

European elections 2024

European ballot boxes in segregated schools : confronting a social issue head on

Next 6-9 June, citizens across the European Union (EU) will go to the polls. A number of them will be casting their ballots inside schools that are effectively segregated. Schools located down the street, in these voters' own neighborhoods, but in which they only set foot occasionally... to exercise the ultimate political power afforded by a democratic society. And despite the fact that their children will have never once been inside.

We, citizens and organizations from across the Union, are sounding the alarm. School segregation is a threat to the very fabric of our societies and democracies. Children from different socioeconomic backgrounds are growing up separate from one another throughout the EU because they are attending segregated schools. It is the fuel of social divide and extremism.

Children are born without prejudice. It is adults who choose intolerance. For this reason, schools are the single best place to build a shared future. And public schools, the backbone of the European educational system, have always been – and must remain – the top government investment to build the system we want for our societies. But there are no policies in place to achieve change.

The EU is at a turning point. Demographic changes and increased social diversity offer a choice: do we truly embrace democratic values and promote respect for human rights, or do we retreat into nationalist and discriminatory ideas in the face of these social transformations? We urgently call on administrations at all levels (European, national and local) to exercise the responsibility that is theirs.

This goes far beyond a debate about education. And goes beyond "improving student skills." It is a full-scale social and societal challenge. Our policymakers must tackle it before it is too late.

Combating school segregation is not just about equal opportunities and/or outcomes. Above all, it is about equity and justice. Which is precisely why every institution at the European, national, and local level needs to be fully engaged.

In November 2022, the Council of the EU adopted the 'Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success.' Replacing the 2011 'Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving.' In their policy framework, Member States were once again encouraged to promote active anti-segregation policies as one of their measures.

The time has come to enforce it. By 2025, EU Member States are meant to develop "integrated and comprehensive strategies towards school success" to minimize the effects of socioeconomic status on education and training outcomes, to promote inclusion, to further reduce premature school leaving, and to reverse poor performance in basic skills.

Let's make it a reality.

Social diversity in schools is both wise and possible — by implementing legal actions and by engaging all of society. As European citizens committed to social justice, we urge the European Parliament's incoming members to actively address the issue, specifically by pushing the following points:

Proposals and recommendations at the European institutional level

1. Pay specific attention to school desegregation policies that support the development and monitoring of integrated and comprehensive strategies meant to help schools succeed.
2. Prioritize school desegregation measures within school success policies and the European Education Area agenda framework.
3. Cooperate with Member States to develop common EU-level school segregation indicators, based on available international sources. Allowing comparisons between Member States and incorporating them into the monitoring of educational initiatives.
4. Promote the development of measures addressing school desegregation within the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy Funds 2021- 2027 current programming period. Both with regards to programming specific education objectives and to possible funds reprogramming, as well as through other relevant EU programs and initiatives.
5. Develop school desegregation plans and policy guidelines supporting Member States in the development of integrated and comprehensive national strategies towards school success.
6. Develop Commission-specific reports and research on national policies and effective approaches to school desegregation. For example, through Eurydice, the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE), and the Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training (NESET).
7. Pay specific attention to school segregation in future editions of the Education and Training Monitor, and in monitoring processes related to the European Semester.

8. Promote greater peer learning on active desegregation policies within Strategic Framework of the European Education Area cooperation processes.
9. Prioritize cooperation, research, knowledge, and innovation on school desegregation in calls for European programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.
10. All the aforementioned measures, policies, programs and plans, should be guided by the principle that the public school is, and should be, the backbone of our education systems.

Proposals and recommendations at the Member State level

1. Make school desegregation a strategic objective of the "integrated and comprehensive strategies for school success" that must be developed and/or strengthened by 2025 – and in accordance with the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success of November 28, 2022.
2. Carry out a situational diagnosis and monitor school segregation with common indicators, using international sources to allow comparisons between regions and within the European Union as well as allow evaluations of interventions.
3. Use European funds to adopt measures contributing to the decrease and elimination of school segregation in education and training systems. Ensure appropriate approaches and sufficient budget allocations for their deployment.
4. Promote social awareness campaigns in favor of cohesion, inclusion, and diversity in schools.
5. Effectively apply and develop regulatory frameworks to deploy successful and sustainable measures against school segregation.
6. Promote coalitions and social agreements involving the civil sector and educational stakeholders and training at both national and subnational levels.
7. All the aforementioned strategies, measures, campaigns and plans, should be guided by the principle that the public school is, and should be, the backbone of our education systems.



ASSOCIACIONS FEDERADES
DE FAMÍLIES D'ALUMNES
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Manifesto supported by:

1. Appel pour une école démocratique/Oproep voor een democratische school - Belgium
2. Associacions Federades de Famílies d'Alumnes de Catalunya (aFFaC) - Catalonia
3. Brug Folkeskolen - Denmark
4. Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Éducation Active - Belgium
5. Chance für jedes Kind - Austria
6. Changements pour l'égalité (CGé) - Belgium
7. Collectif Apprendre Ensemble - France
8. Col·lectiu d'Escoles contra la Segregació - Catalonia
9. Comissions Obreres-Educació (CCOO) - Catalonia
10. Controvento Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus - Italy
11. Escoltes Catalans - Catalonia
12. European Cities Against School Segregation (ECASS) - Trans-national
13. Euskal Eskola Publikoaz Harro topagunea - Basque Country
14. Federació d'Associacions de Veïns de Barcelona (FAVB) - Catalonia
15. Fédération des Conseils de Parents d'Élèves (FCPE) - France
16. Fundació Bofill - Catalonia
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