
SCHOOL STUDENTS' EUROPE 2024





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Introduction

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.

Education Must Be A Top Priority

Education empowers people and provides them with equal opportunities. Investing in Education has also the greatest returns to support economical, social and cultural development. Lastly, Education is the foundation of society and belongs to everyone, therefore it has to be publicly funded to remain academically independent.

Therefore, OBESSU demands:

- On all levels (regional, national & European), the recognition of Education as the top priority for long-term investments;
- Allocate at least 5% of the budget to Educational investments;
- Decrease the educational institutions' dependency on private companies and cover their spendings with public assignments;
- Educational investments to be disconnected from economical eclipses and crises.

Education is a Human Right

Education systems all over the world often place a high financial burden on students and their families, building barriers to full access to education. Moreover, education is a fundamental human right, thus should be effortlessly accessible to school students of all backgrounds.

Therefore, OBESSU demands:

- All education to be completely free of charge for the student, with no costs for materials and other necessities.
- City planning attentive to using school buildings as open spaces;
- A student income to be granted to everyone who holds the status of a school student;
- Scholarships available for any school student in the country with special skills and visions, who wish to attend specialised schools or conduct a project;

Vocational Education and Training

We are undergoing a revolution of technologies and school students are at the centre of it. Because many of the “traditional” jobs will no longer exist in just a few decades, these changes must be understood by VET and the educational process of going directly from school to the workplace completely re-thought. New challenges in our economies and democracies mean an increasing need for soft skills and broader citizenship knowledge. VET must focus on quality, to give the right tools to understand reality and to teach skills, in a life long learning approach that can't exclude any level of education. At the same time, the field of work and education should interact on an equal level and mutually adapt to each other according to the trends recognised in both sectors. We also trust that these goals are not possible to be achieved without a democratic participation of learners in decision-making processes and management.

Therefore OBESSU demands:

- Quality of VET to be a core priority for the EU agenda;
- VET learners to have the right to access third-level education and university;
- EU Institutions and Country Governments to include learners and their Unions in decision making processes;
- VET learners to have an active role in school management;

Mental wellbeing of School Students

A healthy education environment is far from being guaranteed for all. The increased pressure to succeed and stand out amongst our peers in the 21st century is pushing students to their limits, which often result in ill mental health. The lack of a supportive and preventive school environment and often coming from difficult social environments or disadvantaged areas where mental health is still highly stigmatized, can result into excluding people from continuing their education. Students need to receive mental health education to learn how to take care of their health and abolish the growing stigma around mental health. In order to fully exercise the right to education, students need, mental health services to be of high quality and free of charge.

Therefore OBESSU demands;

- That students be guaranteed a healthy and stress free education environment.
- That school communities adopt policies guaranteeing a supportive and preventive school environment.
- That students be provided with free and high quality mental health services, regardless of their background.
- Mental Health Education to be in all EU member states national curricula

Migration & Mobility

Human beings moving from a place to another have always been fundamental for European History. Since its foundation, the European Union has given opportunities to learners and workers to get skilled or have a new life abroad, making stronger our economies and mixing our societies. People moving have the same human rights of the ones that stay, but could be necessary instruments to fully include new people or people with a different background in our educational systems and societies. We welcome all the programs like Erasmus+, giving opportunities to European youth, either if these are still far from fully involving our societies. We are against any kind of discrimination against migrants and refugees, we firmly reject any kind of segregation and exclusion from the educational paths.

Therefore OBESSU demands:

- An increase in the Erasmus budget that would allow disadvantaged students to join international exchanges;
- That foreign students and learners to have the same rights as native learners;
- That the European Union fights any kind of segregation in our educational systems;
- Open doors for students and learners from non-EU countries, without discrimination due to migrant status;
- Clear action plans against racism and xenophobia in schools to be developed;
- The European Union and its member states to withdraw the requirements for visa documents for school students and students active in youth organisations;

Vote at 16

Participation in democratic processes is of the utmost importance for our society and the right to vote and to be elected are key elements of citizenship. In a time of growing frustration with political institutions and Euroscepticism, entrusting youth to take a decision in all matters that will affect them in the present day and in the future is a crucial step we need to take in order to give ownership of society to citizens. In 2015 the European Parliament voted a resolution¹ in favour of giving 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote, however the voting rights for this age group is still far from being a reality in the vast majority of EU countries. According to a study by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights², Austria is the only country the EU that allows voting at 16 in all types of elections, followed by Greece which gives the same rights to 17 years old. In Estonia, Malta, some regions of Germany and the UK 16 years old have the right to vote to local elections, or in Belgium to referendums, while in Italy you have to be 25 to be able to vote for the Senate. Looking at the data we realise the need of instilling the responsibility to vote and participate at this younger age while people are still in the education system. Global citizenship education must start from primary level to ensure young people not only understand the political system, but also have developed active citizenship competencies by the time they first vote.

Therefore OBESSU demands:

- The members of the European Parliament to work with their national party members to explore extending the voting rights to citizens from the ages of 16.
- The European Institutions to further stimulate a stronger role of Citizenship Education in national secondary education curricula, keeping a global and holistic perspective on common values;

1. Full text available here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2015-0286&language=EN>

2. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/mapping-minimum-age-requirements/right-to-vote>

Environment

In the last decades the scientific community has proven the existence of climate change, and found their cause to be from human activity. Pollution is not just making our cities and land dirtier and less safe, the increase of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is the main contributor to global warming and consequently the rise in sea levels. Entire regions of the planet are now becoming arid and impossible to live in, creating a new generation of “Environmental Refugees”. This phenomenon is not a far-away challenge, climate change is already affecting EU countries and economies. It is necessary to act now to halt these dangerous processes and make our economy socially and environmentally sustainable. We have the right to live in a productive and safe planet and the responsibility to provide the same for the next generation, There is no Planet B.

Therefore OBESSU demands:

- The European Parliament and Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to develop stronger policies for a green conversion of polluting human activities;
- Concrete plans to defend our environmental resources from pollution, reducing the amount of plastics in seas, lakes and rivers;
- The involvement of youth in environmental policy design and implementation at all levels;
- The encouragement of recycling and renewable energy in schools, public offices and society as a whole and provision for adequate facilities in all countries to do this;
- The introduction of contents about protection of the environment in national secondary education curricula.



We want decision-makers to seriously look at our demands and involve us in the decisions that affect our lives as school students, young people and global citizens.



Nothing
About Us
Without Us

