

EFEE Statement on the Next Generation EU

Brussels, 3 July 2020

In the wake of the significant damage that the global pandemic has havocted on the European economy and public health, the European Union is now getting back on its feet and looking forward to repairing the damage from this crisis. In light of this, the European Commission introduced an ambitious plan on 27 May 2020 to help the member states in their recovery process consisting of both a short-term and long-term vision for the future. Against the background of the twin green and digital transitions, the European Commission proposed a new recovery instrument, called Next Generation EU, which fits within the revamped long-term EU budget of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

As a social partner representing 50 institutions responsible for management of education systems at all levels of education from 26 countries, EFEE invites the negotiators to consider the following points in order to further improve the newly proposed recovery instruments:

1. **We encourage Member States' investment in education**, not only with regards to facing this current emergency but more importantly with the perspective of creating a long-term resilient and sustainable education system. In particular, a greater investment is required to strengthen the availability of appropriate and qualitative equipment as well as secure and necessary infrastructure needed to perform remote-learning with the use of ICT tools, virtual classrooms, cloud solutions, etc. Regarding the latter, we emphasize that as remote-learning should and will be combined with face-to-face learning, significant investment will furthermore need to be made in building sustainable and flexible physical learning environments in schools that take into account the need for social distancing. Having this in mind, we call upon the Member States to furthermore put their trust in school management and teachers to make adequate use of these resources in providing all education personnel with adequate tools, resources, equipment and training as they transition to remote learning.
2. **We support the introduction and facilitation of digital devices and tools** fostering teaching and learning on the basis of experiences gathered during COVID-19 crisis (remote distance learning, online evaluation platforms, innovative online teaching and learning methodologies). In order to create a true European Education Area, we urge national and EU-level agencies to collaborate on building a coherent framework of possible digital tools and programmes that

education institutions can choose from. Additionally, it is paramount that all education personnel as well as the students are provided with adequate digital training in order to create supportive, inclusive and safe learning and teaching environments for students, teachers, trainers, school leaders, academic staff and other education personnel. Having this in mind, raising the technology awareness, both in terms of communication and lifelong learning, of students in adult education should receive additional support.

- 3. We promote European research on the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector.** As the negotiations on the next HorizonEurope Programme and Erasmus+ Programme are ongoing, we invite the Commission to include specific funding calls for educational research on this specific topic in the programme. Furthermore, we invite the Commission to add a dedicated budget on self-regulated learning and remote-learning to the HorizonEurope Programme, which leaves room for pilots to try out new teaching methods. Finally, we support the call from the European Parliament for the Commission to adhere to its earlier commitment to double the Erasmus+ budget in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and review its current proposal which cuts the Erasmus+ budget by 7%. We underline that the Commission's ambitious objectives for a long-term recovery as well as a green and digital transition that emphasizes social inclusion will only be successful when the budget reflects these goals.



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