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Foreword from the Board
As we now approach the first half year of our mandate as Board Members, we are honoured and privileged to look proudly back at all the work we have already accomplished.

We have begun our mandate in the best way possible—with two spectacular events waiting for us; the Training of Trainers in North Macedonia and the Summer School at the UYD in Spain.

Both events did not fail to show the commitment of all of our members to continue the fight for school student rights, and were incredible kick-starters for us all to get to work.

Throughout the past months, the high standard of commitment and passion has been unwavering from various bodies of OBESSU. This has been seen through our project, EPiC, where several members have held national events engaging students at the grassroots. With the central topics of the events being democracy and participation, voting at 16 and the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2024, our members are capacity building and sharing best practices on campaigning and engagement in democratic structures.

Furthermore, we have been immensely focused on advocating for youth and student inclusion with the elections on the horizon. This has been done through high-level events with decision makers, like the European Education Summit 2023 hosted by the European Commission and the 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education. We have been engaging within the Parliament through consultations, including both the political groups and parties via our Manifesto: Europe Needs Us, that was approved at the OBESSU General Assembly 2023.

In a world marred by conflicts and polarisation, our call for unity, solidarity and dialogue has never been stronger. To witness the growing divisions and hatred within our societies is disheartening. Be it the rise of xenophobia, hate speech or social injustice, the consequences of these deep divisions are felt by all.
At the heart of our mission lies the belief that school student unions wield enormous potential to create lasting change. We are the driving force behind the future of education and, by extension, the very societies we inhabit. Our insight, experiences, and dreams are valuable resources that can shape policies and decision-making at all levels. To fulfil this we have continued to carry out our role representing and uplifting student voices within other youth centred organisations, such as the European Youth Forum, directly representing OBESSU’s values at the Council of Members 2023. Attending Generation Climate Europe meetings, including their General Assembly, and continuing our work and commitment within the Global Student Forum. Striving to represent secondary school students in all spaces. The vitality and significance of involving school students at the decision-making table is evident. This is seen through emphasising the central role that VET students and apprenticeships have played in the European Year of Skills, and how they are a continuous contributing factor to a more sustainable future. Our project, InclusiVET, compliments the need for a bigger political focus on exactly this. Having a greater focus on VET students and apprenticeships—with both inclusion in decision-making processes and inclusivity internally, specifically in regard to mental health, as focal points is a high priority for OBESSU.

Additionally, our Council of Members and Extraordinary General Assembly 2023 portrayed how student unions provide a democratic space for young people to be involved and aware of societal issues. Our statutory meeting was concluded with OBESSU adapting 2 policy papers, on the twin transition and on inclusive spaces for minorities. Through our membership collaborating and exchanging experiences, we received 2 urgent motions, one on addressing the ongoing violence against women in our society and one on the Israel-Palestine conflict—where they both passed.
To conclude, the Board of OBESSU, including our new board member elected in December, is proud to represent an organisation filled with strong, democratic and representative members. Members that stand together in tough times and show an unwavering commitment to change our society for the better. It is not possible to truly transform education and use the concept “a whole school approach” without including us.

Let us together prepare for a 2024 where we dismantle the walls that confine us to mere tokens and empower young people to take ownership over their education and future.

The Board of OBESSU
Albert, Andrew, Anna, Gaia, and Nathan
Vision and Mission
The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary education and secondary vocational education in Europe. It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland and brings together 36 Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.

Our vision is that by 2030 we will have school student unions that are considered indispensable stakeholders in debates concerning their lives in Europe and at national level, through constant cooperation and exchange. We will have contributed to achieving a free, inclusive and high quality education that is dynamic, student centered and shaped by learners.

At OBESSU we are all about:

- True school student participation and representation
- Democratic education systems
- Equal access to education ‘A school fit to the needs of today’s challenges’
- Solidarity and understanding
- Supporting the development of school student structures
- Transnational experience exchange
Our Membership
The OBESSULand keeps enlarging its borders! During this year we welcomed a new candidate member: AS from Slovakia, but that’s not all! UNSHM from North Macedonia and SSUNI from Northern Ireland became full members! On the other hand, SUS from Slovakia is not part of OBESSU anymore as they dissolved the student unions.

Which means that OBESSU counts right now with 30 full members, 3 candidates and 3 affiliates, a total of 36 student-led organisations!

We are very happy to see the OBESSU family growing every year!
Our People
We also wish to thank Mikko Jaskari, who left the Board at the end of 2023. You’re a cha-cha rockstar!

Special thanks to Caridad, Petr and Nadine who finished their 2-year mandate in July 2023 but still levitate around the world of OBESSU: Caridad as a Vice-President of the Lifelong Learning Platform, Petr in the Steering Committee of the Global Student Forum and Nadine, you will see her face in the blink of an eye in the next paragraph.
Thanks to Catalin, Giuseppe, Michal and Tara for their work in the MC until July 2023!
Secretariat
Giuseppina Tucci
General management, Human Resources, Strategic Planning
Wannabe: Dumbledore

Francesca Osima
Projects team coordination, partnerships, fundraising
Wannabe: Owner of a hostel in central Italy

Panagiotis Chatzimichail
External Affairs team coordination, advocacy, outreach
Wannabe: “The Voice” winner

Carmen Romero Rodriguez
Members involvement, good governance, partnerships, strategic planning
Wannabe: Turkish actors Agent
Gilda Isernia
Project coordination, policy, research, staff representation
Wannabe: Guestlist Princess

María Ballesteros Melero
Project coordination, capacity building, internal well-being
Wannabe: Basketball player

Raquel Moreno Beneit
Digital communications, in house design, social media, engagement
Wannabe: Travel influencer

Sara Mandis
Projects, European Apprentices Network and VET policies, communications
Wannabe: Florist and pumpkin farmer
Big big thanks to Adel and Elisa who joined us for a bit of their education and training path - we hope they learned as much from us as we learned from them.

Also a massive thank you to Dragana, Samira and Eleonora who have moved on from OBESSU - we know we can count on you to share the school student spark wherever you go!
Achievements
**Position Paper on the European Year of Skills:**
This position paper summarises the views of OBESSU and its members when it comes to the essential skills that should be acquired through education to ensure a just green and digital transition for all and more broadly the necessary skills to help learners become responsible citizens, namely transversal skills such as media literacy, critical and innovative thinking, interpersonal skills, and so on. The position paper was circulated amongst decision-makers and OBESSU members were encouraged to use it in their advocacy activities at the national level.

**Policy Paper on Twin Transition**
“Transforming the Future Of Education with Students and for Students:
The policy paper gathers the views of OBESSU members on the twin transition and proposes a set of recommendations for the implementation of the digital and green transition in the field of education and training to feed policy making processes.

**Position Paper on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning:**
This policy paper discusses the state of play of the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in the EU but also the benefits of developing comprehensive validation mechanisms in particular for disadvantaged groups, such as learners with a migrant background.

**Policy paper on Inclusivity within and beyond Education “Cultivating Inclusive Culture and Transforming our Educational Systems”:**
The Working Group on inclusivity produced a policy paper highlighting its findings on inclusivity in student movements and unions, providing concrete recommendations to youth-led organisations but also to policy-makers at different levels to support the development of concrete measures in the field of youth to foster inclusivity.

**EP Elections 2024 - School Students’ Manifesto “Europe Needs Us”:**
This provides a visual representation of the key elements that OBESSU wishes to see in the programmes of parties towards the EP elections and highlights some of the policy claims that will be developed also with the membership throughout the year.

**More than 100 external events attended where we brought the voice and perspective of school students!**
Governance
General Assembly

Our General Assembly (GA) 2023 took place in Copenhagen on the 7th and 8th of July. The Membership welcomed a new organization, Aliancia Stredoskolakov (AS). Among many fruitful discussions, we had elections to the Board and the Monitoring Committee. UNSHM from North Macedonia and SSUNI from Northern Ireland became full members.

Anna Weinrich was re-elected as part of the Board and we had 4 new additions: Gaia Florence (CANAE), Nathan Weber (MNL), Andrew Victory (ISSU), Mikko Jaskari (SLL).

Nadine Toye, former Board Member, was elected member of the Monitoring Committee together with Ignas Janeliunas, Kacper Bogalecki and Albert Janssens.

What else? We approved several new documents including a Manifesto for the European Elections and the renewed Declaration of School Student Rights.
Our Council of Members 2023 (COMEM) took place in Texel, The Netherlands, on the 9th and 10th of December. The membership approved two policy papers: one on the Twin Transition and one on Inclusivity within and beyond Education. We also discussed matters such as the upcoming EP elections 2024, the right to vote at 16, our role in showing International Solidarity and our internal structuring and solidarity mechanisms.

The OBESSU Members also approved two urgent resolution: one on Condemning Violence against Women and another one calling for Peace in the Middle East.

Furthermore, we held an Extraordinary General Assembly to update our Statutes and to elect a new board member to replace Mikko, who had to resign due to other commitments. We welcome Albert Janssens from EEO (Denmark) to the Board.
Board Meetings

February 2023 - Brussels
- Planning ahead: Staff & Board Meeting
- Policy training with the Lifelong Learning Platform
- Membership applications
- External representation
- Global Cooperation

May 2023 - Bratislava, Slovakia
- Meeting with AS, Slovakia
- Membership Strategy
- Secretariat updates
- Monitoring Committee Updates
- Nominations to external bodies
- General Assembly preparations

June 2023 - online
- Membership updates and engagement strategy
- General Assembly preparation
- Policy Commissions preparations

July 2023 - Brussels
- Handover with the old Board
- Expectations for the mandate
- Staff and Board Meeting
- Team building!

July 2023 - Copenhagen
- Meeting with the GA Chair
- Board report
- Updates on external representations and policy
- Reflection of the mandate

July 2023 - Brussels
- Council of Members 2023 discussion
- Policy Briefings and decisions
- International Students Day Planning
- Adoption of Internal regulations of the Board
- Competency Mapping
- External representation

December 2023 - Texel
- Forecast 2024
- Preparation of COMEM and Extraordinary GA
- Redistribution of portfolios
- Policy impact evaluation

February 2023 - Brussels
- Planning ahead: Staff & Board Meeting
- Policy training with the Lifelong Learning Platform
- Membership applications
- External representation
- Global Cooperation
Monitoring Committee Meetings

Spring 2023

- Internal Secretariat audit
- Financial audit
- MC Report

Autumn 2023

- Working methodology definition
- Meeting with the Board
- Introduction to the Staff
- Introduction to the Financial Structure of OBESSU
Projects & Policy & Advocacy
Projects

In 2023, OBESSU continued to be engaged in a series of EU co-funded projects, which are described below.

**EPiC**

Kicked off in January 2023, the project aims to inform and educate young people about participation, democracy and the importance of youth participation within the electoral process at local, national and European levels. In 2023, thanks to this project, microgrants have been distributed to the membership in order to engage them in conducting dissemination and capacity building activities in their home countries. The project will develop one last round of Micro Grants for activities taking place between January and May 2024, focusing on communications towards the EP elections, especially targeting first time voters and young people that would otherwise not vote, to contribute to the voting turnout.

**Youth Vote**

Thanks to a strong coalition of youth-led civil society organisations, the project seeks to strengthen youth participation through education and communication actions targeting first-time voters and young abstainers. Tools developed in 2023 include a Voting Toolbox to support campaigners and trainers in raising awareness about the EP24 vote. Member organisations of the Informal Alliance for Youth Vote have met for the first time at the end of November 2023, and they will kick off their joint events and activities at the final conference of the project in February 2024.
Strives to create a support system for both teachers and students to adapt to the digital challenges they are facing in online education. Among other outputs, the project developed guidelines for teachers on how to create more engaging online learning experiences, and a MOOC for students on self-paced and self-directed learning, which you can find here. For its final stage, the project is developing a set of policy recommendations on quality online and blended learning, so stay tuned for the beginning of 2024!

Aims at developing an innovative set of tools that will help the widespread implementation of citizenship education in European education systems. The project, whose website you can find here, finished at the end of November, with a double final event in Brussels in the framework of the LLLWeek, which served to present the project outputs and to have a conversation with other Civil Society Organisations, Policy-Makers and educational stakeholders on the present and the future of citizenship education in Europe. The project developed this toolkit on bringing the Whole School Approach on citizenship education to schools, emphasizing the role of school students and democratisation of schools in this process.
is an Erasmus Key Action 2 project approved by the Italian National Agency and led by Istituto Comprensivo G. Locatelli (Tolentino, Italy). The project aims to promote the development of autonomous learning and basic research skills, creative thinking, collaborative attitudes and other “soft” skills through the creation of cultural products based on local histories. This year was dedicated to validating the Conceptual model and competence framework for intercultural cooperative cultural production, presenting the competence framework developed within the project as well as of the Handbook for School Team Leaders. Moreover, the Guidelines for schools, teachers and students, aimed at educators who wish to develop their own arts projects based on the PERFECT principles, were also drafted and shared with schools for validation. Efforts have also been made to disseminate the project through a series of multiplier events held in partner countries during which students' performances were staged.
BOOSTING HEALTH LITERACY FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS.

Aims to provide the tools to find, analyse and understand health-related news with an integrated educational and social intervention. Marching towards the most important part of the project, during the reported year, the BLISS partners first composed a methodological framework for Digital Health@School (based on the European DigComp 2.1 framework) and proceeded in the built up of the BLISS Platform and the creation of the MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses). The final version will be open in 2024, with the full enrollment of teachers and provided support by trained digital mentors.

EU SOCIAL CHALLENGES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR SOLIDARITY.

Is a transnational project focused on youth work. In partnership with organizations focusing on peace, solidarity and social justice among young people in different contexts, it aims to create tools and resources to support youth workers as well as creating and fostering opportunities of knowledge sharing on social cohesion, democracy, intercultural understanding and inclusivity, with the aim to support social development. Throughout 2023, OBESSU has been gathering information on the challenges and good practices of youth workers on the field, with the objective of developing a Toolkit and a Youth Community Engagement Model to support youth workers.
EUROPEAN NETWORK ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

Is a policy and research network composed by stakeholders and interest groups in education. It is aimed at enhancing collaborative school leadership which is crucial in light of the new needs that schools have, especially in terms of the goals set by the EEA.

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT OF UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING

Contributes to a more inclusive environment at VET Institutions by creating interventions aimed at increasing underrepresented students’ engagement. In 2023, the partners completed a series of actions within Working Package One (Focus Groups, Research of National VET systems etc) that led to the creation and publication of the Mapping report on characteristics, challenges & barriers of inclusive student engagement in VET. Furthermore, the project set up a pilot process in relation to the “Online self-assessment tool” targeting both staff and students and that will go on full implementation in 2024. An important milestone was the kick-off of the Peer Learning Webinars, done by OBESSU and took place on the 22nd of November.
ERASMUS IN SCHOOLS.

is an Erasmus+ funded project in cooperation with Erasmus Student Network France, Erasmus Student Network Spain and Euro App Mobility. This project aims at prompting international mobility in secondary education and training and in apprenticeships. Last year, we focused on researching the motivation behind mobility for school students and apprentices, and in 2023 we focused on developing a Mobility Passport gathering information needed for mobility enthusiasts that you can also translate and adapt to any country or context! We also developed a Memento on Peer Interventions to advocate for quality peer-interventions in schools and training centres.

EUROPEAN COHORTS OF PATIENTS AND SCHOOLS TO ADVANCE RESPONSE TO EPIDEMICS

Is a Horizon Europe project that OBESSU started implementing in 2021, that gathers a multidisciplinary partnership between different research facilities, universities, businesses and organisations. It focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on society, with OBESSU’s main focus being the impact and response in schools.
Policy & Advocacy

In 2023, there was a dense number of initiatives at EU level, such as the kick off of the European Year of Skills in May and the build-up to the European Parliament Elections of 2024. Along with new initiatives, OBESSU continued to engage in ongoing processes like the development of the European Education Area by 2025 (Mid-term review event). In doing so, both the Board and the Secretariat have used all means (representations, partnerships, publication of papers etc.) to further promote and highlight the school student perspective, with a higher focus on democratic competences, sustainable development of education systems and a learners’ centered approach to skills.

Breaking down 2023, OBESSU opened the year by publishing a reaction on School Democracy outlining OBESSU’s vision to foster and promote democratic competences of young people as a way to improve the health of European democracies. Fundamental for the drafting of the paper was the “Why Vote” Research Report developed as part of the COYV project, which investigates the main challenges faced by youth looking to participate in politics and society. OBESSU also took part in the LLLWeek 2023 by organizing two events on democratic competences acquired through citizenship education linked to our project CITIZED.

For what concerns necessary actions towards the sustainable development of education systems and a learners’ centered approach to skills, OBESSU’s views are underlined in the OBESSU Position Paper on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (NFIL) which was published in June, 2023. Furthermore, OBESSU reiterates the need for a paradigm shift in the narrative around skills towards a learners’ centered approach that can promote the acquisition of lifelong learning skills, tackled more in depth within the Position Paper on the European Year of Skills. Since the announcement and official start of the European Year of Skills, OBESSU has been following up the process closely and been involved in more than 15 events. Complementing OBESSU’s positions, we have two policy papers published nearly at the closing of the year and approved by the OBESSU Council of Members in December 2023.
First, thanks to the support and engagement of members of the OBESSU WG on Inclusion, we now have the **Policy Paper on Inclusivity in Education**, while the other Policy Paper focuses on the sustainability approach needed to bring about a socially inclusive and fair **Twin Transition** (green and digital).

All the policy priorities above were condensed in the **OBESSU Manifesto for the EP Elections 2024: Europe Needs Us**, which was approved by the OBESSU General Assembly in July 2023. The drafting and development of the manifesto was an opportunity to bring the voice of school students to EU institutions and in particular the European Parliament through targeted consultations with EU parties and Parliamentary Groups such as the European Greens, S&D and the Left.

The organisation and its members also expressed solidarity with students and young people around the world experiencing repression, war and violence - notably, during the **protests in France in summer 2023** and on occasion of the **re-escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**.

At the partnership level, OBESSU kept building and strengthening relations within its networks: former Board Member Caridad Sanchez Alarcon was elected to the Steering Committee of the LifeLong Learning Platform in June 2023; former Board Member Petr Franc sits on the Steering Committee of the Global Student Forum. Furthermore, our current Board Members sit on a variety of Working Groups and stakeholders’ groups such as the Working Group on Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and Education for Sustainable Development of the Council of Europe and the OECD’s Schools+ Network.

Finally, OBESSU entered a new partnership for policy and research in education leadership, the ELNE Network (Educational Leadership Network Europe). Funded by the European Commission, ELNE reunites over 50 stakeholders’ and interest groups in education systems around Europe and it is an exciting opportunity for cooperation between different actors in education and policy development on common topics of interest, such as digital education, teachers’ shortages and curricula for the 21st century.
External representation

The Board of OBESSU and the Staff attended more than 100 external events where the organisation, its values and vision were represented.
OBESSU can not fail to mention how important and still relevant this day is.

Despite the many rights that women have conquered throughout history, every day we see these rights threatened by far-right-wing movements and parties.

If there is a lesson to be learned from this is that once a right is achieved the fight to maintain it is constant.

On the 8th of March, the women of OBESSU, as well as students and teachers, striked under the motto “If we stop, everything stops”. We need to remind society today and every day that the rights of women are under attack. Still to this day we, women, face numerous obstacles such as forced-part time, intense emotional burden deriving from care work, threats to their maternity desires (or lack of it), short and badly paid maternity cover and harassment in the workplace. This is not a dystopia, it is the reality throughout Europe, and so is the gender pay gap.

We asked women part of our Member Organisations “What challenges do you face as a young woman activist?”. You can find their answer here.
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS DAY
(17TH OF NOVEMBER)

focused on relaunching the Manifesto “Europe Need Us: A School Student Manifesto towards the upcoming European Parliament Elections” with an easy-to-read version.

EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS

On the 9th of May (Europe Day), the European Commission celebrated the official start of the European Year of Skills. OBESSU welcomed this initiative, as it is an opportunity to change the paradigm around skills and turn it into a holistic vision of lifelong learning.
TOGETHER.EU
(TOGETHER.EU FOR THE CLOSEST FRIENDS)

We at OBESSU launched a summer trend by using @together.europarl.eu super cool tattoos.

Do you know @together.europarl.eu? According to the @europeanparliament, it’s a community of people who believe in democracy and who want to give it real meaning as the next European elections approach.

According to us, it’s way more than that. Together.EU helps you to get immersed in the reality of young people across Europe. Get to know their experiences, their concerns and their willingness to use their Vote in the next European Parliament Elections.
Partners

In 2023 we worked with the following organisations on different processes. We are proud of the long lasting cooperation that we have developed with them and we are looking forward to joining forces again in the future to defend learners’ rights.

Funders

We are thankful for the fruitful cooperation with our funders throughout 2023 and we look forward to the continued cooperation in projects and more generally in supporting OBESSU’s organisational development.