

## **In the electoral sea of noise, what's left for education?**

### **POLICY BACKGROUND**

On **6-9 June the European Elections** take place. Each Member State organises their electoral process to decide which elected officials from their side will form the new European Parliament. The election establishes a mandate for the European Parliament for **2024-2029**. The numbers of Members of the European Parliament **decreased from 751 to 705 post-Brexit**, but, based on an European Council decision, **this will be increased to 720 for the 2024 elections**. The countries use different electoral systems for this process (D'Hondt, largest remainder, Sainte-Lague, single transferable vote or other variations) as well as with different types of electoral lists (closed, semi-open, open, panachage, etc). For more information on the rules of voting and electing in each country please follow this [link](#).

LLLPlatform is preparing this infonote to analyse the political and policy priorities selected by the different groups running in this election. The **focus will be mainly on education and training**.

### **CANDIDATES AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES**

The lists of candidates are still being drafted in some countries. There will be a mixture of newcomers and incumbents re-running. It is important to clarify certain terms such as **European Political Parties, national parties, European Political Groups and Spitzenkandidat**. The MEPs lists will be national, with each national party or national coalition of parties creating them. These national parties are affiliated to European Political Parties which, theoretically, should reflect the political ideology of the national parties. **The European Political Parties have a Manifesto and this is what will be analysed by LLLP in this Infonote**. The European Political Parties are distinct from **European Political Groups, the latter being formations of MEPs created post-election**. The Groups deal with MEP's day-to-day voting approaches post-election and their membership, though also influenced by political ideologies, is set by the pragmatism of reaching certain political results. Therefore, **some members within an European Political Party might overlap with those of an European Political Group** but this is not always the case. The **Spitzenkandidat is the candidate which an European Political Party chooses to be appointed as President of the European Commission** if they win the election. The process experienced a set of controversies as it was initially foreseen to represent the individual leading a Party's electoral campaign (i.e. was on the electoral list). This was not the case for Ursula von der Leyen in 2019 and again in 2024.

See below the European Political Parties analysed. A general affiliation to the European Political Group they 'more-or-less' belong to has been assigned. Their electoral manifestos are hyperlinked as well as

any other relevant document such as Party Resolutions or proposals for the next European Commission Work Programme. One disclaimer is that the Renew Group will launch a joint platform for campaigning for all its European Political Parties. LLLP will analyse separately the Manifestos of the European Political Parties, but will not analyse the Renew Group campaign as it will simply amalgamate the policies of each Manifesto of each European Political Party in the Renew Group. The acronyms have been colour-coded, with the exception of those parties that have not put forward a Manifesto.

European Political Party	Affiliation to European Political Group	Electoral Manifesto	Proposed Spitzenkandidat	Additional documents
<b>European Green Party (EGP)</b>	Greens/EFA	<a href="#">here</a>	Terry Reintke and Bas Eickhout	
<b>Party of European Socialists (PES)</b>	S&D	<a href="#">here</a>	Nicolas Schmit	Malaga Resolution, <a href="#">here</a>
<b>European People's Party (EPP)</b>	EPP	<a href="#">here</a>	Ursula von der Leyen	
<b>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE)</b>	Renew Europe	<a href="#">here</a>	Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann	
European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR)	ECR	No Manifesto As of 29/03	Ryszard Legutko and Nicola Procaccini (unofficial)	
Identity and Democracy Party (ID)	ID	No Manifesto As of 29/03	Anders Vistisen (unofficial)	
<b>Party of the European Left (PEL)</b>	GUE/NGL	<a href="#">here</a>	Walter Baier	
<b>European Democratic Party (EDP)</b>	Renew Europe	<a href="#">here</a>	Sandro Gozi	
<b>European Free Alliance (EFA)</b>	Greens/EFA	<a href="#">here</a>	Maylis Roßberg and Raúl Romeva	

<b>European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)</b>	ECR	<a href="#">here</a>	Valeriu Ghiletcu	
European Pirate Party (Pirates)	Greens/EFA	No Manifesto As of 29/03	Marcel Kolaja and Anja Hirschel	
<b>Volt Europe</b>	Greens/EFA	<a href="#">here</a>	TBD	<a href="#">EC WP</a>

### **PARTY MANIFESTOS AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

This section analyses the **references that the party manifestos made to lifelong learning** and the place that lifelong learning has as a stand-alone priority or within a set of other policy priorities.

The **EPP Manifesto** refers, misguidedly, only once to lifelong learning. It is linked only with **older citizens** that would like to prolong their participation in the labour market.

The **PES Manifesto** contains one reference to ensuring quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning. The sole reference, and the lack of any category of initiatives linked to education and training, is quite disappointing. However, the Manifesto is a lean version of the Malaga Resolution published in 2023. Therefore, LLLPlatform will analyse both documents and make clear which refers to what, acknowledging that the **absence of elements from the Malaga Resolution in the final Manifesto represents a de-prioritisation of education and training**. The Malaga Resolution defines what lifelong learning is and **PES** has the most accurate definition: **‘Emphasise lifelong learning to cut across all ages as well as formal, informal and non-formal education of all types’**. This is viewed in conjunction with the European Education Area (EEA), making **PES** the sole party that refers to the EU’s most comprehensive strategy for education and training. **PES** calls in the Resolution for an **European Education Action Plan** which would cover quality lifelong learning and adequate funding to it.

There are two references to lifelong learning in the **EGP Manifesto**, one committing to **‘Accessible quality public education, training and lifelong learning should be available to everyone in Europe, regardless of where they live or their wealth’** and one referring to a specific policy action: a **Lifelong Learning Directive**. **EGP’s** understanding of lifelong learning is narrowed down to adult education, since the LLL Directive is targeted towards the **right to paid training leave**. The Manifesto’s overall approach for inclusivity and the sectoral focus are aligned with LLLPlatform’s approach to inclusivity.

The **Manifesto of ALDE** makes one reference to lifelong learning, which is **fully linked to the higher education sector**, demanding for better support to the Bologna Process and the European Universities initiative in order to ensure that **the future labour force is ready for the twin transitions**.

The **Manifesto of PEL** makes no reference to lifelong learning, and based on its references to education it becomes apparent that this perspective is missing from their initiatives. **The education sector is viewed solely through the lens of compulsory education and higher education**.

**VOLT's Manifesto** does not contain references to lifelong learning, but rather **lifelong education, though this is connected to ensuring adequate skills for the twin transitions**. This narrowly interprets lifelong learning to be only about adults and only for the purpose of the labour market.

The **Manifesto of EFA** will be mentioned only in this section of the Infonote due to a lack of focus on education and training. It does not refer to lifelong learning, and only refers minimally to the need of **preserving the EU's currently high-skilled population** to make sure that the EU remains competitive.

The **Manifesto of EDP** contains two references to lifelong learning, both framing it from the perspective of adult education and of retraining due to the ecological transition.

The **Manifesto of ECPM** makes no reference to lifelong learning. Their perspective of education and training ranges over two extremes: skills for the labour market and children's education.

## **PARTY MANIFESTOS AND SECTORAL PRIORITIES**

Sectorally, the **EPP Manifesto** misses many different aspects in education and training. Education is seen as a tool to **combat violence against women, promote democratic values, and combat fake news**. **Financial literacy** is mentioned to ensure that citizens are active in current societies. As the general tone veers towards **securitisation and economic prosperity**, the education and training system and learners' needs are ignored. Students are tokenistically mentioned next to a request for more funding to ensure economic progress based on innovation. The call for additional funding for students is never quantified or tied to a specific action. Calls for a skilled workforce for meeting the EU's goals are made, but even the references to skills for the labour market are nearly absent.

The **PES Manifesto** contains minimal references to education, being quite difficult to establish which sectors are touched by them. A call for **free quality education and lifelong learning** is made in relation to young people, creating the impression that compulsory education, VET and higher education are the only sectors referred to. This is placed close to a call for an **EU plan against the student housing crisis**,

underlining more importance given to challenges in higher education. Digital education receives a mention as well, through a lens of ensuring adequate **digital infrastructure** for all to engage in digital education. The call to implement the **European Child Guarantee**, alongside other references to children rights, covers ECEC to a greater extent than any of the other political parties.

**PES' Malaga Resolution** refers to achieving the EEA by 2025, but does not foresee any plan post-2025. From a sectoral perspective, the Resolution covers VET, insisting on increasing its attractiveness. It covers adult education, for twin transitions upskilling and reskilling but provides some reforms going beyond this: an EU UPSKILL Programme (digital and AI competences), a right to upskilling during work, mandatory foreign language learning. The Resolution refers to health literacy, sexual and reproductive rights education, education to combat gender-based violence (specifically for schools). A strong pledge towards education as a **public good** is made: '**fighting for equal access to quality and inclusive [ECEC] [...] well-funded and inclusive schools, better working conditions for caregivers, educators, and teachers, and to reduce youth unemployment [...] Free quality education at all levels [...] must be accessible to all, to reduce early school leaving**'. **Banning unpaid internships** is on the agenda, but most importantly **PES** refers in the Resolution multiple times to ensuring the **recognition, validation and accreditation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education**.

**EGP** recalls the lost years during the pandemic, **focusing on quality education in ECEC and formal education**. A Manifesto sub-priority is seeing 'Quality education for all' as a tool for people to overcome inequality and fill in green job postings. **Citizenship education and the recognition of non-formal education are supported**. The Manifesto lacks a red thread across the sectors with references to creating 'a green education and training project' isolating learning for sustainability to a specific subject rather than mainstreaming it as advocated by civil society. **Sexuality education and intergenerational learning are mentioned**. **EGP** wishes to empower civil society to provide **media literacy**. **Universal access to ECEC** the clearest commitments made for one sector of learning, proposing that ECEC 'must be counted as social investment in the EU fiscal framework' and calling for increasing the European Child Guarantee funding. The **teachers** are referred to once, to ensure adequate pay, without clarifying what that implies.

**ALDE** has an entire section for skills development, but framed around **meeting labour market needs**. They support achieving **mutual recognition of professional qualifications and academic and vocational degrees** and promote mid-career apprenticeships as long as labour mobility is ensured. Similarly, they endorse the EU Blue Card, viewing legal migration pathways as a way to match the EU's skills needs, without considering skills development and learning support for newcomers or those based in the EU. The reference from the **previous section to the Bologna Process and the European Universities**, together with a reference to fostering **inclusive education for all children** are seen as a tool to develop digital and green skills for the twin transition. However, their approach expands to a variety of sectors, as they wish to **foster VET to urgently upskill key professions (manufacturing, education, cybersecurity,**

**healthcare, agriculture**), recognising vocational qualifications across Europe. For school education, they propose an EU programme for digital education setting minimal levels of digital competences. Targeted actions refer to **digital literacy**, children learning **at least one foreign language in school**, and an EU-funded **Interrail pass for youth choosing VET**, incentivising them to close the EU labour market gaps.

**PEL** covers education throughout transversal priorities. They want an European anti-fascist centre to support more education on the topic. Education is foreseen as a basic public service and linked to a proposal for a **European Fund for public services**. **PEL** calls for EU promotion of investment for free and accessible education. It calls for **stopping the privatisation of education and increasing public funding**, aligned with LLLP's 2022 [Position Paper](#) on Investment. Their Manifesto dedicates **7% of the EU GDP to education, research and innovation**. They wish to 'adopt an **EU directive against social inequalities and discrimination in education**' and to introduce **digital technology in education** if it enhances the work and status of teachers, avoids exacerbating social inequalities, and limits negative environmental impact. The higher education sector is signalled out with proposals to **abolish admission tests and tuition fees, to allocate European study and research grants based on social criteria, to promote European exchanges in training courses from secondary to university level, and to an EU directive capping rents and obliging local authorities to provide housing for learners**. Banning unpaid internships is mentioned.

**VOLT** has a lean Manifesto, not focused on sectoral issues, but on EU governance reforms. However, when referring to skills, it connects them to twin transitions and making Europe attractive for talents. There are references to funding education for the **healthy use of social media and school mental health initiatives, but also refers to sexual and reproductive rights education**, yet with few substantial initiatives. **VOLT** considers the **recognition of skills and qualifications**, albeit for employment purposes.

**VOLT** also offers a **proposal for a Work Programme of the future European Commission**, defining the party's approach on education. Marginal references look at skills for farmers and the military sector. Comprehensive policy proposals cover increasing **investment in education and training to boost innovation**, developing an **EU anti-discrimination law covering education**, strengthening education's capacity to combat antisemitism, ensuring **free, inclusive, accessible and high-quality education**. **VOLT** proposes **curricular reforms** to include English language, STEAM subjects supported by digital resources, citizenship education, and participatory skills such as inclusivity, sustainability, gender equality, mental health, media literacy and critical thinking. They support **teacher training, psychological support, better pay structures and involvement of teachers in policymaking**. **Accessible ECEC and European Schools for all** are among measures proposed. They even propose expanding **European Schools to VET**, backed by EU funding and industry expertise, nurturing students aged 10-12 towards trade skills and combating academic stigma. **VOLT** considers **entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and learning about digital tools' risks** should be part of curricula. Education for migrants and education initiatives on electoral rights and responsibilities are considered. The most significant call is **making education a shared EU competence**.

**EDP** promotes **digital skills, media literacy, civic education and values education**, rather than insisting on specific sectors. It proposes an EU set of civic skills and an **European pilot project on promoting European values through education and culture**. The civic competences are linked with media literacy, as combating fake news is high on the agenda. They propose establishing an **European Civic Service** to boost skills through volunteering. For digital education, it calls for investment to ensure that all develop the needed skills. **Learning mobility is a priority, especially for apprenticeships and VET**. **EDP** proposes a mechanism for the **recognition of diplomas and qualifications in the EU**. They dedicated many reforms to the **outermost regions**: on green skills, boosting school infrastructure, expanding the Erasmus+ programme, creating a European University of the Caribbean and promoting multilingualism. Other covered topics are innovation and skills to ensure preparedness for the labour market and the twin transitions. In this context, increased public and private funding to quality education is called for as well as access to VET. The last groups mentioned are the elderly and youth, **proposing quality training for elderly and banning unpaid traineeships**. References to quality education to compete with American and Asian universities are made, nodding towards higher education without any proposals.

The **ECPM Manifesto** is focused on **freedom in education**. They promote the **rights of parents to choose and influence the topics taught in schools**, ensuring that the learning promotes traditional family values, including the Christian religion. This is coupled with a strong stance on education remaining a Member State competence, decrying the EU ideological teaching which sexualises children. The extremist perspective is coupled with generally appealing proposals on **increasing funding to rural schools, on providing access for all to schools, on making higher education accessible to all and strengthening the position of VET, on developing basic skills for vulnerable populations, on upskilling and reskilling in light of automation**. However, none is substantiated with actions, while the insistence on a narrow form of religious and moral education seem to form the bulk of the priorities of **ECPM**.

## **PARTY MANIFESTOS AND FUNDING**

**EPP** commits to **expanding the Erasmus+ programme**, reaching young learners in rural areas and for the purpose of promoting European and national cultures. Learning mobility is discussed, but it is limited to the 'opportunity to travel' rather than to a serious reflection on what learning mobility is and how it should be done. There is **no call for change on the macroeconomic financial framework** but **EPP** insists on the need not to be guided by ideological principles and to reflect whether current policies and initiatives are feasible. This is a direct attack on the European Green Deal, EU's nature restoration law and similar environmental and social initiatives which would have implications over lifelong learning.



The **PES** manifesto and **Malaga Resolution** call for a **widened Erasmus+ programme and adequate recognition of diplomas and learning periods abroad**. The Resolution clarifies that this should be reserved for disadvantaged learners, and goes further to demand a **'green Erasmus': an active labour market policy for including young people in green jobs**. **PES** calls for **no austerity**, but shies away from making any concrete reference to how the economic governance framework should be adapted to address this. The Resolution is more ambitious with calls for a flexible European Semester that allows social and environmental investments, and for the mainstreaming of the Social Convergence Framework.

**EGP** commits to **increasing the Erasmus+ budget**, referring to an adequate sum for making it accessible to all, irrespective of background. However, with no specific detailing of what this can foresee or how to make it happen, there is concern over how credible this is. Linked to investment, **EGP** calls for a **Green Golden Rule and for a flexible European Semester**, to allow green social investments. **EGP** wishes to include a component on **wellbeing in the Semester**. Such calls are aligned with LLLP's approach of unshackling Member States from restrictions imposing austerity.

**ALDE** makes no commitment to increase the Erasmus+ budget but demands for it to be **expanded to education institutions in candidate countries, to learners of all ages (in VET and ALE) and to establish a branch of it for the mobility of EU public servants in Member States**. On the macroeconomic governance framework, **ALDE** is strict in ensuring that **fiscal policy change would inspire prudence** and would not let Member States pay beyond their means. Though unclear, even as they support the idea of fiscal policies to incentivise green and digital investments, **they seem to promote austerity**.

**PEL** does not discuss Erasmus+, but extensively covers the macroeconomic governance framework, echoing LLLP calls. **They want to abolish the Stability and Growth Pact and replace it with a tool that allows for expansionary investment in social and environmental restructuring, while calling for making the Recovery and Resilience Facility an established EU instrument**.

**VOLT** calls for the **increase of the Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ budgets, with a figure of 300 billion EUR considered for Horizon Europe**. On Erasmus+, they wish to increase its inclusivity towards school students, teachers and apprentices. **VOLT** admits the fact that the long-term focus on higher education in Erasmus+ must be expanded. Within its proposed European Commission WP, **VOLT** calls for the **introduction of sustainability and quality-of-life indicators in the European Semester**.

**EDP** proposes a **tenfold increase to the Erasmus+ budget**. However, in some places this is not qualified, while in others it is mentioned that the increase is specifically targeting learning mobility in apprenticeships and VET. This ambiguity threatens how this commitment will be operationalised. There is no reference to the economic governance framework, even if it calls for investment in innovation.



**ECPM** makes **no reference to Erasmus+ nor to the economic governance framework**. The only reference to fiscal policies indicates a desire of loosened regulations to support disadvantaged regions and SMEs.

## **PARTY MANIFESTOS AND CIVIL DIALOGUE**

**EPP** commits to **promoting civic participation, to improving the situation for civil society, to increasing funding for civil society and to ensuring that civil society is part of conversations for Treaty change**. However, it is unclear how realistic this commitment is considering that **EPP** is the political party that refused to consult with civil society for its Manifesto and considering that its references to civil society are reduced to three short sentences and without any clarity on what measures will be taken.

**PES** recognises in its Manifesto the ‘crucial role of civil society’, but apart from including it in consultations on Cohesion Policy, it ignores it completely. There is **no call for a civil dialogue**, nor any reference to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). Stronger calls for civil society engagement are made across its Resolution. **Support for civil society is requested, but it is unclear whether this accounts for legal, financial, political or other types of support**.

**EGP** makes calls for the involvement of civil society in decision making. The protection of the civic space is a sub-priority of the Manifesto, understanding the need for a vibrant space in which civil society to be empowered for the active participation role that is required. This is linked to a call for a mechanism for which civil society can report abuses directed towards them. **A request for a civil dialogue is clearly made**, and described as modelled on the social dialogue currently existent at EU level. In this context, **calls for sustainable funding of civil society** are also made.

**ALDE** does not call for civil dialogue, but for more **streamlined access of civil society to national and EU funding and commits to uphold the right to association** and assembly to protect civil society organisations, in particular those fighting to protect and promote democracy under threat.

**PEL** makes no reference to civil dialogue, and is limited in its mentions of civil society. It insists on having civil society part of the consultations on their proposal for an European Fund for public services and **recalls the need for Treaty changes as called upon by the CoFoE**.

**VOLT** makes no calls for better engagement of civil society in the EU, rather considering that the **European Parliament is the sole stakeholder that needs a greater say in policy making**.

**EDP** discusses increasing **EU competences in education**. Considering its focus on civic education, this could be a nod to the CoFoE and its demands. However, it is **extremely vague with no actionable point**. Civil dialogue is not mentioned, while extra funding for civil society is suggested only once.

**ECPM** makes no call for civil dialogue and celebrates civil society only for the pressure they made to protect religious freedom. Therefore, there is **no indication that ECPM would support civil society** in education or in the context of a shrinking civic space.

### **LLLP Members' Manifestos**

- ESU Manifesto, [here](#)
- SOLIDAR Manifesto, [here](#)
- Eurochild, WOSM and Learning for Wellbeing Foundation supported Child Rights Manifesto, [here](#)
- EAEA Manifesto, [here](#)
- OBESSU Manifesto, [here](#)

## LIFELONG LEARNING SCOREBOARD

Political Party	Lifelong Learning Definition	Erasmus+	Economic Governance Framework	Civil dialogue	Lifelong Learning Sectors	Specific initiatives	Alignment with LLLP (from no L to LLL)
<b>EPP</b>	Older citizens	Calls for expansion	-	-	School education , HE, ALE	Financial literacy, Democratic education	No L
<b>PES</b>	As LLLP	Calls for expansion	Calls against austerity, a flexible European Semester and Social Convergence Framework	Not mentioned but Calls for civil society engagement	ECEC, School education , HE, ALE, VET	European Education Action Plan, Paid Training Leave, Digital upskilling, Recognition of NFIL, Sexual education, Banning unpaid traineeships, European Child Guarantee	LL
<b>EGP</b>	Adult education	Calls for increased budget	Golden rule environmental and social investments	Calls for civil dialogue	ECEC, School education , ALE	Citizenship education, Sexual education, Recognition of NFIL, Media literacy	LL
<b>PEL</b>	-	-	Abolish Stability and Growth Pact	Limited mentions to civil society	School education , HE	Inclusive education, Banning unpaid traineeships, Financial support in HE, Enhanced EU budget for E&T	L
<b>VOLT</b>	Adult education	Calls for increased budget	Sustainability and quality-of-life indicators in European	Limited mentions to civil society	ECEC, School education , HE, ALE, VET	Reformed curriculum, European Secondary Schools in VET, Citizenship education, Financial literacy, EU-shared competence on E&T	LL

			Semester				
ECR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ID	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>EDP</b>	Adult education	10x E+ (unclear if only for VET and ALE)	No reference	Not mentioned but Extra funding for civil society	HE, ALE, VET	Digital skills, Media education, Civic education, European Civic Service, Learning mobility (especially VET)	L
Pirates	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>EFA</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	No L
<b>ALDE</b>	Education for the labour market	Calls for expansion (adults, public servants, candidate countries)	Promoting austerity	Not mentioned but committed to protect civil society	School education , HE, ALE, VET	EU basic standards in digital competences, Recognition of qualifications, Multilingualism	L
<b>ECPM</b>	No reference	No reference	No call for change	Not mentioned and no commitment for civil society made	School education , ALE	Freedom in education, Religious education, Parents' rights	No L

