



# The European Education Area and the Covid-19 Pandemic

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*Abstract - Over the last decades, across the European Union (EU), the concern for improvement of vocational education and training within the member states grew in importance. The COVID-19 pandemic affected this area of a strategic importance. Therefore, the European Union is considering the adoption of the certain measures aimed at reforming it. According to the EU vision, vocational education and training are essential to the restoring of Europe after the COVID-19 pandemic. Each member state of the European Union manages its national education and training systems and establishes the content of the curricula. According to 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, (TFEU), the EU takes on the role of contributing to a quality education, encouraging the cooperation between member states. The fast outspread and the virulence of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the instauration of a panic feeling at global level. The global dynamics was turned upside down, causing survival, production and consume issues. Governments decided to introduce restricting measures across the economical and social plans. World economy was greatly affected: the markets collapsed, both in Europe and the United States, Latin America and Africa. The states adopted measures at national level, closing the borders and enforcing protectionist decisions. In their turn, citizens were ready to accept isolation measures in order to protect their health and lives. At the same time, free circulation and commerce, as well as the financial system, suffered as well. Therefore, autocratic and populist manifestations were greatly fuelled. Recession was in place and hundreds of millions of people became unemployed across the globe. State aids are the only financial resource for millions of people and numerous companies. A complex vicious circle came into being: the reduction of trust led to less crediting, unemployment and bankruptcy.*

**Keywords - lifelong learning; digitalisation; inclusion; mobility; innovation; social cohesion.**

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the high geographical extent, to the number of victims and the recession of more than 170 states, the COVID-19 pandemic surpassed the financial crisis of 2007 in terms of extension, which also affected all the continents. European states urgently took measures to combat financial insecurity. Some of these measures were criticized, others were said not to have been adopted fast enough or not properly implemented. The European Union sought to perpetuate the citizens' confidence in its ability to manage the crisis. It was involved in ensuring the medical services but also in post-pandemic recovery. The measures envisaged in the field of vocational education and training are also part of this context [1].

The European Council met in Barcelona in March 2002, in the context of the Lisbon Strategy and approved the work programme entitled "Education and Training 2010". It established, for the first time, pathways of European cooperation in the field of education and training, by identifying certain common objectives [2].

If the situation requires it, the EU supports and completes the actions taken by national states. The Europe 2020 strategy stresses the importance of education and training in achieving these goals. Therefore, the EU supports the actions of the states aimed at modernizing education and training systems [3].

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## I. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACROSS THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the Council of May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009, it was agreed on the establishment of the Strategic Framework for Vocational Education and Training (ET 2020). Four strategic objectives were set, which were going to be implemented by 2020.

These concerned the following:

- a. *Lifelong learning and mobility*, by reforming the education systems.
- b. Encouraging *the quality and efficiency of vocational training*, by increasing the level of the basic competences.
- c. Promoting *equity, social cohesion and active citizenship*, so that all citizens could improve the competences characteristic to their profession throughout their whole life.
- d. Supporting *creativity and innovation* in the educational process, through the importance given to the acquisition of competences, entrepreneurship and knowledge in the cultural area.

The cooperation accomplished through ET 2020 was based on the *exchange of information and experience* between the vocational education and training systems of EU member states. Parameters and indicators were established, whereby progress made in meeting the objectives should be assessed. The progress was monitored by the European Commission, which, in this regard, collaborated with the national states.

The Erasmus+ programme, which supports students, trainees and employees for further training abroad, hence increasing their employment opportunities, contributed to improving cooperation in the field of education and training. Also, this programme encourages cross-border collaboration between higher education institutions, in order to innovate and increase the quality in education [4].

European cooperation in the area of vocational education and training led to notable results, although there are many other things to be accomplished. Progress was made in ensuring the necessary capacities for teachers, improving general education, adapting to digital transformation and developing new principles for improving vocational education and training (VET).

At the same time, through the Strategic Framework for Vocational Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), some common benchmarks were introduced across the EU.

Until 2020, a series of obvious results were achieved. At EU level, almost 95% of children attend pre-school education from the age of 4. Over the last

decade, the level of young adults graduating from tertiary education significantly increased, exceeding the 40% target set in 2009 [5].

A decrease in the rate of young people abandoning the education system without obtaining a higher secondary education diploma and not pursuing vocational training courses was registered (from 14% in 2009 to 10.2% in 2019, the EU target being 10 %). As concerns failures, the EU failed to meet its target of reducing, by 2020, the number of 15-year-olds who achieve unsatisfactory results in reading, maths and science, to less than 15%. Also, the financial crisis affected the involvement of adults in learning activities; hence the target of 15% was not reached (however, it increased to 10.8% in 2019).

The Erasmus+ programme played a key part in the intensification of cooperation and in accomplishing national reforms, providing the necessary financial support. Structural and investment funds across the EU also provided resources for national reforms.

## II. ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA BY 2025

During the communication of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, addressed by the European Commission to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the Economic and Social Committee, as well as the Committee of the Regions, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, undertook to create a European Education Area by 2025.

In motivation of this initiative, the European official showed that the COVID-19 pandemic affected significantly the European education and training systems. Over 100 million Europeans belonging to the education and training community were forced to tackle new means of learning and teaching. The health crisis does not have to be an obstacle in the way of learning and developing competences, or in the way of employment possibilities. That is why member states need to cooperate across the EU to create “future-oriented” education systems, by implementing a European Education Area.

The necessary measures proposed after the COVID-19 pandemic target early years education, vocational education and training, higher education, research, adult education and non-formal learning. Creating the European Education Area is possible due to decades of cooperation between the EU member states in the educational field [6].

The strategic framework for European cooperation in vocational education and training (ET 2020), had a fundamental role in supporting the first initiatives referring to the European Education Area and in implementing national reforms. At the same time, it

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also contributed to the reaction of the education and training community to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A quality education is able to transfer to young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in life. At community level, the vision regarding quality envisages youth acquiring certain basic competences, including digital competences, which should allow them to find a satisfactory job [7].

However, according to the survey conducted in 2018 as part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducted at EU level, a high percentage of students is not able to solve basic exercises at mathematics, science and reading (22.5% for reading, 22.9% for mathematics and 22.3% for science) [5].

In 2019, one fifth of the youth living in EU member states did not have basic digital competences. The lack of these competences affects the lives of the citizens and requires the adoption of subsequent remediation measures for adult learning.

An important element for improving the quality of education is to promote the freedom of movement of students and teachers and to encourage the association of educational institutions in Europe and not only. However, many teachers and students face difficulties related to lack of information on learning mobility, insufficient training in foreign languages, financial barriers or full recognition of the learning outcomes and qualifications acquired during their mobility.

Quality education involves supporting language learning and multilingualism, as well as promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in schools.

The introduction of a “European perspective in education” can provide students with information on the significance of Europe and the European Union. This cultural approach is complementary to the national and regional vision.

Last but not least, we should mention the fight against discrimination in schools and against “aggressive behaviours” (*bullying*).

Unfortunately, the inequalities that are based on the social and economic status could not be reduced by means of education. Students with disadvantaged backgrounds have poor school results. Also, across the EU, the unsatisfactory results in reading and early school abandonment are higher when it comes to boys, as compared to girls.

Also, poor school results are obtained by pupils coming from rural areas or from migrant families. The COVID-19 pandemic stressed the importance of geographical localisation of the pupils and their families.

Across the EU, women have higher levels of education than men but lower rates of school

performance. And yet, men have better paid jobs. At the same time, women have fewer leadership positions in higher education.

Europe's prosperity depends on the implementation of policies and investments in education and training, which should encourage green transition and digital transition.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are going to be the most affected, as they have problems finding a job. The labour market will generally be profoundly affected. Under these circumstances, digital competences become compulsory, especially in a post-Covid-19 world. The implementing of digital competences in all the activity sectors will be a must. Still, two out of five Europeans aged 16 to 74 do not have such competences.

Transition towards a sustainable economy, with consideration for environment protection, plays an important part when it comes to employment. Overcoming the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting a transition to “a greener and more digitalized world” can be accomplished only if people have the adequate competences and education.

To do this, we need to transform the behaviour and competences of European citizens, and we must use the education systems as main catalysts.

At the same time, green transition requires investments in education and training, in order to increase the number of specialists involved in creating a “climate-neutral” economy that uses resources efficiently.

The document prepared by the European Commission stresses the fact that “teachers, trainers and educational staff are in the centre of education”. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of teachers in the European Union were forced to adapt to schools closing but they ensured the continuity of the learning process by adopting remote learning.

No doubt that innovation in education is not possible in the absence of teacher and trainers. In the European Education Area, the vision on the educational profession must include very competent and motivated teachers. Teaching and professional training should be appreciated. Currently, the majority of the EU member states is facing a deficit of teachers.

Over the next decade, approximately one third of the teachers will retire. Therefore, attracting competent people into the system is a necessity. The teaching profession needs revalorisation from the social point of view, and in some EU member states also from the financial point of view. Only one teacher out of five working in the lower secondary education believes that his/her profession receives the right valorisation in society. Furthermore, about half of the teachers consider

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that the numerous administrative tasks represent a stress factor within their profession.

The mobility of students and teachers was stimulated by the Bologna Process. Statistical data reveal the fact that the experience of studying abroad contributes fundamentally to improving career perspectives. A significant percentage of Erasmus+ graduates, respectively 80%, are employed in less than 3 months after completing their studies. However, unfortunately, only 5% of the students benefit from the Erasmus+ programme. The main obstacles are financial problems and non-recognition of learning.

Due to the 41 pilot universities, more than 280 higher education institutions in the EU have been implementing deeper models of cooperation. The higher education sector showed that it can cope with change in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, the crisis amplified the challenges of “digitalisation, innovative pedagogy, inclusion and well-being”. Consequently, European higher education systems should intensify cooperation between educational institutions.

This could lead to implementing some common learning programmes and courses which would contribute to boosting the students’ mobility between educational systems in various states. Cross-border cooperation leads to valorisation of the “strengths” of various higher education institutions, with public sharing of material and online resources, courses and infrastructure for various disciplines.

Higher education institutions may have an important role in the recovery post COVID-19, as they are main players in the “knowledge square”: *education, research, innovation and service to society*.

There is a need for automatic recognition of qualifications for the studies abroad, which would allow EU Member States to intensify their cooperation beyond the current possibilities, due to the Bologna Process. The European Education Area can play a “catalyst” role for the Bologna Process [8].

Greater importance must be given to educational programmes based on advanced digital competences, namely cutting-edge technologies: “artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and high-performance computing”, where the deficiency is high.

Cooperation in the educational field is currently an essential instrument in implementing the EU external policy. This represents a soft “instrument of power”. Educational cooperation is vital to the EU geopolitical desiderata and the objectives referring to sustainable development until 2030.

The modification of the world order (through the rise of China), points to the need to strengthen the cooperation across the EU, including the educational field. Annually, hundreds of thousands of students or more, coming from third countries, attend the courses of

tertiary education within the EU. The transparent legal framework for conducting these activities is provided by the EU legislation.

Expanding the partnership between the European Education Area and non-EU countries, especially those in the Western Balkans, is an important element in the vision to be implemented by 2025.

Over the last twenty years, the Erasmus+ programme helped to strengthen the connections between EU member states and other countries. Every year, European universities undertake exchanges with other universities and nearly 50,000 students and professors are involved.

International partnerships led to the creation of innovative curricula and the introduction of joint degrees. Furthermore, joint projects were developed in research areas and new jobs were created [5].

In order to establish a European Education Area, the Commission submitted a series of proposals which should be implemented together with the member states, with the six mentioned dimensions being followed. In order to increase the quality in education, the Commission will support the member states in the process of implementing certain *efficient policy reforms*, which should support *basic competences*. These initiatives will mostly aim at the curriculum and the evaluation. The Commission intends to improve the consolidated Erasmus programme, in order to boost *mobility for the purpose of learning*. For promotion of *multilingualism*, the Erasmus programme will support linguistic competences “from a life-long learning perspective”, in order to create opportunities that are favourable to teaching and learning abroad.

In view of supporting *inclusion* in the educational field, the initiative “Pathways to Success in School” will support students in acquiring their basic competences. The Commission will create a group of experts which are going to elaborate strategies for creating learning environments that should support the groups at risk of getting unsatisfactory results.

At national level, the EU member states can use a series of financing instruments such as the European Social Fund or the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

In order to encourage inclusion and a better quality in the vocational education and training systems, the Commission will support the establishment of 50 centres of professional excellence which will be financed through the Erasmus programme. These centres of professional excellence will aim both at the basic training for youth, as well as at the further training and professional retraining dedicated to adults.

The Commission is going to take steps for preparing a joint European approach with regards to introducing *micro-certificates/micro-credentials*, which should increase the learning opportunities. These can

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complete the curricula designed for students. Also, an increasing number of adults will be forced to retrain. In order to validate and recognize these micro-certificates across the EU, the Commission will present, in 2021, a *Proposal for a Council Recommendation*.

The European Commission promotes gender equality in education and training. A new agenda for transforming higher education will take into account promoting “gender equality”, with regards to options for studies and promotion of women in decision-making positions in higher education.

In order to promote green transition and digital transition through education and training, financing programmes that support this double transition may be used, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Just Transition Fund. For promoting the ecological transition within the EU, the Commission launched the “Education for Climate” Coalition.

For the purpose of promoting digital education across the EU, the Commission promoted the Digital Education Action Plan, which seeks to solve the disparities regarding digital competences. A future programme entitled “Digital Europe” will include financing for developing advanced digital competences.

To improve the teachers’ competences and increase their motivation, the Commission will launch the Erasmus Teacher Academies, through the new 2021 Erasmus. The Academies will be focused on continuous professional development. The Commission intends to create 25 Erasmus Academies by 2025.

In 2021, the Commission will launch a *European Award for Innovation in Teaching*, in recognition of the outstanding contributions of teachers. As far as European higher education institutions are concerned, the Commission aims to provide incentives for at least 5,000 higher education institutions in Europe, to adapt to post-COVID-19 conditions. These incentives will aim at accelerating the transformation of European higher education institutions. The transformation implies *connectivity* between various higher education institutions, *inclusion*, which should enable access to education of a mixed group of students, *digital and green training and resilience*, as well as *innovation*, which also involves research and innovation in learning and teaching. The Commission intends to pursue an *agenda for the transformation of higher education* throughout 2021. Its objective is to fully implement *the European Universities Initiative*, included in the Erasmus programme. The Commission will discuss, together with EU Member States, the introduction of a *European Degree*, which will allow students to choose where to study. In order to increase student mobility within the EU, a *European student card* will also be created. At the same time, the Commission will support member states in automatic

mutual recognition of higher education qualifications at EU level by 2025 [5].

### III. EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic put a strong pressure on the health systems, on the social, political and economic life and on the education system. The crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus revealed the fact that the education system was not prepared for the national implementation of technology in the teaching process.

This led many of us to become aware that an acceleration of the digital transition is imperious. As the SARS-CoV-2 virus spread extremely fast, the executives of European countries adopted radical decisions based on preventive approaches, which were not based on certain data. Many of these decisions were perceived by the population as measures to limit individual rights and freedoms and not to combat the spread of the virus.

Due to this crisis situation, many European states decided to close schools – and so was the case in Romania. As a consequence, the most profound transformation of education and training in the recent history of Europe happened. Pupils, students and teachers adopted digital education, in order for the school year could continue. Unfortunately, for many of them, this was the first contact with digital technology. In Romania, the big challenge was represented by the transition to online education, for which the state system was totally unprepared. It was impossible to adopt the contents of the curricula overnight, which meant that the adaptation to the new online teaching method varied according to each person.

Actually, the COVID-19 pandemic only aggravated the existing problems in Romanian education, namely poor financial resources, school dropout, striking differences between rural and urban areas, insufficient teaching staff or inadequately trained staff. It is a reality that, in 2021 Romania, there are areas without internet access, rural regions that do not have a signal for mobile means of communication or where children know very little of what a computer or tablet is. In this dramatic context, “inclusive and high-quality education” is being mentioned. Undoubtedly, the educational area has some critical shortcomings, but, on the other hand, in society as a whole, progress is also slow.

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There are many people who need help and that need to be supported. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the dropping out of school for many children. In fact, a trend was accelerated and aggravated, the dropout rate being particularly high in Romania. On the other hand, the pandemic led us to look for remedial solutions. Several solutions for the continuation of the school year were identified (the green, yellow and red scenarios). However, even so far there is no plan or strategy that works without raising the suspicion of the actors involved. Of course, the reaction of society to the measures and decisions taken in the context of the pandemic was one of hostility. This is due to the characteristics of this society, which refuses rapid and forced changes.

The feeling of suspicion manifested within the population was amplified by the lack of transparency and the avoidance of taking responsibility for adoption of firm and clear measures. Also, the communication between the authorities and the population was inefficient. The COVID-19 pandemic led to closure of the schools around the world, severely affecting the educational process and worsening social inequities. As a consequence, improving the education system must be a priority across the whole Europe. In times of crisis, online education may represent a viable solution. However, a number of measures need to be taken to improve the whole process: providing digital infrastructure, reorganizing the curricula, training teachers and students. Only by making a series of crucial decisions can the online educational process become a viable alternative.

A successful country is a country prepared for the digital era. Education reform involves the digitalization of the national education and training systems. To improve this process, the European Union Member States must work together in order to achieve future-oriented educational systems. In order to progress, the only solution is to develop a spirit of unity and solidarity. The experience of the present shows us the need to strengthen the educational system, both at national and at European level.

Investing in the development of education is the primary condition for a quality education. Educational policies are essential for the professionalization of teachers and educational management. These policies are the result of analyzes performed by specialists in the field. Subsequently, the results were submitted to public debate, where representatives of the civil society have the opportunity to present their views. Therefore, the process is an extensive one, involving all the stakeholders in the

development, improvement and modernization of the education system. The process of integration into the European learning area involves the adaptation of European education and training programs [9].

The European Commission funds projects to support the beneficiaries of the educational process: students, teachers, parents, in order to increase the level of involvement and improve the level of training and qualification. The success of a modernization strategy involves both the allocation of means and resources, as well as the active involvement of those interested. Therefore, European policies and programmes need to be implemented according to well-defined strategies.

The main goal of the Bologna Process was to establish a European Higher Education Area. It was focused on international cooperation and academic exchange, in order to promote the mobility of students, professors and researchers. At the same time, the aim was to improve the youth's preparation for future careers and to become active citizens in European democratic societies [10].

Currently, the Bologna Process comprises 47 states, thus representing a great success in terms of educational cooperation at European level. By creating the European Higher Education Area, member countries have agreed to implement a three-cycle higher education system: bachelor's, master's and doctorate; recognition of completed periods of study at foreign universities; implementation of a quality assurance system.

The Bologna Process represented major reforms in the higher education system for participating countries. The legislation has been amended and the most important principles of the educational process have been revised in order to create a knowledge-based society. In 1999, Romania signed the Bologna Declaration, as a member, assuming the fulfilment of the objectives of reforming higher education.

In 2000, the most ambitious European development project was launched, namely the Lisbon Strategy. The project was to have a 10 year-duration (2000 – 2010), initially aiming at the development of the European Union states in economic, social and environmental terms. In 2005, the text was revised, with interest shifting to technological growth and employment. Therefore, the new Lisbon Strategy focuses on technology-driven growth and innovation, so that Europe should become an attractive space for investment and jobs.

In the long-term achievement of the Lisbon Strategy objectives (respectively the economic growth and employment), education and training had a major

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contribution. Research and development are an essential component of the Lisbon Strategy, strongly boosting economic growth in the European Union member states.

Research and innovation were supported through major European projects. The implementation of these projects involves collaboration: lifelong learning; the transformation of higher education (the Bologna Process) and the use of common European instruments in research and innovation processes [11]. All these initiatives led to substantial changes in terms of quality, transparency and mobility.

Europe faced many problems and challenges throughout its history. These led to the identification of new strategies adapted to new situations, especially within the education system. The economic and financial crisis, triggered in 2008, was a moment of reflection, which led to the adoption of a new economic vision, in order to get the European Union out of crisis. The solution identified for economic recovery was to create an economy that was smart (based on knowledge and innovation), sustainable (resource-efficient, competitive and greener) and inclusive (ensuring economic and social cohesion).

In 2010, the European Council adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy, which included the European Union's initiatives to combat the economic and financial crisis. To achieve the strategic objectives, the emphasis was placed on making investments in areas such as education, research and innovation. In order to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, seven initiatives were settled: *the Innovation Union, the Digital Agenda for Europe, a Resource-Efficient Europe, an Industrial Policy for the Globalization Era, the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs* and the *European Platform Poverty*.

These initiatives aimed at supporting *smart growth*, namely improving the quality of the education systems, at national and European level. Economic growth and the creation of quality jobs are generated by performance in research, the use of technological resources, the support of innovation and the exchange of knowledge across the European Union.

The European programs are strategies and means of modernization and are supported by major investments in the field of knowledge.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA (2025)

As part of the meeting that took place in Brussels on 30 September 2020, European leaders committed to turn the idea of a European Education Area into reality by 2025. Together with the Digital Education Action Plan, the European Education Area is an initiative that gives the citizens of the European Union the opportunity to learn and work anywhere in the world. The main principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights is the right to education, training and lifelong learning.

The strategy of the European Union is based on sustainability, quality and digitalisation while education is "at the core of the European way of life". Achieving the European Education Area by 2025 is a means by which education can support the European community and economy.

Another central objective assumed by 2025 is to improve competence and motivation in the profession, in order to support the development of teaching skills. The European Education Area also covers higher education institutions. The European Commission supports Member States in improving cooperation between higher education institutions. Achieving this goal will focus on the experience gained by European universities, selected under the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programs. Therefore, education is an important area of a stronger Europe at global level.

Through the 2025 European Education Area, the European Union is committed to providing all the tools to support the education systems of the member countries. However, the success of this approach is closely related to the collaboration capacity of European states. The European Education Area is the "hope" that education and training need in the European Union.

The European Education Area is also a commitment made by the European Commission, together with the other European institutions and partner countries, to give education a central role in the European Union. Education is "a new center of power" in the process of rebuilding Europe. The future of the European Union depends on the ability of European leaders to achieve the goals for which the European Union was created. In this context, improving education systems is a priority.

Therefore, the European Education Area aims to create higher quality and better paid jobs within the European Union. At the same time, it creates favourable conditions for the green and digital transition, which European cities should implement. Also, it aims to strengthen the European identity in order to increase the tolerance of European citizens and to build a united Europe. In fact, at continental level, national identity

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remains much stronger than a diffuse and more difficult to define European identity. However, the national identity was, in its turn, built, an important role in this process being played by the creation of the nation state. In this context, the creation of a common national history and the identification of its own fundamental values was a role played by the national education.

As a consequence, the role of current education is also to contribute to strengthening the European identity, by promoting common symbols, values and interests.

The 2025 Strategy is a call to action for the European Union member states, which requires a sustained effort and everyone's involvement. It is a way by which quality education can become accessible to all children and young people. The future of the education system depends, to a very large extent, on the capacity of European states to learn from the lessons of 2020. At the same time, it depends on the capacity to capitalize on the experiences gained.

The European Union considers that education and training will play a decisive role in the post-COVID-19 recovery. The proposal to set up a European Education Area came in the context of the challenges

brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cooperation between member states in the field of vocational education and training has been going on for several decades. Starting from this reality, the European Commission proposed the intensification of this collaboration, identifying means and objectives of implementation for six essential directions/axes. The main interest is focused on creating competences for European citizens, competences that should prepare them for the green transition and the digital transition. There is no doubt that the success of the European Education Area, which is an ambitious project, will depend on the continued cooperation between EU member states. Taking into account that the field of vocational education and training is the responsibility of each state, the ability of EU member states to reach common goals will play a significant role in turning this project into a reality. A number of pathways have been identified at European level, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, respecting the competences of the Member States in the matters of education and training at national, regional and local level.

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