



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale



ETUCE – European Trade Union Committee for Education
Education International - European Region

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Brussels, 2 February 2023
SF/zs/10328

TO: ETUCE Member Organisations

Message from ETUCE European Director Susan Flocken for 2023

I wish you all a good beginning of this new year!

2023 has indeed started for many colleagues with strong actions and strikes for better pay and working conditions and for the respect of trade union rights. Education trade unions across Europe are demanding the public to truly recognise the value of the teaching profession. ETUCE, the European Trade Union Committee for Education, calls on governments and education authorities to provide for an attractive teaching profession that builds on quality education for all and is publicly funded and well resourced.

In our world, amidst the diverse crises, these demands are necessary because we need change.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on all of us; in education, teachers and students alike suffer from the consequences;
- Escalating food, housing and energy prices and double digit inflation in many countries erode the already modest salaries of teachers.
- Many countries in Europe witness a severe teacher shortage as they struggle to recruit teaching professionals and retain experienced teachers.
- The increase of digitalisation in education reflects its growing impact on our daily life and many private companies often take advantage of education as an opportunity to gain profit to the detriment of students especially from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs who risk being left behind

Right-wing and populist movements are gaining momentum increasingly exerting pressure on democracy, diversity and the rule of law and respect for human rights, jeopardising professional autonomy of teachers as well as equality and inclusion in and through education.

Our message to politicians and decision-makers is clear: Governments must invest more in public education and ensure fair and decent salaries, pensions as well as

healthy and safe working conditions in order to keep experienced teachers in the profession and make teaching a viable career path for talented young professionals.

Education is a public good and access to quality education is a prerequisite to ensure inclusion and equality. Profit-making and accelerated privatisation coupled with the reluctance to ensure sufficient public funding for education are a threat to the democratic values that our society is founded on. In 2023 ETUCE will be holding politicians and governments accountable for their action or 'in'-action.

ETUCE works towards social change and like the response to the climate emergency, it requires bold steps to bring about a turning point to address the challenges of our society and ensure education remains accessible to all. To those who wish to gain profit from education we call out that education is not for sale!

Yet it is the war in Ukraine that has the biggest impact on our lives and on the education sector. Almost one year has passed now since the Russian assault on Ukraine; education trade unions and teachers across Europe are doing their utmost to support the millions of Ukrainians fleeing from the war; on our solidarity missions, we have witnessed how teachers, education communities and families are offering Ukrainian refugees safe shelter, a warm home and a helping hand. Teachers give a certain sense of normality to those who are forced to leave their country and who have to deal with personal losses and trauma. We are grateful to all colleagues for their continued solidarity with those effected by the terrible consequences of the invasion as well as for continuous donations to the solidarity fund.

As education trade unions, we are leaders of change. We work together to shape the future of education at national, regional and local level and across Europe. Democratic policy-making relies on impactful social dialogue, mutual respect and trust between the social partners. ETUCE continues promoting democracy and peace as we stand in solidarity with our colleagues from countries that are going through uncertain times.

In 2023 we continue fighting for teachers' rights and quality education. ETUCE member organisations from across Europe will be campaigning to enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Together we will bring to the attention of education policy-makers, governments, employers in education, students and society at large to the shortage of teachers that is threatening the quality of education and in some countries even the fundamental provision of education.

In this major education trade union campaign all ETUCE member organisations are invited to contribute, join events, engage and create local initiatives to promote and raise the status of the teaching profession and raise public attention on the 10 key action points set out by the ETUCE mid-term conference.

I look forward to our joint campaign and wish you all the best for this new year and inspiration to lead the path towards a better tomorrow for teachers!



Susan Flocken
ETUCE European Director