

Ukraine National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education

I. COVID-19 and wartime recovery of education

Ukraine's education sector was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but since February 24, 2022, Ukrainian education has been facing a much more severe challenge - russia's full-scale military aggression.

In wartime, Ukraine's education is constantly affected by the aggressor's atrocities being one of its key targets – russian troops continue killing civilians, targeting students and educators. Missile strikes and bombs destroy our cities and towns, educational infrastructure is being damaged and destroyed as well. This causes both immediate and long-term negative impacts on Ukrainian education.

Undoubtedly, the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on education should not be underestimated, but the grand-scale russian war against Ukraine has forced everyone to rethink the meaning of equally accessible and safe education. The threats of a catastrophic drop in students' enrollment, reduced access to education, and threat to the mental health of children and adults due to the war has become real in the heart of Europe.

The emergency in the education system of Ukraine has revealed the importance of flexible policy approaches, preparedness for uncertainty, the role of strategic vision, as well as evidence-based actions.

II. Transforming education

In wartime, Ukraine has succeeded in ensuring continuity of teaching and learning. Numerous challenges still should be tackled though.

For Ukraine, creating safe conditions for teaching and learning is now not just a policy priority or political commitment but evident condition for the survival of education, as the entire generation of Ukrainian children runs a risk of having their education disrupted. The system-wide transformations should be put in place including the use of flexible learning modalities, quick response to a change in the security situation, introduction of catch-up programs and tools based on in-depth learning and skill gaps assessment. A psychological support and care system needs to be developed providing comprehensive gender-responsive and age-appropriate assistance for children and youth affected by war or having different levels of war-related experience.

In wartime, learning process has not been interrupted so far and that is mainly due to the efforts of our educators.

However, having a set of reforms in teaching profession already in place, including deregulation of in-service teacher training allowing to freely choose training courses and providers; updated education standards and pre-service teacher training programs; introduction of teacher certification, pedagogical internship and supervision, a number of systemic transformations are still to be performed.

An approach to paying salaries to educators requires updating, and policies to involve the most motivated and talented candidates to teaching profession are to be developed.

Ukraine has well-developed education system with competence-based learning and individual approach in instruction being gradually introduced in curricula at all levels of education.

It is crucial to continue this policy, offering broad opportunities for students to acquire competencies and skills that allow them to grow as innovative and creative individuals who can contribute to the development of the society at large.

More practice-oriented and project-based approaches need to be used in learning. In particular, climate change, green transition, and sustainable development should be further built in national curricula.

It's due to digital technologies Ukraine has managed to ensure that education for millions of Ukrainian students is not disrupted and is relatively safe. This policy should be further developed using the most holistic approach, including improvement of Internet connectivity, digital competencies, and provision of digital devices, aiming to reach out to the most vulnerable groups.

Aiming to contribute to the resilience of Ukrainian education, a digital education ecosystem should be built, including digitization of key processes in education management and introduction of quality educational e-services.

III. Financing education as a common good

The return of investment in education is not obvious, but its effectiveness cannot be overestimated. Therefore, it is time to start treating education as an investment in future economic growth and sustainable development.

The situation is aggravated by Russian military aggression against Ukraine, as all available resources are used to meet defense and humanitarian needs. So, approaches to use education budgets should be carefully revised, financial resources should be allocated to implement strategic priorities and improve education quality. Aiming to attract additional funds to education sector existing partnerships should be developed and new ones should be established.

IV. Next steps

Ensuring sustainability of education in wartime and comprehensive recovery of the sector in the postwar period remain priority tasks for the nearest future. We stand for ensuring continuity of teaching and learning, creating safe and equal opportunities for everyone to access quality education, preserving the flexibility of learning tools and approaches used, and adaptiveness of education policies.

Therefore, building a resilient education and training system is a cornerstone for Ukraine's recovery in the postwar period and a key condition for sustainable development.