

European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education



WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023

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The context of the Work Programme

Over the past 12 years, the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) has progressed towards an effective and efficient social dialogue. It is grounded in the strong commitment of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) and their members to reach meaningful results which are valuable both at European and at national, regional and local level, and are based on clear objectives, mutual trust, respect and cooperation.

From the start of our European Sectoral Social Dialogue, the European Social Partners in Education have been working on the improvement of quality in education in Europe, focusing on the modernisation of the education sector, its management and teaching personnel, and its working environment. We are strongly committed to continuing our work on these issues by raising the attractiveness of the teaching profession, fostering continuous professional development, teamwork, aspiration and decent working conditions, as well as by stimulating the diversity of career opportunities and mobility of education personnel, and encouraging an innovative approach to teaching and learning. Furthermore, we promote gender equality in education and aim at creating inclusive, safe and healthy working environments in which education professionals can flourish so students do well. Sound and effective public investments that support the development of equitable, quality and sustainable education systems are a prerequisite for achieving these objectives.

A strong dialogue between social partners in the education sectors based on good will and mutual trust is key to improving the education sector in a sustainable manner. The endorsement and implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights¹ is clear in its goal to promote social dialogue and collective bargaining, to increase the capacity of trade unions and employer organisations at both EU and national level, and to ensure the full participation of social partners in education in the development, monitoring and evaluation of education policies and reforms. As European Social Partners in Education, we are committed to strengthening our efforts to reinforce the capacity and potential of our social dialogue and to connecting the dialogue at local, regional, and European levels. We also aim to explore how social dialogue can contribute to co-create new policy directions and to fully contribute to the European social and economic governance mechanisms - the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) - so that teachers, trainers, school leaders, researchers and academics, and other education personnel, as well as education authorities' voices are all equally heard in the policy sphere. Moreover, the ESSDE plans to actively contribute to the next Education and Training Strategy in line with the implementation of the European Education Area 2030 goals, and to continue to take an active role in the future Education and Training Policy groups of the European Commission organised in the framework of Open Method of Cooperation.

In order to make our ambitions a reality, quality and inclusive public education with a learner-centred and future-oriented approach, is a key prerequisite. Starting now and in the years to come, the green and digital transitions will have consequences for all stakeholders in the education sector, the way we envision educational management, teaching and learning, but also the way we work as trade unions and employers. To meet the labour market demands of the 21st century and to promote a relevant and efficient social dialogue, we will have to hold on to the values most important to us while adapting to change.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union_en

In particular, this Work Programme is adopted at a time of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, impact on the education sector, education personnel and students alike. The digitalisation of education, accelerated by the pandemic, comes with its opportunities and challenges. The repeated closures of education institutions across Europe, and the acceleration of the digital divide have brought to the surface the importance of a well-functioning multi-level collaboration between education personnel and authorities in shaping the reconstruction of more equitable, fair and sustainable societies. Financing, in the context of the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, must be adequate to foster further recovery rather than accentuate weaknesses in public services and the economy, and it should build on lessons learnt during the pandemic. Investing in teachers and educators, who have been hit hard by the pandemic and whose contribution has proved essential to recovery in education, should be prioritised. They should not come out of the crisis carrying a greater burden of injustice than they bore during or before.

As European Sectoral Social Partners in Education we need to rethink education as part of the solution to the challenge of climate emergency for a green transition and in addressing the social change. ETUCE and EFEE are to continue working to reach high quality education for all in Europe that contributes to a sustainable economic growth, to combat climate change and to reduce inequalities. In ETUCE and EFEE's view, education is a change agent and a powerful tool to inspire, engage and empower learners and all people to rethink our development models, and to be active citizens in our societies. We are committed to jointly address these challenges based on the firm belief that education is first and foremost a human right and public good, and to explore possible joint actions, all with a view to protect and to realise the right to quality education for all.

By building on our achievements from the past 12 years, we want to propose this joint Work Programme that looks into the future. It is clear that we share common challenges and opportunities today and ahead for our education systems, their management and staff, infrastructure, and teaching and learning environments. More precisely, within this Work Programme we present the topics for our work in 2022-2023, the implementation into practice of which represents a core endeavour for us. We emphasise that addressing these issues requires a long-term vision and on-going efforts from both sides. Following the wider context of our work as depicted above, we present the specific topics we aim to work on the coming two years in the text below. In total four meetings per year will be organised: one Steering Committee meeting, two Working Group meetings and one Plenary meeting. For 2022 the following dates have been selected:

- **Friday 21 January 2022: Steering Committee meeting**
- **Tuesday 8 March 2022: Working Group meeting on selected topics in the Work Programme**
- **Tuesday 27 September 2022: Working Group meeting on Higher Education and Research**
- **Wednesday 14 December 2022: Plenary meeting**

Important note: in the context of this Work Programme and the overall work of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in Education, by "education sector", we refer to the whole education sector including early childhood education, primary, secondary education, higher education and research, vocational education and training, and further education. All these levels are inter-linked and have a pivotal contribution to make in preparing learners of all ages and independent of their socio-economic background for living, working, and acting as active and critical citizens in our current and future society.



1. Quality investment in education and training

Sustainable and efficient investment in education and training systems is at the core of European recovery and resilience, especially post-pandemic. Against this backdrop, social partners in education will continue addressing investment issues to improve the access to quality learning for all. Special attention is thereby dedicated to the Pillar of Social Rights, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, as well as the European Semester. While respecting the competence of Member States for their education and training systems, a multitude of EU funding instruments are incentivising public-private developments in education and training investment, not at least in the context of digitalisation in education. The European education social partners agree to jointly address investment issues with a view to strengthen and to support public education, training and research in order to improve access to quality learning for all, to avoid social and labour market segmentation, and to enable process of upward social mobility and convergence across Europe.

Methodology: Continue the discussion on how we, as social partners, can contribute to promoting effective investment for quality education and training, with a focus on the European Semester and Recovery and Resilience Facility, opportunities for education and training, and continue the discussion on public and private investment in education and training, including education infrastructure and professional development.

Schedule: 2022-2023 topic for one of the meetings and continuous process.

Expected outcome: Updated knowledge and peer learning and common understanding on investment in education and training, on privatisation and commercialisation patterns and public-private partnerships

2. Social dialogue and capacity building



Social dialogue promotion has been at the core of the education social partners' work since the establishment of European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education. ETUCE and EFEE wish to focus on enhancing the capacity of social partners to conduct social dialogue, in particular in those countries with a more recent social dialogue tradition, and/or where social dialogue in education has been unsatisfactory. Similarly, promoting a meaningful and outcome-oriented social dialogue in education a vital prerequisite to further advance the democratic ownership of reforms and legislative measures impacting the education environment, especially as the sector has come under immense pressure and control due to health and safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology: Further promotion of the work of the European Social Dialogue and of the ESSDE in particular by building on the joint progress made, by continuing to engage with national and local partners, by improving the sharing of information and peer-learning, by monitoring ESSDE outcomes, and by enhancing communication and coordination between the national and the European social partners.

Schedule: 2022-2023 continuous process and joint capacity building projects.

Expected outcomes: Improved knowledge and understanding of the main definitions, tools and industrial relations models and developments; reinforced coverage and representativeness of the ESSDE Committee; and joint outcomes to be decided by the European social partners in education.



3. Attractiveness of the teaching profession

Quality teaching by well-trained and supported teachers is at the heart of quality education. However, across Europe, there are common challenges for the teaching profession which is facing shortages, as well as recruitment and retention challenges. Due to these reasons the European Social Partners are committed to re-think teaching and learning environments and outcomes in the light of the rapid developments in our societies. Among others, we pay special attention to the shift towards digitalisation that has been accelerated by health measures in education during the pandemic. Linked to this is the enhanced need to focus on continuous professional development and sustainable quality employment within financial sustainability of the education institutions. For the benefit of the learners and society as a whole, EFEE and ETUCE deem it of utmost importance to continue their joint efforts to find common solutions to enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Building on the main elements of the Joint ETUCE/EFEE Declaration *Towards a Framework of Action on the attractiveness of the teaching profession* (2018), EFEE and ETUCE wish to focus on:

- Promoting the development of a teaching profession based on professionalism, appropriate professional autonomy, aspiration and teamwork as well as on sustainable quality employment and working conditions, career prospects and rewards including fair pay, in the context of other attractive career paths and of the economic conditions of the given Member States
- Supporting teachers, trainers, school leaders and other education support personnel particularly through investment in quality and effective initial teacher training and continuous professional development
- Ensuring quality education institutions that are inclusive, sustainable, and learner-centred
- Promoting equal career opportunities and upward mobility for all.

Methodology: Further follow-up on the commitment made in the WP 2020-2021 and implementation of the 2018 Joint Declaration "Towards a Framework of Action on the attractiveness of the teaching profession" through joint action that aims to develop good practices, as well as knowledge-sharing and consultation with social partners in the corresponding Advisory Group

Schedule: joint capacity-building projects

Expected outcome: Shared sectoral approach to prepare the ground for the adoption of a Framework of Action on the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession through effective Social Dialogue.

4. Digitalisation and innovation in education



Challenges and opportunities of digitalisation and artificial intelligence are key topics shaping the current debates about the future of our economies and societies, with the education sector being at the core of this discussion. While the use of digital tools in the educational context does not represent a new phenomenon, the advent of emergency remote educational management and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic created the need to deal with the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in education. This context calls for joint reflection and ambitious cooperation of European Sectoral Social Partners in Education to ensure that no one is left behind on the common quest for inclusive and quality teaching and learning environments.

The joint social dialogue project "[e-Speed - European Social Partners in Education Embracing Digitalisation: Challenges and opportunities for European education trade unions and employer organisations in the digital era](#)" (2020-2021) constituted a great contribution to this debate. Building on the findings of this project, European Sectoral Social Partners in Education have initiated a joint discussion on the pitfalls and benefits of digital education, with a particular focus on emergency digital education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the cooperation of European Sectoral Social partners can make an important contribution to the implementation of the EU Digital Education Action Plan with regards to the priority of developing high-performing and inclusive digital education ecosystems, as well as the cross-sectoral social partners agreement on [digitalisation](#).

Digital education is also a key component of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Therefore, cooperation of European Sectoral Social partners will be also crucial in the implementation the ETUCE/EFEE Joint Statement on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on sustainable education systems at times of crisis and beyond (June 2020) at regional, national and local level.

ETUCE and EFEE are committed to ensure that teachers, academics, other educational personnel, school leaders and other education employers will be adequately provided with the adequate digital skills, equipment and infrastructure to foster a practical and ethical application of digital tools based on the fundamental human and social component of education.

Methodology: ETUCE and EFEE will continue to address the challenges and opportunities of digital education within extensive sectoral social dialogue and peer learning activities. The education social partners are committed to increase their expertise on digital education by sharing information and planning joint-undertakings to generate novel knowledge and networks. This common quest for best practice will guide the way to increased attractiveness of the teaching profession by contributing to the improvement teaching and learning environments and innovative teaching and learning practice.

Schedule: 2022-2023 topic for one of the meetings + follow up joint actions for implementation of "e-Speed" project outcomes

Expected outcome: Updated knowledge on best practice and pitfalls of digital education, creation of a common understanding of digital tools and AI systems and their impact on education employers, teachers, trainers, school leaders, academic staff and other education personnel.



5. Occupational Health and Safety

The world of work is undergoing a fast transformation giving rise to new challenges for decent work, sustainable quality employment and working environments. This transformation also affects the education sector, with the wellbeing and healthy and safe workplaces of teachers, school leaders, academic staff and other education support personnel.

Particularly, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic imposed an unprecedented impact to the physical and mental well-being of education workers and students alike. Psychosocial risks during emergency remote teaching, have triggered depression, anxiety and loneliness at unprecedented scale.

The new European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the Occupational Health and Safety Strategic Framework 2021-2027 of the European Commission give a new impetus to counter psychosocial risks and address the impact of COVID-19 in all health and safety domains.

Against this background, ETUCE and EFEE as European Sectoral Social Partners in Education are committed to support the creation of decent, healthy and safe education environments for education workers and students alike, while implementing the lessons learned from COVID-19 as a new occupational disease to support decent working conditions and inclusive and quality education for all. Therefore, particular consideration must be attributed to the immediate and long-term effects induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology: Education social partners will continue to consolidate their cooperation for healthy and safe education environments. Concrete proposals are the development of a new OIRA-tool for the Higher Education and Research (HER) sector and 'APRES Covid', a new tool for the impact assessment of psychosocial risks on education.

Schedule: 2022-2023 continuous process

Expected Outcome: Updated knowledge on European Commission initiatives in the field of education and training as well as employment and social policy within the background of the green and digital transition and stronger resilience against future health crisis. Through the project "Après Covid" improved risk assessment techniques will be made available to properly prevent and combat the psychosocial threats the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on the education sector as a whole; and the newly developed OIRA tool for HER will enable proper risk assessment for occupational health and safety tailored towards the needs of the HER sector.

6. Education for environmental sustainability



In 2021, seeing to implement the education-focused part of the [European Green Deal](#), the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on education for environmental sustainability. The proposed Recommendation aims to integrate environmental issues in national education systems; support learners to move from awareness of environmental issues to an understanding of these issues; implement multidisciplinary and participatory approaches in education; promote a whole-institution approach where sustainability is embedded in buildings and facility management, governance, partnerships and community relations; and set out common principles on sustainability to guide implementation at national level and support cooperation and exchange of ideas and best practice at EU level. Furthermore, the European Commission announced its plans to develop an EU Competence Framework for Green Skills and focus on reskilling and upskilling in VET.

Climate emergency and environmental issues require a drastic social change, including individual and collective changes in mentality, behaviour, lifestyle as well as in the social, political and economic organisation of EU countries and societies. Education plays a crucial role in implementing this change, and education social partners should be leading these discussions. The green transition of education and society requires updating not only the skills and competences but also curricula, school infrastructure, textbooks, teaching materials and guidelines, assessment methods and teacher training, all of which must be revised in the framework of effective social dialogue at all levels.

Methodology: Education social partners will continue the work on the issue of how to integrate the environmental sustainability in education and promote green skills and competences, especially in the light of the project “European Social Partners in Education Promoting environmental sustainability in school learning, teaching and management” (applied by EFEE on 30 June 2021 with ETUCE as an associated partner). They will also contribute to the work on the green skills and competences at European level and unite their efforts towards ensuring the successful design and implementation of education for environmental sustainability on the national level.

Schedule: 2022-2023 topic for one of the meetings + joint project

Expected outcomes: Improved and updated knowledge, peer learning and common understanding on the design and implementation of the education for environmental sustainability and the impact of green transition on employers in education, teachers, trainers, school leaders, academic staff and other education personnel. Joint Guidelines on how social partners can contribute to promoting the sustainable development of environmentally friendly school eco-systems to prepare students for their future roles of active and responsible citizens (outcome of the project).



7. Inclusion, equality and democratic citizenship in education and training

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and linked to it move to online teaching inflicted severe consequences especially towards those students who are already disadvantaged and have difficulties accessing education (students with special needs, students from disadvantaged socio-economic background, migrants and ethnic minorities, etc.). So, the need to ensure equality and embrace diversity in education is getting ever more political attention at European and national level, especially in the framework of early school leaving and targeted support for groups at risk. In this context and in framework of recovery from the pandemic, education social partners play a crucial role in enhancing the provision of the quality and inclusion education which realizes the full potential of every student and pays special attention to learners at risk of exclusion and underachievement seeking out to support them through individualised approaches, targeted support and cooperation with the families and local communities. Social partners in education have also an important task to ensure that the future generations learn about democratic citizenship, tolerance and inclusion, and are able to practice these values every day.

Implementation of inclusive education requires teachers, trainers, academics, school leaders, and other education personnel to acquire relevant and up-to-date competences, skills and knowledge that allow them to respond to diversity in the classrooms and promote mutual respect, cross-cultural understanding and intercultural dialogue. Therefore, initial and continuous professional development of education personnel focused on inclusive education, as well as availability of education support personnel and mechanisms are crucial for ensuring inclusion and equality in education and training. Furthermore, social partners in education seek to assure that necessary policy frameworks and mechanisms are in place to support the implementation of inclusive education and accompanied by sufficient resourcing and public funding.

Methodology: Continue the ESSDE work on the topics of inclusion, equality, and democratic citizenship building on the success of the past joint projects ([EU CONVINC](#) (2018-2020), [European Sectoral Social Partners in Education promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education](#) (2017-2019)), and focusing on the implementation of a joint action or statement on promoting inclusion and equality in education in the framework of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schedule: 2022-2023 topic for one of the meetings

Expected outcome: Improved and updated knowledge, peer learning and common understanding on how social partners in education can contribute to inclusion, equality and democratic citizenship in education in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and with a special focus on vulnerable groups; Awareness raised on and implementation promoted of previous work and joint policy documents on inclusive education, democratic citizenship, and multiculturalism.

8. Quality and inclusiveness of VET and apprenticeships



In order to contribute to the implementation of the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the education social partners will continue their work on promoting the implementation of the Joint ETUCE and EFEE Statement on improving Vocational Education and Training in Europe (2017) and EFEE-ETUCE JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON Lifelong Learning for All: Social Partners in Education promoting quality and inclusive VET to enhance lifelong learning for all (2021). They will put specific focus on "increasing the attractiveness of the profession of the VET teachers, adult learning educators, VET trainers, school leaders and other education personnel by improving recruitment processes, ensuring their retention and decent working conditions, and by promoting stable employment in the sector." The discussions will also focus on how to prepare teachers and school management for the green and digital transition of initial VET within effective social dialogue.

The education social partners are committed to discuss the improvement of initial VET and apprenticeships. They will also revisit their joint pledge to the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (2015) and discuss how to improve the quality and inclusiveness of the apprenticeship systems following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners, apprentices, VET teachers, trainers, and IVET school management.

Methodology: Discussions within ESSDE Plenary meeting.

Schedule: 2022-2023 continuous process

Expected Outcomes: Exchange of experience of national social partners in implementing the Joint ETUCE and EFEE Statement on improving Vocational Education and Training in Europe (2017) and EFEE-ETUCE JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON Lifelong Learning for All: Social Partners in Education promoting quality and inclusive VET to enhance lifelong learning for all (2021).



9. Higher education and research

Within the joint project "European Sectoral Social Partners in Education Promoting Quality of Academic Teaching and Management in Higher Education", EFEE and ETUCE will organise a joint final conference and will adopt joint recommendations. Further work will be done on discussing the implementation of the recommendation at European and national level with improving social dialogue in the higher education and research sectors. The focus will be also on how to link social dialogue and quality teaching and management.

The ESSDE Working group on higher education and research will discuss the role of the education social partners in improving the quality and inclusiveness of higher education and research within the context of improving the working conditions and employment status of academics and researchers. Potential subthemes could be inclusion, mobility and the creation of supportive environments for academics and (early stage) researchers in light with sustainable public investment to higher education and research.

Methodology: Joint activities of the joint project on Higher Education Promoting Quality of Academic Teaching and Management include a joint final report based on a survey, joint statement/recommendations, a peer learning activity and a final conference. The outcomes of the project will be discussed in the ESSDE working group on higher education.

Schedule: 2022-2023, namely a Peer-Learning Activity (February 2022) and a final conference (April 2022); ESSDE working group on higher education

Expected Outcomes: Exchange of experience of national social partners in implementing the joint statement/recommendations in the ESSDE working group on higher education.

Annex 1

Outcomes Of Social Dialogue Under The Work Programmes Of 2020-2021

Statement by EU sectoral social partners to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2021

Joint ETUCE/EFEE Statement on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on sustainable education systems at times of crisis and beyond (June 2020)

Joint Project EU CONVINCe (with the European School Heads Association ESHA): Project Report of the EU CONVINCe - EU Common Values Inclusive Education (2020)

Up for adoption at the ESSDE Plenary meeting:

- Joint Statement on Opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for the education sector
- Joint Statement on Promoting the Implementation of OIRA tools in Education Institutions by the European Sectoral Social Partners in Education
- Joint Policy Recommendations on Lifelong Learning for All: Social Partners in Education promoting quality and inclusive VET to enhance lifelong learning for all



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