

Lack of School Student Representation at the Education Summit

On the 25th of January, the European Commission organised the first Education Summit in Brussels, hosted by EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Tibor Navracsics. OBESSU welcomes this high-level initiative which focuses on inclusion and innovation within the discussion on education in Europe. Fearing that with the disappearance of the annual Education and Training Forum there would no longer be a space for stakeholders to contribute towards a European education around the aforementioned key values, the announcement of the Education Summit gave us the feeling that the Commission was still willing to enable such a platform in the future.

With its history of over 40 years, OBESSU is the recognised representative organisation for secondary school students in Europe. We have built up a strong structure with a solid base in our respective Member Organisations from 24 countries and a strong central representation at European level operating from Brussels. OBESSU is also member of international platforms such as the European Youth Forum and the Lifelong Learning Platform, actively collaborating with other European relevant stakeholders in the field of education and youth. Having mentioned this, it is extremely worrying that OBESSU was not represented at the Education Summit and was not properly involved in the process.

Innovation and inclusion in education will only be a success if students are at the core of every effort, that is – at school level, the national education policy level and at European level. Although the European Youth Forum and a few other European youth organisations were present at the Education Summit, there was no proper representation of secondary school students apart from unorganised youth, which we see as tokenistic and undemocratic. In our view, a lack of involvement of all stakeholders undermines the democratic legitimacy of European education policy.

While the initial idea of the Summit is promising and OBESSU welcomes the intention of the Commission to put innovation, inclusion and value-based learning central to education discussion in Europe, unfortunately it was characterised by an undemocratic governance approach. We hope that in the future the Commission recognises the value and role of organised school student representation and gives us the recognition and the voice school students of Europe deserve.

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