

ETUCE PRESS RELEASE

Teachers call businesses to strengthen responsibility on improving ‘right skills’

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On 29 September 2014, BusinessEurope, UAEPME, Eurochambers and Eurocommerce released a policy document entitled ‘[Competitiveness First](#)’. As a response, ETUCE, the European trade union federation for education and training, representing 11 million teachers and trainers, and an industry federation of the ETUC, urges businesses to take more responsibility to develop the ‘right skills’ of job seekers and workers and to support education and training systems to prepare students for life and jobs in general, via improving their basic, transversal and civic skills, and [8 key competences](#).

The teacher trade unions also believe that the main task of all policy makers in Europe, including the social partners, must be to overcome the economic crisis, to increase employment, to attract private investments for job creation and to reduce poverty. To this end, ETUCE is increasingly stating the need for growth-enhancing investments, especially in the education sector (eg. in ETUCE Message on [Investing in Education](#), June 2014).

However, we strongly oppose the position of the businesses demanding from the “education and training systems” in general to ‘reflect the needs of businesses and labour market regulations’.

‘Education and training systems should indeed prepare the students and adult learners for life and employment. However, it is neither wanted nor acceptable to seek the adjustment of the long-term goals of the education and training to the short-term, fast-changing needs of the businesses’, said Martin Rømer, ETUCE European Director in reaction to ‘Competitiveness First’ document. *‘The education and training systems are not designed for - and should not aim at - preparing the people only for the ‘required right skills’ in the required ‘right time’ for the companies, mainly now, when demands from workers and their work are being adjusted day-by-day. In today’s Europe, students must be equipped with both the general and practical skills and competences they need to succeed in life and to face fast changing environments. At the same time, they have to be aware of the necessity of lifelong learning to improve their skills and competences’,* he added.

ETUCE calls the businesses to adjust their expectations from the education and training systems and to strengthen their responsibility concerning training of workers. Businesses have essential role in updating basic skills and providing additional, work-related skills to their workers. However, still numerous companies tend to hire and provide training mostly to qualified workers¹. Undeniably this practice contributes to increase labour market segregation, thus also social exclusion and poverty.

1 Eurofound (2012), [Fifth European Working Conditions Survey](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; McKinsey&Company Report (2014), [Education to Employment: Getting Europe’s Youth into Work](#).