



**ETUCE statement on the Key Messages to the Spring European Council in the field of education and training submitted by the Education Council to the Spring European Council, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February.**

*Adopted by the EI/ETUCE Bureau on the 6th of March 2009*

At the Spring European Council the heads of states or governments will prepare EU's position on the G20 summit in London on 2 April 2009 on how to overcome the global financial crisis. The draft summary of proposals "The Global Deal" to the G20 summit, does not include investment in education as one of the measures to financial recovery.<sup>1</sup>

**President  
Président**  
Ronnie Smith

The Key messages submitted by the Education Council to the European Spring Council on the 19-20 March 2009 will form the basis for EU's position on the G20 summit.

**Vice-Presidents  
Vice-Présidents**  
Paul Bennett  
Odile Cordelier  
Kounka Damianova  
Jörgen Lindholm  
Ulrich Thöne

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) - which represents 110 teachers' unions in the EU and EFTA countries and more than 5.5 million teachers in all levels of the education sector – presents below its remarks in relation to the Key Messages.

**General Secretary  
Secrétaire Général**  
Martin Rømer

In response to the Key Messages, the ETUCE agrees on the importance of maintaining open and efficient education and training systems of high quality particularly in a time of global financial and economic crisis. The Lisbon Strategy from its outset has always included education and training as key elements in achieving the full potential of the knowledge-based society. However, the ETUCE regrets that education continues to be seen merely as a tool to meet the specific and immediate demands of the labour market. The ETUCE stresses that education and training systems serve several purposes in society and that the view of education must contain both an economic and a social dimension. The most essential task of the education systems is to *educate for life* and the outlook on education must be comprehensive and cover various skills and key competences. Only a broad approach to education and training can contribute to personal and social competences, which are vital to social cohesion, equality, active citizenship, cultural diversity and personal fulfilment.

**Treasurer  
Trésorier**  
Walter Dresscher

The ETUCE regrets that the Education Council focuses its attention on investment in "human capital" and not on the priority of investing in high quality education and training systems. Moreover, the ETUCE considers that it is unfortunate that the Council suggests investment through "...*new and diversified funding sources – including, where appropriate, private ones...*"<sup>2</sup>. The ETUCE believes that investment in high quality education for all students is necessary, not least to help Europe to recover from the current economic downturn. Free and compulsory education of high quality is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and the acquisition of the key competences for *all* students. It must therefore be recognised that education as a fundamental right is a public responsibility. Education must be publicly funded and publicly regulated. The increased interest at national, EU and global level in diverse forms of cooperation and partnerships in the education sectors is a risky development, as it can lead to a decrease of governments' responsibility to fund and ensure high quality education and training systems for *all*.<sup>3</sup> This risk is especially present in time of economic crisis when governments can be more inclined to resort to budget cuts in areas like the education sector.

<sup>1</sup> See "The road to the London Summit: The plan for recovery". Page 74. You can access this document on <http://www.londonsummit.gov.uk/resources/en/PDF/road-to-london-summit>.

<sup>2</sup> See **Key Messages** to the Spring European Council (Council doc. 5809/09) 2. February 2009. p 2. You can access this document on <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st05/st05809.en09.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See **Key Competences** page 5 and "The road to the London Summit: The plan for recovery". Page 72.

The ETUCE emphasises its concern that the Key Messages do not contain a clear recommendation to invest in the education of teachers and trainers. In order to develop a European workforce with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the labour market, the Member States must increase their efforts to raise the attractiveness and status of the teaching profession, as well as the quality of teacher education.

The involvement and consultation of the social partners are not integrated in the key messages. Teacher unions should be involved at national level as well as at EU level in the preparatory and decision-making process in the field of education and training.

The ETUCE urges and recommends the European Council to integrate the Key Messages from the Education Council in the EU positions to the G20 meeting in such a way that education will play a prominent role in **The Global Deal**.