



Brussels, 3 November 2009

## **ETUCE STATEMENT ON THE TEACHERS' LAYOFFS IN 2009 IN FINLAND**

The European Trade Union Committee of Education (ETUCE), representing 115 member organisations and 5,5 million individuals in the EU/EFTA, wishes to express its concern about the recent layoffs of teachers in Finland.

The ETUCE has been informed by its Finnish member organisation covering pre-primary, primary and secondary Education that 20 Finnish municipalities have, in 2009 alone, temporary laid-off over 6000 teachers from kindergarten to colleges, affecting about 80.000 pupils.

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The lay-offs are justified on an economic basis allowing municipalities to leave the Finnish Basic Education Act (628/1998) out of account. As a result, teachers' working conditions have degraded along with infringement of pupils' rights and a general deterioration of the quality of education. The ETUCE wishes to remind to the Finnish authorities that investing in education benefits all the society, increases personal, regional and international competitiveness and prevents social problems.

The ETUCE also stresses that a highly attractive and quality-oriented education sector is a milestone for the EU member states to achieve the Lisbon Goals. A recent confirmation of this priority are latest key messages on Education and Training issued by the Council of the European Union (19 February 09, 6666/09), stating notably that *"It is precisely in times of economic difficulty that the key strategic importance of sustaining open and efficient, high-quality education and training systems (...) must continued to be emphasised"*. The statement was underlined by the latest EU Presidency's Conclusions from the Council of the European Union (19/20 March 09), which has confirmed the priority to be given to appropriate investments in education (7880/09: 16). Temporary lay-offs also contradict the New Skills for New Job initiative (COM 2008: 868) launched by the European Commission stating notably that Member States must increase their efforts to raise the attractiveness and status of the teaching profession.

Moreover, the ETUCE underlines that the case of temporary lay-offs in Finland, as a mean to cope with the economic and financial crisis, is unparalleled within the EU/EFTA.

The ETUCE therefore urges the Finnish authorities to engage in alteration in the legislation and in other measures needed to guarantee the equal constitutional rights of children and young people throughout the country regardless of the municipality of residence.

The ETUCE reiterates its full support to its member organisation in Finland covering the pre-primary, primary and secondary Education, the OAJ, and their 118,000 affiliated teachers.

On behalf of the ETUCE,

Martin Rømer  
General Secretary