge the status quo, but rather recreate or support existing stereotypes or hierarchies. The third directive models equality and social justice, ensuring that unequal dynamics are not replicated in courses and professional development workshops, in which educators participate as contributors. As an educator, you should also consider whether you are only exploring the experiences of oppressed groups with your students or whether you are also exploring the experiences of the privileged. The fourth guideline is to cure the 'Ruby Payne' syndrome (i.e. to critically examine the materials used for multicultural education, whether they are sufficiently in-depth and whether they promote complex and critical thinking about equality and education). The fifth guideline aims to maintain multicultural education as a policy issue. Teachers must maintain their commitment to the political and transformative nature of multicultural education and not relativise it by reinforcing its oppressive elements.

33 Gorski, 2006, pp. 164–165.
34 Sipos, 2016, pp. 10, 93. The author analyses in detail the concept of competence, its elements, the different approaches that encompass the impact of competences on behaviour, emotional intelligence, or the role of communication. Ibid. pp. 92–98.
35 Robins et al., 2005, p. 11.

The sixth aspect is critical thinking. Multicultural education is an active, practical process. Finally, the seventh guideline contextualises multicultural education by facilitating experiences through which educators can learn to examine concerns about equality. If these concerns are removed from the broader context, it is easier to believe that they can be eliminated.[36]

5. The European Union and diversity in education

Article 165(1) TFEU states that the Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of education and their cultural and linguistic diversity. The Union's action in the field of education is, thus, more a matter of organisation, coordination, and soft law, but this does not mean that it does not have an impact on the development of the education systems of Member States. By contrast, documents published in recent years provide a fairly clear picture of how the European Union believes that national education systems should address cultural diversity. We now highlight some of these, showing the tendency of EU institutions to promote inclusive education that is responsive to cultural diversity and allows it to be preserved.

In 2017, the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States adopted the 'Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on inclusive diversity for achieving quality education for all'[37]. It stressed, inter alia, that education policy plays a key role in promoting inclusion and respect for diversity in the European Union. Inclusive education addresses and responds to learner needs, and the diversity of European societies presents both opportunities and challenges for educational and training systems. This calls for a greater focus on promoting inclusion and common values to help people with different cultural identities live together in a peaceful and democratic Europe.

The document also states that, in Europe, diversity will continue to grow in the future; that there is a real need to combat all forms of intolerance and social exclusion affecting both European citizens and migrants, especially newcomers; and that promoting diversity in education and training policies is essential for building an inclusive society.

On the one hand, these statements make it clear that the European Union is and will continue to be committed to the protection and promotion of cultural

36 Gorski, 2006, pp. 174–175.

37 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Inclusion in Diversity to achieve a High Quality Education For All. Official Journal of the European Union 2017/C, 62/02.

diversity. On the other hand, by suggesting that the TFEU marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe, it also indicates that federalisation is part of European Union's perspective for future development. In this process, education is not only a means of promoting these objectives, but also a European policy in which the European Union has and can have room for manoeuvre and potential.

The document also stresses that education should promote inclusive diversity and the need to acquire intercultural competences while recognising the need to promote cultural diversity, and that education should be based on inclusion, equality, and equity.

Against this background, Member States are invited, according to their national circumstances, to promote a democratic and inclusive school culture and ethos and to encourage cooperation between education and training institutions, local communities, local and regional authorities, parents, the wider family, youth policy actors, volunteers, social partners, employers, and civil society as to promote inclusion and foster a sense of belonging and a positive self-image. Moreover, the document proposes that Member States should promote the integration of third-country nationals, including recent arrivals granted international educational protection.

The Commission is invited to promote the exchange of good practices and innovative approaches to achieving inclusive, high quality, inclusive and equitable education for all; to set up working groups; to provide support; to provide partnership advice on 'inclusive diversity' in education by organising meetings for experts from Member State administrations; to enhance mobility schemes; and to provide evidence-based information and guidance on the implementation of inclusive education, building on the work of the Fundamental Rights Agency.

The coordinating, organising, and supporting role of EU bodies is also reflected in the desire for inclusive education, as the instruments listed above provide for increasingly intensive cooperation between Member States and between EU bodies and Member States in the field of education. Therefore, an ever-closer union among people is beginning to be linked to education.

In 2018, the EU Council issued recommendations to promote common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of education.[38] Populism, xenophobia, divisive nationalism, and discrimination, which can hinder the sense of belonging, have been identified as central challenges. The Council pointed to a trend which it perceives as a threat, although it does not specify the causes of these phenomena but stresses the importance of education as a response.

38 Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching. ST/9010/2018/INIT Official Journal of the European Union 2018/C, 195/01.

The Recommendation refers to the Commission's Communication titled 'Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture'[39], which states that strengthening European identity remains essential and education and culture are the best means of doing so. On However, it also underlines the crucial role of education in preventing radicalisation leading to violent extremism. Emphasis is also placed on the inclusion of a European dimension in education, which should enable pupils to experience European identity in all its diversity and strengthen a sense of positive and inclusive European belonging, complementing local, regional, and national identities and traditions.

The adopted recommendations include the aim of strengthening a sense of positive and inclusive belonging at the local, regional, national, and EU levels, tolerant and democratic behaviour, and intercultural competences.

On 11 November 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on European education.[40] It also urged Member States to promote a culture of tolerance as a priority and critical tool at all stages of the learning process, and called on the Commission and Member States to eliminate bullying, cyberbullying, and other forms of harassment, discrimination, and violence to improve cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity through the creation and exchange of good practices across Europe.

In 2021, the European Commission adopted an action plan on integration and inclusion during 2021–2027.[41] It states that inclusion is a fundamental feature of European way of life. Integration and inclusion are key to the long-term prosperity of people coming to Europe, local communities, the long-term well-being of our societies, and the stability of our economies. To help our societies and economies prosper, we must support everyone who is part of society, and integration must be both a right and duty for everyone.

The Action Plan stresses that education and training are the foundations for successful participation in society and one of the most effective tools for building more inclusive societies. Inclusion and gender equality are among the six dimensions of the European Education Area and are implemented through a series of concrete initiatives by 2025. In addition, schools have the potential to become centres of inclusion for children and their families.

The Action Plan recognises that increasing the participation of children from migrant and immigrant backgrounds in early childhood education and care programs, as long as these programs are appropriate for children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, can have a positive impact on their

39 COM(2017) 673 final.

40 European Parliament Resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: A shared holistic approach (2020/2243(INI)).

41 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027. COM(2020) 758 final.

subsequent schooling, including their knowledge of the host country's language and the integration of their parents and extended families. Therefore, the Action Plan addresses the issue in a comprehensive way, with a strong emphasis not only on preserving cultural diversity but also on achieving integration. It seeks to make societies inclusive and enable people from migrant backgrounds to become a part of them.

Among the tools needed to achieve these goals are a cooperative school environment; adequate training for teachers; support for language learning, coaching, and mentoring; and facilitation of the recognition of qualifications acquired in third countries.

To achieve this, the Commission should provide guidance and targeted support for teachers to develop the competencies needed to manage cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in the classroom through Erasmus teacher-training academies and targeted training; facilitate the transfer of experience; and promote dialogue between Member States on the provision of complementary/reconciliation courses for migrants. Similarly, the Commission will work with Member States to further develop comprehensive and accessible language-learning programs through funding and the exchange of experience.

Member States are encouraged to increase the number of migrant children and children from migrant backgrounds in early childhood education and care; ensure recognition of foreign qualifications; make the management of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms a priority skill in teacher training; develop support programs specifically for unaccompanied minors; or even make full use of EU funding possibilities, including the European Social Fund Plus, the Asylum and Migration Fund, and the European Regional Development Fund, to support programs and actions related to education, skills development, and language training.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the European educational area is increasingly focusing on an education that responds to cultural differences and that, in addition to the formulation of principles and objectives, more concrete proposals are emerging. Obviously, their implementation will depend on local conditions, which is a complex challenge; however, the European Union is increasingly calling for concrete solutions. Consequently, the education systems of the Member States aim at some degree of (increasingly intensive) multicultural education, which goes beyond language learning, civic education, and basic knowledge of the host community.

6. Conclusion

In an increasingly federalised European Union, cultural diversity is both an asset and a challenge. From a cultural point of view, this diversity includes many

dominant cultures, indigenous and national cultures, as well as the cultures of immigrant communities as a result of large population movements. There are similarities and differences between these cultures, and the States, and ultimately the Member States and the European Union itself, must seek to strike a balance between them, avoiding confrontation, tensions and clashes, while at the same time creating social peace, solidarity and loyalty. An important element of this is socialisation, adaptation, the application of integration policies and, ultimately, education.

The study reviewed how states have so far responded to the emergence of different cultures and what educational responses can be made to this diversity in a culturally diverse European Union. It has explored the concept and tools of multicultural education and the EU's approach to this cultural diversity in education. In this respect, it can be concluded that the European Union sees cultural diversity not only as an existing feature, as a fact, but also as a value to be defended and a process that will be further strengthened in the future. As a result, its institutions are increasingly trying to promote inclusive education in the Member States, which is no longer seen as a value, a principle or a distant goal to be achieved, but is also increasingly being proposed as a means of introducing and implementing specific instruments, and providing the framework and financial support for this.

In addition to inclusiveness, one of the future questions for the institutions of the European Union in terms of federalisation is to decide how, by what means and to what extent to focus on the European Union as a value and as a connecting factor in this process, with the aim of ensuring that the peoples of the European Union, in addition to their own, often already multiple identities, also have European identity, identification with the European Union and loyalty to it as an element of their identity.

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