

CALL FOR EVIDENCE - THE EUROPEAN JOINT DEGREE

QUEST's answer to the European Commission

Answered on the 6th of February 2024

QUEST is a European network bringing together 60 civil society organisations, schools, universities, institutions and public bodies advocating for change in education and lifelong learning by the promotion of democratic, inclusive and sustainable practices.

QUEST welcomes the Commission's initiative to propose a European Joint Degree, as it acknowledges its strong potential in terms of mobility opportunities for learners, intercultural dialogues and the strengthening of a collective EU identity. As expressed within the call for evidence, limits exist regarding the variety of administrative requirements, national legislations and educational offers. However, QUEST believes these limits should not lower this proposal's ambition. Indeed, for this European Joint Degree to be both inclusive and representative of learners needs, QUEST trusts it should embrace the following points :

A Joint European Degree should be representative of learners' present and future needs. To do so, the Common European Criteria should not only include the acquisition of passive knowledge, but also the active and transversal development of soft skills in a life-long perspective. Student-led and student-centred activities should therefore be transversally represented within these criteria, and systematically implemented - rather than sporadically - to grant eligibility to the European Joint Degree. This European Joint Degree could therefore become an opportunity to :

1. engage both students, from their studies onwards, in elaborating innovative sustainable and inclusive solutions to present and future challenges;
2. Harmonise and spread innovative pedagogies across EU universities, therefore promoting students active participation and skills adoption throughout the curriculum;
3. Ensure student's and professors' well being in the short and long term.

Current as well as future university learners should be granted a voice in defining both the needs, the shape, the content and the evaluation of this European Joint Degree. Indeed, QUEST is convinced that learners should be given the space to express their right to become agents of their educational futures. A European Joint Degree, elaborated without their perspectives, would fall short from fully recognising the diversity of learning needs and ambitions of future generations. Opening the debate to multi-ages learners, could additionally serve as a learning experience - promoting collective decision making, futures literacy, analysis and problem-solving skills. It could further grant greater knowledge about EU institutions and mechanisms, therefore consolidating democratic knowledge and a

feeling of belonging to the EU. QUEST thus believes this proposal should engage school classes as well as student-led organisations in sharing their views about, if not co-designing, this European Joint Degree. Cutting-edge pedagogies such as democratic education approaches and youth parliaments could be used in that regard.

An equal access to this European Joint Degree should be ensured, so that all students within the EU may benefit from it. This means specific actions should be taken to allow every institution to implement and promote such a degree. For instance, specific funding and technical assistance should be provided to less advantaged higher institutions. Otherwise, the risk is high to see this degree leaving out the students who are unable to access the most prestigious universities. Likewise, funding and communication should be provided in order to promote access to disadvantaged students (inc. disability, socio-economic inequalities...).

Finally, a European Joint Degree should not burden university professors with additional administrative workloads and leave them the flexibility to propose innovative educational experiences.

