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ETUCE Statement on

Public Consultations on the future Lifelong Learning Programme

Approved by the ETUCE Committee on 23 November 2010

Hereby ETUCE would like to highlight its views on the public consultation on the Lifelong Learning Programme 2014-2020.

Policy objectives that need to be redefined

The ETUCE welcomes the main policy objectives of the LLL Programme which are achieving a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU as required by the *EU 2020 Strategy*. However, the ETUCE is concerned that the LLL Programme as a means to support the *EU 2020 Strategy* and the *E&T 2020* work programme is due to fail if education is continuously considered an economic instrument. *Consultation on the future EU 2020 strategy – The ETUCE responds to the Commission's working document* has already emphasised this issue. In this context the ETUCE would like to stress that openness of the schools and education towards labour market organisations/businesses can work only if the balance is maintained in education that equally answers and ensure the individual and the labour market needs.

The *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013* represents a contra-position to the previous strategic objectives and priorities that stands for a political background of the LLL Programme, indicating continuous investment in education aiming to fulfil labour market needs, individual learning needs and social inclusion. As the *Youth on the Move* flagship¹ initiative and Proposal² refer to the relocation of public resources, to encouraging Member States to invest in education by "ensuring the best returns to public resources"³, and to widening the availability of study loans and of EU-level student lending facilities, the ETUCE would like to remind the European Commission that education as a

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Published: 15 September 2010.

² *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Youth on the Move – Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People*: 15 September 2010

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*. Published: 15 September 2010.

fundamental right is a public responsibility. Hence, education must be publicly funded, and publicly regulated: sustainable public funding of education will strengthen the national education systems to overcome the recent and to avoid future economic downturns and to ensure social cohesion. Recognising the “low level of investment in E&T systems, the lack of focus of EU expenditure and the fragmentation of EU funding instruments”⁴, the EU Institutions and Member States should rather encourage investing more resources in education. Equally, at the European level a new programme for Education and Training can only be successful if the budget for this programme is sustained and increased in the post-2013 period. The importance of education for social inclusion and development, as well as the need to offset imbalances in education and training provision across the EU member states require a greater proportion of the EU’s structural and cohesion funds to be dedicated to this goal.

In order to deliver the *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013* Youth on the Move flagship initiative targets to “raise the overall quality of all levels of education and training in the EU, combining both excellence and equity, by promoting student mobility and trainees’ mobility, and improve the employment situation of young people”⁵. The ETUCE would like to emphasise that teachers need to be highly qualified, and their own continuous professional development is significant to ensure quality LLL. The ETUCE recognises that the European Commission admits in the *Roadmap* that teachers, trainers and school staff are not sufficiently involved in the mobility programmes and acknowledges the intention of the Commission to change this, and this will require greater public investment. However, Youth on the Move still restricts the involvement of the highest proportion of teachers to mobility, aged 35+.

The ETUCE believes that unless the difficulties of teachers’ mobility are resolved, the future LLL Programmes will not fulfil their purpose. As regards the provision of qualified teacher replacement, this requires in particular ensuring a sound financial basis and portability of pension and security rights, recognising periods of experience abroad, maintaining a balanced teacher force, and the proper support of teachers within mobility by the employers of the sending and hosting countries.

Furthermore, the simplistic approach of the *New skills for New Jobs* initiative regarding the objective of better matching the supply and demand of qualified workers and the focus on ‘labour market needs’, can actually diminish the effectiveness of the LLL policies and consequently of the LLL Programmes. Demand on the labour market constitutes a highly variable factor that cannot be used as a driver for an efficient, equitable and sustainable education and training policy that should be the major factor of the measures foreseen in LLL Programme. The ETUCE invites the European Commission to have a stronger focus on VET and the better qualification of teaching staff and to pay special attention to ensuring the pedagogic development of experienced private sector employees who move into to the public teaching sector as trainee teacher.

⁴ European Commission, DG EAC. 2010. *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013*

⁵ European Commission, DG EAC. 2010. *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013*.

The role of the social partners

The Roadmap acknowledges the lack of involvement of teachers, trainers and staff in the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme. For ETUCE, this points to a broader problem in the strategy behind the Education and Training priorities. Over the last seven years, the key stakeholders in the field have experienced a lack of involvement and deliberation about the Commission's priorities for action and funding at both European and national level. Involvement and inclusion should not target individuals or so-called 'experts', but rather strategically involve representative umbrella organisations which reflect the needs and problems of people in the classroom. It can hardly be surprising then, that this lack of consultation decreases the effectiveness of the programme and does not allow for creative and realistic actions.

In spite of the increasing role of the European stakeholders in European policy-making, the ETUCE regrets that its comments on the new initiatives⁶ have not been reflected in the decision of the European Commission and that the future of the LLL Programmes is built on these highly criticised policies. The ETUCE would like to emphasise the significant role that social partners play considering the fact that education is a national responsibility. Disregarding the social partners at European and national level could lead to the failure of the Open Method of Coordination.

Therefore, the ETUCE invites the European Commission to include the social partners, in particular those involved in the different fields of education at European level, in the policy development in general and in funding possibilities.

ETUCE comments on the future LLL Programme (2014-)

1. The ETUCE welcomes the European Commission's recognition that the present LLL programme has not been successful as concerns teachers, education and teaching staff due to insufficient financial support, and to mobility and linguistic barriers. However, as it has been stated above, promotion of teachers mobility is highly dependent on other issues, such as access to information on mobility, working conditions in the host country/institution, replacement at the sending institution, maintenance and completion of salary in accordance with the living conditions in the host country during the visit, provision of health insurance and incorporation of the working period spent abroad to pension entitlement. Agreeing with the implementation of equal opportunities and that quantity is put forward upon quality in the LLL Programme, the ETUCE stresses that mobility cannot depend on individual or private funds. The recognised obstacle to mobility, the "unsatisfactory provision of further development possibilities for teaching

⁶ Beside of the *ETUCE Statement on the New Flagship Initiative of the European Commission on Youth on the Move and on the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Youth on the Move – Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People* also: *ETUCE Statement on The new policy of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union on Vocational Education and Training; ETUCE statement on the Draft Council Conclusions on Education for Sustainable Development.*

and training staff”⁷ at national level, should encourage the Commission to positively promote initial learning and continuous development of educators through efficient support by the LLL programme.

2. The ETUCE would like to emphasise that the future LLL programme must not focus solely on the demands of the labour market excluding other types of studies, such as personal development, culture and art, as the Roadmap implies⁸. The LLL Programmes could equally highlight social skills development as a component of lifelong learning. Consequently, the ETUCE would like to invite the Commission to recognise personal development as a key outcome of the mobility period. The ETUCE supports elements in the Roadmap which are aimed at support for disadvantaged and migrant people in the “learning mobility” and the emphasis on equal opportunities. However, it requires comprehensive measures for the mobility of female students and teachers as well as of young unemployed people so that they do not find themselves isolated in the social environment of the host country. Regarding gender equality, the ETUCE stresses the importance of the gender balance and of enforcing mobility of the other gender in fields where either men (teachers of higher education, school leaders) or women (kindergarten, elementary/primary school) are more widely represented. The ETUCE also emphasises the significance for mobility on promoting gender equality as a shared woman/man issue (for instance in teaching and in organising gender-sensitive classrooms).

3. Unlike the European Commission the ETUCE is not surprised that the programme have reached neither young people nor teachers apart from in higher education, considering the fact that many problems remain, in the fields of recognition, structures of the programmes and financial support. Therefore, the ETUCE will only regard the programme so far as a modest success. The ETUCE would like to invite the Commission to promote and finance other programmes to the same extent, since gaining experience from learning mobility is equally important for primary school, secondary school and VET students as well as for adult learners. This also could improve the “European dimension”, strengthen EU citizenship and promote the attractiveness of the European Education Area, which the ETUCE strongly supports. Furthermore, as far as the ETUCE is concerned the mobility of pupils/students at primary and secondary education level can be strengthened by allowing parents and/or teachers escort in the programmes. Consequently the ETUCE support scenario 4 of the Roadmap on “Merger of the current programmes in the field of lifelong learning, international cooperation in education & training (e.g. Erasmus Mundus, Tempus etc...) and Youth in Action within a single programme.”

Promoting mobility in primary and secondary school would also prevent early school leaving. The Roadmap on the future LLL Programme should put greater attention to early school leavers and preventing drop-out in accordance with the ET2020 strategy that is a fundamental policy objective of the LLL Programmes.

⁷ European Commission, DG EAC. 2010. *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013*.

⁸ “The need to gain the competences necessary for the adaptability to the labour market, reinforced by the current economic crisis and demographic ageing, calls for the flexible provision of the lifelong learning opportunities for all generations of people potentially available for labour market as well as for close cooperation between the education and business sectors. Both the internal and external migrations call for the adaptation of education and training systems to ensure the social inclusion of migrants, as well as for the general improvements in the intercultural dialogue.”

4. As regards the impact assessment of the Commission in qualitative, quantitative and monetary terms, the ETUCE believes that that it is difficult to measure the quality of the LLL programmes. Therefore, the ETUCE urges the Commission to both provide a reasonable and structured approach to the pre-determined quality assessment and to publicise the Impact Assessment Guidelines and the process of how the quality will be assessed in order to ensure the transparency.

5. Internal and external migration, as a result of the recent economic crises, has a direct impact on the LLL programmes, especially on the Youth in Action programme: external mobility could also include a final study or internship period in the home country. This would avoid mobility becoming a tool for boosting emigration of young graduates and unemployed people. Also, in many countries (mainly in Central and East Europe) mobility has a negative connotation for employers and having participated in a mobility programme can be an obstacle for jobseekers in those countries. Therefore, creating a positive attitude in the home country towards the external study and apprenticeship/training period of the jobseekers is essential and its positive impact on businesses and companies of the home country should be advertised.

6. The ETUCE agrees with the European Commission about the need to improve the structure of the programme, its management and its administrative processes through simplification and streamlining. However, the ETUCE disagrees with the *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013* which plans to put greater emphasis on multipliers whereas it will attempt to reduce individual participation in the LLL programme. The ETUCE would like to draw the Commission's attention to the diversity of multipliers, especially teachers and trainers and to invite the Commission to address more individuals

Concerning better coordination of policy areas the ETUCE urges the Commission for more synergies between the Directorate-Generals that cover education field, such as DG EAC, DG EMPL, DG INFSO, DG SANCO and DG Trade.

7. In higher education⁹, there is an on-going tension between the priorities of the Modernisation agenda, the Youth on the Move agenda and the Bologna Process. These differences are already evident in the Commission's discourse. For example, the modernisation agenda seems to contradict the Commission's own assertion that higher education in Europe is 'obsolete'¹⁰, while the Bologna Process, although looking to the future in the context of a global higher education community, aims to build on the traditions and strengths of the European higher education system. But also in practice, if agendas diverge, there is a serious risk of erosion from the bottom, as the priorities of the European Higher Education Area are increasingly misunderstood by both member states and stakeholders. Part of this erosion is already shown in recent demonstrations and actions targeting European cooperation in higher education. Confusion also arises from the different mobility targets in the Youth on the Move agenda and the Bologna Process.

⁹ A more elaborate response to the Commissions' priorities for higher education will be sent separately to the Commission, through its consultation on the changes regarding the Erasmus Mundus programme.

¹⁰ European Commission, DG EAC. 2010. *Roadmap: Lifelong Learning Programme post-2013*, p 4.

8. In the post 2013 agenda, the Commission should stimulate more mutual understanding and streamlining between these strategic goals. First of all, the Commission should refrain from drafting its own strategic agenda for higher education without agreement from the main actors in the Bologna Process. It should present itself as a constructive partner that aims to stimulate understanding and to deliberate with the higher education community. Secondly, the Commission can strategically target funding at the core priorities of the Bologna Process, i.e. student and staff mobility, cooperation in quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, university autonomy and academic freedom, curricular reform and employability of graduates. Thirdly, the Commission should improve the funding of stakeholders' projects in order to invite criticism and independent views, rather than aim to mobilise the stakeholders to simply carry out the Commission's goals.

9. In terms of strategic priorities for higher education in both the Bologna Process and the Modernisation agenda, the Commission should pay more attention to a supportive environment for staff and to the social dimension of teaching and learning. Firstly, a major problem for staff in higher education is a fundamental shift in their types of work, i.e. shifting attention from research and teaching into bureaucratic and administrative tasks¹¹, including an emphasis on the attraction of outside funding. The Commission should fund studies on the issue and deliberate on the paradox of an increasing bureaucratisation of academic work, which seems to be related to the accountability agenda, yet run counter to the need for quality education and creativity. Secondly, the social dimension of education is seriously threatened by the increasing debt burden on students and graduates, as well as the increase of graduate unemployment around Europe. Also in this sphere, there is a contradiction with the Commission's agenda, as it pleads for tuition fees coupled with student loans. Understanding of these issues could be stimulated through interdisciplinary and fundamental research, and through more constructive deliberation with key stakeholders.

The ETUCE, the European Trade Union Committee for Education is the European Region of Education International. It represents 135 teachers' unions in Europe and 12.8 million teachers from all levels of the education sector. The ETUCE is a European Social Partner in education at EU level.

¹¹ See for example EI (2009) Enhancing Quality – Academics' Perceptions of the Bologna Process, Brussels: EI.