

Resolution

Fighting for the Future of Public Education in a Social Europe

Adopted by the ETUCE Conference, the Regional Conference of Education International, on 26-27 November 2024

Further to and consistent with the Resolutions adopted by the [9th and 10th EI Congress](#) in Buenos Aires in 2024, the [Resolutions](#) adopted by the ETUCE Conference in 2020, the ETUCE Extraordinary Conference in 2021, and the ETUCE Special Conference in Liège in 2022, this ETUCE Conference:

Acknowledges that:

1. Fighting for the future of public education in a Social Europe is ETUCE's mission. Public education is not only a public good, but also a human right. All workers in education need to join ETUCE in this fight, to defend the societal role of education for creating fairer future democracies.
2. Education is a public good and a human right. Public education is a cornerstone of democracy, social cohesion and human development. It is essential both for the life opportunities of individuals—children and students—and for the advancement of society as a whole, equipping all with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to navigate and contribute to society. It empowers citizens, promotes critical thinking, and fosters respect for diversity. However, public education in Europe is facing multiple challenges that threaten its quality, inclusiveness and sustainability.
3. The existing European and international frameworks are crucial for defining rules, principles and objectives for the future of the education sector and labour and employment policies: i.e. the European Education Area, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Semester policy cycle, the European Research Area, and the Sustainable Developments Goals.
4. The rise of the far right and extremism presents a significant challenge in the current political landscape of Europe, particularly among ongoing wars and conflicts both within and beyond its borders. The populist rhetoric from far-right groups gains traction by exploiting fears and

- 33 insecurities generated by economic instability. The European elections taking place in June
34 2024 have been a crucial moment to define the political guidance of the European Union.
- 35 5. The emergence of far-right parties not only threatens democratic political establishments but
36 also raises concerns about the direction of the European Union and, more broadly, of
37 European countries. Addressing the rise of the far right demands a multifaceted approach,
38 encompassing socio-economic policies, cultural integration efforts, and robust defence of
39 democratic values to safeguard against the erosion of fundamental freedoms and rights.
- 40 6. An unprecedented shortage of teachers is affecting many European countries. The lack of
41 attractiveness of the teaching profession, caused amongst others by low salaries and
42 pensions, precarious and poor working conditions, the lack of recognition for the profession,
43 high workload and limited career prospects, is a major factor behind this shortage. Moreover,
44 the teaching workforce is ageing and not sufficiently diverse, reflecting the social inequalities
45 that persist in the education system.
- 46 7. Meaningful collective bargaining and strong social dialogue are not only beneficial for
47 education workers, but also for quality and inclusive education for all and for the society, by
48 ensuring that teachers have adequate resources, training and autonomy to perform their tasks
49 effectively. Collective bargaining can also enhance the social status and recognition of
50 teachers, which help to attract and retain qualified and motivated professionals in the
51 education sector. Furthermore, collective bargaining can promote social justice and equity by
52 addressing the needs and interests of diverse and marginalised groups in education, such as
53 for example, migrants, refugees and persons with disabilities. Social dialogue is particularly
54 needed for addressing gender inequalities in the teaching profession and wider society,
55 including gender stereotypes and gender segregation in education sectors, promoting women
56 in decision-making, tackling gender pay and pension gaps, and combatting gender-based
57 violence and harassment, and combatting governments that want to bypass social dialogue.
- 58 8. Embedding environmental sustainability into curricula is of critical importance as it requires
59 new skills and approaches, and thus it must be properly resourced to fund the necessary
60 teaching material and training for teachers. To tackle the environmental challenge, significant
61 investments must be made to renovate school and university buildings, including a well-
62 thought using of natural resources such as water, energy, and a real environmental
63 consideration in daily management such as purchasing, recycling, biodiversity, mobility, etc.
64 Similarly, the digital transition is transforming teaching methods and impacting on the
65 professional autonomy of teachers and researchers.
- 66 9. The digital transition requires appropriate resources and that teachers have a final say in the
67 education systems and institutions, enabling them and other education professionals to
68 effectively respond to the evolving environment. Budgetary choices will have an impact on
69 public services. Current trends tend to move in the direction of savings rather than
70 investments in these sectors. These budget cuts or lack of investment will directly affect
71 schools and in turn employees, potential candidates, young people and the elderly. They will
72 affect those who are vulnerable or in financial difficulty even more.
- 73 10. Evidence shows a constant decrease of public investments in education in the European OECD
74 countries while private investments remain steady: such trends are currently increasing the
75 risk of privatisation and commercialisation of education, in particular through investment for

76 technological solutions applied to education. This privatisation impacts the content of our
77 education and the professional autonomy of the education personnel.

78 **Believes that:**

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80 1. Addressing the teacher shortage is a priority for ensuring the future of public education in a
81 Social Europe. National governments shall guarantee more public investment in public
82 education, to guarantee decent and competitive salaries, pensions and working conditions for
83 teachers and other education professionals, to enhance their professional autonomy and
84 status, to support their continuous professional development and well-being, and to foster
85 collegial governance and social dialogue in education institutions.

86 2. Meaningful social dialogue and collective bargaining with strong education trade unions are
87 essential for a democratic and inclusive education system. They enable the participation and
88 representation of education staff in the decision-making processes that affect their
89 professional and personal lives. They also foster a culture of collaboration and mutual respect
90 among the different stakeholders in the education sector, such as governments, employers,
91 parents, students and civil society.

92 3. It is a priority for education trade unions to address equality and inclusion in the context of
93 trade union renewal, accommodating the needs of education personnel from various
94 backgrounds, and to promote internal adaptation of the trade unions as organisation to better
95 tackle emerging trends in the world of labour and reinforce alliances with civil society and
96 other organisations that supportive of the unions' demands.

97 4. It is essential to continue providing support and solidarity among European trade unions in
98 education to engage in collective bargaining. Collective bargaining can cover a wide range of
99 issues, such as salaries, working time, health and safety, gender equality, professional
100 development, professional autonomy and academic freedom, curriculum, assessment and
101 grievance procedures. Through collective bargaining, education workers can secure better
102 working conditions.

103 5. National governments and education authorities must resist the privatisation trends in the
104 education sector, which undermine education as a public good and create market-driven
105 competition, segregation and exclusion in the sector. Private education system, when it does
106 not integrate public service obligations, should not receive public funds. The ETUCE
107 Conference advocates for a public education system that is free of charge, universal, equitable
108 and democratic, that respects human rights and professional autonomy and academic
109 freedom, and that provides quality and inclusive education for all regardless of their
110 background and abilities. Such a system must prioritize children's and students' right to high-
111 quality education as a foundation for personal development and social inclusion.

112 6. The potential of digital technologies should be at the service of enhancing teaching and
113 learning. It is necessary to keep a human-centred approach to digitalisation, that respects
114 pedagogical principles, ethical standards and social justice. Safeguard must also be put in
115 place to prevent risks to privacy, data protection, cyber-security and digital literacy. It is
116 necessary to keep a human-centred approach to digitalisation, that respects pedagogical
117 principles, ethical standards and social justice. Similarly, a future-proof education is an

118 education that becomes more environmentally sustainable and contributes to raising
119 awareness about climate change and ecological citizenship.

120 7. Education plays a key role for the integration of people with disadvantages, e.g. migrants,
121 refugees and asylum seekers. Education can foster intercultural dialogue, mutual
122 understanding and solidarity among different groups in society. However, there exists a clear
123 need for more resources and support for teachers who work with students with diverse needs,
124 as well as for more recognition and valorisation of their contribution to social inclusion.

125 8. ETUCE is convinced of the importance of public services such as schools. Public services are an
126 essential pillar in ensuring a just society. Together, they form "the collective wealth, the only
127 wealth of those who have no individual wealth".

128 **Asserts the commitment of ETUCE Member Organisations to:**

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130 1. Advocate for strong and unwavering support to education as a universal public good and
131 human right, by ensuring and increase of sustainable and reliable public funding from national
132 governments and relevant authorities as the prerequisite for guaranteeing quality and
133 inclusive education for all and for improving working conditions, salaries and pensions in the
134 sector.

135 2. Fight for the recognition and respect of education trade unions' prerogatives and for their
136 effective involvement in national and European social dialogue and collective bargaining.
137 Education trade unions are the only legitimate collective voice of education workers in Europe
138 and every external interference with their freedom of association shall be opposed.

139 3. Mobilise for upholding and strengthening social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels,
140 particularly reinforcing national practices, by setting strategies aiming at the improvement of
141 employment and working conditions of teachers, school leaders, academics, researchers and
142 other education personnel, and for the renewal and organising of trade union organisations.

143 4. Keep on defending the right to trade union action. The right of association, the right to
144 collective action (including the right to strike) and the right to freedom of expression are
145 essential in a democracy and as a countervailing force in collective bargaining.

146 5. Amplify and expound EI's "Go Public Fund Education" campaign in the European context.