

## **European governments take widely contrasting approaches to school closures. Involvement of EC is needed, call NGOs, professional and employers' organizations.**

School closures due to COVID-19 pandemic have detrimental effects on children and young people around the globe. In spite of the general consensus about profound negative impacts of school closures significant differences exist across EU/EEA Member States. 24 organizations from Slovakia call for involvement of European Commission as harmonized approach could improve access to education, help to avoid or limit serious adverse effects on children development and equality of opportunities for young generation across the Member States.

*„We acknowledge COVID-19 pandemic poses unprecedented situation and most serious public health crisis in decades. Likewise, we understand that in the EU/EEA both national education system and response to the COVID-19 pandemic are under the responsibility of the Member States. It needs to be accepted as well that there might be settings which require measures in schools,“* write organizations representing education professionals, psychologists, parents, students and employees. **They point out that the differences among countries and their approach to education are significant in the European Union.** Most countries follow the recommendations of WHO or ECDC and do not close schools, or their closure is taken as a last resort for a short time. On the other hand, there are countries, including Slovakia, which *"have lower ambitions and fail to find solutions to avoid general school closures and protect the right to education and development for children and young people"*.

***“Significant differences in the effort and results of Member States in the protection of the right for education and in balancing the impact of pandemic on young generation require, in our opinion, the involvement of European Commission. Harmonized approach could improve access to education, help to avoid or limit serious adverse effects on children development and equality of opportunities for young generation across the Member States as is also outlined in The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee,”*** says the letter addressed to the Commissioners Mariya Gabriel, Dubravka Šuica and Věra Jourová.

The authors of the letter ask the European Commission to help those countries to gain a profound understanding that education and quality of schools are among key values in the EU and stress their importance for the future of young generation and EU itself, raising the awareness about negative effects of school closures and the importance of protection of educational and other personal development activities for children and young people. European Commission could monitor the situation in Member States with regard to the education and measures taken in schools and facilitate knowledge transfer and best practices sharing across Member States, especially from those which were capable to combine opened schools with the proper management of epidemiologic situation.

When comparing EU countries, according to [the latest UNICEF report](#), all children and adolescents were the shortest time at school in Slovakia and Romania. [In comparison of 31 OECD countries](#) Slovakia is the third worst in length of period with fully closed upper secondary schools.

In Slovakia, children aged 10 and over have spent almost the entire school year out of the schools. The school closures since October 2020 were applied without any time limits and de facto have become permanent measure for more than six months now (secondary schools are closed from 12 October 2020 and lower secondary schools for age 10 to 15 from 26 October 2020). Kids age 3-10 years were out of school for almost four months (since 21 December 2020 till 12 April 2021).

Letter with full list of organizations is attached and can be find on [www.dajmedetomhlas.sk](http://www.dajmedetomhlas.sk)

**Media contact:** Andrea Hajdúchová, Initiative Dajme deťom hlas, +421 908 700 857, [andrea.hajduchova@ddh.sk](mailto:andrea.hajduchova@ddh.sk)