



ETUCE Statement on the Employment Council Conclusions on New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 110 teachers' unions in the EU and EFTA countries and more than 5.5 million teachers from all levels of the education sector. The ETUCE is a member of the Education and Training Co-ordination Group (ETCG) and as the European industry federation for education is a member of the ETUC. The ETUCE is also an autonomous organisation within the Education International Pan-European Structure. In relation to the Employment Council's Conclusions on 'New Skills for New Jobs: the way forward' the ETUCE wishes to make the following remarks.

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The ETUCE acknowledges the fact that the European Union is facing one of its biggest challenges as a consequence of the global recession and agrees that moving towards the knowledge-based society is the way forward. Open and efficient education and training systems are elements of high importance in a time of global financial and economic crisis. However, the ETUCE regrets that they continue to be seen merely as a tool to meet the specific and immediate demands of the labour market. The most essential task of the education systems is to educate for life and the outlook on education must be comprehensive and cover various skills and key competences. Only a broad approach to education and training can contribute to personal and social competences, which are vital to social cohesion, equality, active citizenship, cultural diversity and personal fulfilment.

Lifelong learning

The ETUCE welcomes Council's view on the importance of lifelong learning in promoting employability, as well as social cohesion and inclusion. It is important to emphasise that the aim of lifelong learning is broader than adapting citizens' skills to new challenges and better jobs. The ETUCE agrees with the idea to promote the status of the vocational training, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, as well as the autonomy of each person in access to lifelong learning and employment. It also welcomes the willingness of the Council to further work and encourage member States to develop the 'New Skills for New Jobs' initiative, ensuring its coherence with the EUROPE 2020 Strategy, in particular the flagship initiative 'An agenda for new skills and jobs.' It warns however that a simplistic approach regarding the objective of better matching the supply and demand of qualified workers and the focus on 'labour market needs' can lead to short-term VET and LLL policies at a high risk of failure. The demand on the labour markets constitutes indeed a highly variable factor that cannot be used as a driver for an efficient education and training policy. Moreover, even though this segment of education relates more directly to the labour market, VET and LLL are full part of the overall education systems, aimed at educating for life.

European Qualifications Framework

Concerning the Council's call on Member States to relate national Qualifications Frameworks to the European Qualifications Framework in order to improve the transparency of qualifications and promote workers mobility, the ETUCE wants to stress its support for the diversity of the education systems in the EU as well as the need to ensure that the EQF and the creation of NQFs will not lead to a process of harmonisation of the structure of education systems. The NQFs must first and foremost serve the national context and the national objectives, the specific needs at national level in terms of promoting lifelong learning and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Equally, the development of NQFs must in no way lead to a utilitarian approach to the national education systems, in which the education system is merely tailored to

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the needs of the labour market. The ETUCE also reminds that the national design of NQFs has to be carried out in consultation with the national teachers' organisations in all countries.

Work with social partners

The ETUCE is pleased to notice that the Council fosters partnerships between relevant stakeholders, including social partners, in order to anticipate skill needs more effectively, to promote new learning initiatives, and to improve the transfer and use of new and existing knowledge on future skills needs between the stakeholders. The ETUCE also calls for involvement of the social partners at the national level in order to achieve the goals of the Education and Training 2020 process.

Forecasting

The ETUCE supports the continuous work on labour market trends and labour market forecasting, but stresses the importance of a broad approach to education and training and insists that the pursuit of common goals must not lead to a tailoring of the European education systems too narrowly to the needs of the labour market. ETUCE's belief is that a flexible and adaptable workforce is better developed by education systems based on the broad approach, than by demand-led systems with a narrow focus on the ever-changing demands of the labour market.

In conclusion, the ETUCE supports a development towards more competitive, knowledge-based economy with a special attention being paid to young people and disadvantage groups who need to be provided with employment and training opportunities to prevent their social exclusion. To reach the Education and Training 2020 objectives requires education and training systems to be accessible to all and acting for the development of peoples' knowledge, skills and abilities in a broad range of subjects, social, civic and cultural competences, the ability to learn as well as creativity, innovation and teamwork skills.

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