

# INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A PUBLIC GOOD FOR ALL

**Yes to public funding, no to austerity, and commodification of learning!**

1

**Learning as a public good and not a commodity:** Meeting demands and objectives set by overarching frameworks, such as the UN Agenda 2030, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Education Area and the Skills Agenda, **learning must be seen as a public good and not a commodity.** Public goods have two distinguishing properties: one person's consumption does not diminish other people's consumption levels of the same good, and such goods cannot be provided exclusively to some.

2

**Dedicating at least 20% of total government expenditure on learning:** Transforming the world into a learning society requires adequate resources. As committed by UNESCO Member States in 2015, **public investment in learning should represent 20% of total government expenditure.** A downward trend has seen reductions in public investment in education and training, compensated by private funding. Public authorities must not shift the responsibility of providing learning as a human right to for-profit actors.

3

**Coordinating governance:** Structured dialogue and capacity building mechanisms with appropriate funding are needed to bridge EU and national public authorities, civil society and other stakeholders. **The entire learning community must participate in co-designing and co-implementing the learning process, from policy making to institutional-level decisions, if learner centred approaches to learning are to be meaningfully implemented.** The EU must support Member States in implementing EU policies and funding in close cooperation with the

relevant stakeholders, in particular civil society organisations who were left out of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, and its National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). **Civil society in education must be a central part of monitoring, evaluating and updating NRRPs' implementation, while investment must be directed at all sectors of education and training, informal, non-formal and formal.** Funding should be used to support both soft and hard infrastructural development in the sector.

4

**All learning matters - public funding supporting all learning environments:** Investment should compel people to continue learning throughout and in different areas of their lives to understand, adapt to and, crucially, shape the surrounding world. This demands investment that places equal value to all learning environments - whether formal, non-formal, informal, combining varying degrees of (in)formality or whether run publicly or by independent non-profit organisations - and reflects on how to build cooperation and seamless transitions between them. Adequate public investment must be directed towards ensuring that Community Lifelong Learning Centres become operational across the EU.

5

**Focusing on cost-effectiveness and moving away from cost-benefit analysis:** Without revising the models of calculating success and investment-worthiness, the current challenges cannot be addressed. We need to **move away from relying solely on cost-benefit analyses**, and plan public investment in learning by means of cost-effectiveness analyses and/or newly developed and better suited methods which include wider benefits of learning in their calculations.

6

**Reforming the EU economic governance framework:** Remove education from debt sustainability. Maintaining a narrow and arbitrary set of financial indicators compiled three decades ago (The Stability and Growth Pact) comes at the expense of achieving wider societal, economic and environmental goals today. The EU economic governance framework is in dire need of reform, going further than the European Commission Communication on reform orientations, as time has come to meaningfully adapt financial indicators rather than simply make them more flexible, unshackling Member States so they can ensure adequate public funding for universal, equitable and quality education.

7

**Strengthening the social pillar of the European Semester:** Reform the Semester to rebalance, through investment policies, the Stability (fiscal surveillance) with economic resilience - going beyond Growth - under an overarching framework of wellbeing and sustainability, and credibly support Member States to invest in social policies and in long-term recovery planning that leaves no one behind.

## Ending the empowerment of the empowered and widened equity gaps in education and training systems:

Targeted and tailored funding to learners most in need is necessary in today's continuously challenged and rapidly changing societies. Funding from cradle to grave means policies that address **prevention, intervention and compensation measures**, which are designed **accounting for policy coherence**. Without coherence, funding policies for different types of learning prevent stakeholders from understanding available resources and interconnections for a lifelong learning funding thread.

8

**An early start in life - securing the foundations of learning for all:** Early intervention in learners' life is crucial to prevent issues such as lower educational attainment or early leaving from education and training. Therefore, policy makers must adopt this approach for all public policies, expanding and adequately funding early childhood education and care to ensure that those most vulnerable in society benefit from an early start to learning. Member States are **called on to speed up the elaboration and implementation of Child Guarantee National Action Plans** as well as the measures of the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success, to ensure continuous adequate funding from one stage of learning to the next.

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## Learning beyond graduation - a reality for all through lifelong learning entitlements:

The EU must ensure and support Member States to establish Lifelong Learning Entitlements for all. This means ensuring proper ancillary support services required for guidance, counselling, validation, recognition, and breaking barriers for those most vulnerable to participate in learning according to their individual learning needs and capacities.

10

**Revalorising educators and rethinking the teaching profession:** Improve the attractiveness of the educator profession to ensure retention, well-being and adequate support for being up-to-date to pedagogical and andragogical developments, while ensuring that any funding for working conditions, development opportunities and career progression must be expanded to the wider variety of educators that operate in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.

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## Privatisation of learning has devastating impact on rising inequalities

### Assessment as a tool for learning - Breaking the vicious cycle of performance-based induced inequity:

Performance-based funding according to standardised and summative assessment scores contributed to increasing inequalities; with learners with disabilities, a migrant background, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds facing the brunt of financial punishments incurred by their learning institutions. Rethink assessments to prevent negative impacts on children and young people with lifelong implications. Boost inclusiveness by tailoring assessment to become formative, competence-oriented, process-based and outcomes-based, while associating funding to those most in need rather than based on assessment-oriented funding.

12

**Learning beyond skills for the labour market:** Learning outcomes and aims must be re-established, shifting them back towards the original mission of personal development for individual fulfilment in life as well as the development of communities and societies in harmony with nature while benefiting each aspect of society, be it social or economical, rather than narrowly subjecting people to learning that is benefitting solely the closing of gaps in labour markets.

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### Investing in digital technology to support access and quality learning not to further raise inequalities:

Digital tools and learning must conform to learners' needs, allowing them to regulate their own learning, without being passive technology consumers. For that, synergies in public procurement vis-à-vis the providers of the learning platforms should be experimented while open protocols and interoperability should be encouraged. Digital tools and learning experiences must be quality assured and support services for learners and educators must be in place and to ensure that no one is left behind in the digitalisation process. Equally important is the critical assessment of the algorithms used and the users' capacity to retain ownership of their own data, which cannot be used for for-profit goals.

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