

# Empty classrooms

The impact of COVID-19 on education

ONLINE HIGH LEVEL POLICY INSIGHT | PROGRAMME

**30**  
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With 10 years left to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, Friends of Europe and the Anna Lindh Foundation are holding a series of discussions on the remaining steps towards the 2030 Agenda.

This activity is organised in cooperation with the Anna Lindh Foundation



Co-financed by the European Union



# Programme

**17.25** Online connection of participants

**17.30** High level policy insight

## Empty classrooms

### The impact of COVID-19 on education

Ensuring that all girls and boys are granted quality education is a prime ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals. The return is considerable: a more diverse and prosperous economy, access to better services, and increased equality are amongst the clear benefits from open access to free education. Over the last few decades, exchange programmes across Europe and its neighbouring countries have been developed to enable a greater spread and diversity of knowledge. In the Euro-Mediterranean region, exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ and virtual platforms including Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange have encouraged decision makers and academics to work together in sharing knowledge and best-practices, while equally enabling youth to discover new cultural realities and gain intercultural learning.

However, COVID-19 having kept 90% of all students out of school, the important progress of recent years is at severe risk of being reversed. With many classrooms having remained empty for several months, authorities have scrambled to develop alternative education systems to connect teachers and students. The results vary greatly, with striking differences in completion rates between richer and poorer households, further exacerbating inequality.

- What role can digital tools offer to provide uninterrupted quality education for all and intercultural experiences to students?
- Which focus should be adopted by international partners?
- How can the lessons from this pandemic make our education systems more resilient and inclusive?

#### SPEAKERS

**Elizabeth Guigou**, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation and former French Minister

**Driss Ouauicha**, Deputy Minister for Higher education and Scientific Research

#### MODERATED BY

**Dharmendra Kanani**, Director of Insights at Friends of Europe

**18.30** End of debate

# Speakers & moderator

**Elizabeth Guigou** / President of the Anna Lindh Foundation and former French Minister

Elisabeth Guigou is president of the Anna Lindh Foundation, a network of civil society organisations dedicated to promoting intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean region. Before this appointment, Guigou served as French Minister of European Affairs, member of the European Parliament, and member of the French National Assembly, among numerous other posts. In addition to this, Guigou was the first female to be appointed Minister of Justice in France, where she distinguished herself for her fight for a more independent justice system.

**Dharmendra Kanani** / Director of Insights at Friends of Europe

Prior to joining Friends of Europe, Dharmendra Kanani was director of policy at the European Foundation Centre (EFC). He was the England director at the Big Lottery Fund, the largest independent funder in the UK and fourth largest in the world. Dharmendra has held senior positions in the public and voluntary sector and advisor to numerous ministerial policy initiatives across the UK.

**Driss Ouaouicha** / Moroccan Deputy Minister for Higher education and Scientific Research

Driss Ouaouicha's experience in higher education extends to several senior positions at universities and schools across Morocco, including Dean of the School of Humanities at Moulay Ismail University. While he was Vice-President for academic affairs at Al Akhawayne d'Ifrane University, he contributed to increasing the University's global recognition notably through accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In addition, Driss Ouaouicha is the former Secretary of the EuroMed Permanent University Forum, and became a Member of the National Economic and Social Council in 2011.



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