



ETUCE Statement on the

New Flagship Initiative of the European Commission on Youth on the Move¹

and on the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Youth on the Move –

Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People

Approved by the EI/ETUCE Bureau on 22/10/2010

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The ETUCE would like to express its concerns about the *Communication on Youth on the Move - An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union* and about the *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Youth on the move - promoting the learning mobility of young people* by focusing on the following issues while taking into consideration the statement of the ETUCE on the *Green Paper on Promoting the learning mobility of young people* (08 July 2009) introducing the new Youth on the Move initiative.

1. Promoting mobility: a real challenge

The ETUCE would like to highlight that the financial and economic crises has a very negative impact upon mobility. On the one hand it created new obstacles to mobility since the job of the target destination ceased to exist. On the other hand one of the first results of the crises has been the forced mobility of the people after losing their jobs. The lack of labour mobility within the European Union must be dealt with in a more thorough manner.

The ETUCE welcomes the Proposal for a Council Recommendation that invites the Member States to remove the obstacles to teacher and trainer mobility but regrets that despite of the ETUCE's criticism, the target group of the youth mobility proposed by the European Commission is still among the age cohort of 16-35 year. As a result, the Proposal excludes the highest proportion of teachers from the possibility to develop their work and career, and to be role models for the students in the mobility.

The ETUCE believes that the Proposal still does not solve the difficulties in relation to teacher mobility on providing qualified teacher replacement, ensuring a sound financial basis and portability of pension and security rights, recognising the experience periods¹ abroad, maintaining a balanced teacher force, and proper support from the employers in the sending and hosting countries.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Published: 15 September 2010.

2. Financing mobility: a key issue

The ETUCE strongly believes that investments in education should be strengthened and that cutting the education budgets jeopardises the future of the European society and the recovery of Europe from the recent economic downturn. It must be recognised that education as a fundamental right is a public responsibility. Education must be publicly funded and publicly regulated. The increased interest at national and EU level in diverse forms of cooperation and partnerships in the education sectors is a risky development, as it can lead to a decrease of governments' responsibility to fund and ensure high quality education and training systems for *all*.² Hence, the ETUCE is concerned that the plan of the Commission on relocating public spending from the European Social Fund to other sectors will have a very negative impact on the education sector. Trying to find out other resources in support segments of education, as well as encouraging Member States to invest more in education while "ensuring the best returns to public resources"³ cannot be considered a proper defence of public investment in the education sector. The ETUCE would like to highlight that additional investment into the education sector to boost mobility is essential.

Therefore the ETUCE invites the European Commission and the Council of the European Union to reconsider the negative consequences of the increased availability of study loans, EU-level student lending facility that is highly emphasized in the Communication.

3. Education: a public responsibility

The ETUCE considers that the role of the education systems is educating for life for all, regardless of their social background and development of citizenship from a broad perspective. Education cannot be narrowed down to fulfil the demands of the labour market. Therefore the ETUCE disagrees with the viewpoint of the flagship initiative which puts too much stress on the key competences that are connected to the labour market. The ETUCE strongly believes that the preferred activities of the education counselling and guidance services cannot focus on solely the training and career path of the young people with "*strong labour market involvement*"⁴.

Regarding the expectations towards future jobs and required qualifications, the ETUCE stresses that forecasting is not a natural process. Education systems cannot be based on predictions. If education loses its universality and focuses on the needs of an unstable future in the labour market, the outcomes could be harmful for society and the economy too. Similarly, the ETUCE considers it inappropriate to develop a common language between the education sector and the job market. The ETUCE criticises the extremely technical approach of the European Commission to these issues. It is necessary to see education in a more holistic way incorporating the individual and social behaviour and needs.

² ETUCE Statement to the European Council Meeting (16 September 2010) and the European Commission in Preparation of the G20 Summit in Seoul: Education is at the heart of EU2020.

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Published: 15 September 2010.

⁴ Ibid.

The ETUCE welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to invite the Member States to support young graduates and unemployed people to enrol in the labour market. The ETUCE notices that the Commission raises its voice against the segmented labour market and promotes permanent contacts and secured women employability. The ETUCE would like to emphasise that ensuring the mobility of women by focusing on health and safety is similarly essential. The ETUCE also supports the efforts to reduce the number of school dropouts and to strengthen the importance of early childhood education and care. Social partners should be much more consulted and involved in order to improve the status and attractiveness of vocational education and training and to decrease early school leaving.

4. Higher Education

The ETUCE would like to stress that higher education should be dealt separately since as a part of the communication it is assumed that higher education can only be considered from a mobility perspective that takes the higher education out of its context. On this point the ETUCE recommends to the European Commission to deal with the activities in the appropriate places that is to say in this case, within the framework of the Bologna Process.

The ETUCE strongly recommends a higher rate of investment on higher education than the estimated 2% of public and private GDP investment, as it is not sufficient to facilitate and ensure quality studies for more students. Yet, since the European Commission does not stipulate the extent to which these two types of investment are to be separated, private investment might become overwhelming in the foreseeable future in this sector. The ETUCE must reiterate that it is absolutely necessary for Governments to live up to their responsibilities by providing sufficient public funds.

Furthermore, the ETUCE seeks assurance for higher education and business/industry relations to remain on a balanced basis and so research activities and innovation of the higher education institutions not to be entirely deprived to serve more than private, labour market needs. The ETUCE welcomes the initiative on urging universities to create more vacancy for researchers, but with reference to the Commission's own critique of the segmented labour market, the ETUCE demands researchers to be contacted on full time and normal contracts.

The European Trade Union Committee for Education represents 110 teachers' unions in the EU and EFTA countries and more than 4.5 million teachers from all levels of the education sector. As a European Social Partner in education at EU level, the ETUCE is a member of the ETCG. The ETUCE is also an autonomous organisation within the Education International Pan-European Structure.