



Education International

Internationale de l'Education

Internacional de la Educación

ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

ETUCE priorities on the AGS 2018

Annex to the ETUC annual document "ETUC for Growth and Social Progress 2018"

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

EUROPEAN REGION- ETUCE

President

Christine BLOWER

Vice-Presidents

Odile CORDELIER
Andreas KELLER
Trudy KERPERIEN
Dorte LANGE
Galina MERKULOVA
Branimir STRUKELJ



5, Bd du Roi Albert II, 9th
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92
Fax +32 2 224 06 94
secretariat@csee-etuce.org
<http://www.csee-etuce.org>

European Director

Susan FLOCKEN

Treasurer

Mike JENNINGS

September 2017

This paper outlines policy challenges and priorities for the education sector in the 2018 Annual Growth Survey (AGS). The paper is in line with the ETUC priorities on the AGS 2018.

- a. **The case for investing in universal, free, high-quality education could not be more compelling.** A study by the University of Nottingham (ETUCE, 2017) shows that when Member States implemented cuts to public expenditure, there was often a decline in educational expenditure as a percentage of total public expenditure and/or in nominal terms. Despite the assumption that education had experienced a delayed reaction to the financial crisis and only began to feel the real effects in 2010 (OECD, 2015), many Member States had already reduced education spending as a percentage of total public expenditure in 2008 and 2009.
- b. According to the EU Spring economic forecast, economic recovery is in place in all EU Member States, although this less than robust recovery will not overcome the detrimental effects of a 'lost decade' of recession and low growth. The social consequences of the recession have increased the need and demand for social protections. Education spending has been particularly squeezed and individual **Member States appear reluctant to commit to boosting lagging investment in education.**
- c. **Education is a key institution for both fairness and economic prosperity.** From a longer-term perspective, both economies and societies can prosper when education is given priority. Paradoxically, it continues to suffer with the high potential to impact on growth and employment. Because so much time has already passed with weak expenditure, the damage to the economy and society is being felt. Failure to address the issue results in a vicious circle of extended recessions, continued pressure on social protection spending, and a crowding out of investment in education and human capital development.
- d. The vital calls to expand the provision of and access to quality education sit alongside the demands to restraint public investment. **Continuous pressure on education budget coupled with increasing societal demands for educational effectiveness expose education to privatisation pressures.** This appears in multiple forms including in the contracting-out of educational services, in the increase in transfers of costs to students and households and in the adoption of management practices in the direction of education institution, including in shifts towards individualised and performance-related pay of teachers and other education personnel. In some cases, countries are even privatising education or parts of it and loosening or breaking the vital link between education and democracy. Private, for-profit education has exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and undermined social solidarity. And, often, proves more costly for public finances in the longer term.

- e. **Europe's capacity to fully recover strongly relies on the ability of Member States to increase the level of educational outcomes of its population, and to reduce inequalities.** There is not a firewall between society and the workplace. If there are problems of tolerance and bigotry, there will be problems at the workplace. If managers or workers create stress and compete rather than cooperate, it will poison the workplace just as it damages neighbourhoods.
- f. Educational objectives, together with employment and social considerations, were a priority in the most recent European Semester cycles. However, the **dominance of economic issues sometimes overshadowed broad education policy objectives that are vital to life and society as well as the economy, and relegated education policy to be only a tool of a supply-side economic policy.**
- g. A focus on narrow skills and an emphasis on the *marketable* aspects of education and on *commercialisation* of educational outcomes, especially in higher education, is beginning to emerge in some countries. However, the intangible aspects of education are often the most important. Even if one examines purely labour market related skills, requirements are broad if workers are to be equipped to work with others and adapt to rapid change that technology is bringing about. Those skills and competences include creativity, the ability to work with others, acceptance of diversity and many others. **Narrow skills training and outdated notions of the needs of the contingent labour market will not meet the challenges that confront Europe,** both internally, and externally. They will neither address the need for a sustainable economic growth, to improve the quality of employment, innovation, or the capacity to compete in the global context. A high level of skills, knowledge and competences is needed for the future of Europe.
- h. The dependence of the European economy on migrant workers will continue to grow. Some of those workers will be refugees who have obtained asylum. Quality education is necessary for migrants and refugees to integrate into their host countries. Education helps to build understanding and tolerance among populations in destination countries. Inequalities and discrimination, whether they are based on **immigrant status, culture, gender, race, religious or other differences,** increase tensions in society, including in industry. The fight against bigotry, extremism, populist nationalism, discrimination and inequality is of social and economic value. Education, by itself, cannot resolve these problems, but **governments should do everything in their power to ensure that education institutions and education personnel are provided with resources, healthy working environments and the tools that they need to produce quality education and reduce the tensions and polarisation of society.**
- i. Well-trained and supported teachers and other education personnel are at the heart of education. To the extent that the profession and its status is respected, quality will improve, fewer teachers and other education personnel will leave the profession, and recruitment will be enhanced. **Initial teacher training and continuous professional development should receive greater emphasis. Teachers and other education personnel should be given the space, tools, support, and working conditions to exercise their profession. Good quality education requires commitment and resources.**