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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

### ETUCE views on *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Tracking Graduates*

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On 30 May 2017 the European Commission published its [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on tracking graduates](#).

The following text is the reaction of ETUCE, which represents 11 million teachers in Europe, based on consultation with its Member Organisations on the Commission's document.



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1. The aim of the proposal is to encourage countries to improve their graduate tracking systems in order to identify **solutions regarding youth unemployment and to provide feedback to vocational education and higher education institutions** and policy makers. We welcome that the proposal for graduate tracking intends to strengthen curriculum development of vocational schools and universities as well as career guidance.

2. The proposal suggests that each Member State should **collect the same data about graduates**, early drop-outs and of those not in education nor in employment (NEETs), while ensuring data protection, in order to make the information comparable around Europe. From our understanding this comparability could help European policy makers to have more information on educational outcomes, employability, mobility, and brain drain.

3. The proposal acknowledges that **transitions to the labour market are influenced by economic context and socio-demographic factors** such as sex, country of birth, citizenship, ethnic origin and socio-economic background of the family. Thus, the data on graduate tracking can shed light on employability difficulties from the side of the economic and industrial situation of countries and regions. At the same time, socio-demographic factors can contribute to a better understanding of inequality in recruitment and in the labour market.

4. While graduate tracking is important, the **results on graduates' achievements** need to be analysed and used with great sensitivity. For example, we are concerned at the tendency of employers' organisations to blame the education sector for the so-called 'skills mismatch'. Such an approach fails to acknowledge the key role played by structural factors, including the overall levels of demand in the economy or the impact of class, gender, and ethnicity, in determining the labour market outcomes for graduates.

5. The list of proposed content of data to be collected about graduates and early school leavers, via tax and social security databases, should be handled cautiously in relation to its potential impact on education. The **data about the graduates** should be considered together with the offers of companies, available quality jobs, and the economic/social

ranking of professions, as these factors narrow the labour market perspectives for graduates.

6. We welcome that Member States would need to **report on their achievements** on improving this proposal on graduate tracking in two years, then annually, and that the European Commission foresees setting up a fund to support improving national graduate tracking systems, and encourages Member States to share their experiences on improving their systems.

7. The proposal puts emphasis on the role of education without considering **companies' job offers for graduates, salary and quality working conditions**, recruitment procedures and employers' responsibility to invest in continuous upskilling of employees. Graduate tracking as it is presented in the proposal has a narrow view of education, not considering the possibility that graduates can be employed on the basis of their soft skills and competences.

8. It is not clear **who assesses the following criteria** and how:

- 'relevance of study to employment', and
- 'perceptions of the quality and relevance of their education and training experience'.

9. We underline that graduate tracking should **not be used to evaluate individual institutions** with a view to linking employability rates to performance-based funding of schools and universities. Graduate tracking should not narrow the labour market perspectives for graduates. It is essential to have a **broad view of education** so that graduates can be tracked as a result of their wider professional opportunities, rather than simply on the basis of the professional titles of their degree. It is high time that companies understood the broader learning outcomes of graduates and to move away from stereotypical perceptions about the value of whole areas of study e.g. arts degrees. Furthermore, in their own interest of maintaining a skilled and competent workforce, companies should have a long-term vision for their graduates and invest in their continuous upskilling.

Finally, we welcome that the recommendation to Member States highlights the need for "close cooperation with stakeholders", and how essential and beneficial the **involvement of teachers and education trade unions** is in the process. In line with this, ETUCE confirms its interest to actively contribute to the foreseen group of *Network of Experts* which is to provide advice to the European Commission on the implementation of this proposal.