Education and Learning

What are the challenges young people are facing?

Young people feel the current education system needs modernisation and change in focus.
They believe whilst it is effective at providing basic knowledge such as maths and literacy, it does not focus enough on:

- **Transferable skills and competencies** such as critical thinking and communication skills.
- **Practical life skills**, that enable young people to live independently such as managing money, health education and knowledge of the political system.
- **Relevant technical competencies** for the future labour market. (See also the report on Employment)

Some young people believe the current emphasis on formal education means they lack the opportunity to access non-formal education. It was questioned by some if formal education alone could really provide the sort of education they needed.

Some groups of young people emphasised different things to others. One working group identified that young people in social / youth care facilities prioritised acquiring life skills more than others. Other working groups identified that young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds placed more emphasis on life skills. Finally, whilst many young people emphasise the importance of learning foreign languages, for Roma youth, learning the Roma language was said to be an essential part of maintaining their cultural rights and heritage.

What is young people's vision for the future?

The main trend is that young people want education that provides a wide variety of learning, and that is much **broader than just preparation for employment**. Based on the working group reports, the competencies that young people desire are:

- Basic general knowledge (literacy, numeracy etc)
- Foreign languages (particularly to enable freedom of movement)
- Media literacy and ability to evaluate news sources and information
- Communication and leadership skills
- Digital and technological skills
- Understanding of the civic and political systems, including the EU
- The ability to manage your own learning - 'learning how to learn'

- Independent living skills (e.g. self care, healthy living, and money management)
- Critical, analytical and creative thinking
- The ability to seek and find work, and operate in work environment
- Emotional skills and intelligence (e.g. self confidence, resilience, failure management, flexibility, and self understanding)
- Understanding of diversity and tolerance, and sensitivity to multicultural situations

Although participants talked mainly of schools and universities, there was a recognition that education should also happen in **non-formal and informal settings** and a belief from some that not every skill can be taught in school. An increased emphasis on the **role of the youth sector** in education was highlighted in many working group reports and some called for greater coordination across the EU of professional and educational qualifications.

What solutions did young people propose in the consultation?
Young people's responses mainly focused on the desired skills, but a number of practical solutions were also highlighted;

- **Reform of formal education curriculums** - to focus on a wider variety of competencies

- **Reform of formal education methods** - to create learning environments that are more participative, individualised and self directed

- **Increased emphasis on non-formal education** - such as through support for youth work or youth organisations, or non-formal education opportunities in school and university settings.

- **Increased opportunity for informal learning opportunities** - such as through access to museums, libraries, volunteering, international exchanges, and extracurricular activities

- **Increased opportunity for work focused educational opportunities** - this is described in more detail in the report on Employment.

The Survey Data

How important is this issue to young people?
This issue ranks among the first four priorities, as rated by the young people. It has been measured by two separate items, with one focusing on skills coming in the second place and the one focusing on knowledge coming in place number four.
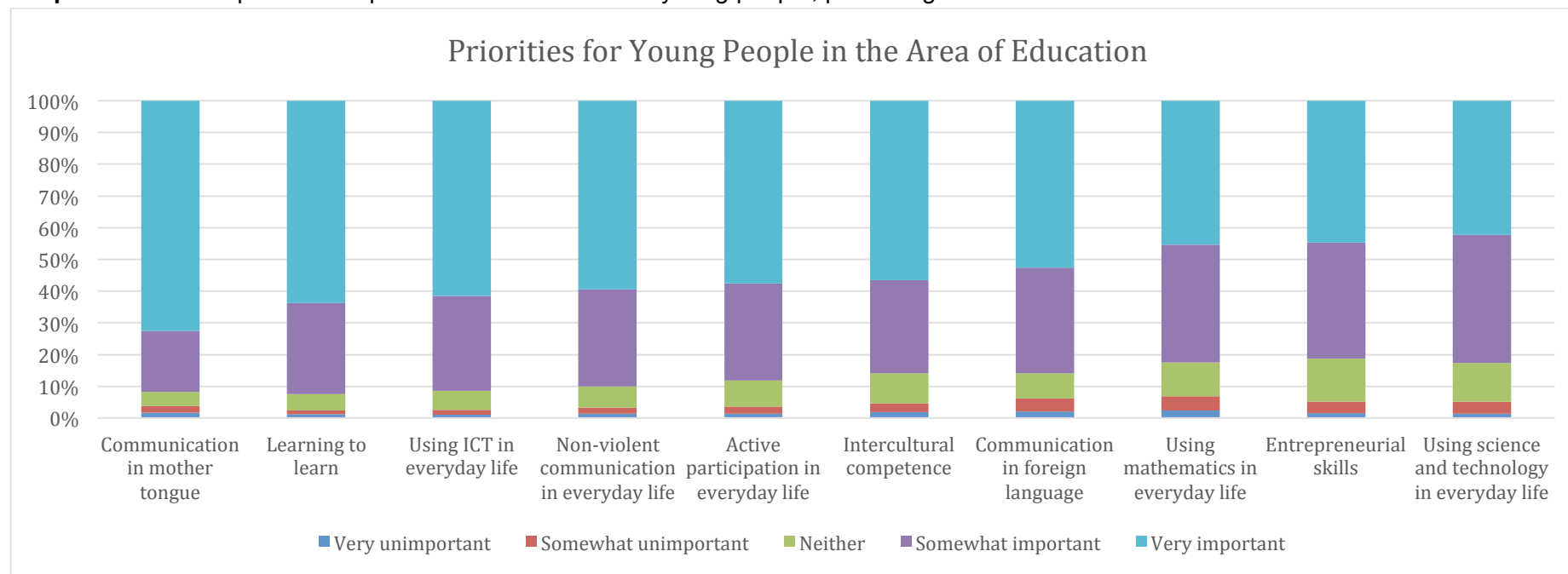
What are the priorities for young people?

A battery of questions focusing on competencies[1] young people perceive as important has been distributed within the survey. Results show that young people believe they should receive a very wide variety of competences, since all of the listed competence options received high average scores of more than 4 on a 5-point scale.

Graph below shows that there is a wide support for competencies related to communication (mother tongue and non-violent), as well as for competence learning to learn, and ICT competence related to everyday tasks. Rather surprisingly, active participation is also rather high on young people´s agenda when in comes to schooling: an area which, at least traditionally, is not very strongly linked to formal education. Among the less rated competencies is also the entrepreneurial competence; a competence, which is repeatedly quoted as vital for the modern economy and labour market. In this case, it would be interesting to explore more on the meanings and perceptions the young people have when asked about the entrepreneurial skills.

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[1] The item read: "How important is it to you to have the following skills?"

Graph: The most important competencies in education for young people; percentages.

Priorities for Young People in the Area of Education

Categories (x-axis): Communication in mother tongue, Learning to learn, Using ICT in everyday life, Non-violent communication in everyday life, Active participation in everyday life, Intercultural competence, Communication in foreign language, Using mathematics in everyday life, Entrepreneurial skills, Using science and technology in everyday life

Legend: ■ Very unimportant ■ Somewhat unimportant ■ Neither ■ Somewhat important ■ Very important

Where does this report come from?

This report is based on responses to consultation question *'What are the most important competencies that young people require from education, for their lives in a future Europe?'.* This question was developed from harvesting tools submitted at the first conference. It has also been written with reference to the report on Employment, as there are some overlaps in responses. Many other reports also discuss the importance of Education so will be interconnected.