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2021 ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality

Recommendation on

The Role of Education Trade Unions in Ensuring Equality and Inclusion in Education in Times of Emergency

The 2021 meeting of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality puts forward for adoption by the ETUCE Committee the following recommendations on the role of education trade unions in ensuring equality and inclusion in education in times of emergency.

The Standing Committee for Equality remarks that the [COVID-19 crisis](#) and the switching to emergency teaching and learning have caused a huge impact on teachers, academics and other education personnel, and sorely deepened inequalities and exclusion.

The Standing Committee for Equality acknowledges that many of these urging challenges are not the mere result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are the result of the combination of multiple crises - economic, political and social crises. The economic crisis and the recession resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic add further constraints on equality and inclusion in education. Additionally, the environmental emergency causes unprecedented threats as the result of growing models that solely focus on profit-making and are incompatible with a sustainable and democratic development. All these crises affect those people worse who are vulnerable and risk being excluded from education, in particular people with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic minorities and rural communities, persons with disabilities and special needs. Furthermore, the emergency measures implemented by governments are especially hard on women and sectors with the majority of female employees, such as education.

Education is crucial to drive the social change needed to ensure a sustainable and equitable future, and education trade unions play a crucial role in promoting diversity, equality and inclusion in times of emergency and lead in solidarity on the social reforms to shape a future society based on principles of democracy, social justice, fairness, and sustainability.

Therefore, with the view to ensure the respect and progress of inclusion and equality in education during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and in potential future health, socio-economic, environmental or other crises, member organisations are encouraged to:

- Ensure that all emergency teaching measures and arrangements (e.g. remote/hybrid teaching) put in place by governments during the crisis, are designed and agreed upon with education trade unions, and remain emergency measures. They are not precedents for a 'new normal' in the future;
- Ensure that teachers, academics, and other education personnel are actively involved when new pedagogical approaches and organisational models in education are developed to address various crises;

- Ensure safe and healthy working and learning environments with a view to leaving no teacher nor student behind and to ensure that vulnerable social groups, including migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, socio-economically disadvantaged people, ethnic minorities, LGBTI persons, different age groups, and others, are provided with targeted support and protection;
- Strengthen and make use of social dialogue and collective bargaining instruments to negotiate with governments and education authorities for provision of sufficient time, financial and staff resources, proper technical equipment and infrastructure in education, as well as for beneficial alternatives to emergency education that ensure inclusive and supportive teaching and learning environments (e.g. adapted curriculum, smaller classes, recruitment of additional teachers and support personnel, etc.);
- Lobby for increased sustainable public funding in inclusive education, including allocation of extra resources for emergency situations, and advocate for management and redistribution of public resources in recovery programmes to promote public education, including measures that tackle social exclusion and inequalities among learners and in the education sector;
- Build the capacity of their affiliates to cope with emergency situations through training and various means of professional support, as well as by encouraging their affiliates to cooperate and share their experiences (e.g. trainings and platforms for ensuring inclusion during online teaching, online trade union activism, support for mental health, etc.);
- Address the disproportionate impact of emergency situations on all inequalities and especially on gender equality in the education sector and in society including the increased professional workload and women's unpaid care work, disrupted work-life balance, psychosocial wellbeing, inequalities in pay and employment conditions, and other working conditions issues;
- Lobby for digital teaching as a supportive tool for delivering high-quality and inclusive education, not as a cheap instrument to substitute face-to-face teaching nor to replace education personnel, while taking care that teachers' professional autonomy is recognised and respected;
- Continue advocating to raise the status of all teaching professionals, including education support personnel, and emphasising the key role of education personnel in providing equality and inclusion support in wider society;
- Advocate for regular risk assessments in education and education institutions and demand adequate compensation for extra workload taken up by education personnel to ensure equality and inclusion in education in times of emergency;
- Lobby for better alignment of the social security support in times of emergency to ensure that education institutions focus on delivering high-quality education and are not used as substitutes for social support institutions.