ETUCE
European Trade Union Committee for Education
EI European Region

ETUCE position on
Education in the post-2020 EU Strategy

Adopted by ETUCE Committee on 19 March, 2018

On 14 November 2017 the European Commission published its Communication entitled *Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture - The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017*. The text focuses on setting up new policy goals on education for the 2018-20 period and beyond.

The following text is the response of ETUCE, which represents 11 million teachers in Europe, based on consultation with its Member Organisations on the Commission's document and on their views on the education in the post-2020 EU Strategy.

ETUCE reaction to the Communication:
Quality education for all now and in the post-2020 EU strategies

We consider it positive that education was discussed at a **high level in the EU**, even though it was under informal circumstances during the Social Summit in Gothenburg. We strongly consider that the **social partners in the education sector** are key partners on designing EU-level policy on education, therefore we regret that the European Commission has not consulted us on this initiative. Furthermore, discussion among the EU leaders without the involvement of the respective education and employment ministers questions **the transparent political process** in the field of education policy development.

1. We regret that the Communication seemingly does not build on the **ET2020 Strategy Framework** while achievements of the education systems of the EU Member States should define the future. The European Commission suggests that the future of education needs to be seen from the perspective of social, economic and political developments. However, it is difficult to predict these developments by 2030. At the same time, **education is a human right and public good** and this has to be respected and strengthened by 2030 in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nation (UN) and the full implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights** which foresees to ensure that "*Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market*". Member States should implement this principle with appropriate legislative measures to ensure and improve quality and equality in national education systems.

2.   The Commission is pointing to important elements required to **develop an education of high quality**, such as excellent training and attractive perspectives for teachers, lifelong learning which includes low skilled adults and early childhood education, focus on key competences and transversal skills, active citizenship and equal opportunities in education and life. In general, these dimensions are always mentioned in EU and countries' education policy but are seldom at the core of actual priorities. However, the most important challenge is that the benchmarks and indicators of the EU2020 Strategy and ET2020 Strategy Framework do not refer to these fields of work and the countries have not been asked to focus or invest to these fields in their policies.

3.   Concerning the **concrete suggestions of the Commission to the Member States** in the form of new **indicators and benchmarks**, we ask the Commission to carry out thorough research including an impact assessment before identifying the targets. It is essential to clarify the terms used in indicators, e.g. who are the low achievers and early school leavers, how are they tracked in the countries, and how are they being supported. In order to introduce benchmarks on **digital competences and entrepreneurship**, these need to be defined while sufficient funding is essential in order to develop those two areas in a qualitative way

4.   It is important to recognise that there are pupils and students behind the indicators and benchmarks and to ensure that the support really reaches those who need it. As the ET2020 Strategy Framework goals have not been achieved in many countries, more support is essential to the low-achieving countries and further targets should be identified to the highly-achieving ones while **respecting their competence on education and the diversity of education systems**. At the same time the European Commission should enhance its support to the countries on improving their education systems to **reach equally high level education for all students** in the continent without any discrimination. At the moment, the suggestions of the Commission for post-2020 targets are not convincing and not feasible to achieve[1]. In order to **better identify the goals**, further consultation with governments and education sector social partners is essential.

5.   We welcome the Commission's intentions to make **Erasmus+** more accessible with a higher budget and the interesting suggestion that 1,5 million teachers, school leaders and other education staff should participate in Erasmus+ exchange programmes. However, education trade unions consider the application to grants too bureaucratic and challenging. The European Commission should allow more **flexibility in mobility of certain individuals**, e.g. teachers and any other working adults to support double "learner and worker status" under Erasmus+ mobility in order to solve the challenges preventing teachers from participating in such mobility programmes, for example mobility of salary, insufficient grants, replacement in employment, mobility of social benefits, etc. We urge the European Commission to provide more support to teachers' participation in the Erasmus+ programme by removing these obstacles. Additional support-should be provided to disadvantaged students to participate in such programmes.

6.   Concerning the **mobility of students**, fairer financial support should be provided to mobile students as the recent Erasmus+ grants are not adequate to cover all the expenses students have in the

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 2 million additional individuals to benefit from Erasmus+ by 2020; 500.000 participants in long-term mobility of traineeship and apprenticeship; 25% of lifelong learning participation from 12%; reducing early school leaving under 5% from 10%; reduce EU-benchmark of low-achievers to 10% from 15%;

host countries. At the moment, this problem makes the Erasmus+ student mobility still exclusive and not equally **accessible to all**. The European Commission announced to introduce a so-called '**EU student card'** to offer a "new user-friendly way to store information on a person's academic records". For us it is not clear what the purpose of such a card would be beyond the offers the ISIC card provides to students. Data protection issues would need to be clarified and the question of who would cover the cost of such a card. From our perspective, such a card could enable students to access student discounts across Member States.

7. In the Communication and the setting up of the post-2020 education strategy, education should be seen as enriching the life of citizens and not as a tool for the labour market as it is about more than employment and developing the future workforce. The term '**European Education Area'** should be used with caution because education is a competency for individual Member States. Stronger focus should be put on building resilience, inclusion and wellbeing as well as skills in the European Education Area, which is about supporting Member States in these dimensions of education. The aim of the '**European Education Area'** must be to support Member States in improving life and opportunities for its citizens while contributing to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a European. Under this initiative the European Union could support policies on better connectivity of all schools and introduce a "**Europe day at school**" with a view to promote European identity.

8. In the post-2020 strategy Member States should be encouraged to decrease the high rate of "**low achiever"** students and adults (25% of student in science, 20% in maths) with appropriate support to them. Being a low-achiever is not only an educational issue as these people usually face **socio-economic and discriminatory disadvantages** which results in low achievement in schools. Thus, this problem should be solved with effective **government policies on housing, welfare and healthcare to tackle discrimination.**

9. [Key competences](), especially **the transversal skills,** are important and the role of teachers and research institutions is essential in developing how the key competences can be applied to teaching. Thus, social partners should be consulted and involved on both EU and national level to define the contents of these key competences and find the proper implementation. Whilst digitalisation, innovation, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) skills are now in the forefront of discussions, future EU policies should focus more on **arts** in all education sectors. The direction towards **teaching STEAM** (science, technology, engineering, *arts* and math) is a good trend. Arts need to be better supported as they have been neglected in recent years when the focus has been on skills for the labour market. Students need to be incentivised and motivated to **learn languages** which is essential in enhancing democratic values and European identity, but training and recruitment of **teachers of foreign language** should be supported when there is a shortage of language teachers in some countries.

10. Besides strengthening the implementation of the Directive 2005/36/EC on professional qualifications, we also see the need to enhance trust and **recognition of studies across all EU countries**. The announced '**Sorbonne Process'** aiming to recognise second level, third level, further education and higher education qualifications among countries sounds like a good idea but we believe that it should be based on ensuring the quality of education at all levels defined and monitored by national quality assurance systems. Therefore, further implementation of the Bologna Process, and developments of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) are necessary. Also, the **recognition of studies among**

education sectors inside borders is just as big of a challenge as recognition abroad. Thus, we ask that the **permeability** and recognition of studies at universities, vocational schools or secondary schools should be a priority area on the post-2020 strategy.

11. Concerning **early childhood education (ECE),** we agree with the Communications that countries should do more to ensure better access, quality and affordability of such education. However, as education is a human right, we demand to make high quality ECE available and accessible to all for free. We remind that early childhood education is essential for the inclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged children for whom support should be given from an early age on.   Early Childhood Education should be state provided and part of national school systems with qualified early childhood teachers and proper terms and conditions. Concerning the announced *Council Recommendation on quality framework for ECEC and benchmark* (95 % children 3 and upwards in ECEC) we underline that the benchmark on participation in ECE itself does not indicate the **quality of ECE**, which should be the core of a quality framework. Well-educated educators/teachers in ECE with **professional autonomy** must be included in the process. Furthermore, we believe that the EU should provide more support for more research and data collection on ECE by appropriate funding and making these funds more visible and accessible for education unions

We believe that the new European Commission's ET2020 Working Group on ECEC, should provide a platform to ministries on peer learning and exchange of knowledge and experiences, and make recommendations on how to support ECE professionals and continuous development of high quality ECE.

12. Concerning the future policies **on vocational education and training (VET)**, our Joint ETUCE and EFEE Statement on improving Vocational Education and Training in Europe underlined the role of social partners in education who are committed to making VET more attractive to society and the school community as a whole, including teachers, trainers, other education personnel, school leaders, students and their families. The post-2020 strategy priorities to improve VET should focus on **improving the role and status of VET teachers**, trainers, school leaders and other education personnel to better prepare students for life, further education and quality jobs, by ensuring that students are supported both in the pursuit of their studies and during apprenticeships **by qualified teacher professionals and trainers with up-to-date and appropriate skills**. Further investment is essential in the VET systems, in particular for teaching, workshops and equipment of VET institutes to keep up with technical developments and provide quality education and training to students and education personnel. Adult education should be supported by highly qualified adult learning teachers and appropriate public provision.

13. As for the future of apprenticeship, we ask the European Commission not only to focus on the mobility of apprentices but also on the **quality training provision of apprenticeships** provided in companies based on the quality criteria defined by ETUC with the involvement of ETUCE and which should be adopted and implemented by the Member States as the Council recommendation on European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. Ensuring fair apprenticeships for apprentices and support to teachers in preparation for and during the apprenticeship of students are essential priorities.

14. Concerning **higher education**, global rankings should provide only information and not be used as a tool for evaluating higher education outcomes and performance-based funding. European and other global **rankings** of European universities should not be misleading and they should be based on a range of categories – vocational, technological, cultural, science, business – as well as more information on social and academic life, and fees / costs of living in institutions.

The Commission's idea to work towards "**truly European universities**" raises several questions from our side, for example on how the funding would be ensured, how and by whom will the criteria of attendance under this label as an institute would be set up, whether students could spend a semester or complete a whole degree under such a setting and if they were multilingual. "**European universities**" should be publicly financed institutions and international competition between universities should be based on quality research and teaching. In order to ensure the quality implementation of such an idea, we ask the European Commission to involve the **education trade unions on consultation on this initiative**.

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Additional ETUCE views on
the post-2020 EU strategy on education

The Teaching profession

15. In the post-2020 EU strategy on education, the focus should be on teachers. There are major difficulties in many European countries to recruit teachers. Therefore, the teaching profession should be more **attractive and the recruitment and retention of teachers** should be a better supported issue. A **highly valued teaching profession** is a prerequisite for providing high quality education for all which is itself a precondition for social cohesion and democratic citizenship. It is therefore of the utmost importance to achieve by 2030 that the **teaching profession has a well-deserved status in society, political thinking and in the media**.

16. The **initial and continuous professional development (CPD)** of teachers should be of high quality and needs to be accessible, affordable and relevant. Improving the knowledge, skills and competences of teachers is essential from the perspective of lifelong learning, career development, and the high quality learning outcomes of students. In the post-2020 education strategies, free and high quality teacher training provided according to both individuals and schools should be a target.

17. Taking into consideration the negative effects of the crisis on the **teaching profession**, EU decision-makers should put quality of teaching, developing higher quality initial teacher education and continuous professional development, as well as raising standards in teaching into the focus of the post-2020 education strategy. Teachers should be entitled to better career opportunities, high job security and social protection, and **decent salary** reaching the same level in every country as of other tertiary graduated employees. By 2030, teachers and other education personnel in every European country should be given the space, tools, support, salary and **decent working conditions** to exercise their profession. This includes **defining** teachers' **working time** according to collective agreements in order to eliminate unacceptable **high number of working hours** including the defined teaching hours and time for other duties including administration, consultation, preparation, and research, etc. The **reinforcement of collective bargaining** is essential as the prerequisite to guarantee decent salaries, pensions and decent working conditions for an attractive and rewarding teaching profession.

Governance in education

18. **Democratic governance of education and collaborative leadership** in schools are the fundamental requirements of high quality education systems. This entails the essential involvement of education trade unions in the framework of effective **social dialogue** with education employer organisations, including governments, in designing and implementing (including monitoring and evaluating) necessary educational reforms. In the post-2020 strategy, the assurance of **effective social dialogue with education trade unions** should be a target.

19. In the last decade, **social dialogue** has been put under severe pressure almost everywhere across Europe. In order to deal with the many new challenges the education community is to face by 2030, social dialogue should be fully restored as one key practice conducive to growth, social cohesion and equality. At the same time, collective bargaining should be fully restored where it was dismantled and its scope should be expanded to include **teachers' professional issues** alongside their material

conditions.

20. Recommendations to countries on **improving teachers' professional status**, equitable and inclusive education could be included also in the **European Semester** process and should reflect therein in a Social Scoreboard that fosters upward convergence across Europe and ensures that the commitment of governments to deliver on the Education 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is met. This should go together with a strong call for meaningful involvement of the European and national education social partners at all stages of the Semester. However, it is worth recalling that any reform in the field of education and training receiving externally-generated contributions and assistance in the frame of the Structural Reform Support Programme should **ensure full transparency**, respecting the **autonomy of and involving the education social partners at all stages**.

Investment in education

21. Education in Europe should be seen from the perspective of respecting and enriching **cultural diversity while ensuring further integration of Europe** in line with putting democratic and European values at the heart of learning. Therefore, the announced European Education Area should not be developed as a European entity. It is crucial that **national competence** on education and training is ensured and respected in order to enrich cultural diversity and to improve the **quality and inclusiveness of schools**.

22. The post-2020 strategy should put particular emphasis on the need for further public **investment in education**, improving **equality and social inclusion** in schools, and **cooperative school leadership and teaching**. The use of digital technology needs appropriate and continuous **high investment** in schools regarding the equipment and software updates. The suggestion of 5% of GDP as a target of minimum investment in education is not challenging as only 9 countries of the EU have not achieved this goal yet. Thus, this target can be discouraging for some countries or even encourage them to decrease their investment to public education. The target should be more ambitious in order to ensure sustainable **investment** to high quality education and to **invest more** in order to facilitate innovation and creativity with the best learning and teaching equipment in schools.

23. The success of any strategy on education to be put in place for 2030 depends on **adequate financing**. Yet no financing commitment has been made. Despite recognising the context of the tight public finances for Member States, the European Commission fails to recognise that decades-old recipes such as **incentivising private investment** and the use of other investment tools such as the **European Fund for Strategic Investment**, allowing for public-partnerships in education, have proved not to be a solution, but a risk for quality in the long run. **Public-private partnerships** did not raise management standards and proved to be even more costly for public finances in the longer term. They did not raise management standards and only offered 'small changes': where they have been encouraged globally, efforts were self-interested, uncoordinated, small in scale and misdirected.

24. By 2030, instead, European Member States should be **incentivised to commit to boosting public investment in education**, by: a) making the case for additional flexibility and for excluding growth-enhancing investment in education from the calculation of the deficit and debt levels within the Growth

and Stability Pact; b) avoiding that precious resources are diverted from public services to incentives and subsidies for public-private partnerships; and c) by implementing fair, adequate and progressive tax systems. Member States should intensify their efforts to expand a revenue base that allows for public investment in education, this includes by setting taxation systems that are free of unfair loopholes, by combating corporate tax evasion and avoidance and by implementing financial transaction taxes and the Common Corporate Consolidate Tax Base to limit fiscal dumping and financial speculation across Europe.

Achieving gender balance in education

25. Gender equality is one of the founding pillars of the European Union and education has a significant impact on gender relations in society. Even though equal access to education for girls and boys is granted in most EU Member States, girls and women are still exposed to obstacles during the educational cycle that influence their careers and positions in the labour market. Despite the fact that women are often more successful in educational attainment than men and that women make up the majority of tertiary students in almost all EU Member States, the **segregation in study fields** for women and men remains a serious issue in the educational systems around Europe, especially in vocational education and training. More specifically, there is a higher concentration of boys in areas related to ICT, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), whereas girls tend to choose language, history and social science classes. Gender segregation in study fields creates challenges in women's school-to-labour transition and leads to gender pay gap considering that occupations which are traditionally male-dominated are usually the fastest-growing and more highly-paid occupations. Encouraging men and women to choose traditionally gender-atypical study fields and career paths can significantly boost the potential productive capacity and competitiveness of the European economy while ensuring gender equality in the research sector leads to future innovation and success. In order to achieve these goals teachers should be trained on how to promote gender equality and to critically assess teaching material.

26. In order to challenge gender segregation in study fields and gender stereotypes in society, it is of utmost importance to provide education employees, school management, career counsellors, and researchers with the know-how and practical tools that are necessary to promote a gender sensitive approach in education and consequently in society as a whole. **Sufficient and sustainable initial and continuous professional development on gender equality** for educational personnel and whole-school environment that promotes relationships based on equality and mutual respect between all education actors, should be the key elements of the post-2020 EU strategy on education.

27. It is impossible to achieve gender equality in education without overcoming **gender segregation in the teaching profession**. The majority of education personnel working in early childhood and primary education are women as these sectors are often associated with care-giving and are usually less-paid than jobs in other education sectors, whereas men are mainly employed in better-paid, higher-status positions (e.g. in tertiary education), as well as in leadership positions. Unequal distribution of household and care responsibilities, including parental leave taken mostly by women, also impacts the career progression of female teachers and researchers. The post-2020 EU strategy on education needs to ensure more **equal representation of women in decision-making** in all education sectors and research. It also has to go hand in hand with **better work-life balance regulations in Europe**, including parental and care leave. ETUCE also stresses that in order to make the teaching profession more

attractive to both men and women, the status of the teaching profession in EU countries needs to be enhanced by increasing education personnel's salaries and improving their working conditions.

Integration of migrants and refugees to education

28. The effective integration of young and adult migrants and refugees at all levels of education should be guaranteed and it must be a priority in the post-2020 EU strategy. ETUCE acknowledges the complexity of the educational inclusion of refugees and migrants across the different Member States. Therefore, setting up a **clear migrant education agenda for Europe** is of utmost importance.

29. Appropriate and sustainable investment must be provided to support the integration of migrants and refugees in education. Investment is necessary for adequate initial and continuous training of teachers and education staff to learn about **inclusive teaching** applicable for multicultural learning environments. The recognition of professional qualification of refugee and migrant teachers should be supported. Mainstreaming migrant education into education policies should be based on social dialogue with education unions. The possibility of **MOOCs and free digital learning** specifically aimed at migrants and refugees should be understood as a complement to enhance their social, civic, intercultural and citizenship competences.

Enhancing democratic citizenship and tolerance

30. Teachers are on the front-line of educating youngsters at risk of violent radicalisation or marginalisation in multicultural learning contexts. They are supported by education trade unions who play a key role in promoting **social inclusion and equity education**. Thus, the upcoming *Council Recommendation on common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching* should integrate education trade unions and teachers' views on how to support the provision of inclusive and EU values-minded teaching.

31. We strongly believe that further efforts should be made at European and national levels on the implementation of aims of the **Paris Declaration** (*Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, 2015*)[2] and this initiative should be at the forefront of the post-2020 EU strategy. In future discussions, the focus should be on how to enable and provide appropriate support to teachers, other education personnel and school heads to cope with challenging and sensitive tasks to achieve tolerance and non-discrimination in schools.

32. ETUCE promotes the use of **ICT for inclusion** as a tool for supporting personalised learning needs and promoting individual learning opportunities, in particular towards disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs. Hence, investing in digital skills to generate better training opportunities in ICT for inclusion for teachers and educational personnel, in particular for lifelong learning, is fundamental. MOOCs should be created with the relevant pedagogical support and content

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 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/news/2015/documents/citizenship-education-declaration_en.pdf

knowledge of teachers so as to provide inclusive and quality online courses for social integration.

Digital skills and ICT use in schools

33. The acquisition or improvement of basic digital skills is crucial to becoming digitally literate and be prepared for all the challenges and opportunities of fast-changing digital societies. Improving the digital skills of teachers requires the identification and accommodation of teachers' own ICT training needs for an efficient use of innovative digital teaching approaches. Thus, **full digital literacy of all teachers and students** must be a priority in the post-2020 strategy to achieve effective and responsible use of ICT in education.

34. ETUCE believes that the introduction, development and implementation of **complex digital skills** into the school-curricula e.g. coding or cyber-security teaching skills, is important but it should not necessarily be a priority on improving digital skills, including thinking digitally and ICT use in schools. Digitalisation processes in education must be conducted carefully and incrementally, complying with the national and EU data protection standards and in consultation with education trade unions as the representative voice of teachers in Europe. The digitalisation of schools and teaching complex digital skills entail that public schools need technical teaching staff and appropriate public funding.

35. **Digital IT governance** in education must serve primarily to reinforce the professional autonomy and pedagogy of teachers and educators towards their students as well as promoting digital citizenship and inclusion for all. **Privatisation and commercialisation of digital education** entails multiple dangers and proven devastating consequences. Technology industry and businesses are not the stakeholders to guarantee quality and inclusive education, since their main objective is to make profits and commercialise digital opportunities in education. Therefore, their actions assist to enlarge the 'digital divide', being detrimental for equity education and extremely harmful for vulnerable learners and for disadvantaged teachers and educational professionals.

The impact of Brexit on education

36. The EU education strategy post-2020 must not overlook the impact of Brexit on education and the teaching community. ETUCE calls on the Commission to protect and respect working-conditions, social protections and citizenship rights of both UK and EU teachers and other education professionals, in the UK and in the rest of Europe. Despite the Brexit, ETUCE also calls for the revitalisation of public investment in UK higher education and research; to consider the problematic of recognition of teaching qualifications for education professionals from the UK to the EU and from the EU to the UK as well as preserving the role of UK education trade unions in the framework of social dialogue both at UK and at EU levels.

Post-2020 from a Pan-European perspective

37. It is essential to consider that the post-2020 strategy, as any previously set-up EU goals, will provide indications to candidate countries, Eastern partnership and Neighbourhood countries on targets to be reached in order to catch up with EU countries. As the Bologna Process is a Pan-European cooperation covering all European countries, the question is to what extent the **European Education Area and the Sorbonne Process** will consider the education systems of non-EU and non-EU candidate countries.

38. In parallel, the elaboration and implementation of activities aimed at further developing education and training systems of the EU partner countries under the European Training Foundation should be undertaken in close cooperation and direct involvement of education social partners representing teachers and other education personnel. It is unfortunate that activities nowadays are structured without the participation and consultation of education social partners.

ETUCE welcomes several of the proposals of the European Commission mentioned in this initiative and would like to actively contribute to further consultations, for example via an observer seat in the preparatory working group of the Education Council on identifying targets for the post-2020 strategy on education.