

RESOLUTION

For an Education-led Recovery

Adopted by the ETUCE Conference, the Regional Conference of Education International, on 5-6 July 2021

Further to and consistent with the Resolutions adopted by the 8th EI Congress in Bangkok in 2019 and the Resolutions adopted by the ETUCE Conference in 2020, this ETUCE Conference,

Acknowledges:

1. the health, psychological, democratic, social and economic nature of the crisis generated by the pandemic;
2. the key role of the education sector in addressing the negative consequences of the pandemic and planning recovery;
3. the need for national, regional and local governments to invest, both short and long term, in public education as the key to enabling both a sustainable and an equitable recovery;
4. that education is a fundamental human right and a public good, and that education systems based on public service values and democratic governances, rather than the market and its ideology, have the potential to make a real contribution to healthy and coherent societies and democracies;
5. that the green, digital and economic transitions are set to profoundly transform the labour market, and the crucial role of teachers, academics and other education personnel to ensure students are prepared for these transitions;
6. that effective social dialogue and collective bargaining, investment in education, inclusion and equality in education during and after the COVID-19 crisis are crucial for a sustainable recovery;
7. that the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted enormous harm and traumatic experiences on individuals and communities. All the while, education communities, and in particular teachers, academics and other education personnel have mobilised with tremendous commitment to continue providing quality education to students in the most difficult of circumstances.

Recognises that:

8. Across Europe, and indeed the globe, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been seismic, creating huge pressures on workers, individuals, and communities, as well as on health services, disruption to commerce and industry, and restrictions in daily lives and social interactions;
9. The pandemic has made visible the damage to societies and the environment that the neoliberal model has produced by emphasising the role of the individual and producing fragmentation in society, instead of nurturing social aspirations, collective actions and the common good. This model has eroded the principles of solidarity, redistribution of financial resources, democracy and social and environmental responsibility;
10. By applying the same unsustainable development model of competitiveness and profitability to the whole planet, to the detriment of quality and the public good, of fair redistribution, of human rights protection, as well as of the environment and over-exploitation of natural resources, unregulated globalisation has shown its limits;
11. Global policy shifts towards deregulation, liberalisation, and privatisation, (where some countries use public funds to support global companies, combined with a decade of economic crisis and systemic underinvestment in education, and the neoliberal rhetoric that the market is a more effective and efficient decisionmaker than the public), are increasingly exposing education to marketisation pressures, and have narrowed the public space and value to societies;
12. The education sector has been severely affected at all levels: (early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, vocational education and training, and higher education), while there is an acute shortage of teachers, academics and other education personnel, coupled with the lack of attractiveness of the teaching profession in many countries. Teachers, academics and other education personnel have been core in ensuring the continuity of the provision of education and the mitigation of widened learning gaps in an unprecedented emergency context which has deep-seated consequences for their working conditions, mental and physical health and well-being;
13. Despite decade-long trends of deterioration of social dialogue and collective bargaining, the pandemic has proven that these have a central role in shaping education policies, employment protection agreements, and the representation of the collective voice of teachers, academics and other education personnel, thereby preventing the disruption caused by the closure of schools and other education institutions from translating into an even bigger crisis;
14. This emergency teaching context has shone a light on the difficulties posed for online teaching, when it comes to equal access to online tools and devices, to training of education personnel in digital skills, data privacy and online security concerns and, simply, to learning in an online environment;
15. The pandemic has also exposed the deep inequities which exist which cause those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to often suffer disproportionately whether that is measured in health, social or economic terms, with job losses featuring prominently. This reveals how important in-presence interaction in teaching is;
16. There is a long-term trend in some jurisdictions which sees less teaching time being allocated to creative practical and arts subjects. The challenge of teaching practical subjects remotely has increased the risk that even less time is allocated to these subjects, and, in some cases that they disappear from the curriculum.

**Notes that:**

17. The European education trade union movement has fought tirelessly and in solidarity to defend the interests of its members in spite of many governments disregarding fundamental trade union rights and freedoms in many countries, and, looking forward, it has led the call on education authorities, governments and decision-makers at national and European level to rebuild on more equitable foundations than those laid bare by the pandemic, in order to create sustainable economies rooted in both social justice and equality;
18. ETUCE, in previous statements has echoed these demands in relation to education It has called on education authorities, governments and decision-makers at national and European level to widen the public space and to value education as a public good by enhancing structural public investment in education systems which support the rights and professionalism of teachers, academics, and other education personnel so that they can deliver equity and inclusive quality education for all students;
19. The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is only possible if supported by a strong commitment from governments, education authorities and policy-makers at all levels to both a systemic education recovery and, more broadly, an education led recovery founded upon upskilling, reskilling and training opportunities for workers displaced by the economic consequences of the pandemic;
20. In seeking such a commitment, key lessons to be learnt from the experience of the pandemic are, among others:
 - Education and training institutions are vital to the personal and social development of young people and to their well-being and resilience;
 - Student-teacher face-to-face interaction is critical to learning and is irreplaceable;
 - The professionalism of teachers, academics, and other education personnel has never been so evident and requires, in turn, committed investment to support and develop it further;
 - Information and Communication Technology and Education Technology companies and other stakeholders' roles and influence in education has never been so explicit as during the pandemic, which affects the purpose and mission of education;
 - Research and knowledge creation are public goods and should serve society rather than business priorities and interests. Public investment in basic research and areas of public interests, such as the environment and health, are fundamental to boost fairness and to support Europe's overall potential for sustainable growth ;
 - The absolute imperative of challenging the inequities in our society through inclusive education systems which are built on the principle of equity and are capable of challenging all forms of discrimination;
 - High-quality education for all, and fair systems of industrial relations, are two pillars of a decent society and are pivotal for sustainable recovery and growth, as they serve broader social and collective objectives.



With a view to ensuring the recovery of the education sector from the COVID-19 crisis in a way that respects and promotes effective measures so that the rights, freedoms and principles which are enshrined in:

the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),

the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the status of Teachers (1966),

the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997),

the ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel (2016),

the ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (1948),

the ILO Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (1949),

the UN Sustainable Development Goal-4 Education 2030 Framework of action

and

the European Pillar of Social Rights,

are secured, recognised and observed, the ETUCE Conference calls upon national, regional and local governments, education authorities and decision-makers to acknowledge, address and invest in the following areas:

Education Recovery

21. Invest in the much-needed recruitment of highly qualified staff and adequate professional training (both initial and continuous) of teachers, academics, and other education personnel to ensure that the needs of students are met and to reduce excessive workloads, gender segregation and challenges to work-life balance which the pandemic has exacerbated;
22. Ensure that within the recovery all students have the right to quality and inclusive education systems where the centrality of the teacher workforce is recognised and valued, and its voice, collectively represented by trade unions is respected, acknowledged and promoted through meaningful social dialogue, free collective bargaining, and involvement in policy making;
23. Promote fundamental trade union rights such as the right to collective bargaining and freedom of association, which are threatened by actions to freeze or limit the exercise of those rights during the pandemic. These threats are amplified by isolation and fear on the part of those teachers, academics and other education personnel suffering from violations of human rights and beyond;
24. Reverse the decade-long trend of unilateral decision-making which attempts to commodify education and work, to promote individual performance management, to increase outsourcing, to expand public-private partnerships and liberalisation in education, to undermine professionalism, wage policies, working conditions and pensions, and to restrict the scope of bargaining and joint policy making in education, all of which is incompatible with fair, transparent, and accountable democratic decision-making processes, within a system of multi-level governance in education;
25. Empower teachers, academics and other education personnel to exercise fully their professional autonomy, as a key to improving education systems;

26. Invest in relevant and sustainable professional development and support, ensuring that initial and continuous professional development focuses on inclusive education while taking into account the context of the green and digital transition. Teachers, academics and other education personnel need to have access opportunities to develop personal practice and engage in practitioner reflections and research;
27. Mobilise a comprehensive, structural and properly funded package for the financing of education in a way which supports recovery and offsets the damages of a decade of under-investment, rather than accentuating weaknesses in the governance of education and in society. Public investment should be sufficient, predictable and equitably distributed so as to serve the public good. This will require engaging to build a new consensus and an economic model that works for people, rather than for profits, budgetary balance and austerity, a model that serves the three-fold aim of a development that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable; that reasserts the value of and the confidence in the public delivery of goods and services, and all the personnel working in the education sector, protects the democratic community form of governance of education institutions, and safeguards it from the reach of private sector investment and actors;
28. Regulate and set clear limits to the role and influence of private, for-profit, and commercial ICT and Education-Technology companies and actors in education, so that the purpose and mission of education is respected and promoted, for the benefit of students, teachers, trainers, other education personnel, and the whole education community;
29. Rethink taxation systems for a more progressive taxation system to ensure a more equal distribution of income and wealth. Expand the revenue base to allow public investment including through more effective tax collection, the control of tax fraud, corporate tax evasion, the promotion of international cooperation within multilateral agencies to reduce fiscal dumping and financial speculation across and beyond Europe, and the closure of tax loopholes and havens)
30. Commit to revise the Stability and Growth Pact rules to allow for a fiscal framework that excludes public education, training and research investment from the calculation of the deficit and debt levels, as well as to an increased EU budget to uphold recovery through the Recovery and Resilience Facility and support the implementation of an EU fiscal capacity to accompany a fair and transparent redistribution of public resources based on geographical, wealth and generational solidarity across countries;
31. Develop comprehensive and holistic education investment to foster knowledge about sustainable development, the multifaceted nature of climate change, and the sustainable use of natural resources, alongside the development of future-oriented knowledge, competencies and skills, to ensure resilience of our systems;
32. Protect the health and well-being of all teachers, academics, and other education personnel, during and well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into account the specificities and needs of pregnant women, elderly and education personnel with underlying health issues. In particular, in order to ensure the safe reopening of schools and other education institutions, offer teachers, academics and other education personnel fast access to COVID-19 vaccination programmes. Education recovery can only be built successfully on the foundation of a well-resourced education workforce where the well-being of teachers, academics and other education personnel is recognised and prioritised as a pre-requisite for delivering and supporting students' well-being and mental health;
33. Recognise that curricula should not be narrowly focused on academic attainment but must also recognise the value and importance of creative, practical and arts subjects in developing the whole person and supporting social and emotional learning and wellbeing;

34. Recognise and address equally the significant mental-health challenges which will have developed for many students during the period of the pandemic and ensure that education focuses first on nurturing and developing the well-being of students, rejecting false narratives about “lost learning” and associated formulaic approaches to addressing students’ needs and ensuring they recover from this unprecedented crisis that has deeply affected young people;
35. Analyse and explore the impact of digitalisation in education in order to harness its potential benefits and to mitigate its negative impacts. In particular, study the current use of online platforms and other ICT tools, digital technologies and media, their impact on teachers’, academics’ and other education personnel’s employment and working conditions, professional autonomy, privacy and data protection rights. Also consider initial and continuous digital training needs, as well as the role of digitalisation in supporting learning and fostering inclusion in education, whilst recognising and favouring the key nature of the student - teacher relationship and interaction.

Inclusion and Equality

36. Identify and address the inequalities exposed and deepened by the pandemic, as regards vulnerable social groups, including migrants and refugees, people with disabilities and special needs, socio-economically disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities, and others;
37. Remain vigilant and continue monitoring and addressing the needs of these vulnerable social groups, who require teachers in their full pedagogic, psychological and human capacity, while including regular risk assessments in education institutions to ensure these special needs are met during and beyond the recovery so as to move on from those pre-crisis approaches that ignored and excluded vulnerable groups;
38. Tackle the digital divide, in particular, at this time when many students and education personnel are required to invest personally in digital equipment, between those who can easily access online education and teaching material and those who do not have access by promoting and ensuring good connectivity infrastructure, the provision of up-to-date hardware and software as well as a safe and supportive learning and teaching environment based foremost on more recruitment of qualified teachers and education personnel into the sector;
39. Deliver targeted and funded interventions to tackle disrupted learning for students at risk of exclusion from education. This should be founded on the deployment of additional education support personnel working with education institutions to address the additional support needs of students;
40. Guarantee a safe and supportive physical and social learning and working environment both during the distance education period and education within an education institution;
41. Seek to address the inequalities exposed outside the education institution by providing stronger support, financial incentives and connections to parents and families as part of the students’ learning environments, in particular when it comes to enabling working parents, including education personnel themselves, to balance their professional obligations with supporting their children who are studying/learning at home. The home-schooling experience of many parents will have confirmed for many the professional expertise and value of teachers, academics and other education personnel. The experience has equally emphasised the importance of home-school communications and partnerships, which education trade unions should seek to capture and capitalise upon;
42. Seek to ensure the involvement and full commitment of all relevant stakeholders, including education institution partners and social partners, as well as collaboration on various levels (e.g. education institutions, local community, leadership of education institutions, education personnel, parents, families) to provide the education in the recovery that fully meets the needs of all students and young people;

43. Review education systems and/or curricula to better focus on active citizenship, responsibilities and rights, promotion of equality, diversity and social cohesion and recognise how interlinked the different regions of our planet are;

Education-led economic recovery

44. Recognise that economic recovery will require significant public investment in training and skills as well as a strong commitment to higher education opportunities for all. This should be predicated on the basis of a sustainable public sector framework to provide equal access to quality education for all;
45. Reject any attempt at renewed austerity as a means of addressing significant debt-to-GDP ratios which have developed and instead call for relevant authorities and governments to create employment by expanding public services to improve the quality of life for everyone;
46. Renew the call for social dialogue and collective bargaining to be at the heart of recovery protocols in order to ensure that education trade unions are fully involved in the development of the recovery policies and measures;
47. In cases of public procurements by education authorities, include clauses ensuring compliance with collective agreements in the various sectors of education.

Commits to:

48. Holding national governments and decision-makers accountable for their management of the COVID-19 crisis and recovery policies, in particular regarding the continued need for structural public investment in quality education and the areas identified above;
49. Raising awareness among the general public on the outstanding efforts of teachers, academics and other education personnel who continue providing quality education throughout the pandemic;
50. Equally, shining a light on the areas of support needed for teachers, academics and other education personnel to continue meeting and rising above the challenges of post-pandemic societies, with respect to their rights, working conditions, health, safety and well-being, and to the overall status and attractiveness of the teaching profession;
51. Striving to uphold the rights of teachers, academics and other education personnel, for the improvement of the education sector, and the rebuilding of fairer, more sustainable democratic societies beyond the COVID-19 pandemic;
52. Supporting member organisations to challenge employers and education institutions that have used the pandemic to cut posts and narrow the curriculum offer, including creative and practical subjects.