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European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

ETUCE Education Investment Priorities for Recovery and Resilience

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<http://www.ei-ie.org>

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The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), representing 132 education trade unions from all levels of education in 52 countries, e.g. more than 11 million education workers, appreciates the emphasis placed on education by the latest cycles of the European Semester¹, by the European Commission's [Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021](#), by the [Next Generation EU](#), and by the [Proposal for a Regulation](#) establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility. In response, and in keeping with the overarching priorities outlined in the European Commission package of policy initiatives including the Communications on [Achieving the European Education Area](#)², the [European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience](#)³ and [A new ERA for Research and Innovation](#)⁴, ETUCE urges the Member States to endorse the provisional agreement by the European Parliament and Council negotiators on the European Recovery Fund and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, and recommends addressing the following challenges, priorities and investment needs in the education sector for recovery, resilience and just transition.

Public education is the key to boosting social fairness and Europe's overall sustainable growth potential. The disruption caused by school closures and the prospects of economic depression due to the global pandemic is without precedent, with dramatic consequences for society. It aggravated pre-existing social tensions, weakened social cohesion, and amplified inequalities at all levels. Educational equality plays an important role for recovery and economic development based on high living standards and quality employment through skills and competences to adapt to future innovation-intensive jobs. It serves as a counterforce to division in society in its ability to foster mutual understanding, integration, and fairness.

Good education systems will require public investment for public purposes that serve the public good. It is imperative that the Stability and Growth Pact rules are revised to allow for a fiscal framework that excludes public education, training, and research investment from the calculation of the deficit and debt levels. The value of public education to society cannot be captured by measuring its cost.

Financing must be adequate to produce recovery rather than accentuate weaknesses in public services and the economy, and it should include what we have learned during the pandemic. Investing in teachers and educators, whose contribution has proved essential to recovery in education, and supporting people who have been hit hardest and have the greatest needs should be prioritised. They should not come out of the crisis carrying a greater burden of injustice than they bore during or before.

¹ See: [ETUCE Thematic overview](#) of the Country Reports 2020 in the education and training field, 2020.

² See: [ETUCE Position](#) on the European Skills Agenda, 2020.

³ See: [ETUCE Position](#) "Right to quality and inclusive education and sustainable public investment must be the key of the European Education Area 2025", 2020.

⁴ See: [ETUCE Position](#) on A new ERA for Research and Innovation, 2020.

Effective social dialogue at all levels and the real participation and consultation of education trade unions in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive and sustainable education policy, reforms and investment within the national Recovery and Resilience Plans (nRRP), according to national laws and practices, is a pre-condition to ensure that the disruptions caused by the global pandemic do not translate into an even bigger crisis in the education sector and for society, and to achieve reform outcomes that are shared, sustainable and future-proof.

Investment needs and gaps

1. **Strengthen public education systems through sufficient education financing** at a level of at least 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to reverse the decade-long trend of decreasing investment.
2. **Boost public investment in basic research** as most innovation rests on publicly funded basic research, including in such areas of public interest as the environment and public health.
3. **Remove further barriers to access education posed by the rationalisation of school infrastructure**, both in urban and rural area, by investing in sustainable, low-carbon emissions, and safe school buildings as well as in secure, quality, digital infrastructure which protects human and privacy rights.
4. **Invest in the capacity of the public sector to develop digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning** to ensure sustainability of investment and affordability, and through social partnership, protect the interests of learners.

Just transition measures

5. **Improve employment, job security, salaries, working conditions, opportunities for career progression and initial and continuous professional development** for teachers and educators across Europe to address an increasingly diverse school population.
6. **Recognise the unequal impact of the Covid-19, and broaden the scope of investment to vulnerabilities in access to equitable and quality, all-inclusive education and training systems** through targeted measures focusing on the most disadvantaged, including migrant and refugee children, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and all those affected by pre-existing inequalities in access to education, including by providing additional support to make sure students and education personnel have access to the adequate and necessary digital material and internet connectivity facilities needed for digital teaching and learning.
7. **Ensure that new EU financing opportunities do not fall prey to for-profit private commercial interests** of organisations offering new models of hybrid teaching and learning and/or digital material in education, through outsourcing, public-private partnerships, or even through the promotion of reforms whereby private ed-tech companies would be embedded in public education systems.
8. **Target education funding to education personnel's in-service digital training**, both initial and continuous, that is tailored to teachers and educators' needs and aligns with students' learning experience.
9. **Orient funding to educate for sustainable development and to foster knowledge about the multifaceted nature of climate change** and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Resilience

10. **Align investment and reform priorities with the commitments to achieve and to fully implement the UN Sustainable Development Goal four as well as the first principle of**

the European Pillar of Social Rights on quality education for all. This would require focusing resources and policies on the development of a future-oriented, sustainable approach to skills, knowledge, and competencies, rather than a narrow focus on skills for the contingent needs of the labour market.

11. **Increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and address the severe teacher shortage** threatening the sustainability of education systems across 24 of 28 European countries by improving employment and working conditions, respecting, and enhancing professional rights of teachers and educators.
12. **The potential benefits of digital technologies in education and training can only be reached** if issues of technological development, artificial intelligence, learning analytics, data mining, and other new digital content that supports education are developed in partnership with educators and support their professional autonomy.
13. **Safeguard the public provision and governance of education systems from the influence of private sector investment and actors;** and make clear that private market opportunities are not automatically compatible with quality public education, accountability, responsibility, public scrutiny, and transparency.
14. **Protect democratic collegial governance of higher education and research institutions.** Business orientation and funding may limit academic freedom by steering research to business priorities and interests, instead of public goods that serve society.