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# ETUCE

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## ETUCE position on *Council Conclusions on Quality assurance supporting education and training*

*Adopted by ETUCE Bureau on 23 June 2014*

The [Council Conclusions on Quality assurance supporting education and training](#) were adopted by the Education Council of the European Union on 20 May 2014.

ETUCE welcomes that the Education Council under the Greek Presidency placed quality in education on its agenda. This is in line with ETUCE's 1-year campaign "[Unite for Quality Education](#)", which, in the framework of the global action of Education International, mobilises its 129 teachers' trade unions in 45 countries, as well as major decision makers in education in Europe. We listed our priorities for quality education in our [10 Key Messages](#), which highlights quality in particular.

We support the objective of creating **quality culture** in education and training, and of moving away from a "checklist" approach. Quality assurance in online learning is in fact an urgent issue to solve.

We strongly oppose the understanding of quality assurance as a reform instrument, both in general and in particular in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Concerning quality assurance as a contributor to policy reform, we underline that reforms in education are prerogatives of national governments. However, **quality assurance must remain an independent instrument used primarily for internal and external evaluation of processes and procedures in education institutions.**

In education **quality assurance should be independent**, and conducted independently by quality assurance agencies; in higher education it should follow the **European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**. ESG set standards and guidelines that quality assurance agencies are obliged to follow, yet they do not prescribe or describe quality as such. The current proposed version of a revision of the existing ESG provides for engagement of higher education staff and other stakeholders in quality assurance in higher education institutions, irrespective of current reform aims and goals.

**Self-evaluation** is also part of quality assurance since one must learn from the evaluation process and discuss how to improve. Quality assurance in this broader

sense can be a useful reform instrument. Quality assurance in education at school level should be a **combination of self-evaluation** and based on **dialogue between the actors of the schools**. In addition, it should **not be a punitive process of the ministerial authorities**. It is essential that this combined quality assurance should give a feedback to the staff and school leaders for example on how a reform process is implemented. Furthermore, **independent agencies** can evaluate all levels of the educational system and identify areas at school or system level that need to be developed or changed to support further improvement and progress of quality at a given school.

At the same time it is essential that quality assurance systems do not add to the **workload** of the teachers and school leaders. Quality assurance should not create unnecessary bureaucratic burdens to the staff.

We believe that quality assurance should focus on assuring the **quality of the education process and the creation of a quality culture** at the heart of the day to day life of any education institution in Europe. Creating a quality culture in schools should be based on the **professional autonomy** of teachers as quality is inherent in their profession. Giving them role in quality assurance unleashes this positive energy in a unique way, and it forms a real alternative for quality assurance as a policy instrument.

The autonomy of the higher education institutions and the **academic freedom** of the academic staff are vital to the development of new knowledge and the incorporation hereof into the education of future generations and thus securing the quality and relevance.

**Quality and employability** should not be reduced to only a question of achieving the desired learning outcomes. The process behind the learning outcome is where the quality is created and where the focus for any development and improvement should be.

Additionally, **social dialogue** in education and training should be strengthened at European and national levels, particularly on quality assurance. Therefore, ETUCE disagrees with the recommendation to the Member States that staff and employers could take part in strategic decision making only “where appropriate”. ETUCE underlines that teachers’ trade unions should be the center of the quality of education.