

**REGENERATE EU POLICY CYCLE 2016/17
TACKLING POPULISM: HOPE OVER FEAR**

**DRAFT POLICY PROPOSALS
SEPTEMBER 2017**

ELECTORAL REFORM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

OVERVIEW:

Despite the electoral defeat of populist radical right wing parties in France, the Netherlands and Austria, in addition to [the effect the Brexit vote had on European people's attitudes](#) towards the EU which induced a wave of Euro-Positivity across the bloc, the European Union still stands at a crossroad. The numerous calls for reforms from both people and some governments across Europe, have wielded few successes, and the trust in the EU institutions continues to remain low. The 2019 European elections may arguably be regarded as one of the most important elections since the creation of the European Parliament.

Amid populist waves, the role of the EU is shifting from a technocratic regulatory body, to an increasingly normative political body. This politicisation occurs both from within, with the effort of Jean-Claude Juncker to transform the European Commission in a form of 'government', and from the Member States, for whom the EU is the subject of important divisions, (e.g. the British referendum). In this context, strengthening the democratic link between the European Union and its citizen is crucial. The European elections must encourage a larger turnout alongside EU centered debates and discourses. In order to do so, electoral reforms are necessary. Several reform plans have been proposed by the the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) which has the right of initiative in this particular area.

The European elections are known for their low overall turnout. This weakens the quality of the representation in the European parliament as a significant number of the electorate is not represented. In turn, this representation deficiency undermines the legitimacy of the European Parliament, hence undermining its influence. Furthermore, the European elections are heavily nationalised. That is, the discourses and debates of the campaign usually revolve around domestic concerns rather than European ones. The European election is more a collection of independent national elections rather than one homogenous European election.

OUR PROPOSAL: REFORMING EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The 1989 Generation Initiative has three solutions to make the next elections genuinely European:

Cross National Parties: The rule that only domestic parties can run in a member state constituency should be changed, in order to foster cross-national alliances between parties around European issues.

The future of the UK' seats post-Brexit: Following the development of Brexit, the 73 seats of the European Parliament initially allocated to the UK could be now allocated to supranational MEPs.

Proportional Representation: Alongside this transnationalisation of the electoral process, a uniformisation of the institutional set up is needed. That is, the election should be homogeneous across member states. The elections should take place in an EU wide system

of proportional representation with open list and small constituencies (3-8 seaters).

It must be noted that ultimately, any kind of reform would have to attain the approval of the Council. In particular, the institutional reform on the uniformisation of the institutional set-up might run against the provision made by the constitutions of some of the member states.

CONCLUSIONS:

We address the Council of Ministers of the Council of the European Union in their capacity of codecision. Our proposal focuses directly on a policy area where the EU has exclusive competence with the member states. Other institutions have recently called for similar reforms, demonstrating a significant impetus behind them. For example, the idea of the reallocation of the British seats was advocated by the General Affairs Council, and reportedly by French President Emmanuel Macron. We believe that this timing should be exploited to create meaningful changes, and we believe that this proposal offers a positive contribution in this direction.

REFORM OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

OVERVIEW:

Established in 2011, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is an important instrument of participatory democracy in the European Union, allowing one million EU citizens residing in at least one quarter of the Member States to invite the European Commission to submit a proposal for a legal act to implement the EU Treaties. The ECI offers European citizens the opportunity to have their voice heard in the legislative process and to actively request policy-makers to address concrete needs, thus contributing to better the EU democratic progress.

To date, only three initiatives have been successful due to the complexity of the process. This has led the European Commission to launch a reform of the regulation. The current mechanism for launching an ECI presents significant challenges for citizens. The process is over complicated and requires the mobilisation of considerable resources which limits the accessibility and potential of the ECI. Moreover, this instrument of direct democracy presents a risk of being politically manipulated, particularly in the context of increased support for extremist parties across Europe.

A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE:

Our proposal seeks to make the revised regulation much more detailed and clear in the measures it entails. To this end, we propose to:

- Increase the involvement of other EU institutions in the ECI process in order to provide expertise and visibility, thus contributing to the success of more ECI proposals. They would also fulfil an important monitoring role in the follow-up.
- Reform the legal admissibility test
- Increase the timeframe for collecting the required one million signatures
- Harmonise and simplify requirements for the collection and validation of signatures across EU Member States
- Streamline requirements on ECI organisers
- Set up a 'follow-up' mechanism allowing ECI organisers to be informed on the process of their initiative
- Promote the use of the ECI by European citizens
- Harmonise standards

CONCLUSIONS:

On ECI Day 2017, the European Commission announced the revision of the ECI Regulation 11/2011 in the form of a new proposal in the autumn 2017. The Open Public Consultation which gathers feedback on the ECI is an opportunity to feed our proposal into the reform process of the regulation. We are addressing our proposal to the European Commission and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, which has launched the legislative initiative to reform the ECI. We think that our proposal add value to and complement the existing debate on a

reformed ECI. It would help addressing current issues and operationalise the ECI without requiring any Treaty changes.

As the European Commission looks currently to revise the regulation of the ECI mechanism, we strongly believe that our proposals will make the procedure clearer and will improve the support available to citizens to launch a successful initiative. Since the ECI is the only mechanism that enables citizens to provide direct input into the EU legislative process, it is an essential tool to amplify citizens' voices and must be constantly improved to ensure it efficiently reflects citizens priorities in the European agenda. A complicated and exclusive mechanism have started to exacerbate tensions among active citizens and, in the long run, this could reverse the beneficial effects originally intended.

A MORE AMBITIOUS EUROPEAN APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

OVERVIEW:

Today, only 1 % of all students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) in Europe participate in transnational mobility schemes. The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) was created by the European Commission in 2013 by “bring[ing] together key stakeholders like businesses, social partners and chambers” in order to “strengthen the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships across Europe”. Despite the need for more cross-border mobility, as highlighted by the EAfA Action Plan 2017-2018, and repeated calls by the European Parliament for a statute of the ‘European Apprentice’, so far has done very little in concrete terms to facilitate transnational learning opportunities. Mobility of learners in VET in Europe remains low.

Our concern is that apprentices in Europe have inadequate opportunities to experience a training placement in another country, while university-educated students benefit much more from the Erasmus+ scheme (for example, qualifications are easier to recognise through the ECTS system). It is evident that not everyone is interested in academic studies, but everyone is entitled to receive support when choosing the career that best suits their talents. For these reasons, we have developed the following proposal to contribute to the EU “Education and Training 2020” (ET 2020) Programme.

OUR PROPOSAL:

Greater VET mobility opportunities represent the core of this proposal. The EAfA should aim at reaching **high mobility levels** similar to those achieved by higher education graduates under the Erasmus+ scheme. This would allow apprentices to spend time in another European country to gain real workplace experience for growth in their professional and personal lives. In a globalised world, companies need employees with international competencies. Indeed, through the acquisition of transversal skills, “students who learn in an international setting should be more ready to go on to work in that environment.” Such experience would equally promote the creation of a European ‘feel’ and the sense of European citizenship among young people. In order to achieve these goals, the EU could play an important role:

- It is able to **gather a sizeable amount of data** about apprenticeships and organisations providing training, which could be made public through the creation of an online platform helping promote and access more easily VET opportunities across the continent.
- Such a database **creates also the possibility to rate and compare vocational education and training** opportunities in different countries, hence creating positive incentives for organisation to develop the best schemes. This could improve the quality assurance in European VET systems, whose monitoring today is done exclusively by Erasmus+ National Agencies.
- The EU would have to play a limited role in the management of the project, by ensuring the smooth functioning of the platform online and by ensuring that **minimum standards** are devised for each vocational training category (label) during calls for interested organisations.

Several initiatives are already being set up at the European level that could serve as a first step to create an area of mutual recognition of qualifications acquired through apprenticeships, a key element to encourage VET cross-border mobility. We also welcome the establishment of Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training Mobility Charter, aimed at improving VET provision and quality across the Continent.

To achieve our final objective, we would have to increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities and benefits across Europe for young students. Information about apprenticeships should be conveyed through a **far-reaching communications campaign** that is not only provider-centred (i.e. call to training institutions) but rather student-centred, targeting in particular **the youth**, thus contributing to changing mind-sets towards doing apprenticeship-type learning in another country.

CONCLUSIONS:

There is still a variety of obstacles that affect mobility in VET, which are not likely to disappear in the near future. Despite all obstacles and barriers, young people need an apprenticeship system in Europe that helps them acquire the international competences to respond to the demands of an ever competitive and globalised labour market. The transversal skills acquired through VET mobility will indeed be necessary for many future jobs. The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in VET recognises that “students who learn in an international setting should be more ready to go on to work in that environment”. For Europe to compete in the global market, reforms to vocational education and training are therefore essential.

INTEGRATING CLIMATE CHANGE SYSTEMIC RISKS IN THE EU'S CONFLICT PREVENTION ARCHITECTURE

CONTEXT:

Climate change has become the focus of renewed attention in 2017. The Trump administration's decision to pull out of the COP21 agreements acted as a reminder that denialism of climate change and of its impact, including on conflict, is a recurrent vehicle of populist rhetoric. The European youth now has a unique opportunity to feed into an inter-generational dialogue to shape the climate and geopolitics it will inherit, and devise solutions to a multifaceted issue that is paradoxically both most pressing and most distant in time. Climate change has already started to affect intra-state conflict, including by displacing populations and aggravating competition for resources between pastoralist and sedentary communities in fragile countries¹. As its effects intensify, climate change threatens to trigger and aggravate conflicts on a regional scale in the EU's neighbourhood. The EU has been at the forefront of the fight against climate change. It must now assert leadership in mitigating its impact on conflict by integrating climate change systemic risks in its conflict prevention architecture.

OUR PROPOSAL:

The EU has acknowledged the increasing impact of climate change on conflict in several documents in recent years. Of note, the 2008 joint paper "Climate Change and International Security" is one of the most comprehensive to date on this topic. It identifies several climate change systemic risks which it acknowledges as threat multiplier against EU interests, and advocates for it to be placed at the centre of EU security policy.² However, practical follow-through has been lacking, and to this day the impact of these statements on EU policy remains to be seen. At present, the EU's conflict prevention strategy and early-warning system do not formally integrate climate change systemic risks, leaving the EU unprepared for and unable to prevent or mitigate the security and humanitarian implications of climate change for local populations and the EU itself.

We recommend that the EU take the full measure of the cross-cutting impact of climate change and follow this three-fold course of action to develop its strategy, institutions, and instruments:

Widening the conflict prevention strategy: The EU lacks a long-term climate security strategy that would a) lay out a vision and understanding of the systemic risks associated with climate change; b) how these will shape its neighbourhood and impact the EU in the coming years and decades; c) how to mitigate these risks.³ Devising such a strategy, with the contribution of experts, including from E3G, Carnegie Europe, the ECFR and Crisis Group, must be the EU's first priority. It is critical that the EU develop such strategy early on to allow for preventive rather than reactive policy-making and action.

¹ E.g. [Crisis Group report](#) on Laikipia, Kenya; [NYT article](#) on loss of fertile land in Africa.

² "[Climate Change and International Security](#)", EU High Representative and the European Commission, March 2008.

³ R. Young, "[Climate Change and EU Security Policy: an unmet challenge](#)", Carnegie Europe, May 2014.

Building institutional capacity: To implement this new strategy, the EU should make use of available resources and create an inter-agency taskforce that would combine and coordinate the expertise of: a) EEAS's conflict prevention division; b) European Environment Agency's "Copernicus", and in particular its i) Emergency Management and ii) Climate Change services; c) Commission experts from DGs including Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, International Cooperation and Development, and Agriculture; d) representatives from the EU-funded Climate Security with Local Authorities (CLISEL) project.⁴ This inter-agency taskforce should meet regularly and coordinate its action with local partners, including African regional Communities (e.g. EAC, ECOWAS) and the African Union's Peace and Security Council, which already holds a yearly session on this theme.⁵

Revamping the early warning system: The EU already possesses an early warning system geared at preventing conflict in its neighbourhood, but it does not, at present, incorporate climate change systemic risks; and the Climate Risk Early Warning Systems (CREWS) envisioned in the Paris Agreements only tackles short-term environmental risks (natural disasters).⁶ The EU should therefore supplement its early warning mechanism with a new facet on climate security, so that it can forecast and mitigate through early warning, early action and resilience building the impact of phenomena such as: a) rising water levels, disappearing lands; more severe or recurrent droughts; desertification; water stress and fresh water scarcity etc. resulting in displacement, migratory pressure, harsher competition for resources in areas prone to conflict; and b) melting Arctic and resulting increased activity in contested waters (for hydrocarbon exploitation, geostrategic presence...)⁷

⁴ See the website of the [Copernicus](#) programme. See the website of the [CLISEL](#) project.

⁵ Press release on the AU's "[Climate Change: State fragility, peace and security in Africa](#)" open session.

⁶ More information on [CREWS](#).

⁷ "[Epicenters of Climate and Security](#)", Centre for Climate and Security, June 2017.

TACKLING THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND ASYLUM

SEARCHING FOR A VISION AND A MESSENGER:

We recommend that DG Home, the EEAS and all relevant stakeholders frame their message in conservative moral values, following the principles of Moral Foundations theory (MFT).

Over the past years, populist parties have increasingly defied core EU values and the policy preferences of large segments of European youth by designating asylum-seekers and migrants as targets of choice to stoke the fears of their electorate. Amid what has come to be termed Europe's "Refugee Crisis", asylum policy has "back-spilled" and current policies do not benefit any party.

The EU has so far failed to articulate and disseminate a coherent vision in order to address and alleviate instrumentalised economic and security concerns, cultural prejudices and feelings of disempowerment. In other words, the EU lacks an alternative narrative, in and of itself, that instead of countering populist claims point by point, should provide a frame for the EU's asylum policy. The EU further lacks the language and vocabulary to promote progressive asylum policies beyond the liberal echo chamber, to reach those EU citizens who cast their vote for populist parties.

A CHANGE IN DISCOURSE: FROM 'GULF' TO 'BRIDGE':

In order to bridge this gap, we recommend:

- Investing actively in articulating and disseminating through mass outreach initiatives a statement, a vision of EU societies based on core European values that forms a matching piece to Orban's illiberal democracy and the divisive rhetoric of populist leaders;
- Embed within this vision a progressive, sustainable asylum policy (*see below, part 3.*);
- Use MFT and its application to political arguments to ground such policy in conservative moral values - such as family, religious teachings, tradition (of historically helping refugees), honour, contribution of refugees to the society and the economy - and reach beyond the EU's echo bubble by appealing to segments of the EU population thus far alienated by the fashion in which the message was conveyed.

On the one hand, the EU can neither ignore the growing influence of populist leaders on the continent nor postpone an overdue discussion with their electorate. On the other, it cannot afford to compromise on its values and trade them for electoral support. What it can and should do is engage the discussion with those who feel left out of the debate, by advocating for progressive policies in their own language. Political arguments reframed to appeal to the

moral values of the targeted audience are significantly more effective and persuasive, chiefly because they increase the apparent agreement between the political position defended and the targeted audience's moral values.

REVAMPING DUBLIN AND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES:

Overview

A number of factors are undermining the EU's asylum policy and its response to the refugee crisis. Among these, a policy "spill-back", an ailing burden-sharing system and a lack of functioning resettlement schemes are prominent challenges. We address in the sections below several recommendations to DG Migration and Home Affairs, the EASO, the EEAS, the European Migration Network, civil society and all other relevant stakeholders.

First, by all appearances, the field of asylum policy is "spilling back". Current EU policies are unsustainable, reactive, and leave member states divided. At the national level, policy-making has been steered increasingly towards nationalist measures that undermine core EU values and principles of solidarity. While European citizens remain divided as to what the EU's response to the "refugee crisis" should be, a vast majority of them are dissatisfied with the status-quo.⁸ They ask to see more decision-making at EU-level on achieving a common migration and asylum policy, and they want the EU, rather than Member States (MS), to be primarily responsible for it.⁹ This is why we recommend further integration, by devolving power upward to a centralised European Asylum Agency (EAA), and downward to local communities.

Second, burden-sharing between MS is currently dysfunctional. Under the Dublin Regulation, frontline countries bear the brunt of the burden. Moreover, compulsory refugee quotas in recent relocation and resettlement schemes have proven inefficient, if not counterproductive. Virtually none of the quotas have been respected, and they have created significant backlash in certain MS.¹⁰ This is why we recommend to include a permanent distribution key operated by the EAA in the Dublin regulation, and to reform resettlement programmes to make burden-sharing fair but flexible.

Third, inefficient resettlement programmes have led many asylum-seekers to travel perilous journeys to Europe's borders. This has increased the humanitarian cost of the "crisis" and forced the EU into controversial deals with third countries. In the case of Turkey, the closing of the border has had a humanitarian impact as far back as Syria, and it has empowered Turkey to publicly blackmail the EU over accession proceedings. The very legality of the deal has also been a topic of dispute and the rights of asylum-seekers have not been guaranteed. This is why we recommend creating incentives for local communities to join a voluntary matching scheme, supported by fair but flexible burden-sharing.

⁸ ["European opinions on the refugee crisis"](#), Pew Research Centre, 13 Sept 2016.

⁹ Results of [EU Parlemeter 2015](#) and [Eurobarometer Spring 2016](#).

¹⁰ Hungary referendum rejecting EU refugee quotas in Oct 2016; Visegrad group repeatedly asking to contribute through other means.

A thorough review of the Dublin system

First, we recommend devolving power upward through the creation of a centralised asylum agency. In addition to upgrading the EASO into a fully-fledged EAA, the EU should provide it with the means to fulfil its mission by expanding its mandate: asylum applications should be lodged with the EU through the EAA rather than with individual countries.

The EU should keep fulfilling its obligations under international law and review the applications of asylum-seeker who enter its territory. However, to ensure adequate and compulsory burden-sharing between all-member states, the EAA should operate a permanent distribution key. It should further adopt a common list of safe countries, including within the EU. If certain member states do not meet harmonised EU standards, they should be fined to finance the resettlement of refugees in other MS and the development of the areas and communities that host them.

A new kind of resettlement programme

MS should further devolve power downward and empower local communities to join reformed resettlement programmes through a matching scheme operated by the EAA. The system would take into accounts the preferences of local communities and of refugees to match them through non-discriminating factors, to foster integration, revive deserted rural areas, address the lack of skills and professions locally, reduce secondary movement in the EU, etc.¹¹

Burden-sharing should become flexible but remain fair, so that countries whose communities do not host refugees would contribute through other means. A financial contribution would help fund the matching scheme, in addition to earmarked money from the European Social Fund, and private-public partnerships (private sponsorship of asylum-seekers). The funds would ensure that communities can adequately host and integrate refugees, partly by investing it in fostering local growth.

Asylum-seekers should be able to apply to the matching scheme of the resettlement programme through EAA outposts on the ground in countries neighbouring conflict zones, and otherwise in EEAS representations.¹² This would help reduce the number of refugees seeking to reach the EU's border, and therefore lower the humanitarian cost of the "crisis", as well as reduce the EU's dependency on deals with third countries to stop asylum-seekers from reaching its borders.

¹¹ In Italy, see "[Riace](#)", BBC, 26 Sept 2016; "[Camini](#)", National Geographic; "[Sant'Alessio](#)", Global Citizen, 19 April 2017.

¹² The EU could model this recent initiative: "[Emmanuel Macron: Hot Spots for asylum seekers in Libya](#)", Al Jazeera, 27 July 2017

EMPOWERING DIGITAL CHAMPIONS

OVERVIEW:

A key challenge for the European Union is to effectively communicate its policies and above all the benefits it brings to European citizens. The European paradox by which citizens increasingly dislike the EU while it brings them tremendous benefits can partly be explained by a failure to communicate. Indeed, the EU struggles to reach out to communities and to use the full potential of the digitalised world to appeal to a younger audience. Another key issue particularly affecting the EU is the spread of so-called 'Fake News' perpetrated by internet trolls who, in contrast, are taking advantage of the online world. A lack of digital literacy coupled with high disinformation about the EU makes it a vulnerable scapegoat. We believe that there is a strong need for humanised narratives as well as a bottom up approach for an effective communication strategy of the EU.

EMPOWERING A GENERATION OF DIGITAL CITIZENS:

This proposal mainly aims at empowering online actors by offering them the skills and support they need to develop their community project and, in turn, making the most of their 'multiplier capacity'. Secondly, the objective is to equip European citizens to make the most of the digitalised world. We think that it is important that the EU take a leading role in training digitally literate citizens. A third objective aims at creating a sustainable network of digital champions.

The training would be a win-win game. On the one hand, it would benefit the participants by helping them gain essential skills and knowledge to work the EU democracy. On the other hand, the EU would benefit greatly from a generation of digitally and EU-literate citizens.

The 'Digital Champions' would receive a training on the fundamentals' in Brussels and then a tailored training online. Upon conclusion of the training, the participants would develop their individual projects in accordance with the European Union Communications objectives. These would be adapted to the specific national contexts and to the more emotional, visual, humorous and viral forms of communication required by young social media users. The different modules would be provided by experts from the civil society and academia following a call for tender generated by the European Union.

CONCLUSIONS:

The multiplying effect intrinsic to the nature of the project provides a significant potential outreach capacity. Success would mean that the major social media platforms could be reached and key audiences involved in a more direct and inclusive way about what the European Union really is and offers to European citizens. The key output resulting from this process would be the acceleration of the EU debate in the local public spheres with informed citizens able to formulate balanced arguments.

BUILDING VIRTUAL BRIDGES BETWEEN EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

OVERVIEW:

European schooling systems are currently under the jurisdiction of Member States and diverge greatly. Even though there are some initiatives such as the twinning partnerships of European cities, these schemes have not been updated for a long time and could greatly benefit from the digitalisation of the economy. Internet offers opportunities to build virtual bridges between schools, as well as innovative learning methods.

Furthermore, we cannot emphasise enough the need for early digital training in the knowledge-based economy. Pupils should become the primary target for such training, as it has been proven that the earlier the investment, the greater the rate of return, in particular as regards new skills. In addition, teachers would greatly benefit from the establishment of a European learning hub and network to share best practices and materials with fellow colleagues. This proposal mainly aims at bettering the opportunities and improving the training of labour, as well as supporting European education and the forging of a common identity.

ONLINE EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM TO TRAIN AND CONNECT EUROPEAN PUPILS:

The goal of the platform is to **provide early training in a set of skills** that will improve the chances of young people to manage the requirements of a digitalised and knowledge-based economy and public life.

The platform would be a great tool to support pupils in learning new **European languages and cultures**.

The availability of 'european chat rooms' for pupils would revive the pen-friendship model or 'keyboard-friendship'. This would enable them to learn new languages directly with native speakers and discover new cultures in an interactive way. In addition, they would develop the key skills needed in today's societies such as **digital literacy**, in a safe online environment. The platform would also offer several learning projects in any topic as well as an introduction to **EU institutions** and **decision-making** designed in a recreational manner with interactive tools such as videos and games. Finally, teachers would benefit from a much needed **community of practice**, which in turn would help with the harmonisation and improvement of teaching standards across Europe.

The EU would mainly have promotional, supportive and financial roles to help launching the project and get a consortia of schools and partners on board. The platform would be best developed in a form of a public-private partnership. Security concerns regarding children and the internet would be ensured by granting security clearance for schools which will in turn give access only to their teachers and pupils. Hence, the platform would not be publicly available.

The pupils would be able to create their online profile on the platform and their progress would be monitored (e.g time spent, achievements in various activities). To incentivise as many pupils as possible, the platform should be designed to provide a level of autonomy in choosing their learning projects. The platform would match pupils with like-minded peers (e.g football lovers or Spanish learners) who undertake the same course.

TWO PILLARS FOR THE ONLINE PLATFORM:

1. European e-Learning Hub (Objective N°1: Early digital awareness)

- European languages & cultures
- Digital skills/ Digital literacy
- EU civic modules

2. European e-Learning Network (Objective N°2: Building virtual bridges between schools)

- Matching systems for pupils enabling them to develop 'keyboard-friendship' and discuss with native speakers
- Community of practice for teachers

CONCLUSIONS:

For the project to be effective and have an impact, participation is crucial. Only the EU has the power to lead on such a pan-european project and gather a consortia of schools to collaborate on this. Also, as for the Erasmus project, student exchanges existed before its implementation, however it is the European Union who ensured its scale, promotion and ultimately tremendous success. A key point relates to the credibility of an online pedagogical platform. Schools, parents and teachers must fully trust the project in order to get on board and make the most of it.

What will be the benefits of such project?

- Supporting the learning of several European languages and training the next generation of digitally literate citizens.
- Improve the chances of young people to manage the requirements of a digitalised and knowledge-based economy and society. In the long term, the objective is to reduce youth unemployment levels.
- Enhancing teaching standards across Europe by embracing innovative teaching methods and all the opportunities that new technology offer.
- Improve european citizens' awareness of the functioning of the EU but also of member states' cultures and specificities

This European Commission report on 'Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe' shows trends in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Europe.

Relevant findings:

- Pupils in primary education have started learning their first foreign language at an earlier age and are continuing with it throughout the years of compulsory education.
- The numbers of lower secondary students learning two foreign languages is up compared with ten years ago.
- The level of ambition for learning a second foreign language is still remarkably low.

Tibor Navracsics, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: "Speaking several languages is becoming an essential skill in Europe, not only for finding a job but also for participating in society. We need to make better use of **innovative teaching methods** and **new technology** to improve young people's language learning experience."