



Student Declaration

on the 2021 GEM Regional Report

We the members of the European Students' Union, the Organising Bureau of European School Student Union, and the Global Students Forum call for Ministers of Education and European decision-makers to ensure inclusion in education for all learners. Even before the COVID-19 education crisis, our region's education systems were working for some and not for others.

On Zero-Discrimination Day it is time for policymakers to rethink the persistence of segregation and discrimination in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Much progress has been made in education access in our region over the past 20 years; it is time to go the final mile.

Today, 3.7 million children and young people across the region are missing out on education, especially the most marginalized children and youth, including girls, ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrants and refugees, children with disabilities, and those from low-income families or living in remote areas. Discrimination does not stop at school doors. Rather than welcoming what each learner brings, education is often too rigid, pushing many learners out. Two in ten children and young people in our region feel like outsiders in school.

[The new 2020 Regional Report on inclusion and education by UNESCO for Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia](#) underlines the importance of thinking of education as more than about just delivering academic success; the right to be in good physical and mental health, happy and connected with others is as important as the right to learn. Multiple examples are given to show that a legacy of segregated education for children and young people with special needs, Roma learners and linguistic minorities is holding back greater



diversity in our classrooms, and greater acceptance for diversity in our societies as a result. Rather than learning with and from each other, we learn apart. We all miss out.

As the combined voice of more than 40 million students from across the region, we demand strong action from governments and regional institutions to fulfill their commitments to inclusive education. The Report's ten messages provide a road map to strengthen education systems, there can be no excuse for inaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed inequalities to breaking point making moves towards inclusion even more critical.

We each have a role to play in ensuring that no child is left behind. For our part, we will hold governments to account with the power of our voices and actions. We need education systems and institutions that work for everyone, whatever their identity, background, or ability, in which people feel safe and can thrive.

Join us today in calling for action to end discrimination in education.