

EARLY OPENING OF SCHOOLS
IN URUGUAY DURING THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC
OVERVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNT

Early opening of schools in Uruguay during the Covid-19 pandemic. Overview and lessons learnt

United Nations Children's Fund,
UNICEF Uruguay

Authors:

Anahí Alarcón, Centro de Informaciones y Estudios
del Uruguay [Uruguayan Information and Research
Centre] (CIESU)
Gustavo Mendez, CIESU

Coordinated by UNICEF:

Dario Fuletti, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
Julia Perez, Education Officer
CIESU/UNICEF partnership

Copy editor: Maria Cristina Dutto

Design and layout: harto_estudio

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@unicefuruguay

UNICEF Uruguay
Bulevar Artigas 1659, 12 Floor
Montevideo, Uruguay
Phone. (598 2) 403 0308
E-mail: montevideo@unicef.org

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANEP	Administración Nacional de Educación Pública [National Public Education Administration]	OPP	Oficina de Planeamiento y Presupuesto (de Presidencia de la República) [Office of Planning and Budget (Presidency of the Republic)]
CIESU	Centro de Informaciones y Estudios del Uruguay [Uruguayan Information and Research Centre]	PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
CEIP	Consejo de Educación Inicial y Primaria [Pre-primary and Primary Education Council]	RSV	Respiratory syncytial virus
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019	RT-PCR	Reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction
CSEU	Coordinadora de Sindicatos de la Enseñanza del Uruguay [Uruguayan Teaching Unions Council]	SARS-COV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
CSSE	Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University	SOMERUY	Sociedad de Medicina Rural del Uruguay [Uruguayan Rural Medicine Society]
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	TEP	Trabajadores de la Educación Primaria
FUM	Federación Uruguaya del Magisterio [Uruguayan Teaching Federation]	TIC	tecnologías de la información y la comunicación
GACH	Grupo Asesor Científico Honorario [Honorary Scientific Advisory Group]	UDELAR	University of the Republic
GDP	Gross domestic product	UMAD	Unidad de Métodos y Acceso a Datos (de la FCS, UDELAR)
INAU	Instituto del Niño y Adolescente del Uruguay [Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents]	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
INEEd	Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa [National Institute for Educational Evaluation]	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ITU	International Telecommunication Union	UTEC	Universidad Tecnológica del Uruguay [Technological University of Uruguay]
		UTU	Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay (former name of the Technical and Vocational Education Council)

FOREWORD

The COVID-19 crisis is a major challenge to achieving human rights worldwide and, in this particular case, to achieving economic, social and cultural rights. Worldwide school closures have made it particularly difficult to maintain the progress made in the education, protection and well-being of children and adolescents. First, the likelihood that children will not return to school increases the longer they are out of school, especially among those from more vulnerable households. Second, the lockdown situation generates stress within families and increases the risk of children and adolescents suffering or witnessing violence in the home. Third, the closures make it difficult to access services that schools regularly provide, such as food and psychosocial support. For all the above reasons, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has promoted a reopening of schools worldwide, provided that this is done under safe conditions and takes into account the health measures issued by the corresponding authorities.

The Uruguayan education system's response to the health and education emergency has been extremely interesting and exemplary. The presence of Plan Ceibal throughout the country, together with the provision of free Internet services, made a high level of connectivity possible for students and their teachers. The rapid way in which the School Feeding Programme was adapted to the emergency situation, together with the presence of teaching teams in the regions, supporting the educational continuity of the most vulnerable students and assisting their colleagues in the use of new technologies, were also key elements in surviving this first stage of lockdown.

In the context of what could be considered a successful management of the pandemic, Uruguay has been one of the first countries in the world to reopen its educational centres and return to the classroom, combining this with remote education. This process has taken place in an innovative, gradual and phased manner. The return was not organized by grades, as in other countries, but instead prioritized dimensions such as geographic density, the educational vulnerability of students and completion of educational cycles, in addition to considering the health conditions of the area in question and of the educational centres themselves.

It is a privilege to be able to share this systematization with decision makers, researchers, teachers, students and citizens more widely. We hope that the lessons learned can be used as an input when preparing the response to future critical situations and will help identify innovative policies that can be sustained and deepened once the pandemic is over. Finally, I hope that other countries will be able to draw on the Uruguayan experience to identify their own challenges and to plan and implement a return to education.

Luz Angela Melo Castilla
UNICEF Representative, Uruguay

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In light of the emergency situation created by COVID-19, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has joined efforts to safeguard the rights of children and adolescents that have been most affected by the pandemic. Given that Uruguay is the first country in the region to resume face-to-face classes, it was considered relevant to analyse the process with the aim of drawing lessons for the next stages, as well as setting in motion a reopening of schools in other countries in the region.

The document is organized in three sections. The first is a concise description of the population of Uruguay, the evolution of the pandemic in the country, the education system, connectivity for virtual education and the context of government transition. The second section provides an overview of the resumption of face-to-face education, identifying its stages, actors, planning and implementation, together with the sanitation and technical and pedagogical conditions that have been established. The third offers a preliminary assessment of the process, highlighting lessons learned and challenges.

In Uruguay, more than one million students attend formal education, which is approximately 30 per cent of the country's total population, with 95 per cent from urban areas and 5 per cent from rural areas. The State plays a predominant role in the national education system; in primary education, public enrolment covers 82 per cent of total student numbers. Educational coverage has increased in recent years with very high levels between the ages of 3 and 14 years (pre-primary, primary and basic secondary education). However, this decreases from 15 years, especially among the most vulnerable adolescents.

An overview of the process

To understand the reopening process, some of the priorities of the period when attendance was suspended need to be noted, when priority was given to maintaining the link between students and their families and the education system. A significant number of schools remained open from day one of the health emergency, and during all subsequent stages, to provide food to children. This system not only provided nutritional support, but also served as a valuable channel for sending educational support materials to households. It also sought to ensure the conditions for continuing educational activities virtually, supported by the significant progress in connectivity that the country has made since the creation of the Plan Ceibal in 2007, which means that every child entering the education system has access to a computer for their personal use with free Internet connection.

The resumption of face-to-face classes in Uruguay was established as voluntary, staged and gradual. This voluntary nature was in line with the way in which the national government implemented the emergency measures, encouraging rather than forcing people. When establishing the different stages, health criteria were combined with a prioritization of the population. Among the health aspects, the analysis of the impact that the return to school would have on movements of people and the differentiated impact of the pandemic across the country is noteworthy. In turn, priority was given to schools in vulnerable socioeconomic contexts and completion of the compulsory educational cycle.

A combination of these criteria resulted in four staggered stages. The return began a few days after the month-long suspension of attendance, with the reopening of rural schools with the fewest students. After this first stage, which served as a pilot for the more widespread resumption, three other stages were defined during the month of June aimed at resuming all educational levels except universities. The gradual nature meant that face-to-face classes did not take place every day, nor during the usual hours.

Getting children back to school was the focus of the initial efforts of the national education authorities. Prioritizing the resumption of face-to-face classes as a fundamental element in maintaining the link between students and the system, and thus educational pathways, seems to have been key in relieving the tension between health and education. In terms of managing the emergency in a context of extreme uncertainty, the priority the education authorities gave – in coordination with other government actors – to children's right to return to classes is seen as an important driver of the early decision to resume face-to-face education. In addition, the development of the pandemic in Uruguay was marked by a rapidly controlled spread and a relatively rapid downturn in active cases of the disease, with children little affected. This situation facilitated the relatively rapid process of returning to the classroom.

The decision-making process for school reopening was conducted by central government, led by the Presidency of the Republic in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Public Education Administration (ANEP). At first, the National Emergency System played an important role in evaluating the situation and planning the reopening of rural schools. Subsequently, the Grupo Asesor Científico Honorario [Honorary Scientific Advisory Group – GACH] had an important role in the epidemiological evaluation. Teaching unions were also important participants throughout the process. Overall, although there was dialogue between unions and authorities, the process did not entail the usual levels of negotiation within the education system.

Once the need to return had been established by the national government, the bodies of the national education system had an instrumental role to play in how this would take place. In this process, decisions were recognized at the level of the subsystems and the schools. ANEP thus established the stages of the return, its voluntary and gradual nature and the health protocols – according to the guidelines of the health authorities and scientific advice – and produced the main general guidelines. Within the subsystems of each educational level, emphasis was placed on developing programmatic guidelines and technical criteria for the return, undertaken mainly by the technical inspectorates. Meanwhile, efforts were made to provide high levels of autonomy to educational centres so that the general guidelines and direction could be adapted to the specific features of the regions and educational communities.

In order to guarantee health conditions, three specific protocols were drawn up: the Protocol for resuming activity in rural educational centres; the Protocol for protecting ANEP staff; and the Protocol for reintegrating students into educational centres in the urban environment. To these were added the Protocol of action for positive COVID-19 cases among ANEP staff and the procedure for validating ANEP staff belonging to high-risk groups.

Three stages can be distinguished in the technical-pedagogical strategy followed. The initial stage focused on rapidly re-establishing the face-to-face link between students and the system, using various implementation methods to adapt to different local and family realities. The second stage features a situational assessment through surveys of teachers and students and a test of students' knowledge. The third stage will take place when decisions are made regarding the school year on the basis of the empirical evidence generated by the assessment. Based on the process and working experience of ANEP's educational pathway teams, it seems reasonable to expect that attempts will be made to minimize or reject students having to repeat a grade.

Lessons learned from the experience

The resumption of face-to-face classes in the schools took place in the context of a health emergency. The voluntary nature of school attendance seems to have allayed health fears and, in addition, enabled families to gain confidence. With regard to teachers, measures that can mitigate these concerns include creating spaces for dialogue with teaching groups, agreeing on protocols that specifically include the conditions for protecting staff, and promoting guidelines and actions for emotional containment.

The institutional resources and actors available to the Uruguayan education system were a key factor in maintaining the link with students throughout the country and in getting back in contact with those who were becoming disconnected. Ensuring the continuity of school meals and complementary social benefits associated with education, particularly family allowances, reduced the social impact that could have resulted from an interruption of school attendance. Finally, when it comes to resuming face-to-face classes, it is essential to pay attention to the operational conditions that will enable this, as access will be difficult and gaps will be maintained or increased if such conditions are not in place. Student and staff transport to and from schools is a key factor in this regard.

Although the lack of compulsion was favourable given the initial reticence of families, it could open up a gap between those who attend and those who do not, making it important to seek the best strategies to avoid this. The choice of educational content to be provided in a face-to-face learning environment with reduced days and hours also poses a challenge. Initial reflections on this issue within the Uruguayan education system seem inclined to set goals in stages and according to the logic of educational cycles, transcending the grades. This also calls into question the configuration of educational communities and the role each actor plays within them. Educational assessments pose a further challenge. It is important to avoid focusing overly on the qualification when the crucial aspects are in fact the teaching and learning processes, how they are recreated in this context, and what adaptations are required of the school, the students and the education system itself.



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INTRODUCTION

In light of the emergency situation created by COVID-19, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has joined efforts to safeguard the rights that have been most affected by the pandemic. Uruguay was the first country in the region to resume face-to-face classes in the education system following declaration of the health emergency. UNICEF has thus conducted a study of the process, with the aim of drawing lessons for the next stages, and for the reopening of schools in other countries in the region.

According to global monitoring data reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the pandemic is currently affecting approximately 1.2 billion students, representing 68 per cent of total student enrolment worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). In alliance with UNICEF and the World Bank, UNESCO has launched the Global Education Coalition to support governments in strengthening distance education and facilitating the reopening of schools.

The longer vulnerable children are out of school, the less likely they are to return. Among other things, prolonged closures disrupt essential services provided by schools, such as school meals, vaccination, mental health support and psychosocial counselling. In addition, lack of peer interaction and disruption to routines can lead to stress and anxiety. UNICEF has emphasized that:

The reopening of schools must be done safely and in a manner consistent with each country's overall response to COVID-19. All reasonable steps must be taken to protect students, staff, teachers and their families. The timing of school reopening should be guided by the best interests of the child and general public health considerations. This should be based on an evaluation of the benefits, risks, and intersectoral and context-specific evidence, including socioeconomic, educational and public health factors (UNICEF, 2020).

The document is organized in three sections. The first is a concise description of the population of Uruguay, the evolution of the pandemic in the country, the education system, connectivity and a brief reference to the context of government transition. The second section provides an overview of the resumption of face-to-face education, identifying its stages, actors, planning and implementation, and the sanitation and technical and pedagogical conditions that have been established. Finally, the third section offers a preliminary assessment and sets out some of the lessons and challenges involved in resuming face-to-face education.



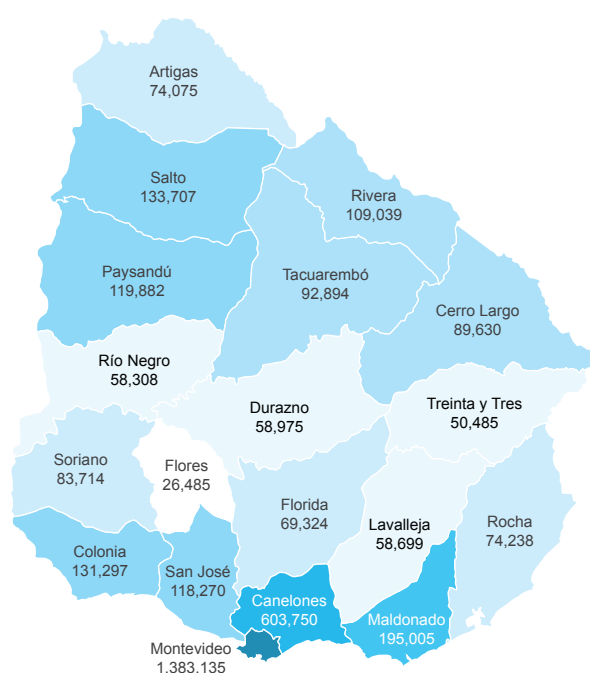
I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

1.1 Description of the population of Uruguay and the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic

This chapter outlines key contextual factors in order to position the analysis of the resumption of face-to-face classes in Uruguay. The chapter is structured in five sections. The first chapter concisely sets out the demographics of Uruguay and data on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second briefly describes the national education system, its different levels, governance, enrolment, coverage and the evolution of public spending. The third focuses on the characteristics of rural and urban primary education. The fourth section provides information on the Plan Ceibal and connectivity, which are central elements in assessing the capacity of the education system to sustain learning continuity in virtual environments. Finally, there is a brief reference to the change in national government, which was almost simultaneous to detection of the first official case of COVID-19 in Uruguay.

Uruguay is one of the smallest countries in Latin America in terms of population. According to estimates and projections provided by the National Institute of Statistics for 2020, its total population is 3,530,912 inhabitants. Approximately 95 per cent live in urban areas and 5 per cent in rural areas. The territory is administratively divided into 19 departments. About 40 per cent of the population lives in Montevideo, the country's capital and its most populated city. With the addition of the capital's metropolitan area, which includes part of the departments of Canelones and San José, the percentage is close to 55 per cent of the country's total population, representing a significant degree of concentration around Montevideo. Figure 1 shows the estimated population for 2020 by department. This is disaggregated by age group and region in Table 1¹.

¹ The ages have been grouped to reflect the different levels of the National Education System, thus facilitating comparison of the population at each stage of the education cycle. Meanwhile, the regional distinction is useful for estimating the number of children living in rural areas, since it was schools in this category that first resumed face-to-face classes.

Figure 1. Estimated and projected population by department as of 30 June 2020

Source: Prepared by authors with data from the National Institute of Statistics. *Estimaciones y proyecciones de población (revisión 2013)* [Population estimates and projections (2013 revision)].

Table 1. Estimated and projected population per year according to age and region as of 30 June 2020

Ages	Total	Urban localities with 5,000 or more inhabitants	Urban localities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants	Rural localities
0-3	181,075	155,953	18,114	7,008
4-5	91,450	78,427	9,327	3,696
6-11	278,902	237,613	29,478	11,811
12-17	293,548	247,178	33,313	13,057
18-24	372,369	321,051	37,187	14,130
25-29	261,183	226,058	24,592	10,534
30-45	773,632	664,179	73,978	35,474
46-64	763,483	646,722	76,645	40,116
65 y más	515,271	439,470	49,196	26,604

Source: Prepared by authors with data from the National Institute of Statistics. *Estimaciones y proyecciones de población (revisión 2013)* [Population estimates and projections (2013 revision)].

The first case of COVID-19 in Uruguay was officially reported on 13 March 2020. The national government immediately declared a national health emergency and a partial closure of borders with countries declared to be at risk, suspended public shows and urged the population to step up personal hygiene measures and to restrict movement, particularly those showing

symptoms or who have been in contact with people with COVID-19 symptoms². The following day, the government ordered a 14-day suspension of classes in public and private schools, at all levels of education, and set up a scheme to provide food daily to students who normally eat school meals.

2 See "Medidas del Gobierno para atender la emergencia sanitaria por coronavirus (COVID-19)" [Government measures to address the coronavirus health emergency (COVID-19)], Presidency of the Republic, 24 March 2020, <https://www.presidencia.gub.uy/comunicacion/comunicacionnoticias/medidas-gobierno-educacion-emergencia-sanitaria-covid19>.

Over the days that followed, the government strengthened measures to restrict the movement of people by calling on public offices and private companies to set up remote working systems. Scheduled flights at the country’s airports were also cancelled. In the education system, the suspension of classes was extended until after Tourism Week (12 April), and then indefinitely.

A distinctive feature of the way in which emergency health measures were implemented in Uruguay is that people were asked to restrict their movement but a general lockdown was not ordered. This even applied to older people, for whom an extraordinary cause of voluntary health insurance was established, since they were regarded as an at-risk population³.

The measures taken were largely conditioned by the development of the pandemic. The evolution of cases of the disease in Uruguay has so far not shown a steep upward curve, while the number of active cases has steadily declined since early April, despite some outbreaks in June⁴. Table 2 summarizes the state of the pandemic, with information from the National Emergency System.

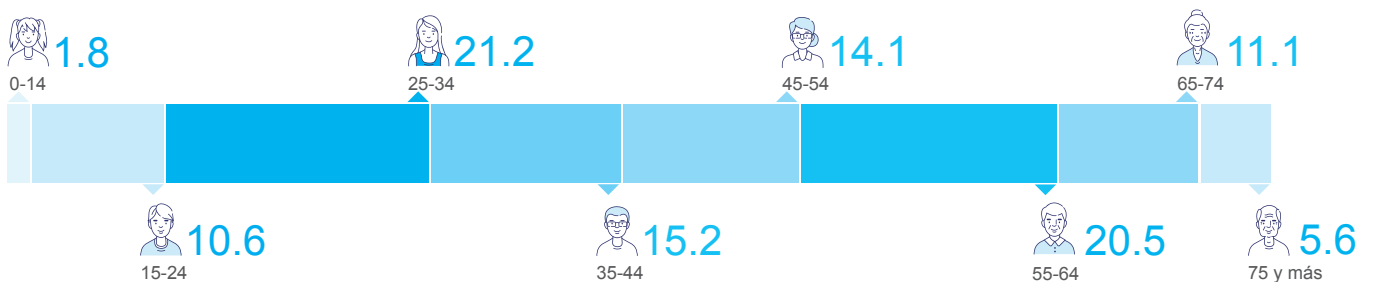
One of the most important contextual statistics for analysing the resumption of face-to-face education is that, so far, COVID-19 has affected a very low percentage of the child population. As of 24 April, only 10 people aged 0–14 years had been diagnosed with the disease. This represents less than 2 per cent of the total number of cases⁵ as shown in Table 3. Another significant factor is that the distribution of cases of the disease in the country has not been homogeneous. Indeed, some departments have not recorded any cases and others have recorded only one case, now recovered. Active cases of COVID-19 by department are presented in Table 4, which shows that there is currently only one outbreak, in the Department of Treinta y Tres, where the majority of cases are concentrated.

Table 2. Key data for COVID-19 in Uruguay as of 30 June 2020

936 Confirmed cases (cumulative)	85 Active cases	27 Deaths
824 Recovered people	2 People in intensive care	66,300 Tests performed (cumulative)

Source: Prepared by authors with data from the National Emergency System.

Table 3. Cumulative cases of COVID-19 by age group as of 24 April 2020, by percentage



Source: Prepared by authors with data from the COVID-19 Monitor, Institut Pasteur de Montevideo.

3 See "IMPO pone a disposición de la ciudadanía una recopilación de normas de interés sobre COVID-19 Publicadas en el Diario Oficial" [IMPO makes a list of regulations of interest on COVID-19 published in the Official Journal accessible to the public], IMPO, n.d., <https://www.impo.com.uy/normativa-covid-19-2/>.
 4 The first outbreak in Rivera was quickly controlled. There is currently an outbreak in Treinta y Tres.
 5 Data from the COVID-19 Monitor, Institut Pasteur de Montevideo.

Table 4. Active cases of COVID-19 by department as of 30 June 2020

Source: Prepared by authors with data from the National Emergency System..

Table 5. COVID-19 indicators in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay as of 30 June 2020

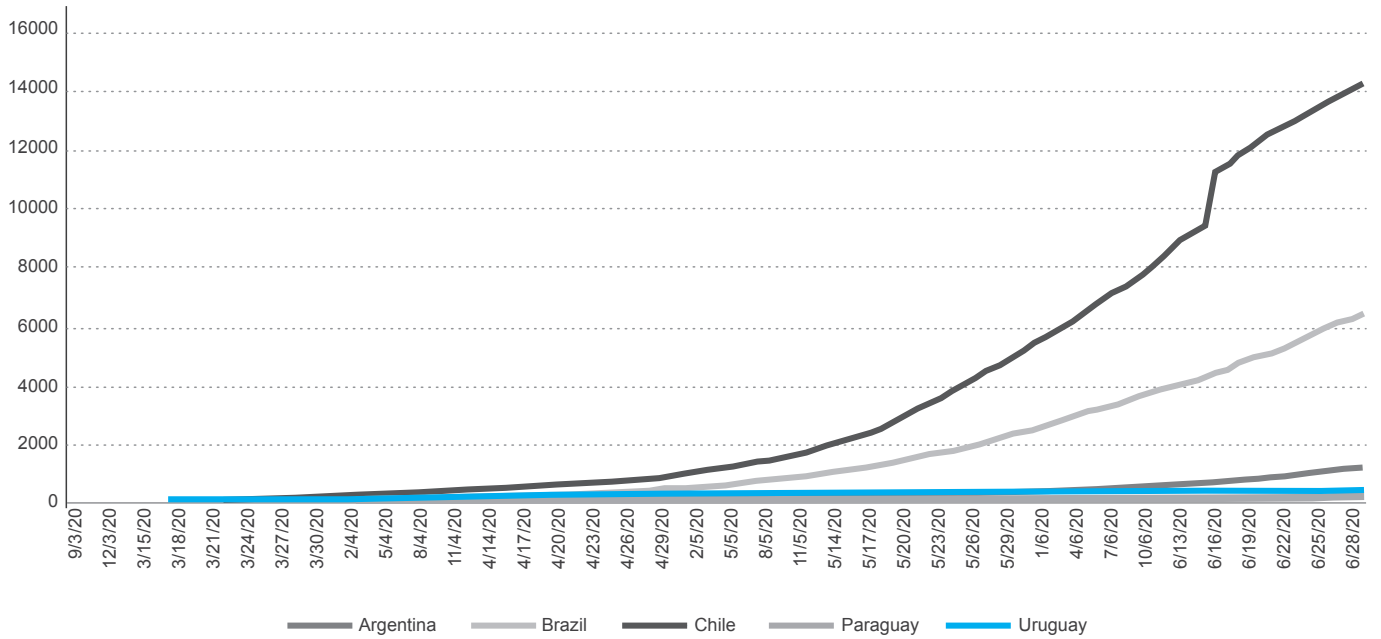
Country	Confirmed cases	Deaths	Recoveries	Active cases	Cases per million population	Mortality rate per 100,000 population	Fatality rate	Population
Argentina	64,530	1,307	22,028	41,195	1,427.8	2.9	2,0	45,195,777
Brazil	1,402,041	59,594	788,318	554,129	6,596.0	28.0	4,3	212,559,409
Chile	279,393	5,688	241,229	32,476	14,615.5	29.8	2,0	19,116,209
Paraguay	2,221	17	1089	1,115	311.4	0.2	0,8	7,132,530
Uruguay	936	27	824	85	269.5	0.8	2,9	3,473,727

* The difference between the population of Uruguay and that in Table 1 is due to different sources for the estimate.

Source: Prepared by authors with data from Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States of America, and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, rev. 1.

Finally, to compare the evolution of the pandemic in the region, Table 5 presents the key COVID-19 indicators for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The information shows that Uruguay and Paraguay are currently less affected than Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

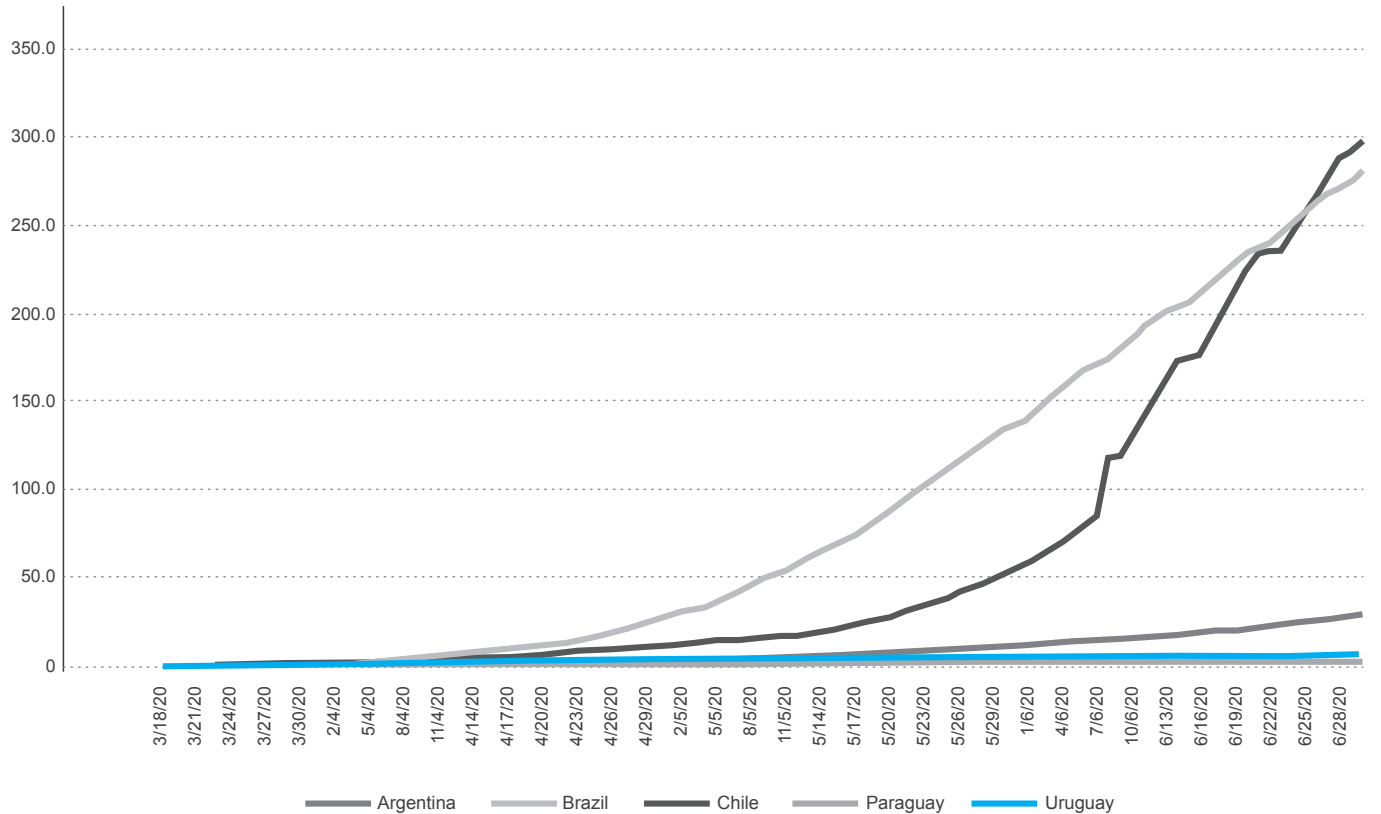
Figure 2. Number of confirmed COVID-19 cases per million population (9 March 2020–30 June 2020)



* The difference between the population of Uruguay and that in Table 1 is due to different sources for the estimate.

Source: Prepared by authors with data from Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States of America, and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, rev. 1.

Figure 3. Number of deaths from COVID-19 per million population (18 March–30 June 2020) in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay



* The difference between the population of Uruguay and that in Table 1 is due to different sources for the estimate.

Source: Prepared by authors with data from Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States of America, and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, rev. 1.

1.2 Brief description of the Uruguayan education system

The Uruguayan education system has three basic guiding principles: that education should be free, compulsory and secular. These principles are set out in the Constitution of the Republic and in current legislation, notably General Education Law 18,437 of 12 December 2008. Education is compulsory from the age of four until the completion of upper secondary education. The legislation defines the national education system as the set of integrated and articulated lifelong education opportunities for all inhabitants⁶.

The national education system comprises formal education, non-formal education and early childhood education. There are five levels of formal education: pre-primary education, primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education and tertiary education. These are described in Annex 1. Non-formal education, within the framework of a culture of lifelong learning, includes activities, methods and areas of education aimed at people of all ages that take place outside formal education, which have educational value in themselves and have been organized expressly to meet certain educational objectives in various areas of social life (job training, community promotion, sociocultural animation, improvement of living conditions, artistic, technological, recreational and sports education, etc.)⁷. Early childhood education covers the life cycle from birth to the age of 3 years, and thus constitutes the first stage of each person's education process.

Education governance in Uruguay is based on a complex system of institutional autonomy. This differs significantly from most countries in the region, in which the Ministry of Education is the highest authority in the education system, with both governing and management responsibilities.

The governance of early childhood education is structured around three institutions, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Public Education Administration (ANEP) and the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents (INAU), which are responsible for authorizing and managing education and care centres for children aged 0–3 years.

Compulsory formal education begins at the age of 4 years and is governed by ANEP, a public body with legal status as an autonomous entity. Under the Uruguayan constitutional framework this means it has a significant degree of autonomy from the executive branch. ANEP is responsible for the planning, management and administration of the national public education system, and for the regulation and supervision of private education at the pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical and teacher training levels (tertiary level). ANEP is governed by the Central Governing Council, a hierarchical body that oversees the other decentralized boards responsible for the different levels of the national education system: the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council, the Secondary Education Council, the UTU/ Technical and Vocational Education Council⁸ and the Teacher Training Council⁹.

At the tertiary level, the Universidad de la República (University of the Republic – UDELAR) is the main university in Uruguay, both in terms of the range of courses offered and the number of students enrolled. UDELAR – which for a long time was the only university in the country – is also an autonomous public body and is co-governed by teachers, students and graduates. In 1984, the first private university was authorized in Uruguay and there are now five private universities. In 2012, the country's second public university, the Universidad Tecnológica del Uruguay (Technological University of Uruguay – UTEC), was created. This is also an autonomous entity and is currently run by a provisional council. There are also a number of university institutes and other institutions in the country that provide non-university tertiary education.

In addition, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEEd)¹⁰ is an autonomous organization whose main task is to evaluate the quality of education in Uruguay at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of the national education system, with the aim of developing lines of education research, and advising the Ministry of Education and Culture and ANEP on international evaluation procedures. Over one million students are enrolled in formal education, which is approximately 30 per cent of the country's population. Table 6 provides summary information on enrolment by level. Annex 2 details the information according to level, type of management and type of education. Although these are data from 2018, enrolment in the system is stable, with a slight upward trend (about 5,000 students per year), making this a fairly accurate representation of the current situation.

6 Article 20 of Law 18.437.

7 Article 37 of Law 18.437.

8 The acronym "UTU" refers to the Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay, whose name was changed to the Technical and Vocational Education Council under Education Law 15.739, of 1985 (predating the current law). However, the use of UTU was maintained for both the body and for the education centres under its aegis. The body's formal name is now the Technical and Vocational Education Council (UTU), as decreed by Education Law 18,437, and we refer to it as such in this text.

9 The Central Governing Council has five members, who must have been active in public education for at least 10 years. Three of its members are appointed by the President of the Republic acting in the Council of Ministers, with the prior approval of the Senate, and the other two members are elected by the teaching body. They serve for five years and may be re-elected only for a subsequent term. They cannot then be re-elected until at least five years have passed. The Directors-General of the Education Councils are also full members of the Central Governing Council – they have a voice but no vote.

10 Created under General Education Law 18,437 (2008) as an autonomous body whose legal status is a non-governmental public institution.

Organization chart of the National Public Education Administration (ANEP)

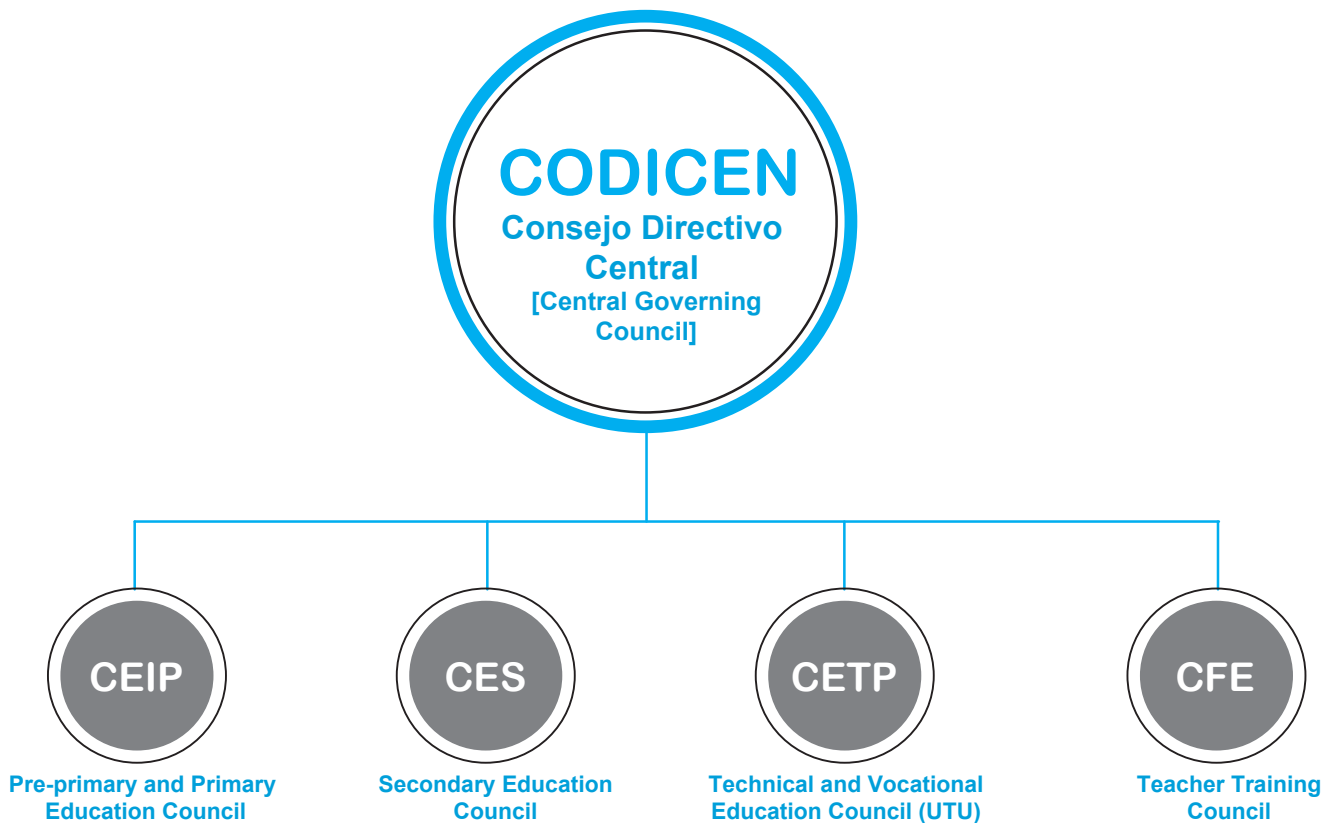


Table 6. Enrolment in the national education system by level (2018)

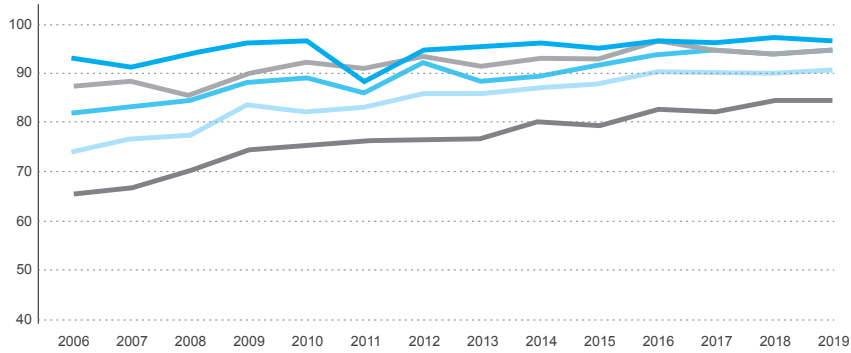


Source: Prepared by authors using data from the Ministry of Education and Culture's *Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018* [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

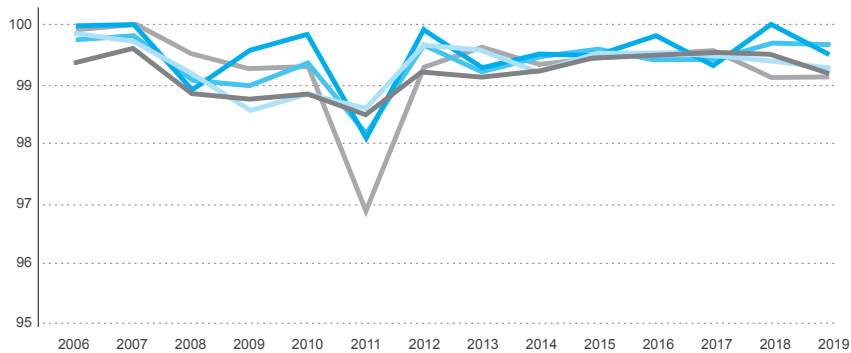
As well as absolute enrolment, it is important to consider coverage. This refers to the relationship between those students who are in the education system and those who, because of their age, should be. Thus, coverage indicators measure students who actually attend education within the child and adolescent population. Figure 5 presents coverage information by ages of compulsory education. The figures show first that Uruguay has very high levels of coverage, particularly between the ages of 3 and 14 years (early childhood, primary, and basic secondary education). After the age of 15 years, while coverage is still high, it is lower than at other levels.

In addition, for some age groups, the data show a stratification by socioeconomic level, although they also show significant progress in reducing the gap between 2006 and 2019, particularly in pre-primary education (3–5 years), basic secondary education (12–14 years) and higher secondary education (15–17 years). At primary level (6–11 years) there is no gap and coverage is close to 100 per cent for all income quintiles.

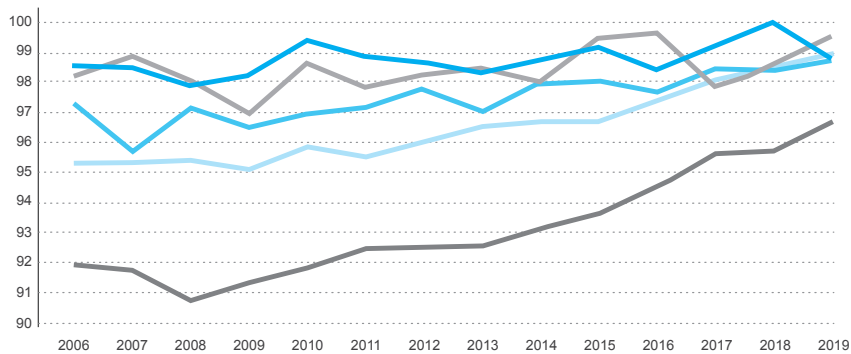
Figure 4. Coverage by socioeconomic level according to age groups (2006–2019)
 Coverage of the 3–5 years age group, by socioeconomic level (2006–2019)



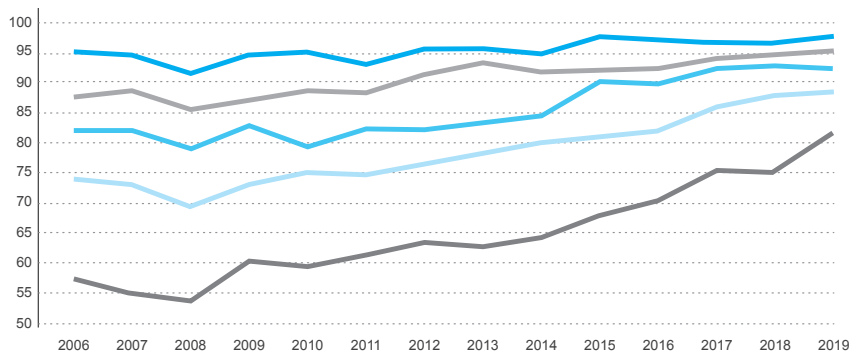
Coverage of the 6–11 years age group, by socioeconomic level (2006–2019)



Coverage of the 12–14 years age group, by socioeconomic level (2006–2019)



Coverage of the 15–17 years age group, by socioeconomic level (2006–2019)



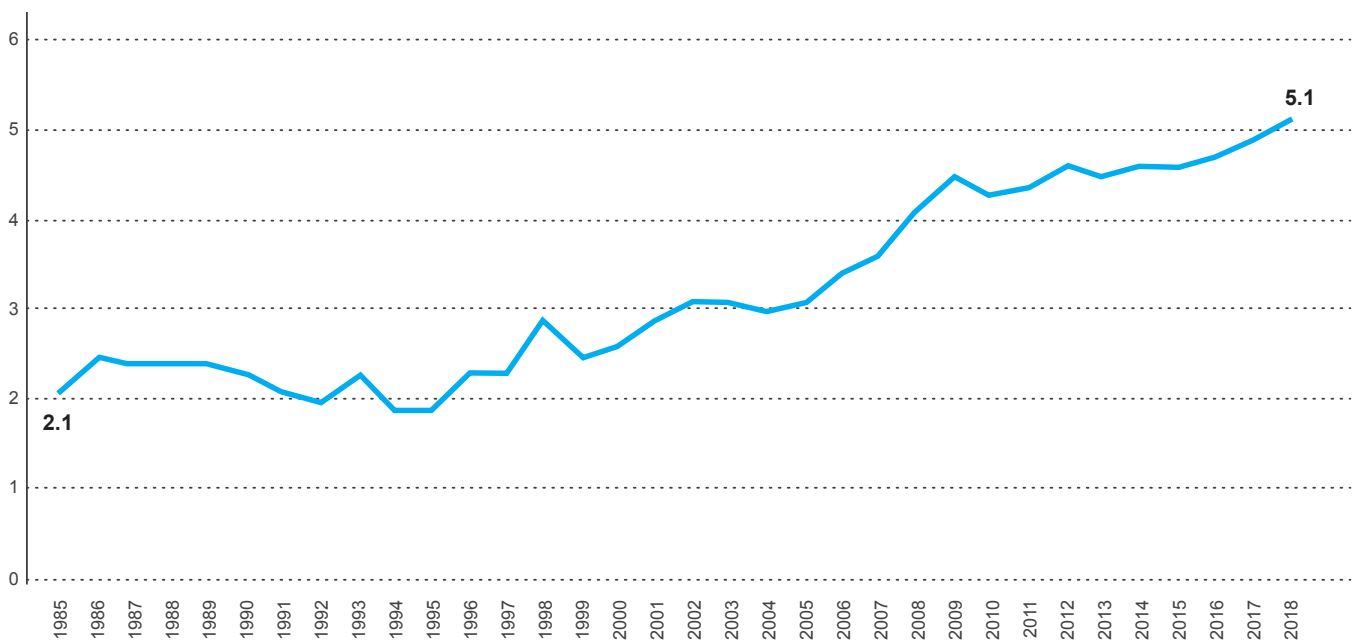
— Quintile 1 — Quintile 2 — Quintile 3 — Quintile 4 — Quintile 5

* Although compulsory education begins at 4 years of age, education at the age of 3 is included due to its wide and growing coverage in Uruguay. Source: Methods and Data Access Unit (Department of Social Sciences, UDELAR), based on the *Mirador Educativo*, INEED, using data from the National Institute of Statistics Continuous Household Survey.

To conclude the description of the national education system, the evolution of the government’s fiscal effort in terms of public social spending on education is presented, based on the macroeconomic priority indicator (percentage of spending in relation to GDP). Figure 6 shows the significant growth in this expenditure in recent decades, most notably from 2005 onwards. In 2018, public social spending on education represented 5.1 per cent of GDP, placing Uruguay above the regional average, which was 4 per cent in 2019 (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC, 2019). However, if Uruguay’s public social spending is analysed by function, spending on education is well below spending on social security (14.1 per cent in 2018) and also below spending on health (6.7 per cent in 2018), according to data from the Social Observatory of the Ministry of Social Development.

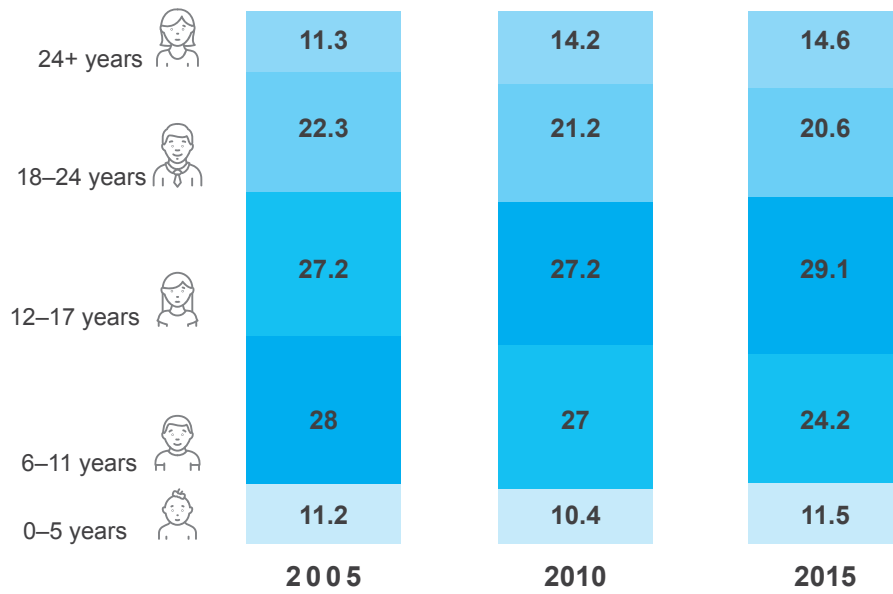
It is also important to consider public social spending on education by age group. As can be seen in Figure 7, in 2005 the 6–11 age group accounted for 28 per cent of spending while the 12–17 age group accounted for 27.2 per cent. By 2015, education spending on adolescents had risen to first place, at 29.1 per cent. Population dynamics may be one of the key causes of this development. It is also important to mention the increase in early childhood spending, which doubled between 2005 and 2015. Finally, Figure 8 presents the percentage of public social spending on education for the main organizations, where the predominance of ANEP (68 per cent), followed by the University of the Republic (17 per cent) is evident.

Figure 5. Public social spending on education as a percentage of GDP (1985–2018)



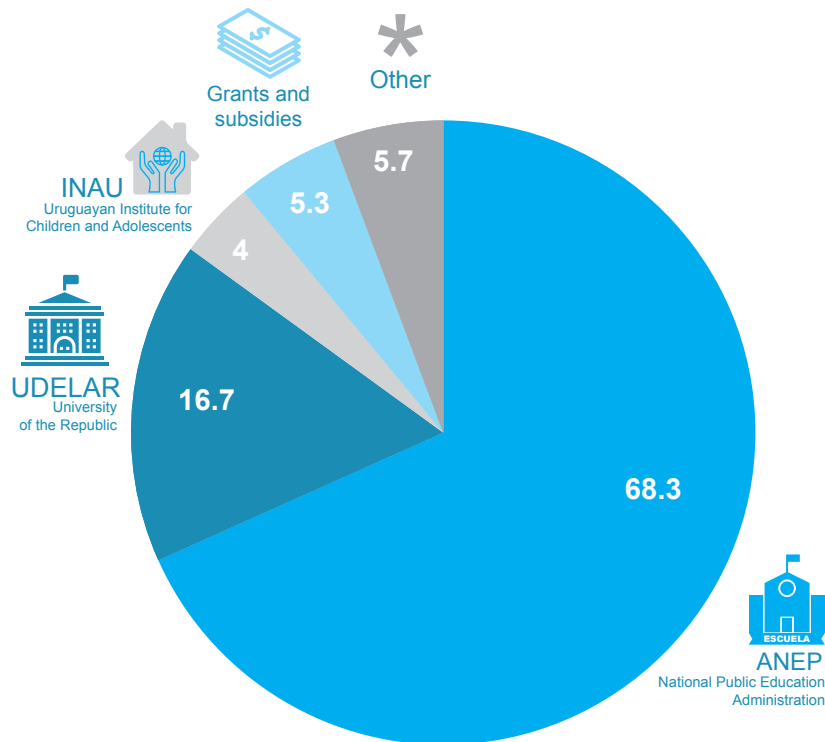
Source: Prepared by authors based on the National Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation (Ministry of Social Development).

Figure 6. Distribution of public social spending on education according to age groups, by percentage (2001–2015)



Source: Prepared by authors based on the National Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation (Ministry of Social Development).

Figure 7. Percentage distribution of public social spending on education according to key categories (2018)



Source: Prepared by authors based on the National Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation (Ministry of Social Development).

1.3 Overview of primary education in Uruguay

Primary education is compulsory in Uruguay. It lasts for six years and generally covers children aged 6–11 years¹¹. It is overseen by the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council, a deconcentrated council that reports to the Central Governing Council¹², which is responsible for managing the public provision of primary education and supervising private education within the framework of the general competences held by the education councils at each level of the national education system (see description in Annex 3).

The primary level covers Years 1 to 6 and is divided into two main categories: mainstream primary education and special primary education. Mainstream primary education is subdivided into urban and rural. Special primary education is aimed at the learning of children and adolescents with disabilities, learning difficulties and high abilities. In addition, there are both public and privately run education centres. This pluralism notwithstanding, Uruguay has a National Curriculum Reference Framework that covers primary and secondary education¹³.

According to the latest data published in the Ministry of Education and Culture Statistical Yearbook, corresponding to 2018, there were 2,490 primary education establishments in Uruguay (Table 7). One of the distinctive features of Uruguay's national education system is the preponderance of public management of education centres. Eighty-three per cent of schools were publicly managed and 17 per cent privately managed, with enrolment of 82 per cent and 18 per cent of students, respectively (Figure 9).

With respect to categories, in 2018, 94 per cent of schools were for mainstream primary education and 6 per cent for special primary education. Meanwhile, 51.2 per cent were mainstream urban schools, 42.8 per cent were mainstream rural schools and 6 per cent were special schools (Table 8). Rural school enrolment represented less than 5 per cent of all types of primary education.

Table 7. Primary school establishments and enrolment by category and type of management (2018)*

	Establishments			Enrolment		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
Common	1,988	355	2,343	242,941	51,289	294,230
Special	80	67	147	5,959	2,123	8,082
Total	2,068	422	2,490	248,900	53,412	302,312

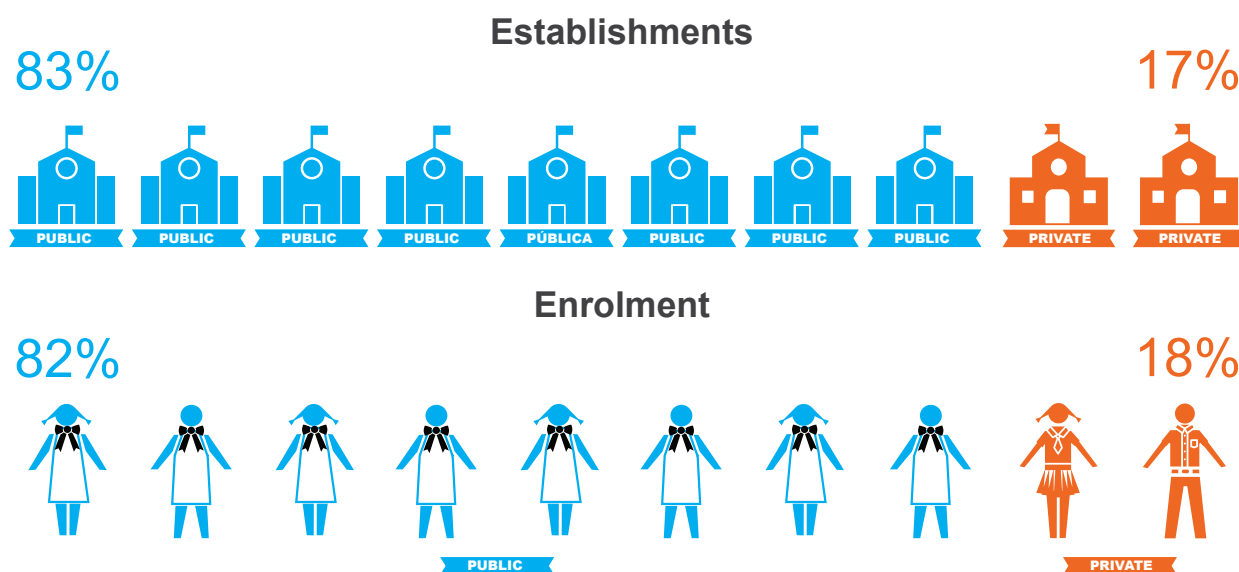
Source: Prepared by authors using data from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018 [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

11 According to the General Education Law, its purpose is to provide basic knowledge, with a focus on developing communication and reasoning that will enable responsible coexistence in the community (Article 25 of Law No. 18,437).

12 The Pre-primary and Primary Education Council has three members, two of which are appointed by the Central Governing Council and one by the teaching body. They are elected for five-year terms and eligible for re-election for a subsequent term. An urgent bill to modify the structure of the education councils is currently before parliament. If the law is passed, these will become single-member bodies, appointed by the Central Governing Council.

13 *The National Curriculum Reference Framework* is available at <https://mcm.anep.edu.uy/sites/default/files/Documento%20MCRN%20agosto%202017.pdf>. There is also a curriculum framework for the care and education of Uruguayan children from birth to six years of age.

Figure 8. Primary school establishments and enrolment by type of management (public/private) (2018)



Source: Prepared by authors using data from the Ministry of Education and Culture's *Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018* [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

Table 8. Rural, urban and special primary establishments and enrolment (2018)

	Establishments		Enrolment	
Mainstream urban (public and private)	1,277	51.2%	281,423	93.1%
Mainstream rural public	1,066	42.8%	12,807	4.2%
Special (public and private)	147	6%	8,082	2.7%
Total	2,490	100%	302,312	100%

Source: Prepared by authors using data from the Ministry of Education and Culture's *Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018* [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

Educational coverage of the country's 6–11 years age group averaged 99.5 per cent in the last decade, and no differences are observed when information is disaggregated by age, sex, region of residence or socioeconomic level (INEEd, *Mirador Educativo*). In line with Uruguay's population dynamics, which show a slow but steady decline in fertility, primary school enrolment data for 2020 are likely to be slightly lower than those for 2018. However, in principle, one would not expect significant variations in the relative distribution between the different categories, or between public and privately run schools.

All rural schools are public and located in the departments in the interior of the country; in other words, there are no rural schools in Montevideo, the most populated department. Of the nearly 1,000 rural schools, 42 per cent have up to 5 students, 31 per cent have between 5 and 10, and the remaining 37 per cent have more than 10¹⁴. Annex 4 provides a more detailed description of the nature of establishments, enrolment and the various types: schools with primary teachers, rural boarding schools, and single-teacher schools.

In addition to the significant role of government and universal coverage, another characteristic feature of primary education in Uruguay is the high level of territorial uptake. This is evident, for example, from the large number of rural schools.

14 Data from CEIP, *Monitor Educativo* [Educational Monitor], n.d., <http://www.ceip.edu.uy/component/tags/tag/89-monitor-educativo>.

1.4 Plan Ceibal and connectivity in Uruguay

In the context of COVID-19 and the suspension of face-to-face classes, it is essential to analyse the country's existing capacity for implementing non-face-to-face modes of education. Uruguay's Plan Ceibal is notable in this respect. Launched in 2007, it is a public policy that aims to equalize opportunities for access to information and knowledge for students in the national education system. Since the implementation of Plan Ceibal, every child entering the education system in Uruguay has access to a computer for personal use and a free Internet connection.

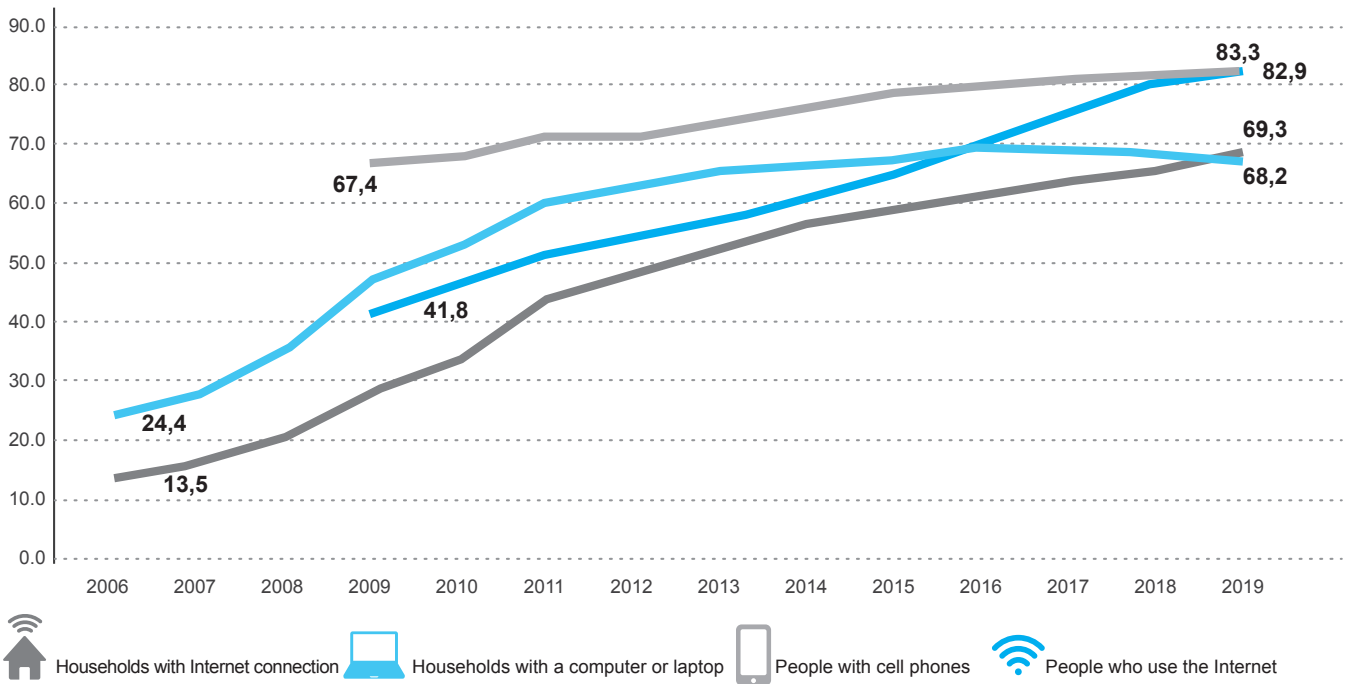
According to figures published on the official Plan Ceibal website, the plan currently provides coverage to 85 per cent of students in the education system: 100 per cent of students in public education aged 6–15 years and their teachers, as well as students from non-public institutions who take part in social action in deprived areas (see detail in Annex 5). Each student receives a device in the first and fourth years of primary education and in the first year of secondary education. Uruguay is the only country in the world where all students in public schools have their own computer, with free Internet access. Its high-quality video conferencing network connects more than 1,500 educational centres across the country.

Finally, over the last decade, Uruguay has been one of the countries in the region with the highest rates for key indicators on connectivity and digital inclusion. As shown in Figure 10, Internet access in Uruguay has expanded steadily and rapidly in the last decade. In 2017, it received the global award for sustainable digital development from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)¹⁵. It was also the first country in Latin America to offer 5G technology. Positive data notwithstanding, it should be noted that while access to infrastructure (both connectivity and computers) is necessary for sustaining educational activities in virtual environments, it is not enough alone.

Stages of Plan Ceibal

During its first decade, Plan Ceibal underwent three stages. The first was focused on delivering devices, connectivity and logistics to keep the system up and running. In 2010, professional development programmes for teachers were created. Technology and education programmes were incorporated, such as the Adaptive Mathematics Platform and the “Crea” classroom management platform; robotics, programming and 3D printing programs were created; English teaching was universalized and textbooks were digitized. The plan was also integrated into education management through the online evaluation system. The most recent stage of Plan Ceibal, which began in 2013, focuses on the development of new pedagogies for deep learning through student-centred methodologies, the extension of teaching beyond the classroom and the use of technology for specific purposes.

Figure 9. Connectivity in Uruguay (2006–2009)



Source: Prepared by authors based on the Oficina de Planeamiento y Presupuesto [Office of Planning and Budget – OPP] Territorial Observatory, using data from the National Institute of Statistics Continuous Household Survey.

1.5 Context: Change of national government

On 1 March 2020, the new President of the Republic, Luis Lacalle Pou, took office. The new government is a coalition of five political parties: the National Party, the Colorado Party, Cabildo Abierto, the Independent Party and the People’s Party.

The country’s change in government is complicated by two elements, in addition to the pandemic. First, the change involves a shift in the ruling political party after 15 years of continuous governance by Frente Amplio. Second, the five-party coalition is unprecedented in the recent political system and increases the time needed to negotiate the appointment of government posts. For national education system bodies, other decentralized government services and autonomous entities, the timescale for appointments is constitutionally longer than for central administration appointments. This is because, although the appointments are proposed by the executive branch, they must have the approval of parliament (given by the Senate).

The complexity of the negotiations within the government coalition and the constitutional characteristics of Uruguay meant that national education system decisions about the health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic were made and implemented by a complex network of authorities designated by the new government and acting authorities of the previous government. Thus, Ministry of Education and Culture authorities took office on 1 March. This was followed on 19 March by the new president of the Central Governing Council, and on 5–6 May by the new authorities of the decentralized councils (Pre-primary and Primary Education Council, Secondary Education Council, Technical and Vocational Education Council and Teacher Training Council) (see Annex 6). The same combination of outgoing and incoming authorities applied to other key national health and education bodies, such as the Administración de los Servicios de Salud del Estado [State Health Services Administration – ASSE] and INAU, and in the senior management of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Public Health.



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II. ORGANIZING THE RESUMPTION OF FACE-TO-FACE EDUCATION

In this three-part chapter, we analyse the process of resuming face-to-face education. The first part presents an overview of the process, setting out the stages, the number of students and a chart showing actors involved in decision-making. The second section outlines the planning and implementation of the process of resumption. The third describes the health and technical and pedagogical conditions that have been established.

2.1 An overview of the process

The return to face-to-face education took place in voluntary and partial stages, since it did not imply an immediate return to education every day, nor according to the usual timetables. Four stages were defined¹⁶, with the first beginning a few days after the total suspension of face-to-face education. Thus, Stage 0 began on April 22, with the gradual and staggered opening of rural schools, which have the fewest students. After this first stage, which served as a pilot for the more widespread resumption, three stages were defined for a gradual resumption of all levels of education except universities, each staggered a fortnight apart. Table 9 summarizes the four stages.

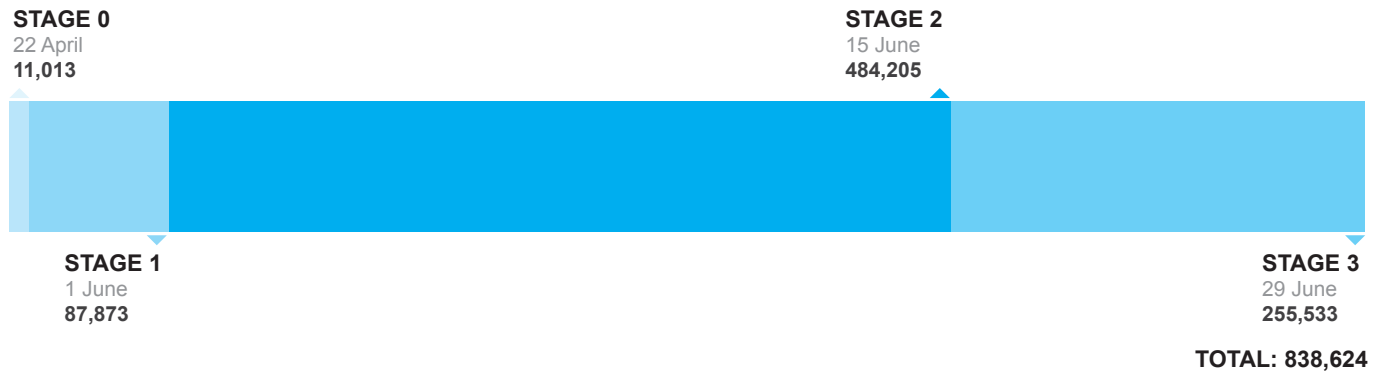
16 See Annex 7 for further details of each stage.

Table 9. Summary of the stages of resuming face-to-face education

	<p>Stage 0 (22 April)</p> <p>Rural primary schools in the interior of the country, except Canelones. The reopening was staggered and began with rural schools with the fewest students.</p>
<p>Stage 1 (1 June)</p> <p>Canelones rural schools and all rural secondary education; vulnerable schools (the Aprender programme and full-time schools), Year 6 of secondary schools and UTU schools (public and private), except those located in Montevideo and the metropolitan area.</p>	
	<p>Stage 2 (15 June)</p> <p>Vulnerable schools, Year 6 of secondary schools and UTU schools in Montevideo and the metropolitan area; special schools, mainstream urban schools, extended-hours and practical schools (public and private) and technical tertiary education, except in Montevideo and the metropolitan area. Opening of early childhood and pre-primary educational centres throughout the country.</p>
<p>Stage 3 (29 June)</p> <p>Addition of remaining primary schools in the capital and the metropolitan area, public and private secondary, UTU and technical tertiary schools, throughout the country.</p>	

* Not including the departments of Rivera and Treinta y Tres, where it was decided to postpone the resumption of face-to-face education.
Source: Prepared by the Presidency of the Republic and ANEP.

Figure 10. Numbers of students at each stage of resumption of face-to-face education*



* Includes ANEP, INAU and non-university tertiary education.

** Not including the departments of Rivera and Treinta y Tres, where it was decided to postpone the resumption of face-to-face education.

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Methods and Data Access Unit (Department of Social Sciences), using data from the Continuous Household Survey 2019 and the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018 [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

The voluntary nature of the return meant there was a significant degree of uncertainty in planning, as it was impossible to anticipate the actual percentage of attendance. In addition, attendance may vary at different levels of education or in different geographical areas. This uncertainty meant, among other things, that hybrid education strategies had to be provided to support both face-to-face attendance and remote learning for those who did not attend. In addition, since resumption has been gradual, it has been necessary to continue with virtual pedagogical support, even for those attending face-to-face education. To give an idea of the degree of uncertainty involved in the process, the number of students in a position to return to face-to-face education at each stage is shown in Figure 10.

The decision-making process for school reopening was conducted by central government, led by the Presidency of the Republic in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture and ANEP. At first, the National Emergency System played an important role in evaluating the situation and planning the reopening of rural schools. Subsequently, the Grupo Asesor Científico Honorario [Honorary Scientific Advisory Group – GACH] became increasingly important as advisers to the Government on epidemiological evaluation. During the reopening of rural schools stage, health was a key consideration. Therefore, the Federación Médica del Interior [Medical Federation of the Interior], the Sociedad de Medicina Rural del Uruguay [Uruguayan Rural Medicine Society] and the Sindicato Médico de Uruguay [Uruguay Medical Union] also participated in the process.

Honorary Scientific Advisory Group (GACH)¹⁷

GACH was appointed on 16 April to provide quality scientific advice informed by international experience to government decision makers. Their work is based on four pillars: progression, regulation, monitoring and evidence.

The group has 55 members, who also liaise with other researchers and academics. The two main areas in which they offer guidance are science and health, and data technology. A technical secretariat was established, which is run by the coordinator of the National Secretariat for Science and Technology.

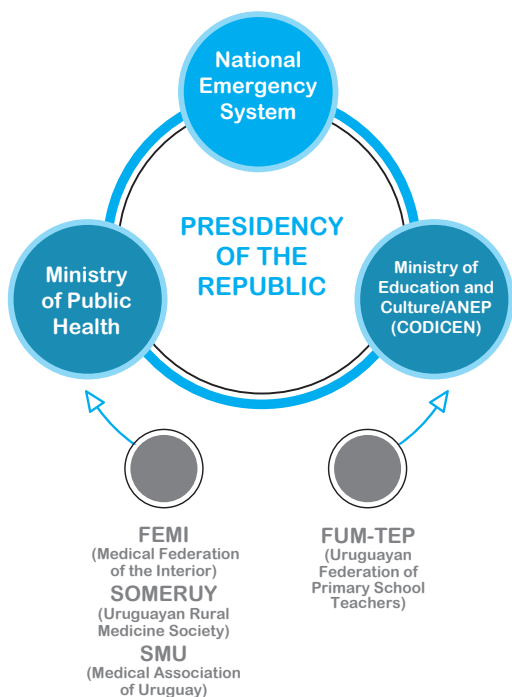
The primary group meets with the Government once a week. This meeting, known as the Grupo de Transición Uy [Transition Group Uy], is attended by the head of the OPP. The reports created are sent on a weekly or fortnightly basis to the executive branch.

The advisers are in communication with the academies of science and medicine, with the UDELAR and ORT universities, and with research institutes that are actively tackling the pandemic, such as the Institut Pasteur and the Instituto de Investigaciones Biológicas Clemente Estable [Clemente Estable Biological Research Institute]. They also collaborate with government bodies such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the OPP, the Agency for e-Government and Information Society, the National Institute of Statistics and Montevideo City Council.

The teaching unions were also important participants throughout the process. At first, since the rural opening involved only primary schools, the Federación Uruguaya del Magisterio [Uruguayan Teaching Federation – FUM] and the Trabajadores de la Educación Primaria [Primary Education Workers – TEP], known jointly as FUM-TEP, participated in the discussion on the working conditions set out in the protocols defined by the authorities. In the later stages involving the resumption of all levels of education, the following also participated: the Asociación de Maestros del Uruguay [Uruguayan Teachers' Association], the Federación Nacional de Profesores de Enseñanza Secundaria [National Federation of Secondary School Teachers], the Asociación de Funcionarios de la Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay [Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay Employees' Association], the Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza Privada [Private Education Workers' Union] and, notably, the Coordinadora de Sindicatos de la Enseñanza del Uruguay [Uruguayan Teaching Unions Council – CSEU], which oversees all teaching unions.

17 Information taken from the article “Grupo de expertos...” [Group of experts...] (21 May 2020).

Key actors in the reopening of rural schools

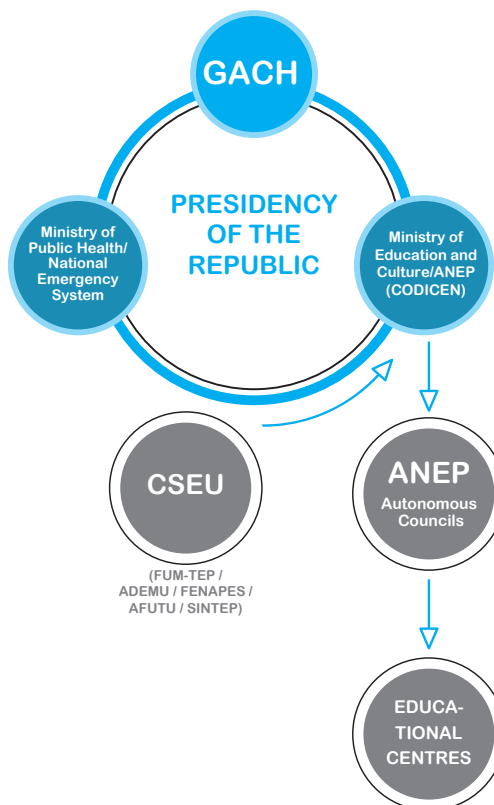


Source: Prepared by authors.

Following the reopening of rural schools, there was a change in the key decision makers involved in the resumption of face-to-face education across the entire education system. A general resumption of face-to-face education was decided at the highest level of government. The national education authorities were actively involved in this decision, as was GACH, which played a major role in advising the national government. Following the decision, ANEP defined the implementation criteria. The Minister of Education and Culture, Pablo da Silveira, used a metaphor to describe this logic: “The central government controls the main power supply and decides if the conditions are right to resume classes, but it is ANEP that switches the lights on or off in the various rooms of the house, depending on the conditions” (“La vuelta a clases...” [The return to classes...], 21 May 2020).

Within the education system, the general decision-making process was led by the Central Governing Council, with subsystems and their respective inspectorates¹⁸ responsible for technical-pedagogical aspects, and educational centre management teams in charge of organizational issues and strategies to create links with students and their families. Interviews revealed that the key to this process were fluid, direct and permanent communication channels between the bodies at the various levels of the national education system, in an extended planning session of the Central Governing Council attended by all councils.

Key actors in the general reopening



Source: Prepared by authors.

2.2. Planning the return and the options established

On 13 March, following confirmation of the first four cases of COVID-19 in the country, the President of the Republic declared a national health emergency.¹⁹ On 14 March, at a press conference in the city of Durazno, the national government announced the suspension of classes at all levels of public and private education for 14 days. Official information published indicates that the decision was the result of an agreement between the incoming and outgoing ANEP authorities and the Minister of Education and Culture, in consultation with the President of the Republic. The decision was formally reflected in Decree 101/020²⁰, which also ordered the closure of Centros de Atención a la Infancia y a la Familia [child and family care centres].²¹

18 Decisions were channelled from the national Technical Inspectorate to the departmental inspectorates. They were then passed on to regional inspectorates, and then to the educational centre management teams.

19 Decree 93/020: “A state of national health emergency has been declared as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

20 Decree 101/020: “Suspension of classes and closure of public and private educational centres at all levels of education, as well as child and family care centres”.

21 Early childhood care centres managed by INAU.

The Secretary of the Presidency announced the two-week (14 days) suspension of classes at all levels of education in the country, in public and private institutions. However, food would continue to be provided to those who attend these centres (schools, child and family care centres and training centres) through a system implemented by ANEP, the National Emergency System and the Ministry of Social Development. This measure was taken following a meeting between Education Minister Pablo da Silveira, the current president of ANEP, Wilson Netto, and the future president of ANEP, Robert Silva, in consultation with President Lacalle Pou. (“Gobierno definió suspensión...” [Government orders suspension...], 14 March 2020).

To understand the reopening process, some of the priorities of the previous stage should be noted, which were established by national education system bodies. Essentially, the focus was on maintaining and restoring the link between students and families and the education system, with programmes designed to serve this aim. This prioritization meant that a large number of actors and resources at the central and regional levels had to be mobilized to carry out the necessary arrangements and activities, and to recover those students who had become disengaged during the health emergency. Resources included teachers who specialize in assisting their colleagues in the use of information and communications technology or in working with children with disabilities, and teams of psychologists and social workers who assist teachers in socioeducational emergencies.²²

“It should also be noted that a significant number of educational centres (more than 700) remained open from day one of the health emergency and during all subsequent stages, to provide food to children.” (“Alimentar en la emergencia”, [Feed in emergencies] (24 March 2020). Meal trays²³ were provided and were picked up every day by an adult family representative. Teachers and teaching assistants worked reduced shifts to give out this food. In those places and cases where this method was not possible, food vouchers were handed out to be exchanged by families in local shops. This system not only provided nutritional support, but also served as a valuable channel for sending educational support materials to households.

In April, student disengagement was approximately 4.5 per cent (12,000 children). The fact that children had only attended school face-to-face for 10 days since the beginning of the 2020 academic year may have contributed to disengagement in the subsequent stage of virtual education. Due to re-engagement strategies carried out by the education system, by mid-June this figure dropped to 1.24 per cent.²⁴ This group predominantly consisted of those in pre-primary education, essentially those aged 3 years.

The framework for reopening schools (UNESCO, 2020) states that when the decision is made to move forward with the reopening process, preparedness should be evaluated and planning guided by six dimensions: policy, financing, safe operations, learning, reaching the most marginalized and well-being/protection. A combination of policy considerations and financial requirements create the environment needed to support the other dimensions. The Pre-primary and Primary Education Council designed the process decision-making scheme as three consecutive steps: 1) political decision, 2) hygiene measures and 3) technical and pedagogical decisions. The Technical Inspectorate²⁵ underlined the significant challenge that this logic entailed, given that it meant implementing decisions taken previously at other levels. It requires constantly and immediately adapting strategies and managing actors and education resources in order to best respond to the context. When planning reopening, information was gathered on the situation in the different regions, and resources were managed to establish the appropriate health measures, in order to give teaching and non-teaching staff and families the confidence to return to face-to-face education during the health emergency.

The process of reopening educational centres in Uruguay took place in two major stages: rural and urban. A month after the national suspension of face-to-face education, the reopening of rural schools was announced for the second half of April. In May, it was announced that face-to-face teaching would resume in urban educational centres in June. The following sections systematically set out the key elements of each stage, definitions and how face-to-face education resumed.

22 For example, technology centre coordinators and maestros dinamizadores (technology consultants for teachers) under the aegis of ANEP, itinerant teachers and staff from the Escuelas Disfrutables [Enjoyable Schools] programme, all of whom report to the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council.

23 These consisted of a meal, bread and fruit, planned by ANEP nutritionists and the third-party companies in charge of preparation and distribution.

24 Approximate data, provided by the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council Technical Inspectorate.

25 The Technical Inspectorate is the highest technical body of the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council's Primary Department. It defines and coordinates the general lines of action for primary education throughout the country, across all areas, and their respective inspectorates. See CEIP, n.d., “Inspección Técnica” [Technical Inspectorate], <http://www.ceip.edu.uy/inspecciones/tecnica>.

2.2.1. Reopening of rural educational centres

On 8 April, the President of the Republic announced that face-to-face education in rural schools would resume on 22 April. For this purpose, the National Emergency System, the Ministry of Public Health and CSEU designed a health protocol setting out the main conditions for the resumption of face-to-face classes.

ANEP's education planning department explained that the decision to start with rural schools was based on the need to accelerate student re-engagement where children and their families are more isolated and where connecting to virtual platforms is more difficult. Likewise, due to the smaller number of students in spaces that allow physical distancing and less movement of people, the rural environment offers better conditions for complying with preventive hygiene measures for face-to-face education.

The variables for selecting schools took into account regional criteria, available teaching and non-teaching staff, and the number of children. Out of the 953 rural educational centres that opened at the beginning of the 2020 school year throughout the country, a list of 543 that had fewer than 30 students enrolled was drawn up (excluding the departments of Montevideo and Canelones). Children's attendance was voluntary, at the discretion of families. The return was gradual, with classes three days a week lasting three and a half hours, from 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.²⁶

In addition, the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council surveyed the centres' buildings and the availability of teaching and non-teaching staff given their transport and access options. The Pre-primary and Primary Education Council's Director of Rural Education reported the results of this survey: "The majority, 330, are schools to which teachers and assistants travel independently; 175 are schools whose teachers live in the area, and 38 are schools in which teachers are resident from Monday to Friday."²⁷ Taking this information into account, the National Emergency System granted health approval and it was decided that ANEP's Department of Medical Services, Health and Prevention at Work would be in charge of follow-up. The decision to swab educational staff in localities with confirmed cases of COVID-19 that were soon to resume face-to-face education helped people feel safer about the reopening.

Likewise, to strengthen monitoring of the process, ANEP organized a pattern of information gathering and exchange during this stage that went from educational centres and communities to the inspectorates of the

respective subsystems, and from the management of these subsystems to the Central Governing Council. The Central Governing Council designed a preliminary tool to systematically categorize the information received on a daily basis. At the time of writing, this was an instrument for internal use.

The decision to reopen rural schools initially met with some resistance from the FUM-TEP, which considered that this contradicted the Government's appeal for people to stay at home. They also stressed the practical difficulties of complying with the hygiene measures. In a press release two days before reopening, the FUM-TEP Secretary-General, Elbia Pereira, stated: "[...] we are a long way from the 543 schools announced by the authorities, because the reality is very different."²⁸ She also noted that hygiene and transport difficulties were compounded by the impossibility of maintaining distance between children: "It's unthinkable, it's impossible for this to happen among children, regardless of how many attend."²⁹

On 22 April, the day the resumption of face-to-face teaching in rural schools began, 344 schools with fewer than 30 pupils opened, while 202 of the schools that were authorized did not open because they did not have the results of the COVID-19 tests carried out on teachers and non-teaching staff, or because they did not have replacements for the teachers or assistants who were in at-risk groups. There were 88 schools where children did not attend. About 1,000 children attended in total, corresponding to 32 per cent of the cohort eligible for return.

The implementation of face-to-face classes on a voluntary basis meant that many rural teachers developed programme content in the classroom during the morning with the children who attended, before replicating this remotely in the afternoon for the rest. To reach the families who were least engaged during the remote stage, school staff and technical inspectorates worked together to devise strategies. They were supported by Plan Ceibal and the Crea platform, local media (radio and television) and landline and mobile phones (mainly via WhatsApp).

The process of rural reopening continued in stages, progressing to schools with larger numbers of students. On 28 April, 369 schools opened, including those with up to 50 students, and on 4 May those with more than 100 students reopened. One month after the reopening, 879 rural schools were running, with nearly 50 per cent of total attendance. As at 1 June, 979 schools were open. Although some building difficulties complicated

²⁶ The press reported that the timetables were established following a government meeting between CSEU, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Medical Federation of the Interior and the Uruguayan Rural Medicine Society.

²⁷ "Vuelta a clases en algunas escuelas rurales se demorará por falta de test a maestros, asegura FUM-TEP" [Return to classes in some rural schools will be delayed due to lack of teacher testing, says FUM-TEP], *La Diaria*, 21 April 2020, <https://educacion.ladiaria.com.uy/articulo/2020/4/vuelta-a-clases-en-algunas-es-cuelas-rurales-se-demorara-por-falta-de-test-a-maestros-asegura-fum-tep/>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

compliance with hygiene measures, most schools managed to function satisfactorily.

One important aspect of the planning process was the uncertainty caused by the evolution of the pandemic. In fact, on 7 May, after an outbreak of COVID-19 cases was recorded in the Department of Rivera bordering Brazil, it was announced that the resumption of face-to-face classes in that department would be suspended, leading to the closure of the rural schools that had reopened (“De 60 escuelas rurales...” [Of 60 rural schools...], 8 May 2020).

On 19 May, the National Institute of Statistics, ANEP and ASSE planned and carried out 300 random COVID-19 tests on teachers and non-teaching staff in rural schools in 16 departments. They were all negative. This result led to the decision to reopen all schools in June and was accompanied by the approval of a protocol to protect ANEP staff, in a process that involved education and health authorities and trade unions.

2.2.2. Reopening of urban educational centres

“The evidence we have available to date is that school closures have very little impact on the development of the disease, compared with the educational, social, nutritional and mental health impacts” (Rafael Radi, GACH coordinator). (“Hay ‘relativa seguridad’...” [Things are ‘relatively safe’...], 21 May 2020)

Based on the evolution of the virus transmission rate – an internationally validated indicator – GACH recommended that the Government resume face-to-face classes. However, it warned that the reopening would lead to the spread of other respiratory infections and in particular respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) which, added to coronavirus, could put a strain on the health system’s response capacity.

At a press conference on 21 May, the President of the Republic, alongside the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Central Governing Council, announced the resumption of face-to-face classes throughout the

entire education system in accordance with a three-stage timetable commencing on 1, 15 and 29 June. A protocol was thus drawn up which extended and expanded the measures established for the reopening of rural schools (“Protocolo de ANEP...” [ANEP protocol], 29 May 2020).

The timetable for the gradual resumption of face-to-face activities prioritized situations of social vulnerability and took into account differences in conditions for health across the country – chiefly levels of agglomeration and the consequent possibilities of maintaining social distance, as well as the evolution of virus infection. It also took into account the need to encourage completion of the final years of secondary education. It should be noted that the Asamblea Técnico-Docente [Teacher Technical Assembly]³⁰ had proposed prioritizing the return of Year 6 of secondary school, to enable students to graduate and allow them to enter tertiary education the following year.

In this new stage, returning was voluntary, at the discretion of the families. The decision-making process for the reopening plan essentially involved the highest level of government, the Presidency of ANEP and the advice given by GACH.³¹ In statements to the press following the government announcements, various actors associated with decentralized education councils and trade unions indicated that they had not participated in the decisions.³²

The Central Governing Council told the media: “Some may believe that these government decisions have to be taken together, and we have made it clear that this is not the case,” noting that the reopening of educational centres had been ordered by the health authority and the education authorities. “That does not mean we do not talk, once the decisions on working conditions have been made and adopted,” he added.³³ In contrast to the process that preceded the rural stage, the planning and protocols of the urban stage did not involve formal consultation with unions.

As announced, the second stage of the resumption of face-to-face education began on 1 June. Prior to that, in the last week of May, teachers were invited to return to educational centres to think about ways of reconnecting with the children who were most vulnerable and least likely to attend face-to-face classes. Within this framework, approval was also given to invite students to attend “support and mentoring activities” (“Calendario de reinicio...” [Timetable for a return...], 2020).

30 Teaching assemblies are public decision-making bodies with powers of initiative. They advise on technical issues related to the branch of teaching they represent and on general education matters. They were created by Education Law 15,739 of 1985 and all teachers in the ANEP system take part in them. They operate by education establishment (schools, high schools, centres, institutes, etc.), as well as in national assemblies corresponding to each decentralized council (Primary, Secondary and Technical and Vocational Education). See “Acerca de la Asamblea Técnico Docente” [About the Teacher Technical Assembly], CEIP, n.d., <https://www.ces.edu.uy/index.php/acerca-de-la-atd>.

31 The group addressing health aims to “outline a general strategy of gradual, regulated, constantly monitored and, as far as possible, evidence-based opening that seeks a balance between key elements, such as optimal individual and collective disease control and management, and resuming operations as we transition to the ‘new normal’” (“Grupo de expertos...” [Group of experts...], 21 May 2020)

32 See “Consejero de Primaria...” [Primary school adviser...] (22 May 2020) and “Sindicato de trabajadores...” [School workers’ union...] (25 May 2020).

33 Statements by Robert Silva on El Espectador radio, quoted in “Comenzó proceso de reapertura...” [The process of reopening...] (2 June 2020).

A few days before the reopening, FUM-TEP and the Uruguayan Teachers' Association warned that conditions were not right for a resumption of face-to-face classes in all of the country's educational institutions. One of the main constraints identified was the availability of cleaning assistants and the sanitation items required for the measures set out in the agreed protocol³⁴.

Educational centres played a leading role in implementing reopening in urban areas, as a decentralized strategy was chosen that allowed centres to adapt the general guidelines to specific local circumstances. Among the aspects that centres had to decide on were the organization of days and timetables for groups to ensure social distancing, staggered entry and exit times and the arrangement of breaks. One of the considerations when timetabling – and which continues to pose a challenge – was family arrangements. The limitations of families who have more than one child attending the centre had to be taken into account so that routines, childcare and transport could be organized to fit in with adult family members' work schedules.

There was physical education, music and outside space. The intention was to find a way to resume, on a face-to-face basis, what we had worked on remotely [...], while focusing on a multigrade approach and on the teacher as an inspiration for the whole school. (Head of Primary Education in La Diaria). ("Comenzó proceso de reapertura..." [The process of reopening...], 2 June 2020)

Some shortened the duration of classes and others introduced five-minute breaks, while in some cases there were longer classes, but with longer breaks as well, which allowed the classrooms to be aired. (Head of Secondary Education in La Diaria). ("Comenzó proceso de reapertura..." [The process of reopening...], 2 June 2020)

On Monday 1 June 403 schools, 134 secondary schools and 70 technical schools throughout the country resumed face-to-face teaching. The reopening of rural schools was completed with the addition of 85 of the 94 rural schools in Canelones, 24 in the rest of the interior, 51 rural schools that offer secondary education (Years 7, 8 and 9) and the non-boarding "basic cycle" agricultural schools ("Comenzó proceso de reapertura..." [The process of reopening...], 2 June 2020).

Educational centre management teams in the departments of the interior also had to schedule classes according to

public transport timetables, which were operating less frequently at the time due to the health emergency. It is evident from both official press statements and interviews that transport was one of the main difficulties in the resumption of classes during this stage.

Another challenge of the early stages of the reopening was the coexistence of face-to-face and remote education, since the latter continued to be important both for those who chose not to attend and for those who attended during the stipulated reduced hours. The Technical Inspectorate noted that it had encouraged and addressed the continuity and complementarity of remote and face-to-face education. As well as monitoring strategies, it encouraged teaching staff to use Wednesdays (when there are no classes to allow schools to be cleaned and disinfected) and the hours available each day (since there is less face-to-face teaching than usual) to think about and make decisions on this complementarity.

However, the Technical Inspectorate noted that when face-to-face teaching resumed, it initially replicated remote education as there was a strict seating arrangement in the classroom, with little movement and with exercise books replacing computers. To a certain extent, this is due to preventive hygiene measures to avoid infection and the spread of the virus, which has made considering and implementing strategies more difficult.

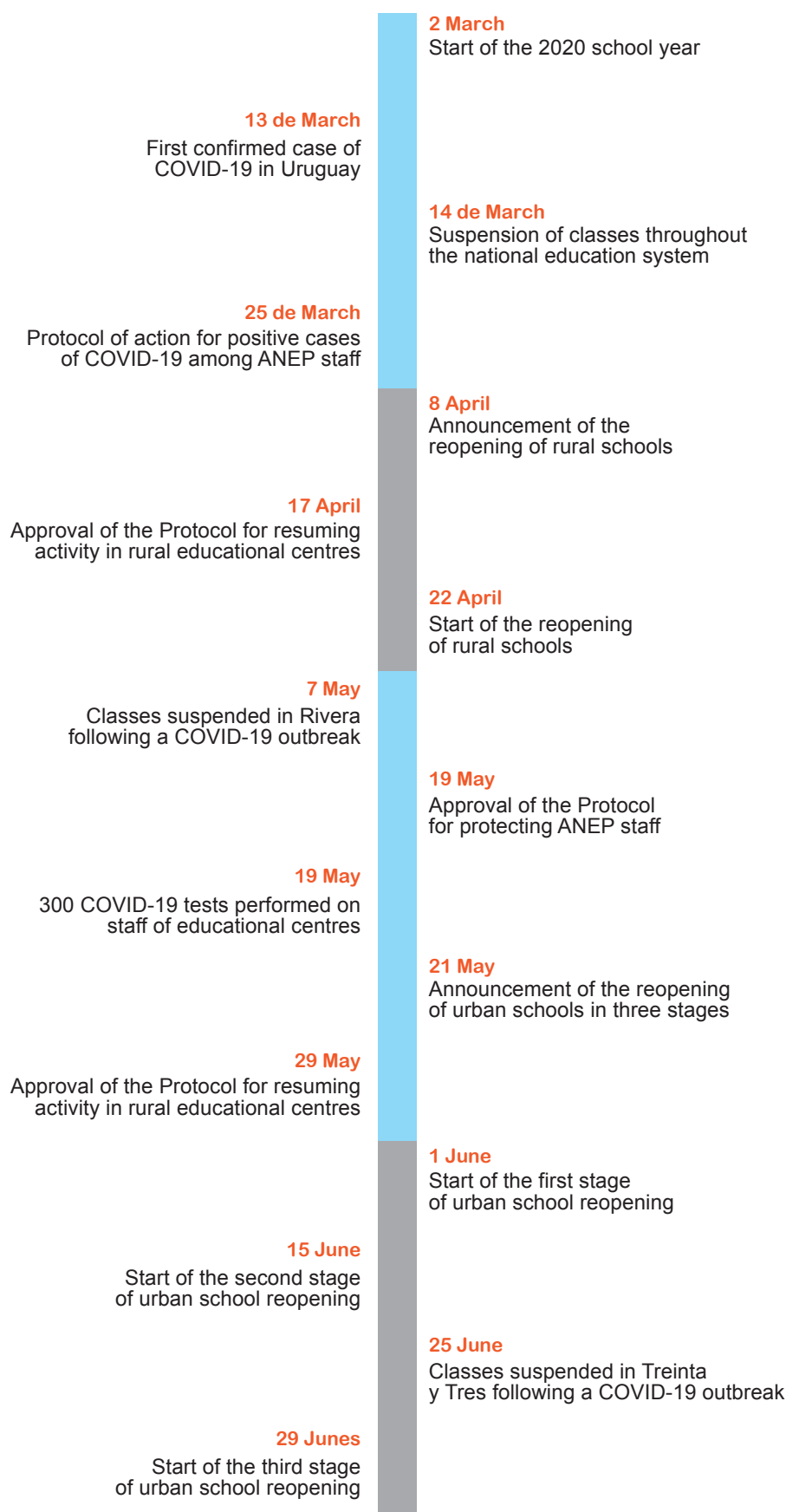
We have to overcome the fear of being together to allow physical, intellectual and emotional movement. (National technical inspector, in interview)

On the other hand, the adjustments required by the remote stage demanded education strategies that integrated content and disciplines, connecting physical and artistic education with language, mathematics and history. However, after navigating the first stages of the reopening of educational centres, it is evident there are some difficulties in transferring this integrated approach to the classrooms and that there are challenges in establishing and maintaining it as a method.

The worst thing that can happen to us is that when we go virtual, we forget what we miss about face-to-face education and that, in face-to-face education, we forget about the triumphs of virtual learning (National technical inspector, Pre-primary and Primary Education Council, in interview).

34 See press articles: "Maestros se movilizan..." [Teachers mobilize...] (n.d.) and "Maestros de Montevideo..." [Teachers in Montevideo...] (30 May 2020).

Timeline of the resumption of face-to-face classes



According to interviewees, the autonomy granted to the schools to define their strategies and to organize themselves was well received and appreciated by education communities and this autonomy is perceived as one of the process's achievements. Nevertheless, in some occasions unions called for some guidelines to be unified across different regions and identified difficulties in adopting individual approaches.

On 15 June, the second stage of urban reopening began and was finally completed according to plan on 29 June. Regarding the uncertainty about the process, it is important to remember that planning was affected by the evolution of the pandemic. As already mentioned, reopening was suspended in the Department of Rivera after an outbreak of infections during May. Similarly, on 25 June, the authorities decided to suspend face-to-face teaching in the Department of Treinta y Tres, after a wave of COVID-19 infections that reached 43 active cases on that date. Despite this situation, it is significant that no infections in educational centres were recorded in either of the two departments.

In an initial assessment of the reopening of schools at the beginning of July, the president of the Central Governing Council noted that, on average, over 70 per cent of secondary students had returned to the classroom, compared with 63 per cent of primary students and over 60 per cent in rural schools. However, "we must continue to work with the Aprender schools, where the percentage was lower," he acknowledged.³⁵

2.3 Conditions and measures for reopening

The following sets out the specific measures of the different stages involved in resuming face-to-face classes, differentiating between those related to health aspects and those related to programmatic or technical-pedagogical aspects.

2.3.1 Health conditions

In the context of a pandemic, establishing the health conditions necessary for the resumption of face-to-face education was a priority. Three protocols specifically addressing these conditions were developed during the process:

- The Protocol for resuming activity in rural educational centres ("Protocol for resuming...", 17 April 2020), approved on 17 April.
- The Protocol for protecting ANEP staff (in agreement between the ANEP and the education unions, represented by CSEU ("Protocol for protecting...", 26 May 2020), approved on 19 May.
- The Protocol on Reintegrating Students into Educational Centres in the Urban Environment ("First stage of reintegration...", 29 May 2020), approved on 29 May. To these should be added the Protocol staff ("Protocol for action...", 26 May 2020), adopted on 25 March, and the procedure for validating ANEP staff belonging to high-risk groups ("Validation procedure...", 11 June 2020), approved on 26 May.














Rural Schools Protocol

The conditions established for the rural environment primarily took into account the possibility of safeguarding health, notably the physical distancing and open spaces that the rural context offers, as well as the practical possibilities of organizing the return with the available human resources, the means of transporting the children and the arrangement of schedules and routines. Firstly, a protocol was produced that expressly sets out the various aspects required to enable a return to classroom attendance in rural schools (see Table 10.).

The government focused on prioritizing each centre's strategies in order to adapt the situation to the particular needs of each context and educational community. It also set out a road map based on the algorithm created by the Ministry of Public Health for case monitoring in non-health sectors. This monitoring sets out different preventive measures according to the degree of exposure to COVID-19 and establishes whether the staff member is in a position to continue working or not and whether he or she should be swabbed and/or quarantined, as shown in the following diagram "Algorithm for action in non-health sectors".

³⁵ "El 3 de agosto se ampliarán días y horarios de clases presenciales en enseñanza primaria, secundaria y técnica" [On 3 August there will be an extension of the days and times of primary, secondary and technical education classes], Presidency of the Republic, 12 July 2020, <https://www.presidencia.gub.uy/comunicacion/comunicacionnoticias/robert-silva-presencialidad-3-agosto>.

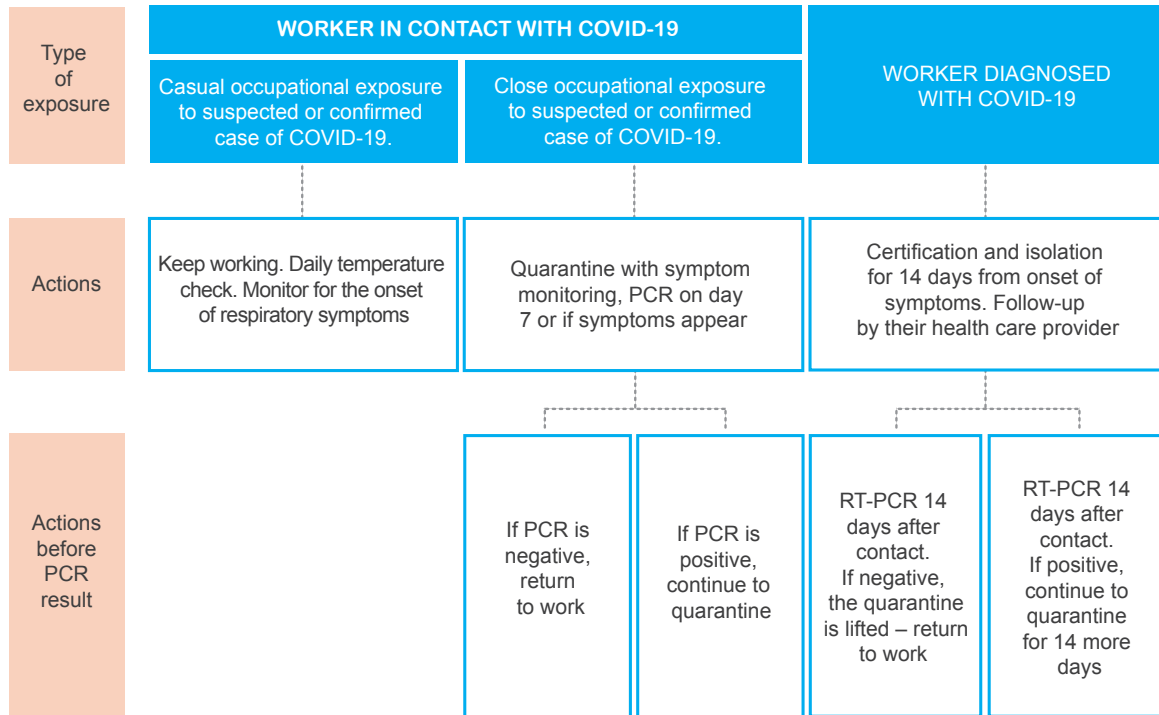
Table 10. Main elements of the Protocol for resuming activity in rural educational centres (Pre-Primary and Primary Education Council)*

	The vulnerable population is defined as teaching and non-teaching staff over 60 years of age and those with comorbidities (the latter must be validated by an ANEP doctor).
	Hiring of school assistants as a condition (170 assistants, 15 hours, 2 months); they were selected by the principals in the community itself.
	Flu vaccine for staff and children up to 5 years of age.
	Nasopharyngeal swabbing of teaching and non-teaching staff from areas with confirmed cases.
	Face masks during transfer and while carrying out activities at the school.
	Handwashing on entry and frequently thereafter.
	Basic questions about symptoms upon admission of students (if they have any, they will be returned home).
	If there are any doubts, temperature will be checked on-site.
	Accompanying adults will not be allowed to enter the school (except in situations that warrant it).
	Daily ventilation of the rooms.
	Antibacterial mats at the entrance to the centre.
	Distancing between students in the classroom.
	Design of a psychoemotional support plan for teaching and non-teaching staff by ANEP.

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council Protocol.

* "Protocol for resuming..."; n.d.

Algorithm for action in non-health sectors



Definition of types of contact with SARS-CoV-2 virus

Contact with SARS-CoV-2: Contact with a positively diagnosed person 24–48 hours prior to the development of symptoms.

Occupational exposure: At work there may be a risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 at different stages of the process (purpose, tools and working environment, as well as during the use of common areas).

Close occupational exposure:

Face-to-face for more than 15 minutes, or sharing a closed environment without adequate ventilation.

Casual occupational exposure: When it does not meet the criteria for close occupational exposure.

Moderate-risk occupational exposure:

Workers at moderate risk include those who need to be in close occupational exposure to carry out their work.

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council Protocol..

For school meals in schools that were resuming to face-to-face activity, specific instructions were given (“Food Service...”, 21 April 2020):

- School lunches have been cancelled to avoid food handling. Families requiring food may request weekly coupons.
- To arrange this food, the centre’s management must enter the identity card of the children receiving it into the Guri³⁶ system.
- The Inspection issues a coupon each day to every child that attends. If they are insufficient, they can apply to other departmental jurisdictions.
- This is recorded with the signature of the child’s guardian on a form.

Instructions were issued regarding the disinfection of rooms, the type of products to be used, the items to be disinfected and how often (Pre-primary and Primary Education Council, Circular 24). To ensure hygiene measures in the classrooms, 1,500 teachers and assistants in rural schools were provided with masks, disposable gloves and alcohol-based hand gel (“Government measures...”, 24 March 2020).

Staff Protocol

On 19 May, the management of ANEP and CSEU signed the Protocol for protecting ANEP staff (“Protocol for protecting...”, 19 May 2020), setting out the working conditions related to health in the context of the spread of COVID-19. The document covers primary, secondary, UTU (vocational) and teacher training education. The main measures are provided in Table 11. With regard to the use of masks, it was initially decided that teachers in the classroom would use a transparent protective screen since it was understood that this helps connect with the students, given the need for gestures when communicating and in teaching and learning processes.

Protocol for Student Return

The Protocol for Student Return was subsequently approved (“Protocol of implementation...”, n.d.), and it set out the workplace conditions for the stages marked out by the government for the reopening of urban educational centres in June. A week prior to the start, health items were distributed to schools throughout the country in order to meet the requirements set out in the protocols.

The protocol generally repeated the measures set out for the return to rural schools stage, with some additional instructions:

- School days not to last more than four hours a day and priority to be given to attending at least twice a week.
- A distance of 1.5 metres to be established between students in the classroom, with staggered breaks and no games that involve physical contact.
- If students have symptoms, they should stay home and notify the school. Specifications were also included in the event of symptoms at the centres, close contact with COVID-19 cases or confirmation that the virus has been contracted.
- Finally, it set out the measures for hygiene and ventilation of spaces.

36 Guri is a web information system in operation since 2011. It provides an updated database of teaching staff, non-teaching staff and students and unifies efforts at the national level. Among other things, it makes daily attendance monitoring possible. See CEIP, “Programa GURI” [GURI Programme], n.d., <http://www.cep.edu.uy/programas/guri>.

Table 11. Main elements of the Protocol for protecting ANEP staff

	The vulnerable population is defined as teaching and non-teaching staff over 65 years of age and those with comorbidities (the latter must be validated by an ANEP doctor).
	Nasopharyngeal swabbing of teaching and non-teaching staff with symptoms or who have been in contact with people diagnosed with COVID-19.
	Those with symptoms should stay home and consult their health care provider.
	Reduce the number of people present in a given space to avoid crowding.
	Sustained physical distancing: 2 metres between people in workspaces.
	Sanitization, disinfection and ventilation of spaces at the end of each working day.
	Antibacterial mats at the entrance to the centre.
	Use of masks as recommended by the Ministry of Public Health.
	Handwashing on entering the premises and throughout the day.
	Design of a psychoemotional support plan for teaching and non-teaching staff by ANEP.

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Protocol for protecting ANEP staff.

2.3.2. Technical-pedagogical conditions

The return to face-to-face classes took place in Uruguay on the basis of a previous period of remote learning that involved a pool of online connectivity resources (Plan Ceibal and its Crea platform). This helped maintain the educational component and the link between students and teachers and the educational community. Upon the return to face-to-face classes in the centres, these conditions were maintained, despite the challenge of organizing teachers to work in both ways simultaneously.

Preparing the teaching staff and giving guidance on a return to the classroom was largely conducted by the subsystems' technical inspectorates. In addition to the cascade monitoring and coordinated work of the inspections at their various levels, technical guidance was provided and distributed through circular memorandums. In the case of pre-primary and primary education, there have so far been five circulars from the Technical Inspectorate.³⁷ Some of their notable slogans include:

- “Let’s carry on teaching” as a message to and from the entire body of teaching staff
- New ways of teaching that support new ways of learning.
- Empathy to think and decide.
- Outlining a road map for a curriculum that is adapted to the remote and blended learning context.
- The educational process of each child within the institution is the responsibility of the entire teaching staff.
- Relevance of one overview per cycle.
- Attention to educational pathways.

While the essential feature of the process in the context of the pandemic is that it has to be dynamic and guidelines are therefore written as we go along, the return to school was accompanied by some general outlines regarding how to follow up and move forward in the planning and implementation of the subsequent stages from a programmatic and curricular point of view.

Circular 4 (“Nurture, weave, entwine...”, undated) establishes the hierarchy of language and mathematics in learning; it sets out the reading and writing objectives by level, as well as natural and rational numbers, operations and geometry. It does, however, stress that “under no circumstances does this mean that a comprehensive approach is being abandoned”. In addition, the general road map for learning is coordinated with the National Curriculum Reference Framework³⁸.

Notwithstanding the above, in interviews with the actors consulted, there is an insistence on the integrality and adaptability of learning to contexts, on the need to prioritize students’ and families’ links to education and, when returning to face-to-face education, particularly, in terms of considering and addressing the socioemotional dimension.

Circular 4 also specifies the different contributions of each actor with the aim of further clarifying roles and resources when organizing the centres. A cross-disciplinary approach is also stressed as a way of making more progress in the construction of meaningful and integral concepts. Within this framework, the return to face-to-face classes focused on sustaining, as required and where relevant, multigrade teaching practices driven by the logic of the centre’s teachers themselves, and encouraging the formation of teams of teachers, physical education teachers and language teachers, in combination with remote learning.

The Technical Inspectorate explained that some messages have been emphasized to teachers and educational communities, including: we are here for the children; we can enjoy a certain level of autonomy within the safeguards; we have many resources and we need to create a group, a collective, and we must focus on each and every one differentially. Meanwhile, ANEP’s Directorate of Educational Planning indicated that the process has also been accompanied by general guidelines and virtual resources to support the teaching process (repositories, web pages and others).

In addition to the guidelines issued through the inspections of each decentralized council, ANEP developed general guidelines to provide tools and strategies to teachers in all subsystems within the context of a return to face-to-face education, on the understanding that learning and teaching in this context is something that will continue to be supported by technology. Within this context, once face-to-face classes had resumed, virtual learning continued to be offered in two possible scenarios: 1) as a complement to face-to-face classes 2) as an extension of learning hours and the improved construction of learning (“CODICEN creates tools...”, 3 July 2020).

37 The full text of the circulars is available at <http://www.ceip.edu.uy/normativa/tecnica/circulares>.

38 Available at <https://mcrn.anep.edu.uy/>.

The document emphasizes that the evaluation should focus on formative feedback. Feedback is promoted as an opportunity for teaching and learning, pointing out that this must be timely and substantive, and a cycle of formative evaluation has been established to outline this approach (“CODICEN creates tools...”, 3 July 2020). Although restoring educational links with students was prioritized when resuming face-to-face classes, the intention was to move forward over the following two months with some diagnostic tools that would subsequently enable empirically-based decisions to be made. The following activities are included in this diagnostic³⁹ design:

- Teacher survey: covering the remote learning stage and also seeking to capture how the process moves forward.
- Student survey: capturing how they have experienced the process (primary and secondary education).
- Evaluation of the learning assessment system: applied to students (first in secondary education, then primary), with a focus on education and processes, in order to obtain an approximation of the learning acquired during the solely remote stage, followed by the blended stage.

Finally, although the subject is still under discussion, there is a tendency for alternatives to repeating the year to be explored and encouraged when making decisions on students moving up a grade in the current school year. Along the same lines, it will also be necessary to establish whether or not the school year is to be extended and, if so, how, and when the summer holidays should take place⁴⁰.

39 Information obtained from interviews with actors in the education system: Technical Inspectorate and management of the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council and the ANEP Planning Inspectorate.

40 At the time of writing, the winter break between 20 July and 2 August 2020 had been confirmed.



III. ASSESSMENT, LEARNING AND CHALLENGES IN THE RETURN TO SCHOOL PROCESS

This chapter highlights some aspects emerging from the review of experiences of the first stages of the resumption of face-to-face education in Uruguay with the aim of providing inputs for the analysis of the next stages to be completed, as well as to encourage the resumption in other countries of the region as progress is made in controlling the pandemic. First, a preliminary assessment is made which aims to describe the main features of the process. Then some of the lessons learned are listed. Some early warning signs and challenges follow. Finally, a summary table is presented with some of the key issues in the process.

3.1. A preliminary assessment

As an overall assessment, with all the caution that the ongoing uncertainty requires, this section highlights some of the main features of the process, the initial role of the education authorities in the national government, how the process is being managed within the education system, the general criteria that have been set out,

the combination of health and technical-pedagogical dimensions and the context of great uncertainty in which decisions are being made.

Getting children back to school was the focus of the initial efforts of the national education authorities. Prioritizing the resumption of face-to-face classes as a fundamental element in maintaining the link between students and the system, and thus educational pathways, seems to have been key for the national government in relieving the tension between health and education. In terms of managing the emergency in a context of extreme uncertainty, the priority the education authorities gave – in coordination with other government actors – to children's right to return to classes is seen as an important driver of the early decision to resume face-to-face education. In addition, the development of the pandemic in Uruguay was marked by a rapidly controlled spread and a relatively rapid downturn in active cases of the disease, with children little affected. This situation clearly facilitated the process for returning to the classroom.

Once the need to return had been established by the national government, the bodies of the national education system, primarily ANEP, had a instrumental role to play in deciding how this would take place. While there was neither a strict nor clear-cut division in this process and discussions often permeated the whole of ANEP, the clear decision-making role of the central authorities, subsystems and schools is evident. The ANEP authorities thus established the stages of the return, its voluntary and gradual nature and the health protocols – according to the guidelines of the health authorities and scientific advice – and produced the main general guidelines. Within the subsystems of each educational level, emphasis was placed on developing programmatic guidelines and technical criteria for the return, undertaken mainly by the technical inspectorates. Meanwhile, efforts were made to provide high levels of autonomy to educational centres so that the general guidelines and direction could be adapted to the specific features of the regions and educational communities.

The general criteria for the resumption of face-to-face education were voluntary, staged and gradual. This voluntary nature was in line with the way in which the national government implemented the emergency measures, encouraging rather than forcing people. The stages were defined in line with health aspects and priorities. Among the health aspects, the analysis of the impact that the return to school would have on movements of people and the differentiated impact of the pandemic across the country is noteworthy. Meanwhile, the socioeconomic context was also taken into account when establishing the stages, and the completion of compulsory education was prioritized. A combination of these general criteria resulted in the staggering of the four stages. Finally, although general criteria and guidelines were established, schools had the flexibility to adapt the gradual implementation of timetables and days to the specific needs of each local educational community.

Decisions taken throughout the process combined (albeit not without tension) the health dimension and the technical-pedagogical dimension. In general, the health dimension and the socialization dimension (what the authorities called “socioemotional”) prevailed, and the technical-pedagogical decisions had to be adapted to the conditions of and possibilities provided by the health protocols. Within this restrictive framework, in programmatic terms, the strategy seems to have prioritized three moments. Firstly, priority is given to the aim of rapidly re-establishing the link between students and the system through face-to-face classes, using various implementation methods to adapt to local and family realities. Secondly, priority is given to

a situational assessment, through surveys of teachers and students and a test of students’ knowledge. Thirdly, decisions regarding the school year will need to be made on the basis of the empirical evidence generated by the assessment. Based on the process and working experience of ANEP’s educational pathway teams, it seems reasonable to expect that attempts will be made to minimize or reject students having to repeat a grade. Meanwhile, a decision will also need to be made on whether to extend the school year or make changes to the planned holidays, all of which involve tensions with workers in the education system, as well as with families.

One particularly relevant factor in the decision-making process is the high degree of uncertainty around how the pandemic will develop, resulting in outbreaks emerging that will surely cause some setbacks in the process. Apart from this, one positive fact is that, for the moment, no cases of contagion have been recorded in the reopened educational centres.

The contingent and changing nature of the emergency is thus another of the main features of the process as demonstrated by the Uruguayan experience. In this context, the flexibility and adaptability of the entire decision-making structure in the face of constantly changing scenarios is key. One element that may have facilitated this adaptability and flexibility in Uruguay is that, as explained, a logic was formed during the process that allocated different kinds of decisions to different levels. However, this logic is not without its tensions – decisions taken at a high level often result in resistance at the implementation level, as well as emerging tensions between political and technical decisions⁴¹.

41 Although not addressed in this document, it must be noted that, alongside a resumption of face-to-face education, given that it is the first year of the current Administration, the Five-Year Budget Law needs to be submitted to Parliament in August. Being an autonomous body, ANEP has the authority to plan its own budget, and its production in this context will be a major challenge for the incoming education authorities. This process is also generally the one that creates the greatest tension between the government authorities and the teaching community.

3.2. Some lessons learned

- The country's connectivity and the extent of the implementation and ownership of a policy such as the Plan Ceibal – not only in operational and functional terms but also culturally, for children and their families – favoured a scenario in which continuity of education was achieved through virtual platforms when face-to-face education was interrupted.
- The return to face-to-face education in schools is taking place, initially, against the backdrop of the current health emergency and with fears for health. The desire to attend school seems to have mitigated the fears and enabled a period of adaptation that has allowed families to regain confidence.
- With regard to teachers, measures that can mitigate these concerns include creating spaces for dialogue with teaching groups, agreeing on protocols, one of them specifically aimed at the conditions for protecting staff members, and also an emotional containment plan, with resources and actions specifically aimed at support. The latter is perhaps the least concrete point so far in Uruguay, even though it is mentioned in the protocols.
- Linked to the above, it is important to include the issue of disrupted normality and the impacts of social distancing on children's return to routine, teachers and class content, in order to contribute to the positive processing of emotions throughout the experience of the pandemic, since emotions directly affect the educational process.
- The institutional resources and actors available to the Uruguayan education system were a key factor in maintaining the link with students in different parts of the country and in getting back in contact with those who were becoming disconnected.
- Both remote learning on its own and a mixture of remote and face-to-face education have required teachers to step away from the traditional disciplines and practices focused on specific grades and subjects. Physical education, language and art must thus be thought of as integrated with other areas based on a logic of integral and cyclical learning. This also calls for the institutional integration of teachers and the configuration of educational communities that think collectively.
- The number of children attending rural schools, as well as their specific features, made it possible to meet physical distancing requirements and implement staggered entry and exit, issues that are a challenge for urban schools.
- Ensuring complementary social benefits associated with education, particularly food and family allowances, reduced the social impact that could have resulted from an interruption of school attendance.
- It was important to establish an outline management plan that allowed for quick and strategic decisions in the context of a dynamic health emergency. One aspect that is key to creating timely responses is monitoring the outcome of actions in real time and making adjustments as necessary.
- In planning and arranging the conditions for an efficient return to the classroom, it is essential to identify and ensure the availability of transport, in dialogue with the transport sector actors, since it can be very difficult for students to get to school and this can create or widen gaps and inequalities.
- Providing centres with greater autonomy means giving them not only the freedom to organize and decide but also the necessary human and material resources with which to implement those decisions. There is then the challenge of maintaining this logic of decentralization, in which the routes taken may be diverse and may challenge the role of the Inspection, a challenge that also involves adapting in line with this experience.
- Countries that have returned to face-to-face classes in Europe, such as Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, have a common framework of fewer children and shorter hours, with protocols focused on physical distancing (1.5 metres) and hygiene standards. The use of masks, however, is not a widespread measure; in some cases it has been advised for transit areas outside the classroom (corridors, courtyards). In all European cases, the staggering of the return to classes has been done by educational level, unlike in Uruguay.
- The image and social value of the public school are being strengthened by the experience gained in the context of the health emergency. It is important to see education and school as spaces for the containment and construction of citizenship, valuing their centrality at all times but especially at a critical juncture such as that unleashed by the pandemic.

3.3. Early warnings and challenges

- Although the lack of compulsion was favourable given the initial reticence of families, it could open up a gap between those who attend and those who do not, and it is important to seek the best strategies to avoid this. How does the curricular programme fit with the stages of the return plan set out and the disparate attendances? The inequities that existed in face-to-face education have been transferred to and exacerbated by remote learning. Those who did not connect or barely participated in the virtual platforms are the same people that were demonstrating absenteeism, intermittent abandonment, repetition or disengagement. This challenges the education system and its strategies and capacities to include and support students from different realities.
- The physical distancing established in the protocols and recommendations continues to present a challenge when implementing the routine of face-to-face classes, since the dynamic of daily relationships that are natural to children and adolescents – as well as adults – makes it difficult to permanently and systematically maintain the recommended distance at all times. This is especially true for younger children. The community has, nevertheless, worked collaboratively and willingly to take the greatest precautions and make the effort to handle this, with the relevant adaptations. In addition, the infrastructure of educational centres in some cases makes it difficult to move onto the next stage of extending class time as they have insufficient space to comply with the current requirements regarding accommodating a greater number of children per shift.
- How is the combination of remote and face-to-face education being handled when face-to-face classes recommence in schools? How are they combined programmatically and in terms of the class load? How is the teachers' teaching time organized for this purpose? Various schemes have been proposed to address this situation, such as having one day and extra hours outside the classroom available for teachers to focus on the virtual environment, assigning remote tasks to those teachers who, because they belong to high-risk groups, cannot attend the centres, and using synchronous or asynchronous methods with video recordings of the classes. This is, however, an issue that needs to be followed up and the relevant strategies and adjustments generated to achieve better complementarity.
- The staggering options should consider the needs of different groups and the differentiated impact of not having the school as a space for containment and the face-to-face pedagogical link. In this sense, children in pre-primary education and those with disabilities experience greater barriers to using the methods offered by virtual platforms, while the routine, the bond and the space for care and development that educational and care institutions provide also plays a more decisive role in their daily well-being and development.
- The selection of educational content during the early stages, with reduced days and times, also raises questions. Some European countries, such as Austria and Germany, have chosen to start with the core subjects and some electives, while the rest continue digitally. Initial reflections on this issue within the Uruguayan education system seem inclined to set goals in stages and according to the logic of educational cycles, transcending the grades. However, ways of addressing this issue need to be explored.
- Educational assessments are also a challenge this year. It is important to investigate what the period of unassessed remote learning yielded and what impact this has had on student motivation. The focus on assessment, approval and promotion from one year to the next gives way to a prioritization of meanings and content, tools, cycles and expected learning. The new stage of the return to educational centres includes the implementation of examination dates for secondary schools. This is positive insofar as it will enable the possibility of completing the cycle, which is particularly important for that age group, given that the longer the period of discontinuity, the more difficult it will be for students to pick up the course again and complete it. It is, however, important to avoid focusing overly on the qualification itself at a time when the crucial aspects are the teaching and learning processes, how they are recreated in this context, and what adaptations are required of the school, the students and the education system itself.
- The first stage of the return to secondary school classes recorded significant student attendance, almost 70 per cent in the first week. This illustrates the importance adolescents place on face-to-face classes and the educational centre as a space for socialization and affective containment, in addition to the educational content of the teaching

and learning processes. The student survey scheduled for the next stage is likely to provide interesting information on this topic.

- Information is a complex challenge in the context of a staged return. Attendance varies, is subject to willingness, and also depends on the days and times at which each educational centre calls the students in. Mechanisms need to be established to obtain accurate and consistent information from the different stages and different channels and platforms operating within the system.
- How much of the previous environmental education has affected children's understanding and effective capacity to implement health prevention measures on their return to school? How is the experience of the pandemic being incorporated into and included in the curriculum design in relation to these topics? Although these are tangential issues to the process under way, they are aspects that will need to be included in reflections on the future of education in this context.
- A gender perspective must be included in the process and in the analysis of current and future experiences. In both the stages of solely remote (virtual) education and during the first stages of the resumption of face-to-face education, a large proportion of those who provided the teaching and supported the education of children at home were women. Added to this was the strain of caring for their families, given the working arrangements in the context of the health emergency. It is important to analyse the inequities in this regard, as well as the resources and support available for such a scenario.

3.4. The key to resuming face-to-face education

In conclusion, a summary table is presented to highlight the main issues involved in establishing a return to face-to-face education in Uruguay. With all the caution and uncertainty the current scenario entails, given that the process is constantly developing, this summary is based on a reconstruction of the process as set out in the documentation collected, the interviews conducted and the press monitored.

Table 12. Key issues in resuming face-to-face education in Uruguayan schools

The political decision-making process
Sustained outline management plan, politically defined by the national government.
Leadership of the education authorities in overcoming the tension between health and education.
Advice from health authorities and experts (GACH) based on the evolution of the pandemic.
Decision to support the first stages of opening up with testing to help staff and children's families feel safer.
The decision-making process within the education system
Central definition of criteria, general guidelines and protocols for the return, and of programmatic outlines and technical guidelines supported by subsystems.
Autonomy on the part of educational centres and the educational community in terms of adapting implementation to specific local needs.
The criteria and priorities for a return
Voluntary, staged and gradual return.
Initial reopening subject to availability of enough staff (teachers and assistants) and health supplies.
Leave areas that are more built-up until the final stages (the impact on movement of people was taken into account, in line with the regional impact of COVID-19).
Prioritize vulnerable socioeconomic contexts and completion of the educational cycle.
Prioritize re-establishing the link with students and meeting with them in a first stage of face-to-face education and then progress onto a situation assessment and strategies for rolling out curricular content.
Lessons learned
Uruguay's dense network of education system actors made it possible to implement relevant and timely response strategies. The commitment of teachers, assistants and civil servants to upholding children's and adolescents' right to education was essential.
The pathway and resources for remote learning within the education system and household connectivity enabled the country to adapt favourably to the situation. The Plan Ceibal and the Crea platform were key in this.
Prioritizing the return to school in the context of the health emergency puts stress on staff and families when deciding whether or not to send children back to school. They need to be supported with clear and comprehensive information and provided with conditions that will ensure that health risks are minimized.
Logistical/operational issues, mainly transport, have to be considered in the decisions and actions related to a return to face-to-face classes and its stages, since they can become a barrier to reconnecting with students and create or extend gaps in access to education.
Ensuring the continuity of school meals and complementary social benefits associated with education, particularly family allowances, reduced the social impact that could have resulted from an interruption of school attendance.
When planning the next stages, it will be essential to consider and decisively seek ways of supporting the way in which households connect with the remote component, by providing appropriate devices for this purpose and encouraging the infrastructure and logistical aspects needed to reduce barriers to and gaps in access.

Source: Prepared by authors.

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Resolutions and regulations

Number	Date	Organization	Table of Contents
Agreement No. 34 Res. 17/20	29 May 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Authorizing the implementation of budgets for food and extra hours
	28 May 2020	CODICEN	Protocol for resuming classroom teaching
Technical Circular 5	25 May 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Principles for schooling: the return to face-to-face teaching
	19 May 2020	CODICEN	Protocol for protecting ANEP staff
Agreement No. 46 Res. 18/20	8 May 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Emergency health tax COVID-19
Circular No. 24	27 April 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Cleaning and disinfection
Technical Circular No. 3	21 April 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Opening windows to empathy: remote teaching
Press Release No. 56	21 April 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Food service in rural schools that resume face-to-face classes
Technical Circular No. 2	23 April 2020	CEIP-ANEP	In between: building closeness at a distance
Circular No. 6	16 March 2020	CEIP-ANEP	Service continuity
Press release	14 March 2020	CODICEN	Faced with the health emergency

Interviews conducted

Interviewed	Position and institution	Date
Dr. Graciela Fabeyro	Managing Director of the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council	4 June 2020
Dr. Adriana Aristimuño	Sector Director of Educational Planning for the Central Governing Council	23 June 2020
Selva Pérez	Technical Inspectorate, Education Division of the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council	26 June 2020

Annex

Table A.1. Levels in the national formal education system

Levels in the national formal education system
<p>Pre-primary education (level 0)</p> <p>Its purpose is to stimulate the emotional, social, motor and intellectual development of children aged 3, 4 and 5 years. It is compulsory for 4 and 5-year-olds.</p>
<p>Primary education (level 1)</p> <p>This is organized into two educational pathways: mainstream and special (aimed at children and adolescents with disabilities, learning difficulties or high abilities, and organized according to their specific needs). It covers children aged 6 years and above. In the mainstream pathway, there is a six-grade cycle.</p>
<p>Lower secondary education (level 2)</p> <p>This prioritizes the development of acquired skills and knowledge and promotes a theoretical and practical mastery of artistic, humanistic, biological, scientific and technical disciplines, among others. It is taught both at the level of general education (general basic secondary education) and of technical education (technical basic secondary education). It also includes the programme known as the seventh, eighth and ninth grade of the rural basic cycle, which comes under the National Public Education Administration (ANEP)'s Central Governing Council, and is taught in schools falling under the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council in the rural interior of the country. As a cycle, it extends from the first to the third year of secondary education and is for those students who have graduated primary school.</p>
<p>Higher secondary education (level 3)</p> <p>This level is more focused on specialization and is taught via different pathways:</p> <p>General education: This allows for continuation into tertiary education. As a cycle it extends from the fourth to the sixth year of general secondary education; it is a continuation of basic secondary education.</p> <p>Technical education: This allows for continuation into tertiary education or integration into the labour market (technical baccalaureates, vocational secondary education, technical secondary education and courses coordinated between levels). It is a continuation of basic secondary education.</p> <p>Vocational education aimed at labour market integration: This has the purpose of training middle and senior technicians in qualified professions. It includes basic and higher technical courses, requires students to be at least 15 years of age and is a continuation of primary education. It does not traditionally enable educational continuation but can be offered alongside technical provisions that do enable this.</p>
<p>Tertiary education (level 4)</p> <p>At this level, there is a significant diversity of educational offerings from public and private institutes, schools and centres. Tertiary education is, in turn, organized into three levels:</p> <p>Non-university tertiary education (level 4-A): The aim of this level and pathway is to deepen and broaden training in some branch of knowledge. It includes, in terms of the public institutions, the non-university tertiary courses and programmes of ANEP's Technical and Vocational Education Council, the Military, Aeronautical and Naval schools (all under the Ministry of Defence), the National Police School (under the Ministry of the Interior) and the Municipal School of Dramatic Arts (under Montevideo City Hall). The non-university institutions in the private sector are called non-university tertiary education institutes. They apply to the Ministry of Education for authorization and, once obtained, they register the certificates issued in line with generally accepted national and international assessment guidelines.</p> <p>Teacher training (level 4-B): This level and pathway is aimed at training teachers, early childhood teachers, technical teachers, professors, physical education teachers and social educators, as well as providing the other training required by the social system, such as university tertiary education. It includes, in terms of the public offering, tertiary education training courses and careers: Institute of Teacher Training (IFGD), Regional Centre for Teachers (CERP), Institute of Artigas Teachers (IPA), Institute of Technical Education (INET), Institute of Training in Social Education (IFES) and Regular Institutes (IINN), under the Teacher Training Council of ANEP.</p> <p>University tertiary education (level 4-C): This is aimed at training in the production and reproduction of knowledge at higher levels, including processes of teaching, research and expansion. It leads to undergraduate and graduate degrees (specialization, Master's degrees or Doctorates). In the public sphere, the institutions that offer tertiary-level university careers are the University of the Republic (UDELAR) and the Technological University of Uruguay (UTEC).</p>

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Uruguay SDG Report (OPP, 2019).

Table A.2 Enrolment in the national education system by level, administrative form and pathway (2018)

System total		1,005,736
Total early childhood and pre-primary education		192,702
	Early childhood (0–2 years)	56,617
	Pre-primary (3–5 years)	136,085
Total primary education		306,660
	Mainstream primary	294,291
	Mainstream – public	243,002
	Mainstream – private	51,289
	Special – primary	8,082
	Special – public	5,959
	Special – private	2,123
	ANEP's Youth and Adult Programme	4,287
	Primary education (levels I and II and Literacy Programme)	3,136
	Accreditation tests	1,151
Total secondary education		355,991
	Total lower secondary education	181,926
	Rural basic cycle (seventh, eighth and ninth grades)	1,408
	General basic secondary	143,232
	Public	118,623
	Private	24,609
	Technical basic secondary	37,286
	Total higher secondary education	174,065
	General higher secondary	126,225
	Public	109,613
	Private	16,612
	Total technical higher secondary	47,840
Total technical education (without educational continuity)		2,327
Total tertiary education		148,056
	Non-university tertiary	12,965
	Public	12,965
	Technical and Vocational Education Council	11,979
	Tertiary – police or military	779
	Other public tertiary	207
	Teacher training	27,468
	Public	27,468
	Teacher Training Council (CFE)	27,184
	Training and Studies Centre of the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents (CENFORES– INAU)	284
	Total university education	107,623
	Public university (UDELAR)	85,905
	Technological University of Uruguay (UTEC)	1,107
	Private university	20,611

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018 [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

Table A.3 Tasks of the Education Councils under the General Education Act

A) Develop teaching and learning processes according to their respective educational level.
B) Approve the curricula and programmes of the subjects they cover.
C) Manage the services and units for which they are responsible.
D) Supervise the development of plans, programmes and courses.
E) Regulate the organization and operation of the services for which they are responsible and adopt the measures they require.
F) Plan budgets for salaries, expenses and investments according to the assigned educational level and their amendments, as well as the accounts and balance sheets for budgetary execution corresponding to the services for which they are responsible.
G) Make all kinds of appointments, reselections, promotions and sanctions, as well as grant licences and appoint teaching and non-teaching staff, in accordance with the Staff Regulations and the ordinances approved by the Central Governing Council. They may also make rules in this area in accordance with statutes and ordinances.
H) Propose to ANEP's Central Governing Council the dismissal of the teaching or non-teaching staff for whom they are responsible, for reasons of ineptitude, omission or offence, with the guarantees established by the law and the respective statutes.
I) Appoint the Secretary-General of each Council, as a position of particular trust, who must have been a staff member of said body for a period of no less than 10 years.
J) Prepare the statutory regulations they deem necessary for their staff and submit them to the Central Governing Council for their approval and incorporation into the body's Staff Regulations.
K) Enable, authorize, supervise and audit the institutes at the corresponding educational level, in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Central Governing Council.
L) Issue and revalidate national study certificates and revalidate foreign study certificates at the levels and in the educational pathways for which they are responsible.
M) Adopt resolutions within the scope of their competence, except for those which, under the Constitution of the Republic, correspond to other bodies by virtue of the current law or ordinances.
N) Verify, in the case of the lower secondary education, higher secondary education and technical-professional education (UTU) councils, the approval or validation, if applicable, of the previous level, as well as authorize progress to the corresponding higher education levels.
O) Promote a climate of democratic participation and constantly encourage critical and responsible reflection throughout the institutions for which they are responsible.
P) Exercise any other powers delegated to them by the Central Governing Council in particular.

Source: Article 63 of the General Education Act 18,437.

Table A.4. Establishments and enrolment in public mainstream rural primary education, by department (2018)

	Rural total	Establishments			Rural total	Enrolment		
		With a primary teacher	Rural boarding school	Single teacher		With a primary teacher	Rural boarding school	Single teacher
Total	1,066	325	6	735	12,807	8,741	105	3,961
Montevideo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resto del país	1,066	325	6	735	12,807	8,741	105	3,961
Artigas	45	17	1	27	518	398	25	95
Canelones	94	54	1	39	2,343	1,994	22	327
Cerro Largo	79	18	0	61	700	399	0	301
Colonia	78	23	0	55	921	572	0	349
Durazno	55	5	0	50	356	131	0	225
Flores	23	3	1	19	176	62	16	98
Florida	67	21	0	46	686	421	0	265
Lavalleja	58	10	0	48	372	165	0	207
Maldonado	35	12	1	22	534	366	13	155
Paysandú	57	18	2	37	760	488	29	243
Río Negro	37	14	0	23	443	311	0	132
Rivera	76	21	0	55	780	526	0	254
Rocha	37	5	0	32	279	114	0	165
Salto	58	28	0	30	1,121	955	0	166
San José	71	30	0	41	1,130	858	0	272
Soriano	60	12	0	48	535	261	0	274
Tacuarembó	89	27	0	62	897	603	0	294
Treinta y Tres	47	7	0	40	256	117	0	139

Source: Prepared by authors based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's Anuario Estadístico de Educación 2018 [Statistical Yearbook 2018].

Table A.5 Plan Ceibal in figures

Infrastructure	Devices	2 million laptops and tablets delivered between 2007 and 2018. 550,000 updated devices, reaching all students and teachers in primary and secondary basic education. 20,000 laptops available to loan from a 'laptop library' for teacher and student support.
	Connectivity	100 per cent of the educational centres (2,850 establishments) with Wi-Fi networks as of August 2019. 97 per cent of those registered (720,000 users) accessing the Internet with broadband by August 2019. 100 per cent of urban public educational centres (1,350 facilities) with videoconferencing equipment and 175 videoconferencing rooms for teaching points in five countries by August 2019. 45 educational centres and 350 users accessing the videoconferencing network via the mobile network by August 2019.
	Micro:bit	47,300 licences delivered/assigned between 2018 and 2019.
	Digital laboratories	18 Ceilab spaces implemented as of September 2019. 2,700 teachers and students participating in the Robotics, Programming and Video Games Olympiad.
Platforms	CREA	270,000 users by the end of 2018. 119,000 active users by the end of 2018. More than 1,800,000 comments published by students and teachers by the end of 2018. 1,600,000 submissions made by students through the platform by the end of 2018.
	Mathematics (PAM and Matific educational games)	145,000 users of mathematical platforms as of August 2019. 69,000 active users on the mathematical platforms as of August 2019. More than 33 million activities completed on the PAM platform by August 2019.
	National Library "Biblioteca País"	80,000 users by the end of 2018. More than 220,000 loans, downloads and visualizations undertaken via the platform by the end of 2018.
Teaching	Ceibal in English	95 per cent of urban school groups in fourth, fifth and sixth grade take English classes. 70 per cent of students learning English by videoconference.
	Teacher training	19,500 teachers trained between 2014 and 2018.
	Global Learning Network	600 educational centres part of the community as of August 2019. 2,240 teachers evaluated their students in 2018 with "learning progressions" proposed by the Network. 50,595 students were assessed in some dimension of the six skills in 2018. 1,908 teachers approved some of the Network's remote courses during 2018. 2,940 teachers attended face-to-face meetings.
	Computational thinking	1,633 groups of fourth, fifth and sixth graders working in 2019, comprising more than 30,000 children.
Equity	<p>In 2018, 65 per cent of lower-income primary and secondary school students only had a Plan Ceibal computer. From 2007 to 2011, access to a computer per child aged 6–13 years rose from 30 per cent to 94 per cent, with the largest increase seen in children from lower-income families (from 9 per cent to 93 per cent)</p>	

Source: Plan Ceibal, Ceibal en cifras [Ceibal in figures].

Table A.6 Appointment of authorities in the national education system

1 March. Along with the new government, the Minister of Education and Culture, Dr Pablo da Silveira, and the Undersecretary, Dr Ana Ribeiro.
19 March. Dr Robert Silva took over as president of ANEP's Central Governing Council (the most important body in compulsory education in terms of size and powers).
27 April. Juan Gabito Zóboli took over as adviser to the Central Governing Council.
5 May. The new authorities of the Technical and Vocational Education Council and the Teacher Training Council took over. Within the Technical and Vocational Education Council, Prof Juan Pereyra was appointed Managing Director and Dr Laura Otamendi CEO. In the Teacher Training Council, Dr Patricia Rivieras was appointed Managing Director and Prof Victor Pizzichillo CEO.
6 May. The authorities of the pre-primary, primary and secondary education councils assumed their posts. At the Pre-primary and Primary Education Council, Ms Graciela Fabeyro was appointed Managing Director and Ms Olga de las Heras CEO. At the Secondary Education Council, Prof Jenifer Cherro was appointed Managing Director and Prof Reina Pintos CEO.

Source: Prepared by the Presidency of the Republic and ANEP.

Table A.7 Stages of the return to face-to-face education

Primary education
Interior rural schools, except Canelones
Stage 1 (1 June)
Primary education
Rural schools in Canelones
Full-time learning schools, except those located in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).
Secondary
Rural secondary education schools under the Secondary Education Council and the Technical and Vocational Education Council (rural high schools, integrated educational centres, seventh, eighth and ninth grade in rural schools, agrarian basic cycle without boarding schools).
Six years of diversified baccalaureate under the Secondary Education Council and three years of technical and professional baccalaureate under the Technical and Vocational Education Council (public and private), except for those operating in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).
Stage 2 (15 June)
Pre-primary and primary education
Special schools throughout the country, addressing their particular needs.
Early childhood, pre-primary education, public and private, throughout the country.
Mainstream, practical and extended-hours urban primary schools (public and private), except those located in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).
Full-time learning schools in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).
Secondary
General basic (Secondary Education Council) and technical (Technical and Vocational Education Council) cycles, public and private, except Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).
Basic vocational training under the Technical and Vocational Education Council/UTU and other plans corresponding to this educational level, except in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Table A.7 Stages of the return to face-to-face education (cont.)

Secondary Education Council 2016 proposal and six-monthly plans, except for Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Secondary Education Council diversified baccalaureate, technical and vocation baccalaureates, as well as secondary vocational education under the Technical and Vocational Education Council (public and private), except Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and coastal strip of Canelones).

Six years of diversified baccalaureate under the Secondary Education Council and three years of technical and professional baccalaureate under the Technical and Vocational Education Council (public and private) in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Tertiary

Public and private technical tertiary education, except Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Stage 3 (29 June)

Primary education

Public and private schools in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Secondary

General basic (baccalaureate) and technical (Technical and Vocational Education Council/UTU) cycles, both public and private, in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Secondary Education Council 2016 proposal and six-monthly plans in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Basic vocational training (FPB) under the Technical and Vocational Education Council/UTU and other plans corresponding to this educational level in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the coastal strip of Canelones).

Diversified full, secondary baccalaureate education, full technological and vocational baccalaureates, as well as Technical and Vocational Education Council (public and private) secondary vocational education in Montevideo and the metropolitan area (Las Piedras, Progreso, La Paz, Joaquín Suárez, Toledo, Pando, Barros Blancos, Empalme Olmos, Ciudad de la Costa and the Canelones coastal strip).

Source: Prepared by the Presidency of the Republic and ANEP.

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