

## EDUCATION FOR SHARED SOCIETIES Concept Note

Co-organized by the World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid (WLA-CdM)  
under the High Patronage of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Portugal

### Summary

This project aims to mobilize political will around a global **Education for Shared Societies Agenda** to leverage and drive engagement on *education for all* as a catalyst to address challenges affecting the advance of shared societies. This *Agenda* will be developed in a global cross-sectorial dialogue process and offer relevant policy proposals to develop effective education for building more inclusive and peaceful societies.

It will draw on the leadership experience of over 100 democratic former Heads of State and Government from more than 70 countries – the members of the World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid (WLA-CdM) - and build on the innovative work of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and partners in the field of education.

### I) Background and Justification

A **shared society** is one in which everyone has a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, shielded from dynamics of social exclusion, inter-group tensions and violence. Over the last ten years, the WLA-CdM has been working on a dedicated project to highlight and champion the concept of shared societies, impulse by WLA-CdM Members' concerns about the problems resulting from social division and social exclusion leading to conflict and violence. A shared society brings citizens together, develops understanding and respect amongst them and meets their needs. As a result, such a society is supported by its inhabitants and is more peaceful, fair, settled and stable, reinforcing the social contract between the state and its citizens and the pillars on which it is founded.

The WLA-CdM's **Shared Societies Project** has worked from global to local, focusing recent efforts on mainstreaming the *Shared Societies* concept within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the resulting Agenda 2030 and its implementation. The concept is, in fact, reflected in various places in the SDGs and in particular in Goal 16 on “inclusive and peaceful societies”. The Project has also analyzed the relationship between social inclusion as it affects and is affected by other aspects of social and political development such as local governance and women's participation, as well as the virtuous cycle of *Shared Societies* and the economy. The proposed discussion would address another key dimension in the construction of *Shared Societies*.

During the life of the **Shared Societies Project**, it has been evident that the forces creating division, tension, isolationism and intolerance are again gaining traction amongst those who feel threatened. This includes those who feel marginalized and disadvantaged and those who fear the changes that appear around them but lie beyond their control, such as, digitalization, the disappearance of traditional values and norms, the growth of radical fundamentalism, demographic change, environmental degradation and disasters and shifts in political and economic power, nationally and

internationally. Traditional political, religious, and other leaders are struggling to reach the vulnerable and marginalized and better deliver on their needs and concerns.

Young people, in particular, frequently perceive traditional institutions and their mechanisms of participation as old-fashioned, rigid, and even irrelevant. Another flagship program of WLA-CdM - **Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism** has also been responding to these tendencies in that specific context. Here, the WLA-CdM has emphasized the importance of integrated prevention strategies and of the use of *soft* power, including education and other social inclusion policies meant to nurture shared values.

These trends make the Shared Societies Project ever more relevant. The initial rationale for Shared Societies argued that trends of economic mobility, displacement, and globalization will increase the levels of diversity across the world. The failure to proactively and positively manage this diversity has the potential to produce substantial negative consequences. This was seen by the Club de Madrid as part of one of the most important conversations of our time, i.e., how leaders could constructively manage ethnic differences while protecting and preserving human dignity to build a Shared Society. The challenges are multi-dimensional and, therefore, must be tackled in a multi-dimensional way, including the fundamental inclusive education dimension when addressing issues such as **mass movements of populations**, the role of the **media and new technologies**, or the **Global Citizenship** paradigm, which reflects the interconnection of the world in terms of values that are universal like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and its 2030 Agenda to build peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

## II) Education for Shared Societies

In 10 years of global leadership in promoting shared societies, the WLA-CdM has identified **education** as a crucial catalyst in building these societies. Formal and non-formal education has the power to equip young people with values, knowledge, and skills to face a diverse and rapidly changing world, and set the bases for social cohesion, inclusion, and engagement. Education is one of the “Ten Commitments for Shared Societies”<sup>1</sup>, calling for “an education system that offers equal opportunity for developing the knowledge, skills, capacities, and networks necessary for children to become productive, engaged members of society and understand and respect others”<sup>2</sup>. Within this framework, the WLA-CdM has been identifying transformative practices and advocating for educational establishments that embrace a message of respect for difference and diversity, schools that value the range of identities in the community and the introduction of a curriculum on pluralism, diversity, and mutual understanding.

Through a cross-sectoral dialogue process, WLA-CdM will highlight transformative trends in education and formulate policy recommendations that can help governments and organizations effectively integrate inclusion policies into their educational strategies and thus reinforce resilience in youth as a means of building inclusive and peaceful societies and preventing violent extremism.

WLA-CdM Members' individual and collective leadership experience, convening power and access, will come together with educational experts to develop a dedicated approach to **Education for Shared Societies**, raise awareness of its importance and encourage its adoption. The WLA-CdM

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<sup>1</sup> The 10 Commitments and Approaches are grouped into four categories (Institutional Arrangements, Safeguards, Service Provision, and Inter-Community Development), key policy areas identified as essential features of a shared society.

<sup>2</sup> 10 Commitments and Approaches for Shared Societies, Club de Madrid, 2009:

<http://www.clubmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SSP-Commitments-and-Approaches-for-Shared-Societies-260609.pdf>, p.9

and its Members are uniquely positioned to support and lend independent, practical, strategic counsel and their voices to the development and implementation of inclusive and resilient policies in this realm.

### III) The Approach

The situation of the youngest and most unfulfilled generations have put the international community on alert but this cohort also provides a unique opportunity for positive change. Younger generations are ready to undertake transformative approaches to build safer and more inclusive societies. They also have the legitimacy to share powerful stories and trusted narratives of what could be done to channel the energy of a generation frustrated with governments and institutions that are perceived as distant, ineffective and irrelevant bodies<sup>3</sup>.

This era of rapid growth and interconnectedness has greatly empowered citizens but it has simultaneously disempowered millions of persons, particularly youth, across the globe who lack the skills needed to respond to the challenges of digitalization.

Globally, over two-thirds of young people feel that making a greater contribution to society is important, but they also feel they need broader skills and knowledge to do so<sup>4</sup>. It is an urgent necessity to equip them with the 21<sup>st</sup> century global skills, values, and knowledge needed to thrive in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

This proposal seeks to foster political and technical dialogue on the role of formal and non-formal education in contributing to enabling conditions for more inclusive and cohesive societies. Education can nurture critical thinking, cultural awareness, shared global values, respect, and understanding. Formal education on its own is not enough. For instance, those encouraging division, prejudice and hatred have a simple, if misguided message, yet they have often had the knowledge and skills to create attractive narratives that could present them as resourceful and active citizens. Hence, there is a need to further research how education can both amplify fear and distrust, entrenching negativity, or have a positive impact, nurturing shared values and healing divisions.

### IV) Objectives

The *overall objective* of the initiative is to mobilize political will around a global **Education for Shared Societies Agenda** to leverage and drive engagement on *education for all* as a tool to address challenges affecting the advance of shared societies.

To do so, it will channel the collective knowledge, ideas, experience and voice of multiple stakeholders - WLA-CdM Members, expert practitioners, policy makers, social actors, business and academia - to produce a set of policy proposals and strategies for the effective use of education as a tool for building more inclusive and peaceful societies and preventing violent extremism in a shared societies context.

*Specific objectives include:*

- (i) An **Education for Shared Societies Agenda** to be achieved through a multi-stakeholder process, garnering expertise, political experience and influential voices - at the local, national and global levels - that can mobilize the political will needed to generate positive change.

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<sup>3</sup> PVE: Leaders Telling a Different Story. Outcome Document, Club de Madrid. December 2017:<http://www.clubmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PVE-Outcome-Documents-2017-12-1.pdf>, p. 101

- (ii) An **Alliance for Education for Shared Societies** focused on the implementation of the Agenda through concrete public policies at the local, national and global levels.

## V) Project Activities and Work Plan

In March 2018, the WLA-CdM hosted an **Expert Task Force (ETF) Meeting on Education for Shared Societies** on the margins of the 2018 Global Education and Skills Forum. An informed strategic vision was developed, leading to the identification of three themes considered particularly relevant for global action on education for shared societies:

1. Inclusive education for migrants, refugees and IDPs
2. Education for preventing violent extremism
3. Digital resilience for shared societies

Multi-sectorial **working groups** are being formed for each theme, with the mandate to formulate policy recommendations that will be brought together into a global Agenda on Education for Shared Societies. The *Agenda* and its policy recommendations will offer guidance to governments and institutions.

The following section presents the main activities and deliverables that are planned over the next 12 months. They will be conducted with continued engagement from the ETF, and under the guidance of a **Steering Committee** led by WLA-CdM members, ensuring political leadership and expertise throughout the process.

### *Activities/Deliverables:*

- (i) **Mapping of relevant stakeholders** working in the field of education, social inclusion, media and technology and preventing violent extremism.
- (ii) **Agreement on operational partnerships** for the implementation of the process
- (iii) **Periodic exchanges between the ETF and the Working Groups** between May and October 2018 to develop and review background papers on each of the 3 themes.
- (iv) **Exchanges between the ETF** and ongoing third party processes to consider in the formulation of the *Agenda*. These exchanges and the participation in relevant national and international dialogues<sup>5</sup> will, in turn, start raising awareness and mobilizing political will on the need for an **Education for Shared Societies Agenda**.
- (v) A 1.5-day **Policy Dialogue on Education for Shared Societies** to be held in Lisbon in October 16-17, 2018. To complement and galvanize the work of the multi-sectorial working groups, a 1.5-day gathering of political leaders, policy-makers and expert practitioners will be organized in October 2018, in conjunction with the WLA – CdM annual General Assembly. Over 150 participants will together identify best practices, transformative ideas and preliminary policy recommendations that will be captured in three 5-7 page briefs and submitted to the *Agenda* Drafting Committee.

### *Working Group Methodology*

The *Agenda* will be formulated through a twelve month-long informed dialogue involving Members of the WLA-CdM, policy makers, and expert practitioners that will integrate the Task Force and three

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<sup>5</sup> Four missions anticipated between March 2018 and February 2019

thematic Working Groups. These will be serviced and managed by a Content Coordinator, the WLA-CdM Secretariat, and, eventually, the Agenda Drafting Committee.

Each thematic Working Group will be composed of at least 1 WLA-CdM Member, 5/6 leading expert/practitioners from governments, international institutions, civil society organizations and academia. Each group will be co-chaired by an expert and a WLA-CdM Member who will lead the preparation of a 5-7 page brief that will serve as the basis for the *Agenda* and include a set of concrete policy recommendations and proposed transformative practices for the respective Working Group area. These papers will be discussed during the Policy Dialogue that will take place in October 16-17 in Lisbon, and feed the *Agenda*.