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

Proposer:	Joves Ecosocialistes, Giovani Europeisti Verdi, Young Greens South Tyrol, Youth Forum URA
Agenda item:	8. Resolutions

Motion text

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

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

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

Addressing these inequalities requires going beyond the classroom. In this sense, access to extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, or language learning plays a key role in cognitive development, social integration, mental wellbeing and, ultimately, in the students' future. However, these opportunities are increasingly shaped by purchasing power, effectively excluding children from unprivileged backgrounds from spaces essential to their personal and social development, reinforcing class-based inequalities across generations.

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

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

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

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

A sixth issue is the working conditions of teachers, which affects the quality of education. Many educators are underpaid and face high workloads, leading to stress and a decline in educational quality. Having overburdened teachers with

less time for lesson planning and student support affects learning outcomes. Teachers play a huge role in our system, and many issues have to be solved through broader family and work-life balance policies.

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

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

CALL TO ACTION:

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

- **Invest in teacher training, affordable and high-quality school materials, and reduced student-teacher ratios.**
- **Ensure fair remuneration for teachers without unjustified disparities in line with national and regional contexts, alongside continuous training on diversity, history, climate and social justice, while protecting teachers’ access to unions.**
- **Guarantee youth participation in governance as a right, anchored in law through independent legally recognized youth representation bodies (student unions, youth parliaments, youth councils), adequate resources, inclusive access, and mandatory accountability in decision-making processes.**

- **Ensure the effective implementation of these rights through binding frameworks, including minimum standards for representation, stable public funding, legally recognized consultation on relevant policies and budgets, and clear obligations for public authorities to respond to and justify decisions in relation to youth input.**

- **Reform assessment systems by replacing traditional grading with fair and holistic evaluations that reflect students' actual learning and development.**

- **Remove grade-based barriers to scholarships and traineeships to ensure students' achievement of their full potential and professional aspirations. Use an alternative selection method such as applications based on motivation letters and an exam that doesn't require specific preparation to avoid punishing disadvantaged students who cannot exclusively dedicate to studying.**

- **Create public, high-quality distance and flexible education for people who work at the same time they study at the same cost as in-person public degrees**

- **Provide funding for low-income candidates preparing civil service exams for top positions in public administrations, as they are usually covered by people from a privileged background, fueling inequality and causing institutions to be less representative of society.**

- **Ban unpaid internships and ensure curricular internships do not involve costs for students.**

- **Promote collaboration between schools across regions and countries. Allow children from low income families to access EU mobility and educational programmes such as Erasmus.**

- **Increase EU and Council of Europe funding for Erasmus+ activities and other kinds of short educational activities that help promote EU values, protection of the environment, human rights, etc.**

- **Fund extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, and language learning, to ensure equal access regardless of socioeconomic background.**

- **Address rural-regional disparities with tools such as the European Regional Development Funds, allocating resources to marginalised rural areas to reduce gaps in access and learning outcomes.**

- **Revise history curricula to avoid justification of previous crimes against human rights and prevent colonial views.**

- **Adapt schools to climate change by favoring natural presence around them to tackle rising temperatures and protect kids from excessive air pollution. Guarantee schools are well-equipped to be a safe and healthy 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)