

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
General Assembly 2001

Ref: 7714

DRAFT

**TEACHER EDUCATION AND SUPPLY IN EUROPE:
A TIME FOR ACTION!**

**AN ETUCE STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION
IN EUROPE**

1. Introduction

The European Union and national governments across Europe have recognised the central importance of education as an underpinning to the fabric of Europe and to the achievement of many of the objectives which have been set either nationally or for Europe as a whole. Whether it is the 'Europe of Knowledge' or the 'Europe of the Citizen', or the development of the European Union as a coherent economic player at global level, education is seen as the key. Decisionmakers on education increasingly understand the need for education at once to be more accessible, both in the initial, compulsory phases and throughout individuals' lives; to be flexible to the needs of students and of society, and to respond to new demands; and yet retain and enhance the quality of its outcomes. In the delivery of these goals, the *quality and adequate supply of teachers*, which is the theme of this statement, is clearly crucial.

These issues are fundamentally affecting the future of the European Union and the countries within it, The institutions of the European Union and the national governments have to exercise their competence within the field of education as creatively as possible, and look for new inter-governmental means of pursuing common objectives in the field. The development of important teacher education networks, including ENTEP and the Thematic Network on Teacher Education in Europe (TNTEE), and the conference, held under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, 'Teacher Education Policies in the European Union', in Loule, Portugal, on 22 / 23 May 2000, are examples of this interest.

The interest of the EU institutions and the national governments in teacher education is timely. There is a growing crisis in many countries of Europe, as the teachers from the 'baby boom' generation born just after the Second World War approach retirement, threatening to cause a loss of up to 50% of teaching personnel in less than a decade - and in some countries, a substantial proportion of these leaving within only two or three years. In policy terms this is a crisis which is only around the corner, given the time it takes for the professional education and training of a teacher. It will also have implications for the training process itself, given that teacher training has come to depend on the cooperation and active participation of experienced teachers in the schools - just the people who are approaching retirement in the next few years.

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

General Assembly 2001

But also, and of more long-term consequence, the loss of this generation of teachers will expose what has been evident within the profession in many European countries for a number of years: that the teaching profession has not attracted or retained younger people in sufficient numbers, creating a demographic time bomb, waiting to explode when the 'baby boomers' retire. The reasons for the crisis vary in detail from country to country - but all too often, it is basically a combination of low status and pay compared to other professional careers, and continuing increases in the volume and complexity of demands placed on teachers.

It is important that the national governments and the European institutions respond quickly and positively to the immediate challenge to teacher education, but they must also address these underlying problems, and the increasing sophistication and difficulty of the teacher's job. The European Trades Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) would argue strongly that the official response must be in the context of long term objectives and standards. Historically, crises in teacher supply have often been met by short-term measures which have often temporarily lowered the standards demanded of the teachers entering by such emergency routes - leaving them to learn on the job or to enhance their professional skills at their own initiative later in their careers. In the twenty-first century, with the new and increasing demands and pressures on the teaching profession, this will not be good enough. All teachers need a good foundation of professional knowledge and skills, on which to build the continuous, career-long, professional development which is now expected of teachers.

2. The ETUCE position

The ETUCE has been concerned for a number of years, with the inter-linked issues of the supply of high quality recruits to teaching, the continuous professional development of teachers and the development of teaching as a high status profession. In 1994, the ETUCE published a report, 'Teacher Education in Europe', which developed these themes. The report was prepared by a working party including representatives of teaching and teacher education from across the European Union, as well as a representative of the European Commission. The key principles of that report were widely endorsed by teacher education bodies and were discussed both with national governments and representatives of the European institutions.

The principles in the report remain valid for the present day, and some of the trends which the report identified have developed in the intervening period, including the demand for continuous professional development, the strengthening of partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools, the role of information technology, and the problems of racism and violence in schools. In the background, the issues of globalism and multi-culturalism, which were also themes of the report are steadily assuming greater significance within education systems. The summary of the report is included in the next section.

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
General Assembly 2001

3. Summary of 'Teacher Education in Europe' (Chapter 2 of the report)

Note: This chapter summarises the main themes of the 1994 ETUCE Report, and the numbers in brackets after each paragraph indicate the chapters in which these themes are discussed.

2.1 Teacher education must promote the personal and professional development of teachers throughout their careers. The professional role demands that teachers must be reflective and adopt a self-analytic approach to their working lives. The central purpose of teacher education is to develop in teachers qualities, knowledge and skills to meet the needs of pupils/students, and through this also to meet wider social and economic needs. (5, 6)

2.2 These values must be promoted through the content and methodology of education. Teacher education must promote key values in the teacher and in the educational system - respect for other human beings, and their relationship to society and the environment; democracy; equal opportunities and a transcultural approach, which promotes respect for a diversity of cultures, and effectively combats racism and xenophobia. (5, 6, 8, 9)

2.3 To achieve these purposes, teacher education must play its central part in the development of a high status teaching profession, protecting the autonomy of the teachers' professional work. The teaching profession is a unified profession with some key common characteristics for all teachers, from pre-primary to higher education. All teachers should have high qualifications and in acknowledgement of this and of their important role in society, enjoy high status. With these characteristics should go substantial professional autonomy for the individual teacher, and participation on a representative basis in educational decisionmaking affecting teachers, within the structures of the public service. The EU, ILO and OECD recognition of the role and status of teachers is to be welcomed. Teacher education, like the education system itself, must achieve a balance in its staff to reflect society as a whole, taking into account gender, disability and sexual orientation. (5, 6).

2.4 Teacher education must be recognised as a part of higher education, with recognised equivalences with other higher education disciplines and qualifications, and with the capacity to engage in educational research and draw on research findings. In order to cover the breadth of subject study, education science, methodology and practice, initial teacher education courses must not be reduced from their present lengths. (5, 10).

2.5 Teacher education must promote the application of educational research in teaching, as part of a continuous process of interaction with schools and school teaching : there must be an inter-change between teachers in schools, teacher educators and researchers. (5, 7).

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION General Assembly 2001

2.6 Teacher education is a career-long process: each phase must take account of the other and there are expectations on teachers, their employers and the public authorities to facilitate life-long learning and the professional development of teachers. In return, there is an expectation that teachers will engage in professional renewal and updating. This has financial implications which the public authorities must take into account. (6).

2.7 Teacher education comprises four elements to be undertaken in an inter-related way -subject study, educational science including pedagogy, teaching methodology/didactics and practice. An appropriate balance of all these elements must be achieved and they should inter-act with one another in a dynamic way, at each stage of a teachers' professional development. (10).

2.8 The European Dimension is important to teacher education, and must involve recognition of Europe as a whole, balanced with respect for national and regional diversity, shared knowledge and experience and mobility of teacher education students and teachers. The European/national dynamic must be given reality through the effective use of the subsidiarity principle. The European Dimension must be realised particularly through the promotion of mobility of teachers in all phases of education, teacher education students and educational researchers; the development of language skills. Also, the European Dimension must embrace European national and regional perspectives, the cultures of the ethnic minority communities and a broad international perspective. It must not lead to a "Fortress Europe" mentality. (4).

2.9 Education is an investment in the value of the individual and the realisation of their full potential, and also in the social, economic and cultural life of individual countries and of Europe. Teacher education is the most fundamental aspect of this investment, in view of its capacity to shape the rest of the education system. This is a crucial factor to be taken into account in European Union programmes, since money spent on teacher education has a powerful multiplier effect as teachers and teacher educators communicate with their own pupils and students. (5, 7).

2.10 European teacher education should be supported more fully by the institutions of the European Union, particularly through its programmes (particularly the new SOCRATES programme). SOCRATES must learn the lessons of its predecessors, particularly ERASMUS and LINGUA, which are widely regarded as excessively bureaucratic, and in which too little has been done to involve teacher education and teachers in the school. Also, SOCRATES requires an advisory committee with a significant representation from ETUCE as the key Social Partner in this field. (4, 12).

2.11 The ETUCE proposes the establishment of new bodies for teacher education in Europe, a network and a teacher education institute, in both of which the ETUCE itself would expect to play a major part. The network and institute would support one another and conduct research, disseminate research findings and information about teacher education, promote the European Dimension; disseminate best practice, for example in respect of the role of the teacher or intercultural education, and provide the crucial teacher

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
General Assembly 2001

union perspective which is inadequately represented or totally missing from most of the existing structures of this kind. (12).

2.12 The principles in the Report are relevant to teachers in all sectors, including post-school education, although it is acknowledged that the actual pattern of initial and in-service education is very different at present for these sectors than for the school and pre-school sectors. It is suggested that for higher education in particular, appropriate opportunities and incentives are created to promote the professional development of teachers in the sector. (11).

2.13 The ETUCE itself and its affiliated organisations need to promote these principles in their relationships with policymaking bodies for teacher education at the European, national and institutional level, and seek to get them adopted. Also, the ETUCE and its affiliates must apply the principles in the development of their own policies, and in the review of their own structures, and to discuss them as appropriate at European, national and local level. (12).

(Copies of the full report, 'Teacher Education in Europe' are available from the ETUCE on request.)

4. Key trends and developments since 1994

The recent official level interest in the future of teacher education, shown in the networks and the Loule conference, has carried forward the debate on a number of the themes which the ETUCE highlighted in its 1994 report.

Information technology These include the limited response of teacher education so far to the challenges of information technology in education, referred to in passing in the 'Green Paper on Teacher Education' published by TNTEE. It would be a modest first step to ensure that all teachers - both entrants and serving teachers - have a basic competence in information technology. Information Technology will generate massive changes in curricula and learning methods. It would be desirable, and may soon become essential, that all teachers are able to be more pro-active in this field, in both using and generating IT-based materials and methods. Yet the reality is that many teachers have IT skills far below those of many primary age pupils, for many of whom accessing a computer is more natural than reading a page of conventional text. This is a huge challenge, requiring an investment of resources that has yet to be recognised, much less met. Hardware, software, and their applications are also rapidly changing, so the demand for updating of teachers' knowledge will be continuous.

Globalisation A linked issue, is the globalisation challenge. New technologies and media, and the culture of the global marketplace have put the learning and teaching process in the forefront of change. The teaching profession must respond to these new circumstances. While the role of the teacher must change, it is equally clear that teachers are essential to perform their traditional role in new ways, and to mediate between the

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

General Assembly 2001

pupils and the sometimes misleading attractions of new technology. New and existing teachers must be prepared for these changes - and must be fully involved in the process of shaping them. It is an important issue for European identity and culture, for the European educational systems to respond in a coherent and pro-active way, in a field where much of the leading educational software is being developed outside the region and with commercial interests as a principal motivation.

Education - a public service Education is rightly a public service, and it must continue to be in the public domain, if all our future citizens are to share the benefits and meet the challenges of globalisation and technological change, and if education's role as a force for social cohesion is to be fulfilled. The attacks on public services including education in many parts of Europe must be halted and reversed, and the public services must be recognised as key investments in the economic and social infrastructure.

Racism and multi-culturalism In the years since the publication of the ETUCE report, both military conflict within Europe and internal national instances of xenophobia, together with the continued global polarisation between the rich and poor peoples, have emphasised the importance of education in the process of socialisation and the promotion of multi-culturalism. Modern Europe has always been characterised by its ethnic diversity, and this trend has become more pronounced in recent years, with the increased opportunities for mobility and the growing economic attraction of the region. The importance of the education system, and teachers as role models, in building social cohesion and a climate of multi-culturalism cannot be emphasised sufficiently. This is a key example of the indispensable role of the teacher even in a high tech age. But this role cannot simply be taken for granted - teachers, if they are drawn from a cross-section of society, will reflect many of society's characteristics, including potentially, limitations on experience of diverse cultures and societies. All teachers need the knowledge and the analytic tools to promote the values of a multi-cultural society and to work in the spirit of intercultural education, and this will require appropriate elements within their professional training, both at the outset of their careers and in the process of continuous professional development.

Partnership with other professionals Within public education, teachers increasingly work in partnership with other professionals, in the assessment of their pupils and students' needs, and helping to meet them. Such professionals include social workers, educational psychologists, and medical and para-medical staff. The teacher is often the first person to be involved in identifying pupils with other professional needs, or in mediating between the pupils and / or their parents and the other professionals. Of course, teachers cannot have the diagnostic skills of their professional colleagues, but it is important for teachers to be able to identify needs and to know what steps to take to call in related professional help. Again these competences are not 'given'; the professional training of teachers must give teachers at least the basic skills, as well knowledge of related issues including the legal responsibilities of teacher and other professionals.

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

General Assembly 2001

Teachers as mentors / tutors A significant development since the 1994 ETUCE report, is the role of teachers in schools as mentors to their peers in the process of continuous professional development, and as mentors or tutors to new entrants to teaching in the initial and induction phases of their professional training. Mentoring and tutoring are likely to bring with them the demanding role of assessment. These roles place further responsibilities on the experienced teachers who are also in demand for other leadership tasks - school management, curriculum development, pastoral work, projects and fieldwork, and new careers outside teaching including inspection and educational administration. Most national systems routinely have to plan for a loss of thousands of classroom teaching posts - or their equivalent in teaching hours - to these activities every year. It is the cadre of experienced teachers from which these roles are filled, which is to be so drastically reduced in the coming decade. Programmes should be created to equip experienced teachers for the mentoring role. Where appropriate, teachers nearing the end of their career may be encouraged to work for part of their time as mentors. However, in order to ensure that the role of mentor also involves teachers of similar ages and experiences as new entrants, younger teachers after a few years experience, should also be encouraged to take on some mentoring work: young teachers will welcome being supported by colleagues from their own peer group.

Shortage subjects Many national systems have faced teacher shortages in particular subjects, and have developed strategies, often only partly successful, to deal with them. Typically these subjects included mathematics and some sciences, where there has been a steady decline in the popularity of those subjects in schools, and technical subjects like information technology, where there is a strong demand for qualified people from other sectors of the economy. More recently some countries have experienced shortages of teachers of some languages. Once a subject becomes identified as a 'shortage subject', it can be trapped in a downward spiral, in which lack of teachers reinforces the negative perception of the subject at school, further reducing the supply of potential recruits to teaching. The deep-seated character of the shortage problem begins in the school curriculum and in school students' perceptions of subjects and the careers leading from them. These problems must be tackled by the education system as a whole, and this is clearly a long-term project. In the short-term, programmes to convert existing teachers to these subjects and to attract subject specialists must be intensified, but the overall standards of teaching in these subjects must be sustained. Where appropriate, teachers from other EU countries, or from outside the EU should be encouraged to help fill the gaps. An obvious area where this could be invaluable, is in respect of language teaching. There needs to be more coordinated work on educational labour market questions at the European and national levels. The natural tendencies of the labour market have created the problem of shortage subjects. The problem also highlights the relative decline in attractiveness of teaching as a career, and this needs to be addressed by enhancing the status, pay and conditions of all teachers.

Some solutions have their limits These are just some examples of the pressures on teachers to extend their professionalism, to develop their roles and to meet emerging challenges. There is a huge task to give new entrants and existing teachers the relevant

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
General Assembly 2001

knowledge and skills, and some education systems have looked to other, supposedly easier, solutions.

Many systems have placed great emphasis on the potential role of information technology. As we have indicated above, and in other ETUCE publications, we believe that information technology is a valuable tool for educationalists; also, it is vital to use the full potential of IT in the classroom to equip young people with the capacity to deal with an increasingly computerised world. Computer-based learning for some particular purposes can be of enormous benefit to pupil and teacher alike. However, the ETUCE asserts that the teacher will remain the key piece of 'software' in the education system, and teachers remain central to the learning process in its widest context.

Another response to the need to relieve the growing pressures on teachers, is to use other staff alongside, or in place of the teacher. These may include classroom assistants, or technicians. Once again, if used in the right way, these measures can provide benefits to both pupils and teachers, and relieve teachers of non-teaching tasks, but they should not lead to a diminution of the teacher's role - or in the need for qualified teachers. Teachers must be in charge of the teaching / learning process, and be the key individuals responsible to the pupils and society for this process.

A further approach in meeting general or specific teacher shortages, has been to recruit teachers from other countries. In practice these may often be young, new or recently qualified teachers, whose primary motivation is to visit other countries, or to find work when few jobs are available in their specialisms in their home country. Schools and teachers can benefit greatly from contact with other countries' education systems. The European Union's commitment to mobility within the European labour market is at least as relevant to teachers as to other skilled workers. However, it is important in this context to make a distinction between teachers who are interested to work in another country on a permanent basis and teachers who would like to have the opportunity to study and experience other countries' education systems during a shorter period. Teachers who want to find a job in another country should be given all possible support, including language training and in-service training, to be prepared to work in new surroundings. For those teachers who would like to experience other education systems, teacher exchange programmes should be further developed.

Professionalisation - De-professionalisation. Unfortunately there are signs in some countries that governments and authorities responsible for education do not fully realise the importance of maintaining a profession of well-educated and competent teachers. During educational discussions the opinion has, on occasion, been expressed that information technologies and new educational needs would relax the professional requirements of teachers. From that perspective, it is important to defend high professional standards and to resist trends towards a de-professionalisation of teaching.

ETUCE clearly sees that the pressure towards de-professionalisation is being generated not by educational factors but by the chronic problems of teacher supply which many

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

General Assembly 2001

countries face. Some of these cases are compounded by a drive towards cuts in public sector expenditure. We believe that these policies can only lead to a downward spiral in the quality of education and an undermining of its role as a key determinant of a nation's social and economic well-being. Governments and public authorities must sustain and improve the professional standing of teachers, ensure an adequate supply of high quality entrants to the profession, and adopt policies which encourage these skilled professionals to continue working in schools.

5. Ways forward

The themes and developments addressed in the previous section, are all part of the system in which teachers are working now. They are putting great pressures on the system, and making great demands of the professionalism and commitment of the teachers. These trends and broader developments including, in some countries, attacks on the status of the public sector, are already putting great pressures on teachers. The demographic crisis outlined in the first section, which is rapidly approaching in many European countries, threatens to overwhelm systems and individuals who are already struggling to meet new challenges with inadequate resources. National governments and European institutions need to act decisively now to avert a major disaster for the existing level of education, which would jeopardise the objectives which governments and the EU have set themselves.

However, in responding to a short-term emergency, it is necessary, and should be possible, to meet the ongoing criteria and principles which have been outlined in this report and its predecessor in 1994, and which are shared widely within the European education systems (as demonstrated by the Green Paper which went to the Loule conference). It is a matter of regret that Loule and the work of the ENTEP and TNTEE networks have not concentrated more on the crisis and on finding ways of matching the short-term special measures which many countries will adopt in the next few years to agreed underlying objectives for the teaching profession, and for the re-evaluation of teaching which is urgently needed. Nevertheless, the positive work that the networks have done so far, suggests that they have the capacity to effect change in the system, and these networks should be encouraged to facilitate debate and action at the European and national levels, and also to take into active partnership the teachers' representative bodies at the European national levels. A key task for networks, governments and other policymakers, will be to ensure that the quality of teachers is sustained, as different routes to qualified status develop. Where teachers are recruited as part of special measures programmes, it is likely that continuous professional development will be of particular importance during the early phases of their careers, to ensure that they reach the level of skills and knowledge expected of them. If this gives a boost to the 'continuous professional development culture', it is to be welcomed.

The ETUCE believes that the system of teacher education, training and supply in many European countries will face a crisis in the next decade as a result of the demographic effect which we have described. Forward planning should ensure that sufficient teachers

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
General Assembly 2001

of adequate quality are available. But it will not pay to be complacent. Positive action must be taken shortly. We believe that the action taken must start from the premise that standards of teacher education and training must be maintained and built on, through any short term supply crisis, and that the lessons should be learned both for the supply and for the professional education of teachers. The ETUCE also believes that the underlying problems and periodic crises in teacher supply will not be satisfactorily resolved until the status and career opportunities of teachers are significantly enhanced.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion:

- ◆ the growing crisis in teacher supply in many countries in Europe, must be addressed as a matter of urgency;
- ◆ this must be the opportunity for a re-assertion of the professional nature of teaching and a recognition of the need for continuing professional development of teachers throughout their careers;
- ◆ teachers and their representative organisations must be involved in the networks and partnerships which are playing an increasingly important part in the development of teacher education in Europe.