

MANIFESTO FOR PRESIDENT OF UNSHM

„BACK TO SCHOOL“

In my two-year term as President of UNSHM, my team and I will work on the implementation of the following programme:

1. OUR PRIORITIES: MY SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

PRIORITY #1: Blended learning

At the moment the most urgent question is the model of learning which the high-school students will follow next September. It is the third school year that may start via distance learning. Two generations have finished their education on their computers. The current freshmen have started their high-school experience online, stripped of the chance to meet each other.

That is why - as with this school year - I will continue to advocate for the introduction of blended learning in the high schools. **Firstly, every student will choose which model of learning they would like to follow: distance or physical.** Those who choose the physical model will be divided into two groups which will rotate on a weekly basis (one week at home, the other in school). Of course, the smaller schools will work fully physically if they meet certain predefined conditions.

I will ensure that the quality of the distance learning is increased through standards and expectations. Additionally, together with the schools, we will work on the creation of protocols which will protect the health of students. **For all of this to be possible, vaccines should be offered to all faculty and staff in the schools.**

Only blended learning will secure the quality of our education and our mental health. Hence, the question is very urgent.

PRIORITY #2: Authentic in-school democracies

Although many schools boast that they have functioning student councils, oftentimes the presidents of the individual classes are elected by the headteacher, not by the students of that class. **Even if the student council wants to change something, it is blocked.**

That is precisely why, together with my team, we will **radically and meaningfully change this current, illegitimate model that does not represent the interests of high-school students.** The Law must recognize the high school union.

My vision for the future is a school where we have the right to express both, our individual and collective opinion, loudly and clearly. All students must elect the President of the Student Council. **High-school students must be equal partners in the problems which involve their interests.**

2. LET'S RIGHT THE WRONGS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

INJUSTICE #1: There are 12 months in a year, not 9!

In the age of climate change and extremely polluted cities in our country, public transport, especially for high-school students, is an essential need. To increase high-school mobility,

- All high-school students should get fully free city and inter-city bus transport.
- Free transport during the school holidays as well - i.e. during the whole year, not only during term, achieved through an annual bus card for every student.
- Since high-school life does not happen in schools only, the distance between the home of the student and the school, as well as the type of the school, should not be criteria for the free public transport.

INJUSTICE #2: What does the word “psychologist” mean?

Mental health is a very important part of the life of every human being and it is not shameful to ask for help if one experiences issues with it. Sadly, the school psychologists are forced to work on administrative tasks and cannot commit to their students.

- A new approach: Every high-school student could arrange for a private meeting/session with the psychologist, by using Google Calendar. This model will allow for privacy and dedication.
- An increased interaction between the students and the psychologist as soon as the full return to schools commences.
- The creation of detailed protocols and the updating of the existing ones on acting after reporting problems connected to mental health and sexual harassment.

INJUSTICE #3: Grades are (not) increased via a phone call.

Our education system is known by the fact that connections are always successful in increasing any grade. Corruption is deeply entrenched in our schools, but shall we allow it to continue to rule over us?

- Even students, who are satisfied with their lower, but real grade, are damaged by this practice. Hence, the grade should stem from knowledge, not connections.
- A grading and reporting system through blockchain technology. This technology allows for a fully democratic principle in the digital sphere: all users receive their own, identical copies of all inputted data.
- The data are permanent - they can be edited, but not deleted. All have access to them and see who and when created them, increasing the transparency of the system in the process.

3. THE WAY FORWARD FOR BETTER EDUCATION

IDEA#1: Civic and financial education

The challenges of modern time, along with the sheer principle of what an educated person is, i.e. a citizen, makes clear the need of such a subject. Schools should develop collaboration in this subject through an online platform.

- Every 18-year-old must know how to be an active citizen in a society. We must know how the state, the Constitution, and the political system work.
- We have to differentiate fact from propaganda and how to tackle fake news and conspiracy theories. This can be achieved by learning how to evaluate sources and critical consumption of media.
- The new generations must accept the values of responsibility, volunteering and service.
- Financial literacy is crucial, it is unacceptable for someone to finish their secondary education, not knowing how to fill out a tax return or an invoice.
- Financial education should encourage the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. Companies founded and run by high-school students should be opened in every VET school.

IDEA #2: Talented students = talent schools

A while ago, the Mathematical-Informational Gymnasium in Skopje was founded. It is a school for the most talented students in STEM after passing an admission exam. Such schools should exist in different areas, too.

- The state support for STEM should not stop. However, we must not forget the other areas - languages, humanities and social sciences, namely.
- Two new schools for talented students should be open. One for linguistics, literature and philology, while the other for philosophy, history and economics.
- In the Language Gymnasium, students should have the opportunity to learn Macedonian, the regional languages, English, French, German and Italian. More courses should be developed, like Russian, Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic, Hindi and Swahili.
- In the Humanities-Social Sciences Gymnasium, students should be able to fully commit themselves to the study of these disciplines. They will read the works of the great thinkers throughout history, debate and research.
- Due to the ability of high-school students, university professors can be included in the teaching in both gymnasia. University professors could be included in the Centres for excellent students, too.
- The same principle should apply for areas that are often not found in the regular high-school experience - Drama and Journalism, to name a few.