

## **EI-ETUCE-JTU Joint Statement on the occasion of the signature of the EU-JAPAN Economic Partnership Agreement**

*On the occasion of the upcoming official signature of the EU-JAPAN Economic Partnership Agreement, 11.2 million teachers and educators from Japan and the member countries of the European Union are calling for education to be explicitly carved out of the deal.*

Education International and its member organisations in Europe and Japan have followed with concern the negotiations between EU and Japan since talks began in 2013. It has been difficult to follow the content of the negotiations due to the lack of transparency and consultation with unions. It has now been revealed that the EU and Japan have included “privately funded education services” into the agreement. As a result both parties are effectively opening the door to foreign for-profit education providers by locking in and intensifying pressures of privatisation.

Hideyuki Shimizu, General Secretary of the Japan Teachers' Union emphasised: “the Japanese Constitution guarantees the right to education as a basic human right that is the government’s responsibility in order to ensure equal opportunities to education and therefore education must be excluded from international trade agreements”.

“The European Commission is rushing through the ratification of this massive agreement, declaring that only the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament are needed for the ratification. We regret that the European Commission is monopolising the debate at European level, limiting the debate at national and local levels regarding the consequences of the agreement. This is concerning because in the EU according to the subsidiarity principal education is a national competence. In several EU countries education is also a sub-national competence. National and regional education actors will have to face the impact of this agreement without having had the opportunity to influence it” stated Susan Flocken, European Director of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE\*), European Region of Education International .

“We believe that the agreement in its current form poses direct threats to the provision of high-quality public services, such as education, in particular through restricting governments’ capacity to regulate in the public interest, encouraging further liberalisation of services and expanding the rights of multinational corporations,” said EI General Secretary

David Edwards. "Many education systems contain a mix of public and private providers, and by including commitments on private education the EU and Japan are exposing public schools to the terms of this agreement."

"Also, we note the lack of clear and unambiguous exemptions for the education sector. Commercial trade rules must never restrict the ability of governments and designated public authorities to provide decent employment and high-quality education."

\*The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 132 Education Trade Unions and 11 million teachers in 51 countries of Europe. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of education trade unions.

