



Students disappointed by SOTEU: Accessible education is key to the future of Europe

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BRUSSELS: The European Students' Union (ESU) and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) welcome this specific focus on the fight against the climate change, especially in light of the recent environmental disasters in the world; and the specific actions related with the migration issue, such as the creation of legal pathways for legal migration. Nevertheless, it comes as a surprise to ESU and OBESSU, that president Juncker did not mention once "education" in his one hour speech. The EU is standing at a crossroads, ready to improve the social dimension of the Union as shown in the efforts of putting forward the European Pillar of Social Rights, and education should have a primary role in this.

"If we really want to bridge the gaps between people in the EU, we need to start making education more accessible. Combatting extremism and hate speech and fostering inclusion have been on the EU agenda the last year, but now it seems that they neglect following up on this. We would have liked to see solutions, because education plays a pivotal role in any approach with a chance to succeed" says Helge Schwitters, President of ESU.

If we want to stop fueling the populists' agenda, refugees and asylum seekers entering the EU countries must be given the chance to access education, have their skills recognised as stated in the Lisbon Convention and hence contribute to their social inclusion, for a Europe open to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue: this is what OBESSU and ESU are promoting with their respective programmes "Seeds for Integration" and "Together Moving Forward".

ESU and OBESSU are deeply disappointed by the fact that one of the flagship initiatives of the EU - the Erasmus+ Programme - was not even mentioned. This programme is crucial to enhancing solidarity and needs more funding as well as strategies to include disadvantaged and underrepresented groups: a quick mention to young Europeans involved in the European Solidarity Corps is not enough.

It is clear that the future of Europe must place the civil society at the forefront. This means carving out education from trade agreements, providing solutions for students at risk of exclusion, and making sure that socio-economic inequalities are reduced. President Juncker foresaw a sixth

scenario for Europe, where “freedom, equality of opportunities and the rule of law” are at its core: no matter the future scenario for Europe, education plays a key role.

Note to editors

***The European Students' Union (ESU)** is the umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 38 countries. The NUSes are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. Our members are also student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents around 15 million students in Europe. ESU receives an administrative grant and runs projects funded by the European Commission.*

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***The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)** is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland and brings together Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.*

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