

R3 No Future Without Education: Facing Inequalities through Rights and Participation

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Forum URA

Agenda item: 8. Resolutions

Motion text

1 When discussing politics, we often reflect on the past, we analyse the present,
2 and we envision a better future. However, in attempting to build this future,
3 insufficient attention is paid to the basics, education and participation,
4 thereby overlooking the material conditions in which children and young people
5 develop. Across Europe, they are still not granted full access to the necessary
6 means to thrive, both individually and collectively.

7 Education systems in Europe are not failing by accident: they are shaped by
8 political choices. Insufficient and uneven funding, unequal access, disparities
9 in educational standards across neighbourhoods, persistent social exclusion and
10 the growing commodification of education reflect systemic priorities that place
11 capitalist market logic above social justice and education. At the same time,
12 these political decisions impede students from acquiring valuable knowledge for
13 human development, including sexuality, emotional well-being, and democratic
14 participation.

15 The first problem is that education can function both as a driver of inequality
16 and as its most powerful remedy. Nonetheless, it currently reproduces existing
17 social hierarchies. Whilst formal access to education is widely guaranteed
18 across Europe, it remains deeply unequal in practice. Students from wealthier
19 backgrounds benefit from structural advantages, such as private extra tuition,
20 supportive learning environments and access to modern technological devices that
21 enhance their learning, while others face systemic barriers that limit their
22 opportunities and prospects from an early age.

23 Addressing these inequalities requires going beyond the classroom. In this
24 sense, access to extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, or language
25 learning plays a key role in cognitive development, social integration, mental
26 wellbeing and, ultimately, in the students' future. However, these opportunities
27 are increasingly shaped by purchasing power, effectively excluding children from

28 unprivileged backgrounds from spaces essential to their personal and social
29 development, reinforcing class-based inequalities across generations.

30 A second problem is the lack of education on key aspects such as diversity,
31 environmental and social values, and sex education. Against the far-right
32 narrative that education must be reserved exclusively for parents, we argue that
33 schools must not only teach knowledge and skills but also shape humans who can
34 form a better society in co-education with parents. Inclusion and respect of all
35 kinds of diversity are not fostered in all centers. Sex education and education
36 on sexual diversity are still not widely implemented over the EU, and faces a
37 conservative push against it. For instance, a recent policy under the Meloni
38 government in Italy sought to ban sex education, ultimately restricting it to
39 requiring parental consent. Sex education should be accessible to all and from a
40 young age, starting with emotional awareness and consent, respecting each other
41 and ourselves to give children the ability to communicate better and be
42 respectful with each other.

43 A third issue is the lack of history education on recent developments and the
44 origins of other countries and cultures. To better understand our society and
45 the culture of every country, it would be vital to include the histories of
46 native peoples worldwide. Focusing mainly on European history and neglecting
47 native people's way of life leads to harmful and biased thinking. Addressing
48 this requires teaching democratic values and respect for different cultures and
49 origins.

50 A fourth issue is the lack of education on climate change in close connection
51 with social justice. It is essential to teach children about nature,
52 sustainability and respect for our planet and its fragile ecosystem to
53 understand how nature and climate connect to social and climate justice. The
54 lack of contact with nature among urban kids is also a health and education
55 absence that must be solved.

56 A fifth issue is the persistent educational disparity between rural and urban
57 areas across Europe. Students in rural regions often face limited access to
58 specialised teachers, essential infrastructure, libraries, laboratories, and
59 internet. Extracurricular activities such as sports clubs or arts programmes are
60 scarce or absent, restricting both cognitive and social development.
61 Furthermore, rural schools struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers due
62 to their remote location, leading to higher staff turnover and interruptions in
63 learning continuity. The lack of reliable public transport exacerbates these
64 inequalities, forcing students to travel long distances to attend school. Across
65 Europe, these structural barriers create a tangible gap in educational outcomes
66 and future prospects between rural and urban students (without prejudice to the
67 latter and the structural short of investment in them), reinforcing generational
68 inequalities shaped by one's dwelling.

69 A sixth issue is the working conditions of teachers, which affects the quality
70 of education. Many educators are underpaid and face high workloads, leading to
71 stress and a decline in educational quality. Having overburdened teachers with
72 less time for lesson planning and student support affects learning outcomes.
73 Teachers play a huge role in our system, and many issues have to be solved
74 through broader family and work-life balance policies.

75 Lastly, education is not only about what is taught, but also about who has the
76 power to shape decisions afterwards. Young people, despite being the primary
77 subjects of education systems and deeply affected by political decisions, are
78 still largely excluded from participation in governance. In around half of all
79 European countries, student unions, youth councils and youth parliaments lack a
80 solid legal basis, stable funding, and institutional recognition, reducing
81 participation to a symbolic exercise dependent on political goodwill. This is
82 not a failure of youth engagement, but of democratic structures that concentrate
83 decision-making power and fail to ensure accountability when young people's
84 input is ignored. Without enforceable guarantees, inclusive access, and
85 mechanisms that ensure follow-up and real impact, participation risks
86 reproducing existing inequalities and undermining trust in democratic
87 institutions. Ensuring that all young people have a legally recognised,
88 adequately resourced, and genuinely influential role in shaping policies is
89 therefore essential to building more a democratic and equitable future.

90 We call for attention to the uneven provision of education across Europe,
91 including disparities in resources, extracurricular opportunities, teacher
92 conditions, and gaps in instruction on diversity, social values, sexual
93 education, climate, and social justice. These factors shape learning
94 environments and determine students' acquisition of the knowledge and skills
95 necessary for personal growth and active participation in society.

96 **CALL TO ACTION:**

97 **We call on the Council of Europe, European Union institutions, Member states and**
98 **regional governments to:**

- 99 • **Invest in teacher training, affordable and high-quality school materials,**
100 **and reduced student-teacher ratios.**

- 101 • **Ensure fair remuneration for teachers without unjustified disparities in**
102 **line with national and regional contexts, alongside continuous training on**
103 **diversity, history, climate and social justice, while protecting teachers'**
104 **access to unions.**

- 105 • **Guarantee youth participation in governance as a right, anchored in law**
106

- 107 through independent legally recognized youth representation bodies
108 (student unions, youth parliaments, youth councils), adequate resources,
109 inclusive access, and mandatory accountability in decision-making
processes.
- 110 • Ensure the effective implementation of these rights through binding
111 frameworks, including minimum standards for representation, stable public
112 funding, legally recognized consultation on relevant policies and budgets,
113 and clear obligations for public authorities to respond to and justify
114 decisions in relation to youth input.
 - 115 • Reform assessment systems by replacing traditional grading with fair and
116 holistic evaluations that reflect students' actual learning and
117 development.
 - 118 • Remove grade-based barriers to scholarships and traineeships to ensure
119 students' achievement of their full potential and professional
120 aspirations. Use an alternative selection method such as applications
121 based on motivation letters and an exam that doesn't require specific
122 preparation to avoid punishing disadvantaged students who cannot
123 exclusively dedicate to studying.
 - 124 • Create public, high-quality distance and flexible education for people who
125 work at the same time they study at the same cost as in-person public
126 degrees
 - 127 • Provide funding for low-income candidates preparing civil service exams
128 for top positions in public administrations, as they are usually covered
129 by people from a privileged background, fueling inequality and causing
130 institutions to be less representative of society.
 - 131 • Ban unpaid internships and ensure curricular internships do not involve
132 costs for students.
 - 133 • Promote collaboration between schools across regions and countries. Allow
134 children from low income families to access EU mobility and educational
135 programmes such as Erasmus.
 - 136 • Increase EU and Council of Europe funding for Erasmus+ activities and
137 other kinds of short educational activities that help promote EU values,
138 protection of the environment, human rights, etc.
 - 139 • Fund extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, and language
140 learning, to ensure equal access regardless of socioeconomic background.

- 141 • **Address rural-regional disparities with tools such as the European**
142 **Regional Development Funds, allocating resources to marginalised rural**
143 **areas to reduce gaps in access and learning outcomes.**
- 144 • **Revise history curricula to avoid justification of previous crimes against**
145 **human rights and prevent colonial views.**
- 146 • **Adapt schools to climate change by favoring natural presence around them**
147 **to tackle rising temperatures and protect kids from excessive air**
148 **pollution. Guarantee schools are well-equipped to be a safe and healthy**
149 **learning environment which fosters well-being.**

Reason

We believe education is a very important topic in these times, with a lot of young people voting for the far right and a society that's failing to solve our most concerning issues. Young people are the future of this society, and with an educational system that fails us we won't be able to solve any of the threats we face. We cannot let inequality start from childhood, and as a Youth Federation, we must speak up for a better education for ourselves and also for the kids who have an even weaker voice than we do

Supporters

Michele Rattotti (GEV)