

ETUCE Action Plan on European economic governance (European Semester)

On 11 September 2014, the ETUCE Bureau adopted an Action Plan for a greater ETUCE involvement in the process of the European economic governance (the European Semester process). The Bureau considers the European Semester process, in particular the Country Specific Recommendations, important as it has major influence on national reforms and programmes on education and training.

In order to increase trade unions' **impact** and **visibility in the European Semester process**, the Bureau agreed that there is a need to establish/improve the coordination and information flow among the various levels, in particular through:

- Raising awareness: from ETUCE Secretariat to ETUCE member organisations;
- National feedback: from ETUCE member organisations to ETUCE Secretariat;
- Cooperation on national actions: between national teachers trade unions and national confederations.

Therefore, we would like to kindly ask you to **designate a person from your member organisation**, who can be the **contact person of the ETUCE Secretariat** concerning the issues of the European Semester.

Background on the European Semester

The **European Semester** process, in particular the **Country Specific Recommendations**, has a major influence on national reforms and programmes on education and training.

The European Semester is a **yearly cycle** of economic policy coordination of the European Commission which was set up in 2010. Each year the European Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of the economic and structural reform programmes of the EU Member States' and provides them with recommendations on the next year's budget allocation. These are the **Country Specific Recommendations**, which are provided to most of the EU countries also on education and training budget.

Countries involved

Countries **involved** in the yearly process: EU Member States

Countries **not involved**: EFTA, EU candidate countries

Within the framework of the European Semester, **specific rules** apply to **EU Member States** which are experiencing financial difficulties or which are under *financial assistance programmes*¹. These countries are different and they do not receive special Country Specific Recommendations.

Challenges

- The European Semester is a yearly process and it requires quick actions from social partners in order to be able to influence it.

¹ For example, EU Member States under excessive deficit procedure must submit and implement Economic Partnership/Adjustment Programmes containing detailed fiscal-structural reforms, in addition to the detailed budgetary plans that all EU Member States must submit in the framework of the European Semester. During the period of time under Economic Partnership/Adjustment Programmes, these Member States do not receive additional country-specific recommendations (CSRs) in May/June, in order to avoid duplication with measures set out in the Economic Partnership/Adjustment Programmes. Procedures of reinforced budgetary monitoring, surveillance, assistance and sanction – this latter for **Euro-area Member States only** - are set by the Six Pack (establishing the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure, in force since December 2011), the Two Pack (establishing the European Stability Mechanism, in force since May 2013) and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG – whose fiscal part is referred to as the ‘Fiscal Compact’) reinforcing the economic coordination among the 26 Member States signing it. The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance is binding for the 18 Euro-area Member States, and will be binding for the others once they adopt the Euro or earlier if they wish.

A short guide to the EU fiscal governance can be found here:
http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/articles/governance/2012-03-14_six_pack_en.htm

- The *Education Council of the EU* (thus the Ministers of Education) does not have competence to deal with the education and training recommendations in the European Semester.
- *Recommendations on education and training* are decided by the *Employment Council* (thus, by the Ministers for Employment).
- National budgets are decided by the Ministers of Finance. Therefore, the two other Council which are dealing with the process are the *Council for Economic and Financial Affairs*, and *Council for General Affairs*.
- At European level ETUC and ETUCE deals with the education and training recommendations in parallel. ETUC from VET and work-based learning perspective, ETUCE from general approach.
- Thus, at national level, both national confederations and teachers' trade unions lobby on the education and training recommendations in parallel. Confederations do this from VET and work-based learning perspective.

ETUCE actions

- ETUCE has been focusing on investment in education, in particular from the perspective of the effect of the crisis on education, since the outbreak of the crisis. Our actions have been various², including surveys, statements, positions, resolutions, solidarity letters to Member Organisations, a dedicated [crisis website](#), formal and informal lobbying at the European Union institutions, discussion at European level Sectoral Social Dialogue meetings, monitoring reports on education spending, informing and requesting national actions, for example addressing the crisis issue in the “Unite for Quality Education” campaign. Some European-level lobbying happened in collaboration with ETUC.
- ETUCE has had targeted consultations with member organisations on the implementation of the European Semester, and issued statements to the European Commission specifically on the European Semester:

² For reference, ETUCE Action and Campaign Framework on the Economic Crisis:

- [ETUCE Member organization mobilizing for Quality of Education](#) based on 10 Key Messages on ‘What is needed to improve Quality of Education in Europe?’, 2013-2014
- [ETUCE webpage on Crisis in Education](#),
- [ETUCE survey - The continued impact of the crisis on teachers in Europe](#), 2013
- [Analysis of a mini-survey on the impact of the economic crisis on teacher education in the European Union](#), 2012
- [ETUCE action and campaign framework on the economic crisis - Analysis of the mini-survey](#), 2012
- ETUCE film documentary: ‘Exiting the crisis through quality education’, first screening September 2014

Recent Positions adopted by the ETUCE Bureau/Committee:

- [ETUCE Statement on CSRs 2014 on education and training](#), June 2014
 - [ETUCE Statement on EU 2020](#), June 2014
 - [ETUCE Statement on the European Commission proposals in the framework of the European Semester 2012](#), June 2012
 - [ETUCE Resolution on the Financial and Economic Crisis](#), November 2012
- [ETUCE resolutions adopted in November 2012 by the ETUCE Conference](#)

2012 Statement on the European Commission proposals in the framework of the European Semester 2012

[ETUCE Resolution on the Financial and Economic Crisis](#) referred to this 2012 statement.

2013-2014 Under the framework of “[Unite for Quality Education](#)” campaign, national priorities on education were set up based on [ETUCE 10 Key Messages](#) and on the Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester.

2014 [ETUCE Position on the proposal of the European Commission on the 2014-2015 Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester](#)

Structure of future ETUCE actions

It is essential to set up a structural approach with coordinated actions to prepare and to follow up on the yearly process of the European Semester and to enhance the capacity of member organisations to influence the process.

- There is a need to coordinate the **various phases** of the design and implementation of the Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester at national and European levels:
 - To react to existing Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester;
 - To implement the existing Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester;
 - To influence the next Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester
- In order to increase trade unions' **impact** and **visibility** there is a need to establish/improve the coordination and information flow among the **various levels, in particular through:**
 - Raising awareness: from ETUCE Secretariat to ETUCE member organisations;
 - National feedback: from ETUCE member organisations to ETUCE Secretariat;
 - Cooperation on national actions: between national teachers trade unions and national confederations;
 - Cooperation on European-level actions: between ETUC and ETUCE;
 - Lobbying at European levels: between ETUCE and/or ETUC and EU institutions (European Commission, EU Council).

From the side of the **ETUCE Secretariat**, the focus could be on:

- disseminating information in a timely manner;
- requesting and collecting feedback on teacher unions' involvement in the process at national level;
- possible dissemination of best practices of national actions – via website;
- cooperation with ETUC, supporting and feeding into the ETUC actions in the European Semester process;

- restructuring and strengthening ETUCE's own procedure of actions in the European Semester process.

The timeline of activities is based on:

- Timeline and institutional actors of the European Semester on the [European Commission website](#)
- Timeline and institutional actors of the European Semester on the [EU Council website](#)
- The [European Semester calendar](#)
- The ETUC toolkit for a coordinated action³

³ <http://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-coordination-collective-bargaining-and-wages-eu-economic-governance#.U8Zw10Cfivg>
<http://collective.etuc.org/>

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