

## ETUCE-EFEE Joint Statement on Preventing and Managing Psychosocial Risks in Education

Deliverable for the social dialogue project 'APRES COVID'

The statement will be further put forward for adoption at the ESSDE Plenary in December 2025

Psychosocial risks are increasingly recognised as one of the occupational safety and health concerns in the education sector. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers, academics, school leaders, and education support personnel across Europe faced a wide range of occupational hazards, including workload, staff shortages, student disruptive behaviour. The pandemic had a significant impact on these challenges, amplifying existing psychosocial hazards and accelerating structural changes such as digitalisation, increased social complexity in classrooms, and heightened exposure to work-related stress.

Building on their longstanding cooperation on occupational health and safety, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), as the European Sectoral Social Partners in Education, jointly developed the [social dialogue project APRES COVID](#) (2023–2025). This initiative, co-funded by the European Union, aimed to assess the long-term impact of the pandemic on psychosocial risks in education and to promote an equitable, sustainable, and education-led recovery. Through social dialogue, joint research, and capacity-building, the project has strengthened education social partners' understanding of psychosocial risks in education and reaffirmed our shared responsibility to address them through effective and preventive measures.

Through the case studies and the survey, the project study highlighted positive developments related to the implementation of digital tools, fostered innovative practices in teaching and learning and strengthened community feeling. At the same time, the project also underlined an intensification of psychosocial in the education sector, with lasting impacts beyond the pandemic. Educators across Europe reported increased exposure to psychosocial risks, which affect their occupational well-being and professional commitment. While the rapid transition contributed to the emergence of technostress and the need to ensure the right to disconnect, it also led to lasting improvements in digital competencies and novel modes of collaboration and communication.

Both unions and employers recognise that these experiences carry important lessons. On the one hand, the sector can positively build on the legacy of digital innovation, strengthened collaboration, and improved access to resources, which continue to benefit teaching and learning. On the other hand, systemic challenges including, among others, staff shortages, declining attractiveness of the profession, and difficulties in maintaining the work-life balance must be addressed to prevent and manage potential harm and to ensure recruitment and

retention. Most importantly, the project reaffirmed that the well-being of education staff is directly linked to the quality of education and student outcomes. Teachers and staff who feel supported are better able to foster quality and inclusive learning environments. This underscores the shared responsibility of both employers and trade unions to place occupational well-being at the core of education systems, supported by strong and ongoing social dialogue.

Building on the results of the APRES COVID project, ETUCE and EFEE jointly commit to:

- Promote the dissemination of the revised European Guidelines on Preventing and Managing Psychosocial Risks in Education (2025) at national, regional, and local levels, including through streamlining their promotion into ongoing social dialogue structures and integrated with existing occupational safety and health projects.
- Prioritise concrete joint actions to foster the implementation of the revised Guidelines along with other relevant joint tools developed in synergy with the APRES COVID project, such as the OiRA tools for the and higher education and research sectors, and the European Multi-sectoral Guidelines on third-party violence and harassment.
- Strengthen cooperation with national members by calling on education trade unions and employers' organisations across Europe to actively adapt and apply the APRES COVID project outcomes to their contexts, thereby ensuring meaningful impact at local and institutional levels.
- Continue joint efforts on prevention of psychosocial risks in education, including by seeking funding opportunities, building further partnerships with relevant actors at European level.
- Foster a culture of prevention and respect in education, where psychosocial risks are systematically assessed and addressed, and where the well-being of staff is recognised as central to the quality, inclusiveness, and sustainability of education systems.

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