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Education & Employment / Education & the Economic Crisis:

### **Draft Resolution on Higher Education and Research and the Global Financial Crisis**

**Proposed by:** UCU/United Kingdom  
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Congress notes the diversity of responses by national governments world-wide to the global financial crisis. Some governments have taken the opportunity to re-affirm the role of the public sector as a weapon in the struggle for economic and social coherence and sustainability, and of higher education and research as a key area of counter-cyclical investment. However congress is alarmed at the vicious ideological attack on universities and research programmes as public sector goods in a number of countries, being carried out under a propaganda screen that pretends that this is an objective or technocratic solution.

Congress strongly asserts that the responsibility for the crisis lies firmly with the greed and recklessness of the financial sector and the pusillanimity of governments in condoning that greed and fuelling it with round after round of deregulation.

The crisis has been used as a pretext for the promotion of a number of core neo-conservative principles in higher education and research which challenge the core characteristics of public sector higher education including academic freedom and institutional accountability, quality and access. In particular:

- a crude market or customer-provider model is being imposed;
- costs are being shifted from the state to individuals, hitting at equality of opportunity and creating massive uncertainty about funding streams;
- private institutions and corporate for-profit providers are being encouraged and allowed to cream off more lucrative courses;
- courses and research in academic disciplines without a direct or short-term connection to the labour market or the economy are being marginalised;
- in common with the rest of the public sector, university pension schemes are under savage attack.

As the EI 7th Higher Education and Research Conference in Vancouver in September 2010 said, 'the vandals are at the gates.' Where this programme of destruction is being implemented, the universities are being thrown into turmoil and the talents and aspirations of a generation of students are being thrown into jeopardy. Congress calls on the Executive to mount an urgent, reasoned campaign to protect higher education in those countries where it is under threat, drawing on the evidence from those countries where higher education and research has been sustained and developed in these most difficult of conditions. The campaign will need to take up these issues at the global and regional level and support national level campaigning.