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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

### ETUCE views on the *Draft Joint Report on ET2020* of the European Commission

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ETUCE

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During the past two years, the European Commission consulted ETUCE several times in different ways about the teacher trade unions' views on the future strategic goals of the EU on education and training.

We have been positive about this consultation process and we welcome that most of our views were included in the [Draft Joint Report on ET2020](#). In order to further contribute to the design of strategic goals of the EU on education and training, we initiated a consultation in September 2015 with national member organisations representing employees in all education sectors<sup>1</sup>.

This report is a summary of the views of ETUCE and its member organisations on the Draft Joint Report on ET2020.

1. Overall, our member organisations assess the report positively and underline that teacher trade unions are proud of their contributions to securing the provision of quality education in difficult and **challenging circumstances** such as the economic and financial crisis. We welcome the fact that the monitoring of the [Paris Declaration](#) (March 2015) is a key priority in the upcoming work cycle. The education sector is an important area in promoting active citizenship and common values on freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination. The intentions are in good consistency with the eight key competences, including social competences and citizen competences. However, it is absolutely essential to clarify the integration of this new key priority and the **eight key competences** in the strategic framework and benchmarks.

2. We strongly believe that the increasing number of asylum seekers and the recent **refugee crisis** in Europe should be taken into consideration in the "Context" part of the document. The text should include the need for sustainable and quality educational support to young and adult migrants and refugees via improved focus on training and recruitment of teachers in all education sectors. We welcome the reference to the [Communication on A European Agenda on Security](#) in the text, as education must be improved to avoid radicalisation.

3. Although the paper includes some references to the role of the **social partners**, with a section in the main document "Stronger links between education, business and research,

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<sup>1</sup> The following national teacher unions responded to ETUCE's consultation: BUPL (Denmark), DLI (Denmark), EEPU (Estonia), FECCO (Spain), GEW (Germany), NSZZ-Solidarność (Poland), UIL-Scuola (Italy), NASUWT (UK), OAJ (Finland), VBE (Germany)

and involvement of social partners and civil society”, the annexes do not build upon or further develop this approach.

We suggest that the report should pay more attention on the importance of **social dialogue**. While effective social dialogue remains the key for the development of successful educational reforms, unfortunately, several teacher trade unions reported that they have generally not been consulted on key education reforms linked to the implementation of ET2020 goals. Therefore, the report should mention that without full involvement of teachers through their organizations in defining and implementing educational objectives and policies, education systems cannot hope to achieve quality education for all.

4. World class education depends, critically, upon high-quality teachers, whilst also valuing accountability in the context of pursuing a moral mission for education. It would be important to highlight in several sections of the main document - such as section 3 on “**Governance and working methods**” that teacher trade unions should be involved – in effective social dialogue – in order to make significant contributions.

There are sections such as section 4 “Strong support for educators” where **teacher trade unions** will be indispensable for achieving the outcomes of this priority.

We ask for the following recommendation under priority area 3 to be shifted to the overarching message of the Report because social partners’ and stakeholders’ involvement is important - not only for improving ICT in education:

*“Fostering **participatory education governance** by stimulating engagement of learners, educators, parents and the broader local community such as civil society groups, social partners and business.”*

5. We welcome that the text underlines the regrettable fact of the lack of **public funding for education**. Therefore, we ask to encourage governments in the text to invest firstly to maintain high quality education, secondly to invest in teachers’ training to deliver best on these recommendations at school level.

The Report needs to argue more positively in favour of **public education** as the basis for providing the opportunity to learn to all children and young people, regardless of their socio-economic background. In our view high-quality public education is not secured unless it delivers high-quality and good outcomes for all children and young people. Equity must be the hallmark of education quality. This twin mission cannot be left to market forces and the report should focus on arguing for a major role for government in **securing high-quality public education for all** as the basis for an inclusive, fair and democratic society.

Further improvements are needed in respect of investing in education of the socio-economically disadvantaged in order to narrow the gaps in educational achievement and participation.

Concerning priority section 6 of annex 1 on recommendations to investment in education:

- We strongly oppose the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-priority of the section: *“Exploring the potential of the IPE in the area of education and training, including by promoting funding models **attracting private actors and capital**”*.
  - ETUCE strongly opposes private financing of education. In its [Message on Investing in education](#) from July 2014, ETUCE stated clearly that education must be publicly funded and accessible to all. **Public financing of education needs to be sufficient, predictable and sustainable to ensure not only access, but also the provision of quality education for all.** In the EU of the economic crisis, education systems have been too often considered as an easy target for fiscal consolidation. Everywhere across Europe, cuts in public financing of education have gone hand in hand with the privatisation of potentially profitable education services, thus jeopardising both the provision and free access to quality education for all. Everywhere across Europe, privatisation and commercialisation of education result in increased discrimination, social fragmentation and widening inequality. The most affected are those who have got fewer resources. **The Report should clearly state that education is a societal and public good, and must serve the interests of the public rather than those of private investors.**
  - Equitable access to education is widely recognised as the key to economic and social progress. Education is an investment on the workforce of the future, thus it is leverage for social mobility, and for filling the increasing gap between those who have got the means and those who have got none or not enough. Therefore, **governments should take all necessary measures to ensure they have sufficient resources to finance all sectors of education, and to ensure that the resources reach the most marginalised.** This entails that governments across Europe should have the courage to develop alternative economic policies targeting public investments, job creation and social equality rather than relying only on fiscal consolidation. For example, they could transfer resources from unproductive military expenditure or combating corporate tax evasions, implementing financial transaction tax, etc. to ensure public resources to education.
  - ETUCE welcomes that the European Commission constantly recommended prioritising growth-friendly investments in education within the European Semester framework, especially during the high peak of the economic crisis, as stated in the Report. However, the Report should also face **the contradiction between the EU’s ambitions and the actual budgetary constraints that hinders a socially oriented and inclusive economic growth.** Many policy recommendations are still counterbalanced by other imperative recommendations of continued fiscal consolidation and demands to bring down public debt. Thus, it remains a significant challenge for Member States to find the financial resources to invest in education. This is why ETUCE believes that such a contradiction should be faced and taken into account throughout all phases of the renewed, more socially oriented, European Semester.

- We strongly believe that the following third sub-priority should be adjusted: *“Encouraging innovative ways to ensure **sustainable investment** in all forms and levels of learning, including performance-based funding and cost-sharing.”*
  - As the Report recognises, performance-based funding systems are a recent development in many member states and ETUCE agrees on the need for more evidence of the effectiveness of such a policy instrument. Moreover, whereas in some cases performance-based elements in public funding can be considered as an additional source of funding, they should never substitute the core, sustainable and predictable public funding.
  - In any event, this is an area where the **role and facilitating function of unions can be crucial in identifying the kind of investment improving performance, efficiency and effectiveness of education and training** systems. Education unions and their members are able to identify the weaknesses of current education and training investment and how this might be put to better use, as well as identifying and participating in innovations in all levels of learning.
  - The report should specify that all education in a country should be a public responsibility, that is to say: education should be **both publicly funded and regulated. Teacher trade unions should be enabled to cooperate with governments and public authorities to oversee the design and impact of education budgets against key indicators of equity** in order to ensure that funding education is sustainable, progressive, and that resources meet the most marginalised.
  - The Report could underline the need for increase of adequate provision for the maintenance of school infrastructure and public responsibility for the management, conservation and improvement of school facilities.

6. We welcome the Commission’s recognition of **Early Childhood Education and Care** as one of the most efficient means for raising proficiency but we would wish to point out that despite the importance of early childhood education this is often one of the first casualties when there are financial pressures on governments.

We suggest the following change: "professionalisation and working conditions of staff" on page 4.

7. On page 5, the task of the higher education systems shall not be limited to strengthening the "knowledge economy" (1st paragraph) and adult education to the "further training and retraining" (3rd paragraph) as these and other sectors of education should primarily serve the personal development and participation in society.

We welcome the European Commission’s recognition of the importance of both high-quality academic study and of high-quality vocational education, underpinned by strong commitment from **business** and employers’ organisations and equality of access to high-quality, practical, hands-on, work-based learning opportunities. At the same time, involvement of business in education should not lead in any way to privatisation. High-quality public education relies upon high esteem, thus we ask the European Institutions to continue to sustain public support for public education.

7. The development of **administrative systems** of schools could be included in the Report, which should ensure both proper administration of schools and appropriate treatment of the professionals.

8. We support that the **future “ET2020 working groups”** operate within the framework of the new prioritised areas and we wish especially to emphasise work methods based on peer learning which have contributed with a constructive critical reflection upon the existing practice in each country. At the same time, ideally the work of the new ET2020 working groups should feed into policy initiatives initiated by the EU institutions in cooperation with the European-level social partners.

We would like to underline that the participation of ETUCE representing the teachers would be of utmost importance in the working groups.

## **Annex 1 – Priority areas**

### **1. Relevant and high quality skills and competences, focusing on learning outcomes, for employability, innovation and active citizenship**

Trade unions in several countries have made significant contributions to increasing basic skills through establishing learning programmes in these areas in the workplace. Thus unions will be essential to initiatives to “Re-igniting lifelong learning strategies addressing the transition phases within school education, while promoting transitions to and between VET, HE and AL, including non-formal and informal learning, and from education and training to work’ .

### **2. Inclusive education, equality, non-discrimination and promotion of civic competences**

- We think access should be inclusive and equal to **free and universal education** for minorities and disadvantaged groups.
- Access to qualified and experienced teachers has a major impact on children’s educational outcomes. Therefore to secure social mobility and excellence for all children, the European Institutions should focus on ensuring that all pupils are taught by **qualified and experienced teachers**. This means having appropriate levers in place to recruit and retain qualified teachers and to ensure the continuous development of teacher quality. Clearly austerity measures across Europe have compromised these levers.
- Next to promoting “civic, intercultural, social and relational competences” profession-related competences are essential.
- We miss any reference to **social partners** where unions and especially teacher trade unions could make significant contribution to the achievement of the priority aims. This would be especially true for the aim ‘Facilitating the effective acquisition of the language of learning and employment by migrants’.

### **3. Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era**

There is a reference to social partners in the aim ‘Fostering participatory education governance by stimulating engagement of learners, educators, parents and the broader local community such as civil society groups, social partners and business’. However,

involving social partners, especially teacher trade unions in the design and implementation of these goals could be recommended.

In addition, the European Commission should highlight that in order to promote “ the use of ICT as a driver for systemic change” with a view to “increase quality and relevance of education at all levels”, it is important that teachers receive high-quality training in initial training and continuous professional development for the pedagogical use of ICT. Too often the provision of ICT in education is falsely equalled with ‘quality’ education.

#### **4. Strong support for educators**

This is the priority aim where the role of social partners especially of teacher trade unions is massively understated in the document. Teacher unions have and should continue to have a major role in strategies for fair selection and recruitment of teachers, raising the awareness and prestige of the teaching profession through comprehensive strategies.

#### **5. Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility**

The issues and priorities covered in this section, facilitating skills and qualifications are of direct relevance to social partners including teachers trade unions, yet there is no reference to the role of trade unions in extending this work in the labour market.

#### **6. Sustainable investment, performance and efficiency of education and training systems**

- See our requests for recommendations above.
- Strong involvement of teacher trade unions in national decisions regarding investing in education is crucial as teacher unions and their members are able to identify the weaknesses of current education and training systems and investment based on hands-on teaching experience. Teacher unions can provide practical recommendations on how the system and investment might be put to better use.

#### **Annex 2: specific VET and Adult Learning Priorities up to 2020.**

VET and Adult Learning Priorities are of particular interest to teacher trade unions. There are references to work-based learning and some references to social partners. However, they need to be further developed in the various outlined priorities. This is particularly true for the priorities on the development of initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors.

Although a section on adult learning is welcome, there is no reference to the role teacher unions may have in the various priorities laid down. All of these – governance, supply and take up of adult learning provision, flexibility and quality assurance - are highly dependent on the work of education workers.