



# ECNAIS

European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools

**Public Hearing on the Right to Education: Freedom of parental Choice. *Preventing radicalization through education, practices from schools' daily lives***

The independent educational sector has for long been providing valuable and smart answers to the key issues of radicalization and thus enabling relationship bonding which creates purpose and a sense of belonging.

Concepts like values, autonomy, diversity, dialogue, empathy, critical thinking, inclusion, involvement and integration, among others, are put in place and in practice every day by European independent schools. Combined, these are instruments in preventing radicalization through education.

In a Hearing in the European Parliament on 26 January 2016, hosted by MEP's Mr Nuno Melo and Mr Andrew Lewer, five independent schools told about their value based approach of education, how they shape their pupils to become responsible citizens and how they teach them to make the world more just and democratic . Inspired by their different religious, philosophical and pedagogical profile, these schools are strongly motivated to strengthen the students self-knowledge and self confidence, together with the development of empathic skills, which are crucial for living a peaceful life with tolerance and respect for others people choices.

Simon Steen, chairman of ECNAIS, quoted Mr. Andreas Schleicher (Director, OECD Directorate for Education and Skills) , who [blogged](#) on 22 January 2016:

"...one has to strike a balance between strengthening common values in societies, such as respect and tolerance, that cannot be compromised, and appreciating the diversity of our societies and the plurality of values that diversity engenders."

All five schools gave perfect examples of how the right to education and freedom of parental choice can contribute to such diversity enforcing the bonds through belonging and making clear the complex purpose of education.

In The Hearing, organized by [ECNAIS](#), there were also contributions by [OIDEL](#) (on the freedom of education index), and Rodrigo Ballester (member of the Cabinet of the Commissioner for Education); he emphasized the fact that although education is not the competence of the EU, Europe recognizes the role education, and also independent education, has to play in the battle against radicalization. The Commissioner is fully prepared to make the spreading of good examples in this respect possible). On behalf of ECNAIS, Sofia Reis presented a short overview on what independent education stands for. The Hearing was chaired by ECNAIS chairman Simon Steen.

The schools which presented themselves ([see their power point presentations](#)) were:

- Maria Montessori Private Basic School with Kindergarten, Slovakia
- Cosmicus, the Netherlands
- Federation Steiner schools, Belgium
- Den Alternative Skole, Denmark
- Avgouleia-Linardatou independent school, Greece