

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
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ETUCE positions on lifelong learning

The European Commission has decided "*to launch a European-wide debate on a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning at individual and institutional levels, and in all spheres of public and private life*" (p. 3, Memorandum on lifelong learning). ETUCE, representing 81 teacher unions in 19 EU and EFTA countries with a total membership of 2.5 million teachers and workers in the education sector, welcomes this initiative. From the perspective of the teachers in Europe, this is a crucial topic to discuss. ETUCE would like to focus on the following 15 areas in this discussion:

- 1) Partnership
- 2) Aims of lifelong learning
- 3) Shared financing of lifelong learning
- 4) The importance of a good foundation education
- 5) Quality in education
- 6) Indicators and benchmarks
- 7) New basic skills
- 8) ICT in teaching and learning
- 9) Distance learning
- 10) Learning centres
- 11) Relation between formal and non-formal education
- 12) Mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas
- 13) Validation of prior and experiential learning
- 14) Guidance and counselling
- 15) ETUCE and educational research

ETUCE believes that these areas are essential for further discussion and ETUCE is also prepared to develop a dialogue on these items with the Commission, as well as with relevant employer organisations at European level.

1. Partnership

- 1.1. ETUCE shares the opinion expressed in the memorandum that partnership is the key to success for lifelong learning.
- 1.2. ETUCE shares the opinion expressed in joint text of the social dialogue education and training ad hoc group of February 16, 2001, that putting lifelong learning into practice means working together and identifying the responsibilities of different actors. It also means the involvement of social partners - at all appropriate levels in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies by public authorities and learning institutions.

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- 1.3. There is a need to develop a new partnership between the public sector and a wide range of partners in the community, business, the trade unions and the media. The public sector must play the leading role within this partnership, but employers, trade unions and individuals must also increase their interest and involvement in matters related to lifelong learning.
- 1.4. It is the responsibility of the public authorities to develop coherent policies and strategies for lifelong learning, according to individuals' needs. Public authorities must be particularly concerned with the promotion of social equity, and with ensuring that the rights to education are realisable.
- 1.5. It is important to underline the need to build a partnership where the teachers, represented through their organisations, have the opportunity to participate. This partnership has to be built locally on schools, regionally, nationally and at the European level as well. At all these levels, there is a need to examine existing mechanisms for consultation and to find ways of further improving these mechanisms.
- 1.6. At European level, it is important to find ways to improve the mechanisms for on-going consultations between ETUCE and the Commission. It is also necessary to find ways which can improve contacts and consultations between ETUCE and associations of employers at European level which include relevant school authorities.
- 1.7. A shared responsibility with the social partners must contain a mechanism for discussions and exchange of ideas. There is also a need to have the opportunity to participate in the process of discussions which take place before decisions are made.

2. Aims of lifelong learning

- 2.1. ETUCE shares the opinion expressed in the memorandum about "*two equally important aims for lifelong learning: promoting active citizenship and promoting employability*" (p. 5). It is important to emphasise that the aim of lifelong learning is broader than employment and employability.
- 2.2. Everyone has a right to lifelong learning and this right must be given reality through policies and strategies. Such policies/strategies may include legal rights; financial support in forms appropriate to an individual's needs; improved networking; advice and counselling; better access and outreach policies.
- 2.3. Life-long learning includes early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, higher education and adult education. Because most people spend more time being adults than being children and young people, what is called adult education may cover a longer and more heterogeneous period in the

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life of an individual than other categories. The changes in the demographic structure in society, with a relatively small proportion of young people, reinforce the importance of adult education. This means that the development of adult education is crucial within the framework of life-long learning.

3. Shared financing of lifelong learning

- 3.1. Lifelong learning can only be achieved by increased investment in education. This requires more financial commitment from government, but also a commitment from other actors.
- 3.2. The public sector must provide different types of financial support. Such support can be directed to individuals, to different types of institutions providing adult education and to companies. There must be opportunities for individuals to receive grants and to borrow money through favourable loan schemes.
- 3.3. It is important to provide lifelong learning to teachers and other personnel in education training and research. In the case of education reforms or the introduction of new technologies in schools, the employer holds a responsibility to give teachers the training needed to perform their duties. There is also a broader need among teachers for different types of training or education.

A teacher may want to obtain knowledge and skills in a topic which he/she has not been teaching earlier, get knowledge and skills to teach children or young persons in an age category other than the one he/she has taught earlier or develop deeper knowledge in a certain topic. In these situations, there may be a reason to talk about a split responsibility between the individual and the employer. How such a shared responsibility should be organised, will vary from country to country depending on different traditions.

Interesting ideas which may be fruitful for further investigation could be for example "savings accounts" to which both the teacher and the employer contribute. The important idea is to find structures which will help teachers to participate in lifelong learning without having to bear the whole cost themselves and which will support the development of the education systems.

- 3.4. Another issue of particular interest is the growing teacher shortage. Many European countries are rapidly approaching a situation where there will be an acute shortage of teachers. To meet this problem a whole series of measures will be needed. Obviously, one of these measures could be to make it possible for persons active in other professions to get an education which will allow them to become teachers. Such an education must be of high quality and contain the appropriate elements needed by different groups to achieve the relevant teacher competence.

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Similar measures could also be taken to allow teachers working with children or young persons in certain age categories to expand their competence to other age categories or to broaden their competence to teach more subjects. It would be relevant to discuss how the European Structural Funds could be used in this context.

4. The importance of a good foundation education

- 4.1. Early childhood education must be regarded as a part of the overall education system and the first stage of a lifelong learning process. The education offered at early childhood education level should comprise a mixture of caring, playing and learning. Early childhood education has an enormous potential and a particular role to play in the development of children's ability to learn, their well-being and their general development. All children must be given the right to a place in early childhood education.
- 4.2. Life-long learning puts the basic education in a new context. If basic education is supposed to prepare young people for a society where they always have to be ready to learn and relearn, to learn how to learn becomes a central objective in itself. Learning to learn must be to learn to reason and how to seek and use information. Another important aspect is to learn to be curious and to wish to learn. Critical thinking is another facet that could also be added to this approach.
- 4.3. Technical and vocational education must be recognised as a part of the educational system with equal importance and status to general and technological programmes within secondary and/or tertiary education. Technical and vocational education not only has the purpose of preparing young people for employment. Like other types of education, it also has to help prepare young people for life as citizens, through their political, cultural and private lives.

5. Quality in education

- 5.1. Quality in education has been an important part of ETUCE's agenda during recent years. There is a broad interest among teachers in improving the quality of education.
- 5.2. Areas where the quality of education specifically could be improved are; the learning environment for students, the working conditions for teachers, the prerequisites for professional development of teachers, up-dating the curricula and increased funding.
- 5.3. One of the key elements in many governments' policies has been to improve the systems, instruments and methods for evaluation. There is a risk that evaluation could focus too much on easily measurable school achievement without taking into consideration the complexity of the reality in schools. In relation to this, there is also a risk that teachers, as well as students and parents, could be side-stepped in the evaluation process and made merely objects of the process. From this perspective it

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becomes crucial to find alternative methods for evaluation which will allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and will give teachers the opportunity to be part of the process.

5.4. The EU Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education has played an important role in developing alternative and complementary models for evaluation. Internal school evaluation is a critical element in the pursuit of quality and a way of emphasising the professional responsibility of teachers. In order to make developments in these directions possible, schools need resources specially earmarked to support such programmes. Teachers need to be given time to sit down together and plan and implement evaluation activities. In order to help the teachers to find appropriate methods for the school-based evaluation, they have to be offered suitable in-service training.

6. Indicators and benchmarking

6.1. A crucial element in any project on quality of education, indicators and benchmarking should be related to internal school-based evaluation.

6.2. It is necessary to examine how contacts and consultations in this context between education trade unions, represented by ETUCE at European level, and the Commission could be improved and further developed. Similar steps have to be taken to improve and develop contacts between individual unions at national level and relevant national education authorities.

6.3. Some general principles of relevance for the whole discussion on quality, evaluation, indicators and benchmarking are :

- 1) Indicators have to link results and achievements in the education system to the available resources.
- 2) Indicators must be of a type which makes it possible for schools and teachers themselves to find ways and tools for improving quality.
- 3) Indicators have to be developed which could easily be incorporated into the “normal work” of teachers, without increasing their general workload.
- 4) Indicators have to be developed which give a “full picture” of quality in education, with all the complexity this implies.
- 5) There is a need to find indicators which promote new methods of evaluation and which are internal, formative and qualitative in their approach.

6.4. In relation to the “*European report on quality of school education*” some specific comments can be made:

- 1) The indicators do not cover all the subjects and cross-curricular knowledge of relevance for getting a good picture of the quality of schools. One way of widening the perspective could be successively to change subjects and other types of knowledge included in future reports.

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- 2) It would be of great interest not only to measure the general level of the resources, but also measure the resources which are actually transferred to the classroom. A possible benchmark in relation to resources could also be how many countries spend at least 6% of GNP on education, as recommended by The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century ("The Delors Commission").
 - 3) The indicator on teacher education has to be elaborated and contain information about the education of all categories of teachers. A distinction should be made between pedagogy/ psychology and practical training in schools during periods of practice, when the content of teacher education is described. It might also be useful to include information about entry requirements to teacher education. It would be of crucial interest to have information about teachers' in-service training.
 - 4) It is important to develop an indicator on the participation of teachers in the development of educational policies and the curriculum. Such an indicator should cover both the participation of teachers in these processes as professionals and the consultations between government and educational authorities on the one hand and the representative organisations of teachers on the other.
 - 5) To get a more elaborated picture of the quality of education it is important to have information about the differences in attainment between boys and girls, students from the majority population and students with an immigrant background or ethnic minorities, students from different regions etc.
 - 6) It would be useful to have an idea about the present status of lifelong learning figures on the participation in education by adults and information about the knowledge and skills in the adult population.
- 6.5. For the continuation of the work with indicators and benchmarks, ETUCE would propose that:
- 1) the teachers and their organisations should be more involved;
 - 2) the information on teachers in the report should be improved; and
 - 3) resources for the development and use of alternative methods of evaluation should be provided.

7. New basic skills

- 7.1. Those skills, which have been described as "new skills", need to be further examined and elaborated. What are IT skills and technological culture? To what extent are they about using IT and to what extent do they relate to a broader approach, incorporating a large number of other skills? How can skills in foreign language be improved? How can methods of language teaching be further developed? Which languages should be emphasised? What do we understand by "Entrepreneurship"? Should it be taught in school or elsewhere? What do we understand by "Social skills"? Can social skills be taught? What is the responsibility of the school?

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7.2. The discussion on new skills has several implications for education and is highly correlated to the discussion on quality in education. If these skills are seen as essential educational objectives, it means logically that quality education should help students to acquire these skills. Could it to some extent be a matter of reviewing priorities in the existing curriculum or is it a matter of introducing a whole new set of skills into the curriculum? Does the introduction of "new skills" also imply new structures for schooling, teaching methods, teacher education and evaluation? These matters also have to be discussed from the perspective of an "overcrowded" curriculum.

8. ICT in teaching and learning

8.1. The education sector can only respond to the high demands of the new century if it is in tune with the technological developments in other parts of working life and society. Without real access to ICT and professional teachers who can lead the future development of knowledge and skills with the support of new apparatus, the education sector will lose impact. There is also a risk of an increasing gap within countries between the included and the excluded, and between access and use of new technology in society and in education. National governments in Europe and the relevant European Union institutions must take this responsibility seriously.

8.2. The high expectations and demands attaching to all educational activity in the ICT context must be accompanied by correspondingly generous investment in the development of teachers' and school managers' skills and professionalism in all types of school, teacher education included. The need for professional development in this context is enormous. Resources will have to be committed on a completely different scale from that at present. The individual school must be vigorously supported by the appropriate responsible level in building up and implementing this necessary development of competence. Heavy investment in the development of teachers' professionalism in the use of ICT will pay off handsomely and will make all the difference to pedagogical development in all educational activity.

8.3. Teachers' need for professional development resources must be recognised. School management has a critical responsibility here and must be supported, by the political bodies governing the educational system at national, regional and local levels, in promoting the development of teachers' competence.

8.4. The type of computer and software chosen for a particular study programme should be decided after discussions at local level. The important thing is that the need for and development of new technology should always be included in deliberations concerning educational planning, both at a general level (the entire school) and in greater detail (individual subjects or fields of study).

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- 8.5. At the EU Lisbon Summit 2000, some extremely important targets were established: that EU member states should ensure all schools access to the Internet and multimedia resources by the end of 2001 and that all necessary teachers should be skilled in the use of Internet and multimedia by the end of 2002. It is extremely important that these commitments are taken seriously.
- 8.6. In the European Commission Communication: "eLearning, COM (2000) 318 final" the role of teachers and other staff in education is not sufficiently taken into account. Teachers' skills and qualifications are necessary to make ICT useful in the daily education situations including children, youth, adults and the elderly. The ICT qualifications of the teachers and other staff in education are the very foundation for successful developmental work.
- 8.7. In the European Commission Action Plan "eEurope, COM (2000) 330 final and Communication: eLearning, COM (2000) 318 final" there is no mention of parties directly involved such as schools, other education institutions, teachers, researchers and other personnel in education; in particular the social partners are not defined as actors. This is an important shortcoming, which could reduce the prospects of success for the recommendations if not addressed in a proper way. There is no recommendation to solve the problems of education software quality, which is obviously of crucial importance. In particular language issues should be addressed, not least the problem with software in the lesser-used languages. It is crucial to include the national teachers' organisations in the implementation of the recommendations suggested by the European Commission.

9. Distance learning

- 9.1. Distance learning will offer new opportunities for citizens to take part in advanced learning projects. The time and space factor is being transformed by ICT. The rapidity with which information can be obtained in exchange, regardless of space, will have consequences for all educational activity in general and for the development of distance learning in particular. Teachers and other personnel in distance education will be the key resources ensuring high quality and efficiency in distance learning.
- 9.2. Distance education could be used as a tool to offer education to groups who have had limited opportunities to participate in "normal education". It could be used to provide education to adult learners with full time work who, for financial and/or family reasons, have to try to combine education and work and adult and young learners living in areas far away from educational institutions.
- 9.3. In the area of higher education, distance education can offer an opportunity to people who do not live in the cities with higher education institutions to participate in such education.

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- 9.4. It is crucial that the public sector should make investment in distance education in order to avoid a total commercialisation of this type of education. Such investment must include training of relevant staff. Initiatives must also be taken to guarantee the quality of distance learning projects.

10. Learning centres

- 10.1. It is not acceptable that adult education is available only to those who can pay. There is a need for the public sector to find ways to subsidise such education. It can be done through the establishment of educational centres for adults offering different types of courses or through support for popular organisations arranging non-formal education. The role of secondary schools and universities could also be considered in this respect.

11. Relation between formal and non-formal education

- 11.1. Non-formal education must be seen as a supplement or a complement to formal education, but never as a substitute. The role of non-formal education is to provide education in addition to the basic system of education. Non-formal education should never be seen as a means of replacing basic education within the formal system, but it must be recognised that, in some countries, groups of adults have never had the chance to receive basic education. These people were never given the right to the education to which they were entitled when children. For those who have not been offered adequate education, there is a need to find solutions. Non-formal education can be one such solution, which will give back to these people the rights they were denied as children.

12. Mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas

- 12.1. The questions concerning certification and recognition of qualifications and diplomas are of crucial importance. This discussion is of special significance in the light of changes in the European labour market and the movements towards more international mobility. One difficulty in the discussion is the different systems and traditions in different countries. Further dialogue and investigation of the matter is deemed necessary.
- 12.2. Improved information systems can play a significant part in the development of better comparability of qualifications and diplomas. Co-operation between national information and guidance systems should be strengthened (particularly between systems established within education and training public services), in order to offer trained young people and employees clear and reliable information on their rights and guarantees when they are in mobility situation.

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- 12.3. The European system of recognition can only be effective if it is compatible with the national systems, which requires that it takes account of their features and procedures; it should also bring new rights and guarantees connected to transitional mobility and urge governments to remove obstacles in their own systems. This requires a system of simple rules comprehensive to all the individuals concerned. Systems must be flexible and must not be over-regulated.
- 12.4. It is important to develop improved credit accumulation and transfer systems and to make sure these are not limited by age levels attached to particular qualifications. The development of a credit system must work hand in hand with a better indication of the status of particular qualifications achieved nationally, as far as other European countries are concerned. It is also important to register qualifications, both those gained initially and those gained during adult life, must fulfil a variety of purposes, including the development of individuals' personal, social and cultural abilities, as well as strictly vocational ones.
- 12.5. Community actions must recognise the diversity of vocational education and training models in the different EU countries and must not consider "apprenticeship" as the sole vocational education and training path. All forms of training, training periods or sequences in enterprises followed by a trainee without a students status or without work contract must also be encouraged and recognised.
- 12.6. Educational credits must come within a perspective of improving quality, the coherence of the contents of the education/training concerned and the accessibility to initial training through continuing education and the validation of professional experience. It should be made possible to impose on public and private employers a better recognition of qualifications and diplomas obtained by young people and adults .
- 12.7. It is important for measures to be taken to encourage employers throughout the labour market to have a greater awareness and acceptance of qualifications gained in other European countries. Particular emphasis should be placed on achieving a European area of qualifications for teachers and other staff in education, given their importance within the education and labour market systems of Europe.

13. Validation of prior and experiential learning

- 13.1. Many adults have acquired considerable skills and knowledge over the years without receiving any formal certification of these skills. There has to be a system for validation of prior learning/experience.
- 13.2. Several countries are discussing flexible schemes for documenting the real skills acquired through employment. There is a need to develop methods for the assessment of learning which take place at the work place or at other places

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outside formal education institutions. It is crucial to maintain and develop quality guarantees in this process. It is also of importance that these methods should meet validity and reliability criteria. The social partners must have the opportunity to play a role in the process. It is also essential that the formal education system is given a central role in setting up schemes of this nature.

- 13.3. In order to meet quality requirements it is important that when institutions may be established to organise and set up schemes for documenting and validating skills and knowledge, such institutions must be an integrated part of the existing education system.

14. Guidance and counselling

14.1. In order to help individuals, institutions and companies to plan training and education, advice and guidance services must be improved and made available free of charge. Access and outreach policies have to be elaborated and improved. The needs of the labour market are changing and it is becoming ever more difficult to obtain a full overview, either of all the training options available or of the future needs of the labour market. Researchers are predicting a scenario with a flexible and rapidly-changing labour market. Structural changes can lead to several career changes during each person's working life. Skills must be constantly renewed. New opportunities may open up, but it will become ever more difficult to keep track of all the options available. This may result in greater freedom of choice, but it also creates a greater level of uncertainty and there will be a steadily increasing need for guidance. So a more extensive system for giving adults guidance on careers and training needs to be built up. Each individual's overall personal situation needs to be given greater attention, since daily life is changing so rapidly.

14.2. To a great extent, guidance on lifelong learning will be a matter of gaining a full overview of the options available, being creative and identifying opportunities. There is a need for impartial, independent guidance to assess learning needs and inform course choice.

14.3. Counselling and guidance services have to be made available in schools as well as at work places.

15. ETUCE and educational research

15.1. There is clear need for research in lifelong learning, particularly in the use of ICT in education.

15.2. It is important to find ways of combining educational research with the education of teachers, in order to make sure that the future teachers are able to stay updated with pedagogical, didactical and methodological research in this area. Professional

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development for teachers already in service would also take advantage of such research.

15.3. Educational research on lifelong learning and other current matters should be encouraged across the borders of the Member States.

15.4. It is important to make it possible for different actors, not only the traditional research institutes, to organise research on current educational matters. The social partners could for example play a role in initiating some types of research. It is important that resources are made available to the social partners and other relevant stakeholders to organise or commission research projects.