



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 EU 2020

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) wants to express the following views to the European Council and the European Commission meeting in Brussels on the 17th of September 2010, in the preparation phase of the EU positions for the G20 summit taking place in Seoul, South Korea on 11-12 November 2010.

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The ETUCE fully supports the recent reaction from the EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Ms Androulla Vassiliou, to the 2010 OECD Report "Education at a Glance": *"Europe cannot risk falling behind in education and training. Improving education and training systems is one of the key tasks for the future and the means to both secure Europe's economic success and its social cohesion. (...)With the worldwide recession continuing to weigh on employment levels, education is an essential investment for responding to the changes in technology and demographics that are re-shaping labour markets."* (IP/10/1093, 7 Sept. 2010).

The Commissioner's statement reflects the consensus within the European Institutions that investments in education should be strengthened and that cutting in the education budgets jeopardises the future of the European society. The Lisbon Strategy from its outset has always included education and training as key elements in achieving the full potential of the knowledge-based society. The European Council recently confirmed this approach in the continuity of the process initiated in Lisbon in 2000 on the adoption of the new EU 2020 Strategy. The ETUCE believes that investment in high quality education for all students is necessary, not least to help Europe to recover from the current economic downturn. Free and compulsory education of high quality is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and the acquisition of the key competences for *all* students. It must therefore 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, EU and global 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*. This risk is especially present in time of economic crisis when governments can be more inclined to resort to budget cuts in areas like the education sector.

Within this context,

- Having regard to the Education policy coordinated at the European Union level since 2000 under the Lisbon Strategy ;
- Having regard to the EU 2020 Strategy objective that is the school drop-out rate should be less than 10% and the share of population having completed tertiary or equivalent education should be at least 40% by 2020;
- Having regard to the key messages on Education and Training issued by the Council of the European Union (19 February 09, 6666/09), stating notably that *"It is precisely in times of economic difficulty that the key strategic importance of*

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sustaining open and efficient, high-quality education and training systems(...) must continue to be emphasised”;

- Having regard to the EU Presidency’s Conclusions from the Council of the European Union (19/20 March 09), which has confirmed the priority given to appropriate investments in education (7880/09: 16);
- Whereas the national efforts to reduce the public deficit and to fulfil the IMF requirements for accessing support funding have to be shared by all actors in the economy, first in line being those who led the economy into the crisis.

The ETUCE urges the European Council and the Commission to defend the following positions at the G20 Summit:

1. Education and training must be protected from public sector budget cuts. No country can afford a “lost generation” of children and youth.
2. Education is not just a cost. It is the smartest investment in sustainable recovery.
3. G8 countries must maintain their commitment to close the Education for All (EFA) financing gap, so as to achieve the target of all children in primary school by the year 2015. G20 countries should convene a ministerial level committee, with the major agencies, to put in place a new approach for funding EFA, and education unions must have a place at the table.
4. We call on the G20 to invite UNESCO and the OECD to develop the International Task Force on Teachers into a Global Partnership for Teacher Education and Professional Development, aimed at ensuring enough qualified teachers to achieve quality education for all, and to foster good human resource practices for the teaching profession. The global organisation of teacher unions, Education International, should have a recognised leading role in this new partnership.

Brussels, September 2010

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 115 teachers’ unions in the EU and EFTA countries and more than 4.5 million teachers from all levels of the education sector. A recognised European social partner, the ETUCE is a member of the Education and Training Co-ordination Group (ETCG) and the ETUC European industry federation for education. The ETUCE is also an autonomous organisation within the Education International Pan-European Structure.