

SOTEU: Students disappointed seeing education again at the bottom of the agenda.

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The **Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions** shares concerns on the **State of the European Union** speech delivered this morning by European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. One year ago, President Juncker was delivering the same speech to the European Parliament and was criticised harshly by OBESSU and ESU for lacking to mention the key role of education in improving the social dimension of the EU.

While we welcome Juncker's call for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies to fight radicalisation and Euroscepticism, we want to stress that **the history of the European Union and its values will be lost if Member States do not start to invest again in education**. We regret not seeing Juncker insist with Member States on investing a consistent amount of their GDP in education, while promoting a strong united Europe.

If it is true - as President Juncker mentioned - that Europe accounts for the 40% of the world GDP thanks to the standard we set in market policies, trade and jobs, **how come we cannot also be leaders setting free quality education standards?** A strong united Europe needs to start promoting peace from its schools, VET centres and other educational institutions. In this sense, we welcome Juncker's mention on the future of the Erasmus+ programme, while we call for more investment in the **accessibility of the programmes** and we call for a real exchange of good educational practices that can shape new educational systems in cooperation with school student unions and other relevant stakeholders.

Our voice, the voice of school student, is not the last voice in the debate. President Juncker mentioned **what is really at stake for the EP 2019 elections** calling for eliminating differences in the different geographical areas of Europe. On our side we call **for our voice to be heard**. School students have a voice, as shown also by recent election results such as Brexit, and we need to **improve intergenerational understanding and cooperation through education**, so that we can have a say in decisions impacting our present and our future.

OBESSU welcomes President Juncker's call for working on migration policies, while also calls on institutions to take into account the **educational needs in a diverse world**. Young migrant and refugees are not only to be considered skilled labour force, but also current and future active citizens who need to shape their European culture through quality student-centred educational systems for all. Moreover, when it comes to promoting education in neighbouring continents - as President Juncker mentioned Africa - we cannot avoid emphasising the need for **publicly funded quality Global Development Education and Global Citizenship Education curricula in schools**.

To conclude, as European School Students who believe and promote European values in our everyday work with our peers in Member States of the EU and neighbouring countries, **we are extremely disappointed for the residual role that we are considered to play**. Students are the main stakeholder when it comes to education. Excluding us from decision making processes will, in turn, make European policies less representative and lacking answers.

We approach the European Parliament elections sharing the same love that President Juncker's has for Europe in its broader sense, and we have no intention of being left out of decision making. Europe is us and we will not let anyone take decisions about us without us.