

EFEE Statement on the European Climate Pact

Brussels, 17 June 2020

The transition to a sustainable European society is both a challenging task and stimulating opportunity, which will require the support and input from every stakeholder in order to become successful. The European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), representing 50 institutions responsible for management of education systems at all levels of education from 26 countries, is therefore enthused that in its Communication on the Green Deal, the European Commission directly addresses the activation of education and training as one of the key instruments which will be crucial for the success of the European Green Deal.

Taking into consideration the substantial role that the education and training sector will play in the success of Europe's ambitious ecological transition, EFEE invites the European Commission to take the following points into consideration to further improve the European Climate Pact:

1. We welcome the European Climate Pact's mission of "bringing together regions, local communities, civil society, industry and schools. Together they will design and commit to a set of pledges to bring about a change in behaviour, from the individual to the largest multinational. This will be a key part of the just transition for all".
2. We call for the set-up of a **comprehensive public investment plan** in high-quality education and training to provide **people with green skills and attitudes**. In order to establish a new climate culture, large-scale programmes concerning the change in attitude and skills for people of all ages will be required. Raising the awareness and motivation for climate action and environment protection should start at an early age in the education institutions. Consequently, EFEE warmly welcomes the Commission's proposal to prepare a European competence framework for schools, training institutions and universities to help develop and assess their students' knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable developments. Education and training providers are well placed to engage not only with their students but also with parents and the wider community to promote sustainability as a core attitude and prepare people of all ages for green jobs. EFEE emphasizes that this transition will therefore require new ways of learning as well as teaching, which is why we support the Commission's plan to provide support materials and facilitate the exchange of good practices

in EU networks of teacher-training programmes. This will need to be reflected in ESCO, the European multilingual classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.

3. We emphasize the importance of **sustainable learning environments** in achieving a. It is EFEE's mission to contribute to a modern and sustainable European education sector. This includes on the one hand that the infrastructure of education institutions becomes more sustainable, and on the other hand that education providers adapt their learning environments to the needs of today's students. EFEE encourages the Commission's initiative on the former objective to at least double or even triple the renovation rate of public buildings, including schools, so they become more sustainable. Regarding the latter objective, EFEE reaffirms that open learning environments require the leaders and management of educational institutions to play an active role by providing a strategic vision transforming institutions into connected learning communities and stimulating professionals to strive for innovative teaching approaches. Mobilising all stakeholders to change the role of digital technologies in education institutions is a challenge and an opportunity for our sector. Employers, trade unions, school leaders and others can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere that empowers educators to make use of innovative and digital tools, among others by continuous professional development courses, achieving inspiration via peer learning, and networking with colleagues. At the same time, we see the need to jointly explore how the introduction of digital tools, but also Artificial Intelligence and Learning Analytics will impact on educational infrastructures and the role of management, teachers, and other education staff.

4. We stress the tremendous role that the entire education and training sector will have on the pro-active re-skilling and upskilling of the European workforce. As the New Circular Economy Action Plan clarifies, it is clear that the green transition towards a sustainable future will force some sectors out of the economy while others will grow and flourish. In order to achieve a just transition for all, the European Social Fund+ will have to invest in helping Europe's labour market to acquire the skills they need to transfer from a declining sector to a growing one. EFEE therefore encourages the European Commission to update the Skills Agenda, which is scheduled for the first quarter of 2020, and the Youth Guarantee accordingly in order to enhance employability in the green economy. We furthermore highlight the important role that vocational education and training as well as apprenticeships plays to meet the changing needs of the labour market. Having this in mind, EFEE was pleased by the Social

Communication's proposal to include a European Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the update of the Skills Agenda.

5. We encourage the European Climate Pact to foster disruptive innovation and research. In order to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal, investment in new technologies and sustainable solutions will need to increase significantly. Consequently, EFEE encourages the European Commission to not only support conventional innovation and research across higher education and post-secondary vocational education and training (VET) institutions but also to include secondary VET institutions and partnerships with industry through innovative entrepreneurship in their research calls. It is undeniable that to be at the helm of the next wave of innovation and to breath new life into the European Research Area, which will be spearheaded by Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya Gabriel, a wide range of education levels will need to be activated. There is not only a need to invest more in research and innovation but also to teach and train EU citizens to work with these new technologies. Effective innovation begins and ends with education. EFEE furthermore recognizes the need for more and closer collaborations between individual research and European funding programmes. Therefore, we urge the European Commission to create strong synergies between different funding schemes, including Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ and ESF+. Moreover, under the guidance of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, the European Commission should promote stronger links and interchange of knowledge between all education levels in order to foster wide-range research. Lastly, EFEE believes it is paramount that the European Green Deal includes the work on Green Erasmus, which was announced by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, more prominently in their priorities for not only innovation and research but also for the sustainable learning environments.



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