



# ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education

EI European Region

Education International

Internationale de l'Éducation

Internacional de la Educación

<http://www.ei-ie.org>

## ETUCE position on future objectives of EU2020 Strategy on education and training

*Adopted by ETUCE Bureau on 16 June, 2014*

### EUROPEAN REGION-

#### ETUCE

ETUCE, which represents 132 teachers' trade unions in 45 countries, strongly welcomes the fact that the European Commission is having a [public consultation](#) on the future priorities on EU2020.

#### President

The hereby position is our answer to the questions of the public consultation.

Christine BLOWER

While EU2020 has provided directions to the member states' national strategies to achieve growth and jobs, the targets have not been achieved due to the severe effect of the **economic and financial crisis**. Poverty has increased, unemployment rate is the highest in the EU's history, and the quality of education and training is deteriorating. PIAAC results proved that there is an extremely high rate of low-skilled adults in Europe, and high number of people are not in employment and education (NEETs). There are numerous **new challenges**, which should be taken into account in setting up future objectives, such as increased nationalism / EU-scepticism and increased inequality.

#### Vice-Presidents

Odile CORDELIER

Walter DRESSCHER

Paula ENGWALL

Andreas KELLER

Galina MERKULOVA

Branimir STRUKELJ

We believe that the primary focus of EU2020 should be on the **people**. It should demonstrate and enhance a strong European cooperation to improve people' life, by providing them with employment, by improving the quality of education and training and by decreasing their poverty. EU2020 should focus on solutions tackling and avoiding future crisis. **Combatting the crisis** and its negative influence on social and economic state of Europe should stay in the agenda, because unfortunately we still cannot speak about "post-crisis". Instead of **austerity policies**, the countries should be encouraged to focus on well-targeted investment. For example spending on countries' defence could be reduced in many cases, and shifted to invest to increase employability rate and to improve quality in education.



5, Bd du Roi Albert II, 9th

1210 Brussels, Belgium

Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92

Fax +32 2 224 06 94

[secretariat@csee-etuice.org](mailto:secretariat@csee-etuice.org)

<http://www.csee-etuice.org>

**Effective social dialogue** is imperative to achieve the objectives of EU2020 at European and national level. However, the crisis has also affected social dialogue. It is obvious that countries with strong and effective social dialogue have been more successfully dealing with the crisis than others. This is why social dialogue must be strengthened in all fields, especially in education and training, at European, national, regional and local level. We regret that social partners, especially teachers' trade unions have not been appropriately consulted about the implementation of the EU2020 at national levels, which is an issue to be urgently solved.

We believe that targets and benchmarks in the EU2020 strategy should be made coherent with the ones in the **ET2020 strategy**. Although the current targets for 2020 respond to the strategy's objectives of fostering growth and jobs, two strategies on education and training (higher education attainment and reducing early school leaving) do not cover challenges of teachers and trainers, school leaders, young and adult people, and do not focus on investment and quality education and training in general.

In order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth the most important and relevant areas to be added to the existing **EU2020** objectives are the following:

- Improve employability for all
- Enhance effective social dialogue in all levels
- Decrease numbers of people not in employment and education (NEETs)

We believe that the **objectives of EU2020 on education and training** should cover general objectives on education and training, such as:

- Ensure sustainable investment in education and training
- Improve quality and free access to education and training for all
- Ensure effective and enhanced social dialogue on the design and implementation of education and training policies.

As far as we are concerned, to achieve the EU2020 objectives, it is essential to make further efforts to maintain the achievements of achieving the present **ET2020 objectives**, and to add further targets, such as:

- Improve efficient teaching and training by **quality initial and continuous professional development of teachers and trainers**. Minimum 10 % of the working time of teachers in all education sectors should be spent on continuous professional development.
- Improve teachers and trainers **working conditions, salary, and raise the status of the profession**.
- Enhance **gender equality** in the teaching profession.
- Taken into account the PIAAC results, it is essential to make benchmarks on adult learning to **improve basic skills and motivation of adults** to attend lifelong learning courses. The EU working age population with low literacy and low numeracy skills (20%) and low ICT skills (25%) should be decreased.
- Besides of improving basic skills (maths, literacy and numeracy), which are measurable, EU countries should focus more on improving the **8 key competences**<sup>1</sup>, with special attention to “learning to learn”, social and civic competences, digital competences and language competences of learners and teachers.

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[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/education\\_training\\_youth/lifelong\\_learning/c11090\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm)

- Special attention should be made to improve **innovative and transversal skills**, especially ICT skills, of the learners and their teachers in all education sectors.
- Linking to the implementation of the European Area for Skills and Qualifications, countries should work together with social partners to increase the number and improve the **quality of apprenticeship places**.
- Ensure national and European-level **social dialogue** in all the stages of implementation of the strategic objectives on education and training, at all levels.

We find it essential that EU-level targets are broken down into **national targets** as EU2020 and ET2020 must have influence on national strategies, and national programmes should translate these targets. The future strategy can deliver results if **the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)** of the European Semester process by focusing on the implementation of EU2020 and ET2020 objectives at national levels, taking into account the subsidiarity principle and flexibility in relevant fields. In general, EU2020 and ET2020 objectives should better link the priorities of the Annual Growth Survey of the European Commission and therefore to the budgetary, economic and social policy objectives of the CSRs of the European Semester.

Growth can be achieved with ending austerity policy. Member States are better encouraged to focus on the implementation of common targets for growth if it happens with a **cooperative way** between the Member States and the European Commission. Reporting and monitoring national actions seemingly do not always help the member states to achieve the objectives. We suggest to concentrate on well-targeted peer-reviews and exchange of experiences among the governments to make common efforts to achieve the strategic targets on education and training. The focus should be on **implementing the EU-level policies** and making them adaptable for newer needs than on continuously creating new policies.

The **seven action programmes for growth**<sup>2</sup> developed under the EU2020 and ET2020 strategies, such as the *Youth on the Move* and *Digital Agenda*, had limited influence at national levels. Concerning the fact that education and training is under national competence, these programmes could have limited effect at national levels. However, some of these affected Country Specific Recommendations of the European Commission to countries, which definitely had positive impact on their implementation.

As far as we are concerned, the EU not only needs a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and jobs for the coming years, but it also must set up **short-term and long-term objectives** taking into attention the possible future challenges. We prefer that the short-term strategies should focus on solutions to combat the crisis, medium-term strategies to combat the negative impact of the crisis on economic and social development of Europe, while we should look into the future for long-term growth.

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<sup>2</sup> "Flagship initiatives": "Digital agenda for Europe", "Innovation Union", "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "Agenda for new skills and jobs", "European platform against poverty"