



Next Generation EDU: Invest in Education for the Next Generation!

The EU's new long-term budget for 2021-27, coupled with Next Generation EU is the single largest investment in the history of the European Union. Its core programme, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, is aimed at helping the EU economy recover from the pandemic crisis and foster an economic transformation that meets the targets of the green transition, the digital transformation and the resilience and inclusiveness of European societies. The general framework is set at the European level, while the concrete policies of investment are developed and implemented by the Member States. However what is often lacking in both, is a clear commitment to invest in the one strategic sector that will ensure the long-term transformation of our societies: Education.

As highlighted in a report by Civil Society Europe¹, the lack of transparency and participatory design of the National Recovery and Resilience (National Plans) phase is also a reason for alarm. This is especially true for Student Councils and Unions, Youth Organisations and Civil Society Organisations in general, who in many cases have been on the frontline of the Covid-19 emergency, addressing the gaps in Member States' capacity for an emergency response.

We believe that for these investments to be effective, thorough consultation of the different stakeholders of the education community is paramount, both for designing and for implementing the measures. That is why our organisations call for:

- 1) A clear commitment to follow the European Parliament demands² to devote at least 10% of the funds of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans to education including a specific focus on mitigating the digital divide utilising the 20% of the RRF dedicated to digitalisation (funds for IT materials for schools and other educational centres, students and teachers; inclusive, accessible and independent learning platforms and materials that are also fully useable by learners with disabilities; teacher training and capacity building of

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https://civilsocietyeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CSE-ECNL-Participation-of-CSOs-in-the-preparation-of-the-EU-NRRPs_spread.pdf

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0045_EN.pdf

education providers) and enhancing learners', students', and school students' participation in decision-making. Member States should take into consideration the Country-Specific Recommendations for education and training made by the Commission in the framework of the European Semester.³ Member States should also ensure that the next generation (measures for children, young people and education) are clear pillars of their national recovery and resilience plans as outlined in the Recovery and Resilience Facility legislation.

- 2) A clear commitment also to the European Parliament's demand on supporting youth work and volunteering activities and organisations that deliver them, in all their diversity as they are particularly at risk throughout Europe. A lack of support to these activities, as well as non-formal and informal learning in general, would create a significant gap in the offer for young people to access learning experiences focusing on competences that are crucial for dealing with the crisis (such as media literacy, digital literacy, active citizenship or entrepreneurship).
- 3) Robust investments by the Member States in expanding social protection systems for students and young people and in the creation of quality jobs to address the surging rates of unemployment that is particularly affecting young people in education or having just left education. The necessity of these measures are demonstrated by the current crisis: many students have lost their jobs during the pandemic and many are unable to access social protection systems, leading to thousands of students having to rely on emergency food banks.
- 4) A public impact assessment within the Member States' submission documents on how the projects on education of the National Plans are going to benefit current and future students; additionally we demand students' and students' representatives, as well as youth organisations and young people to be part of monitoring committees as called for in the Recovery and Resilience Facility legislation.
- 5) Thorough and structured consultations and real involvement of the students' and school students' unions, youth organisations and all other educational stakeholders as well as civil society groups representing disadvantaged learners, including learners with disabilities and special educational needs in the design and implementation of the National Plans regarding education.

- 6) A clear commitment towards communication and transparency, from national governments in making the National Plans (both in their draft and final version) and their implementation documents publicly available, and from the Commission in independently assessing the involvement of the national stakeholders by the governments, and in making its assessment documents on the National Plans publicly available.

A proper investment in education, a commitment to transparency as well as a thorough stakeholder involvement in all the stages of the process are crucial to ensure an effective, positive impact on our education systems and our communities. We call on the Member States to uphold these principles, and for the European Commission to be up to its task in assessing the National Plans, their adherence to the common objectives, as well as the thoroughness of the stakeholder involvement in its drafting and implementation, as dictated by the EU regulation establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Invest in EDUcation, invest in the Next Generation of EUropeans!