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ETUCE Statement on the Draft Council Conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility

Adopted by the ETUCE Bureau on 23 November, 2011

ETUCE would like to remind the European Union institutions that learning mobility has been affected by the recent financial, economic and political crisis and this should be taken into account by the Education Council when adopting the *Draft Council Conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility* on 28-29 November, 2011.

ETUCE, the European Trade Union Committee for Education, represents 135 Teacher Unions and 12.8 million teachers in Europe, 5.5 million teachers in the EU, from all levels of the education sector. ETUCE is a social partner in education at the EU level and a trade union federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of teacher unions.

1. ETUCE welcomes the fact that the Polish Presidency puts forward learning mobility by creating benchmarks on it. ETUCE also agrees with the view that, taking into account the recent economic situation, the benchmarks are not concrete targets for Member States, but are recommendations to be included in the national priorities.
2. However, ETUCE considers that more individuals should benefit from learning mobility as an alternative to unemployment in the current context of the financial and economic crisis. We invite the Education Council to pay special attention to this when adopting the Draft Council Conclusions.
3. ETUCE urges the Education Council to enhance learning mobility for all students, starting with minors until adults. ETUCE welcomes that learning mobility is defined as physical and not online mobility in the Draft Council Conclusions. At the same time, we stress the need to promote also the participation of general primary and secondary school students in mobility programmes.
4. We consider the proposed European benchmarks as a weak attempt to involve all actors in the education sector into learning mobility. All students and teachers should have opportunities to experience learning mobility, not only the 20% of the higher education and 6% of the initial vocational education students. Therefore, ETUCE calls for the European Union institutions to increase the benchmarks.
5. As far as ETUCE is concerned, the individual mobility support schemes in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programmes have not been efficient to support the lower income students. The recent economic crisis contributed to further social exclusion of the socio-economically disadvantaged students who have now less chance to contribute financially to their participation in mobility programmes. Hence, ETUCE strongly believes that investment in LLP should be strengthened in order to secure the future of the European society and the recovery of Europe from the recent economic downturn.



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6. ETUCE welcomes the recommendation that all Member States should recognise the abroad study period and that the EUROPASS instrument could be used for this purpose. However, we would like to highlight that students must be informed of the recognition of their studies taken abroad before they leave their home country. Member States should inform all students about the existing opportunities and about the national rules of recognition of studies taken abroad.
7. ETUCE welcomes the recommendation of the Draft Council Conclusions to the Member States to prepare statistics and conduct surveys on teacher mobility at all levels of education in order to develop an indicator for teacher mobility. We stress the importance of teachers' mobility to develop their work and career, contribute to quality education and be role models in mobility for the students. Teachers should have the opportunity to participate in short term mobility programmes.
8. At the same time, we emphasise that major difficulties have remained in relation to teacher mobility, in particular when it comes to providing qualified teacher replacement, ensuring a sound financial basis, portability of pension and security rights; recognising the experience periods abroad; maintaining a balanced teacher force; and securing proper support from the employers in the sending and hosting countries.
9. The promotion of teachers' mobility depends mainly on other issues, such as access to information on mobility, working conditions in the host country/institution, replacement at the sending institution; maintenance and completion of salary in accordance with the living conditions in the host country during the visit; provision of health insurance; and incorporation of the working period spent abroad to pension entitlement. Therefore, the national statistics should deal with these obstacles and contribute to resolve them.
10. ETUCE stresses the importance of the involvement of education stakeholders in promoting learning mobility and wishes to have this point included in the Council Conclusions.