



# **RESOLUTION**

## **Campaigning to enhance the Teaching Profession for Solidarity, Democracy, Equality and Sustainability**

Adopted by the ETUCE Conference, the Regional Conference of Education International, on 1-2 December 2020

Further to and consistent with the Resolutions adopted by the 8th EI Congress in Bangkok in 2019, the Resolutions adopted at the ETUCE Conference in Belgrade in 2016 and at the Special Conference in Athens in 2018, this ETUCE Conference

### **Acknowledges that:**

1. In the past decade, socio-economic inequalities, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, unequal distribution of wealth, unequal access to resources, and a prevailing individualistic approach at the expense of a collective one, have led to a number of issues that challenge the core principles of democracy, solidarity, non-discrimination, the rule of law, equality, and respect for human dignity on which our society is built. While we witness the spread of populism, right-wing and conservative political discourses as well as of neo-liberal policies, fuelling radicalisation, xenophobia, stereotypes and extremist attacks, migration as well as the fourth industrial revolution and climate emergency policies are issues that are not properly and sufficiently addressed by the European institutions and national governments.
2. In 2020, the whole world including the European region faced an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis linked to the outbreak of the COVID-19. This crisis has had and will have a major impact on the education sector, education personnel and students alike, as well as on the implementation of fundamental and trade union rights, quality of social dialogue, equality, democracy, and inclusion in Europe. Due to measures of quarantine and isolation introduced by most European governments, schools, universities and other education institutions were forced to move to remote education provision. This has raised a number of serious challenges for education personnel, from the lack of digital tools, concerns of personal data protection, academic freedom and professional autonomy, including teacher training on how to teach remotely to many issues regarding continued employment, continued pay and social benefits, workload, work-life balance, and psychosocial well-being.
3. The closing of schools and universities due to lockdowns made everyone realize how essential education institutions are and the key role they play in society. Education facilities do more than just educate learners. They offer them shelter, care, safety, structure and the opportunity for interaction with their peers and their trusted teachers and other education personnel. The crisis therefore was an eye-opener on the various roles taken on by the education department and its personnel and what is expected from



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them by society. Already a few months of remote teaching and learning have laid bare crucial overall learning losses and negative impacts on students' wellbeing and involvement in learning due to the absence of face-to-face classroom education. It shows clearly that although online or otherwise remote teaching can be of additional value, it can never replace face-to-face education.

4. Instead of enhancing a coherent approach in solidarity to jointly address these challenges and find common solutions, many governments are hiding behind national interests, reversing the successes that have been achieved in the field of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination and replacing them with stigmas, anti-democratic and anti-trade union processes and the elimination of human rights.
5. As Europe is spiraling into the deepest recession of the last century in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and governments are forecast to be under pressure to increase social protection and support for public health while public debt and deficit levels are rising to unprecedented heights, some European countries appear reluctant to commit to boosting public investment in education for sustainable, sufficient and equitable education systems.
6. As Europe is spiraling into the deepest recession of the last century in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and governments are forecast to be under pressure to increase social protection and support for public health while public debt and deficit levels are rising to unprecedented heights, some European countries are not willing to commit to boosting public investment in education for sustainable, sufficient and equitable education systems.
7. Furthermore, the catastrophic results of the unsustainable approach to our environment and its natural resources cannot be ignored anymore. The past 19 years (since 1998) have been the hottest years on record leading to rising sea levels, more frequent natural disasters, destruction of the forests and lakes, dangerous level of air pollution, food and water shortages, biodiversity loss and all other serious consequences of the environmental crisis. Environmental problems also significantly widen socio-economic gaps between people, countries, and regions having a more severe impact on disadvantaged social groups and economically poorer countries.
8. A number of frameworks clearly outline the aims and targets for solidarity, democracy, equality, and sustainability, including the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), the European Pillar of Social Rights, the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) on gender equality, [Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#), a [European Green Deal](#), and other international and European instruments. These principles are also outlined in the education focused policy documents, e.g. '[A New Skills Agenda for Europe](#)', European Commission's Communications on '[Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies](#)' and '[Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture](#)'. However, the monitoring of their implementation shows that Europe is far from achieving even the bare minimum of the set-up targets. The lack of political will and public investment to implement the equality and non-discrimination strategies and policies are named among key reasons for many inequalities still existing in Europe.

## Notes that:

9. All the above-mentioned tendencies have an undeniable impact on our education systems, education community and education personnel, and therefore, on education trade unions. Education systems need to develop, innovate and transform in order to be able to prepare open-minded, culturally sensitive and responsible citizens with solid democratic values, while preserving and strengthening the free provision of public education.



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10. Acknowledging the diversity of the workforce, it is important that diversity is reflected in trade unions' membership and that trade unions represent a wide range of different needs of the workforce in the education sector.
11. In times of societal change, pandemic viruses, migration and the refugee crises, and rising individualism, human rights and democratic citizenship education as well as sustainable development are fundamental in educating committed, critical-thinking and active citizens and providing a sense of belonging and opportunities for active participation for all learners, especially for those disadvantaged and marginalised. We are citizens of a planet in danger. This requires comprehensive and practical curriculum and supportive policy frameworks on citizenship education. Sufficient time within the schedule, clear guidelines for addressing these issues and professional support for teachers, academics, and other education personnel are vital.
12. Correlations between different subjects and elements within the education system need to be reviewed to initiate a process of thinking differently with a view to saving not only our climate but our planet as a whole. We, as a society need to adopt a significantly more sustainable way of life and this must start and be reflected in education.
13. Teachers, academics, and other education personnel also face an increasing diversity among learners coming from different realities, languages, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and often feel unprepared not only to address the needs of all learners but also to deal with such challenges, as personal identity conflicts, controversial discussions, fake news and influence of social media on students' minds, and many other.
14. The increasing diversity also requires schools and education systems in which all learners of different socioeconomic, language and cultural backgrounds can meet each other, interact and learn from each other. Especially in schools where learners from disadvantaged and very diverse backgrounds are concentrated, it is difficult to offer equal chances to learners and to address the challenges they face. This is a major issue still not addressed well enough, not only in terms of teacher training, but also in terms of financing of education and the attractiveness of the profession.
15. Education institutions and an education sector built on principles of equal opportunities, democratic governance, enhancement of diversity of views and backgrounds, academic freedom and professional autonomy for teachers and other education personnel, are inherent elements of the sustainable development of education and of the European society at large, and are fundamental for ensuring that the pronounced principles of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination in education and the teaching profession lead to concrete results and do not remain a mere declaration of rights.
16. For high quality, inclusive and sustainable education systems based on principles of equality and democracy, an attractive teaching profession is of utmost importance with high status in the society, decent salaries and pensions, decent working conditions including adequate workload, continuous professional development adapted to teachers' needs, supportive, safe and healthy workplaces, both from a physical and psychosocial perspective, and attractive career opportunities. An attractive teaching profession also means more equal and diverse education personnel.
17. Digitalisation in the education sector and remote teaching are set to create a wide array of new challenges for the teaching profession and the education community as a whole. Notable areas of concern include the development of teaching and learning policies and practices adequate for the digital era, questions surrounding the impact of the use of new technologies on the employment and working conditions



of education employees, privatisation and commercialisation of digital teaching and learning tools, personal data protection and issues surrounding the use of Artificial Intelligence in education systems, with particular regards to ethical concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic and a forced transition to remote teaching has impacted and exposed a number of major issues related to the working time, workload, work-life balance, and health and safety (including psychosocial wellbeing) of education personnel that need to be addressed to ensure adequate and attractive working conditions in the education sector.

18. Further to this, the introduction of, and increasing pressure, to use digital tools to assist teaching and learning purposes leads to growing concerns for the future of the teaching profession. Indeed, digital technologies adapted to the education sector are being sold to governments and education institutions as innovative teaching techniques, and risk being misused as an alternative to teachers. This would severely endanger the quality of education, as teachers, and teacher/student interaction are central to developing knowledge on a specific subject, as well as equality, critical thinking, and social and emotional skills. The COVID-19 crisis clearly showed that teachers are at the core of the education and learning process. While large parts of the education systems across Europe closed schools, universities and other education institutions, and moved their coursework and teaching online, education personnel showed an extraordinary flexibility and ability to adapt to new circumstances and new ways of teaching to maintain the pedagogical link with students and the connection with parents and communities. It is therefore of utmost importance that digital technologies, when introduced into education institutions and teaching and learning methods, do not lead to the deprofessionalisation of educators, and fully respect their professional autonomy and academic freedom. Instead, education professionals should be involved and supported by public investment in developing technologies, digital tools, and teaching content for education and in taking decisions on when and how to use them.
19. The introduction of new, digital, and innovative tools in teaching and learning practices requires an adequate level of public funding. Failing to address this issue would deepen existing inequalities in access to quality education, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic where the digital divide and unequal access to distance teaching and learning material was closely linked to the socio-economic and geographical background of students and teachers. Already, governments across Europe advocate for an increase in public/private partnerships as a means to integrate digital tools in education. The collective reflection around these aforementioned points and digitalisation in education in the wider sense will require the inclusion of, as a central point of focus, the expertise, views and experiences of education trade unions at all levels.
20. Social dialogue is an inherent mechanism of the democratic society. Europe can only be a place of social progress, social justice and economic development, when the rights of education personnel to participate, through their representative education trade unions in the process of consultation, proposal creation and negotiations on decent work and fair working conditions, design and implementation of education policies, is respected and promoted. Furthermore, as an effective, meaningful and inclusive mechanism governing relations between the education workforce and employers, as well as governments, at all levels, namely local, regional, national and European, social dialogue remains vital to the achievement of sustainable development across Europe. Respecting the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, supporting the social partners in their capacity to engage in social dialogue are pre-conditions to unleash Europe's inclusive and sustainable growth potential and to address the far-reaching social consequences of the crisis in education and in society.
21. The principle of solidarity is at the core of trade unions' existence and trade union rights. In the face of such threats as commercialisation and privatisation of education, populism and right-wing political discourse, climate crisis and attacks on trade union rights, education trade unions should collaborate not only with each other at regional, national, European and global level, but also within the whole



education trade union movement and with other relevant stakeholders in education. Furthermore, the burden set by the need to adapt to a fast-changing society should not be borne by the education sector alone: it is a shared responsibility of all actors in civil society.

22. Principles of solidarity, equality and enhanced diversity are also crucial for the structure of education trade unions themselves. With a view to regaining their place in the society and strengthening their voice and role, education trade unions need to be more active by addressing the needs of all education personnel, promoting diversity of views and backgrounds among their members, and by engaging with those who are most marginalised or under-represented in the education sector.

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

23. Continue promoting the central role of teaching in education within European and national education policies as well as in their implementation;
24. Strengthening the work on the issues of equality, inclusion, and sustainable development in the education and teaching profession and enhancing these topics through social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels;
25. Working towards strengthening social dialogue and trade union rights, and ensuring that social partners are fully recognised as equal partners in the sectoral social dialogue in education at all levels and at all times, even during crises and extraordinary circumstances;
26. Demanding an increase in investment in public education and the design of public education budgets in a manner that provides sufficient, predictable and sustainable public resources, alongside demanding governments' accountability, public scrutiny and transparency of education budgets to assess the equitable distribution of public resources and to ensure that they meet the needs of those most marginalised in our society;
27. Mobilising against all attempts to expose education systems to marketisation, privatisation and commercialisation, that pose a threat to the broader social and collective objectives of education, such as those of equity, social cohesion and inclusion;
28. Advocating to strengthen the legal and ethical framework, public funding of infrastructure and ICT equipment, as well as initial teacher education and continuous professional development, to ensure that both teachers and students will benefit from digitalisation;
29. Lobbying for an over-arching and effective integration of human rights, democratic citizenship and sustainable development education in all education systems in the European region. Cooperating in demanding the conditions for teachers to exercise their professional responsibility in developing education in these areas based on their professional autonomy, professional ethics and academic freedom;
30. Ensuring the active involvement of education trade unions in the design and monitoring of all education policy reforms and developments (including teacher training) at European, national, and local level, including discussions on teaching environmental issues based on the knowledge of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals which constitute a solid basis for building an environmentally sustainable, economically and socially fairer world;



31. Building the capacity of education trade unions and their affiliates on issues of equality, inclusion, democracy, and sustainable development;
32. Promoting a holistic perspective of the education system which focuses on the integration of every person in the society and preparing responsible citizens who are aware of their rights and obligations and value mutual respect, equal opportunities and diversity;
33. Demanding high-quality initial and continuous professional development, as well as professional support for teachers, academics, and other education personnel, according to their needs, in providing truly inclusive, culturally and socially diverse education with up-to-date tools and methods (including digital means, language training and teacher assistance);
34. Promoting education institutions built on principles of equality and inclusion, shared governance and democratic culture, teamwork and peer support, academic freedom, freedom of opinion and expression and pedagogical and professional autonomy of teachers and other education personnel;
35. Working to promote the attractiveness of the teaching profession where all education personnel regardless of their cultural or socio-economic background, develop and progress professionally and in terms of their career, have better remuneration, dignified working conditions and proper work-life balance, and are highly motivated to do their work;
36. Collaborating and standing in solidarity with other trade unions within the education sector and in the global trade union movement, as well as cooperating with other stakeholders in education (e.g. students and parents movements, local communities, NGOs, etc.) to combat socio-economic inequalities and undemocratic and neo-liberal approaches;
37. Whilst preserving the full respect for national differences in legal frameworks, cultures, structures, traditions and approaches, ensuring a democratic and equality culture within trade union structures and policies;
38. Working towards growing as unions by organising, recruiting, developing, engaging and mobilising the membership in different contexts and from different backgrounds, including under-represented groups. This includes attracting, organising and stimulating active participation of young members within education trade unions.

**Mandates the ETUCE Committee to:**

39. Set up a taskforce or working group to update the ETUCE education policy paper with a view to developing a campaign on raising the status and improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession for equitable, inclusive and sustainable education.