



*Dear Mr. **Victor Petuya** EPA President
and the **EPA Board of Directors:***

Valérie Gardette (F)

Elena Odysseos (CY)

Aivar Haller (EST)

Boštjan Bobič (SLO)

Claudio Masotti (I)

Statement on reopening of schools and further measures in the educational sector

Some European countries have decided to reopen the School even before resuming economic activities because education is considered a strategic sector, not just an obligation for the training of new generations. The Italian government has decided not to reopen in May, postponing everything to September.

We ask for a rethinking with respect to the next school year, which provides for greater flexibility in the methods of return to class and distance learning, to guarantee the right of access to schools of all levels and to all students, especially those who live in areas with limited connectivity to the internet, or whose families experience socio-economic discomfort such as not to allow free access to distance learning. This is not only true for geographical regions but also within one household if both parents are in home office and two kids need to use the internet at the same time. Very often the internet connection is not strong enough to support that demand.

The government of Italy, a country that has been in demographic decline for years, finds the resources for new hiring of teachers in the state schools, while the number of pupils decreases, but does not finance or even support the system of **non-state schools that offer public service in Italy to around 900,000 students and so to more than 2.7 millions of EU citizens.**

We ask that the freedom of educational choice by the parents as primary responsible for the education of their children, and the freedom of teaching of non-state schools be guaranteed by means of adequate extraordinary state funds for the family in this moment of crisis so serious for our country. **Without this immediate economic initiative, we foresee that from 25% to 30% of non-state schools will not open in September.**

We ask to support families and the national school system, considered as a whole consisting of state and non-state schools, as these are basic conditions for restoring a future to the Italian economy and social cohesion to Italy.

Also the Spanish government does not provide the information or the capacity to those who, up to the state of alarm, had the competence to decide when and how to return to school safely and with guarantees of learning; **In addition, it takes advantage of this extraordinary situation to promote the approval of a law that goes against the freedom of education established by the UDHR and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, in addition to judgments of the Constitutional Court.**

For these reasons we ask you, Mr. President of EPA and the board of directors, to support our requests to the Italian and Spanish Governments as it was already stated in an EPA policy paper published in 2015 "**2015 Manifesto of European Parents for a European Future of Our Children in the 21st Century**"

- Financial support systems are to be strengthened and / or set up to provide at least minimum living income for those caring for small children, elderly relatives or ill family members

- Schools should become autonomous community learning spaces providing settings for lifelong learning, mutual learning of parents, teachers, children and the whole community, open nearly every day of the year and every hour of the day depending on the needs of the community, in a true realisation of the principle of subsidiarity to help parents fulfil their rights and duties as primary educators as well as real child participation.

Rome, May 15th 2020

Giancarlo Frare - President of AGEsc - Parents' Association of Catholic Schools

Carlo Stacchiola - President of Articolo 26

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