

Question for oral answer O-000039/2026

to the Commission

Rule 142

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on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education

Subject: The pilot project on European Schools Alliances and its contribution to citizenship education, democratic competences and European values

The forthcoming pilot of a European Schools Alliances, included in the Commission's 2026 Work Programme, is intended to strengthen structured cooperation between schools and school authorities across the Union. The initiative arrives at a critical juncture: the Basic Skills Action Plan now classifies citizenship as a basic skill, marking a significant shift in EU education policy at a time when only 42 % of 16–30-year-olds understand 'a great deal/fair amount' about the EU, and only 30 % feel they have a say over decisions affecting the EU.

While building on the legacy of Erasmus+, the initiative can therefore be seen as supporting joint innovation and peer learning, as well as pupils and teachers' mobility. The preparation of the pilot also coincides with a broader evolution of EU education policy, reflecting the need to equip future generations with the appropriate knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes needed to thrive in an evolving, competitive society and labour market. As such, the pilot should address three converging imperatives: skills for competitiveness, democratic resilience and equity gaps.

The European Commission's 2025 Strategic Foresight Report highlights the need to reimagine education in line with future labour market and societal challenges, linking resilience to democratic values and social cohesion. With around 70 % of employers expecting to recruit workers with new skills and nearly 60 % of the workforce requiring reskilling by 2030, this underscores the urgent need to strengthen transversal competences, including civic and intercultural skills, within education systems. The European Democracy Shield identifies education as a 'first line of defence' against disinformation and declining civic engagement, while the EU Youth Strategy aims also to improve active citizenship and democratic participation, namely through education.

The European Schools Alliances pilot presents a unique opportunity to jointly develop and test innovative teaching models and new approaches for basic skills, including citizenship skills, participatory learning and civic engagement, and to strengthen mutual understanding of Europe's cultural diversity. Integrating student and teacher mobility to foster a deeper sense of mutual understanding could also prove crucial for the success of the initiative. Clarity will be needed regarding its objectives, scope and governance, as well as the role of the European Parliament in accompanying its development.

In this context, Parliament would like to ask the Commission:

1. How does the Commission envisage the European Schools Alliances contributing to the development of democratic competences, active citizenship and an understanding of the European Union and its values among school-aged learners?
2. How will the Commission ensure that the pilot supports inclusive participation by schools in disadvantaged contexts and learners with fewer opportunities?

3. What targeted mechanisms (e.g. earmarked funding, or simplified application processes,) will the pilot deploy?
4. How does the Commission plan to engage with the European Parliament during the preparatory phase of the pilot, in order to take into account Parliament's priorities and expectations?
5. Will the Commission share draft design documents before finalising the pilot's scope, and establish a formal feedback loop?

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