

First session: how did your national education system react to the crisis. Lessons learned?

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented disruption to the Spanish educational system. Students, families, professionals and administrations were forced to react and take the necessary steps to overcome this crisis and to adjust to all the temporary or permanent changes arising from it.

After the closing of schools following the lockdown in the spring of 2020, the Ministry of Education and the regional educational administrations were able to organize, face-to-face exams for the transition to Higher Education. This was an essential step to “normalize” the situation for hundreds of thousands of students in order to continue with their education.

The school year that started in September 2020 has not been easy, but Spain is managing to avoid further lockdowns, and the schools are always open. Guidance from both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health stated the goal to keep schools open, and this target is being met. Mention should be made to the considerable effort made by teachers, students and families and also the policies implemented to ensure that schools are secure environments. For instance, the decision to use masks for children aged 6 and older, and the huge amount of resources allocated to hire extra teachers and provide digital equipment for students and schools. The effort to vaccinate most of the teachers has also contributed to the exceptionally low number of COVID-19 cases in schools.

Crises are always a learning opportunity, and the management of the Spanish education system has improved, following the tight collaboration between the Central government and the Regional administrations. The whole education system has been updated: the use of ICT and digital tools has grown and the modernization and improvement of the pedagogical resources and school management are already on course.

- Second session: How did your council position itself during the crisis? Lessons learned?

The COVID-19 crisis has significantly changed the functioning of the State School Council. A firm decision was taken: counselling and assessment were still the main tasks and goals. But, at the same time, the Council has been working hard to analyse the strange situation arising from the current pandemic and has drawn up concrete and useful proposals addressed to the Public Administrations and the whole educational community.

The Council’s activity has mainly focused on paying special attention to the impact of the pandemic in the teaching-learning process. We must also highlight the development of innovative telematic solutions for online meetings and voting process that have facilitated the Council’s work and the discussions and deliberations.

The aim has been to be able to help the educational community to create a better future where education continues to be a highly appreciated essential service.