



The Future of the Teaching Profession

Background document

Workshop on the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Education

Defending Education as a basic human right

Six years of economic crisis, in conjunction with the sovereign-debt crisis, have undeniably caused considerable strain on European countries' public budgets. Governments across Europe have undertaken a large number of reforms often justified by major cuts in public spending.

Since 2008, ETUCE has continuously been monitoring the impact of the economic crisis on education and education systems in Europe. ETUCE has carried out three questionnaire surveys¹ covering the period 2008-2011 and 2011-2013. The surveys embraced almost all EU member states, allowing ETUCE to collect responses from 45 teacher trade unions in 27 European countries. According to the ETUCE member organisations who participated to the surveys, governments across Europe **cut educational spending** and embarked in reforms headed towards some kind of **privatisation of education**, mining the pillar of a democratic European society based on the access to public quality education free of charge for all².

The surveys and studies undertaken by ETUCE have shown that the austerity and cutback policies, often imposed without any consultation of the teachers' organisations, have a direct impact on the teachers' working conditions at all sectoral levels in Europe.

According to ETUCE member organisations **80% of European countries³ have undergone education reforms** since 2008. Responding organisations in about **half of the EU countries⁴** reported about an on-going **process of privatisation⁵**. Alarmingly, all those who went through some kind of privatisation reform suffered from education budget reductions due to the crisis⁶.

¹ For reference: ETUCE, 05/2013 – [The continued impact of the crisis on teachers in Europe](#); ETUCE, 09/2012 [Mini-survey on the impact of the economic crisis on teacher education](#); ETUCE, 2012, [Mini-survey in the Action and Campaign framework on the economic crisis](#).

² ETUCE comparative analysis of the 3 ETUCE surveys on the impact of the crisis: [The crisis and its drawn-out effects on education since 2008](#),.

³ The 80% is referring to 20 countries out of 26 surveyed from 2008: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and UK. You need to name the title of the survey. Otherwise people might bother us with questions where to find it.

⁴ From 2008: 11 countries out of 26 surveyed, namely: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Spain, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal and UK. From 2011, 2 countries more started privatisation processes: Ireland and Romania.

⁵ When referring to privatisation, surveyed ETUCE member organisations meant to report an on-going process of reforms in differing and various branches of education – e.g. pre-primary and primary in Poland, higher education in Romania and Spain, pre-university in Cyprus, teacher education and early childhood education in Ireland, LLL programs in the Netherlands, indirect public-private participation in France and educational service sector in Spain and UK, boosted up by the economic crisis.

⁶ With the exception of Germany, Malta and Poland.



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Recent Eurostat data⁷ for the period 2009-2012 illustrate the fact that many countries implemented **deep cuts in their education budget**. Statistics show that public expenditure on education decreased both at EU average level and in the majority of EU Member States.

- On the **EU average level**, public spending in education **decreased overall** by 3.6% as a relative share of EU GDP in 2011, and remained constantly low at 5.3% in 2012. With the decrease in GDP in 2012, public expenditure for education fell further in real terms.
- The **share of GDP devoted to education at Member State level was reduced** in 14 out of 27 countries⁸, reaching the highest troughs in Romania (-27%) and Portugal (-13%), and remained at the same level as in 2011 in 9 countries⁹. In 2012, the share of GDP invested in education was increased only in 4 countries¹⁰.

In both EU and non-EU member countries, austerity has proven itself unable to tackle the crisis, weakening the demand and hence blocking the start of a new growth cycle.

According to the ETUCE comparative analysis of the three questionnaire surveys carried out between 2008 and 2013, **deteriorating working and employment conditions for teachers**, combined with cuts in social expenditure, have had a **direct impact on quality of education**.

Moreover, the cuts and downturns in European education systems have affected students and their families and blurred the prospects and opportunities for younger generations in Europe. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there is emerging evidence¹¹ that the ideological drive towards privatisation and marketisation of education is resulting in increased discrimination, social fragmentation and widening inequality, the most affected being those with fewer resources.

It is therefore on the social side that the picture is most alarming, with a rapid increase in poverty and social exclusion. **The increase in social conflicts** has resulted from these changes –for example in social dialogue reforms. This happens in a context where basic trade union rights are denied to the teachers in some countries in Europe, forcing the teacher unions in these countries to act without any institutional recognition and, in some cases, facing legal or even physical threats against their representatives.¹²

The way forward: teacher trade unions actions to exiting the crisis

Driven by the belief that Europe could only recover from this unprecedented economic, social and job crisis by ending austerity policy and developing alternative economic policies, ETUCE has stood in

⁷ Eurostat data on General government expenditure by function (COFOG) can be [found here](#).

⁸ Namely: BG, CZ, DE, ES, CY, LV, LT, HU, PT, RO, SL, SK, FI, UK.

⁹ Member States that didn't experience any variation from 2011 to 2012 were: BE, IE, EL, FR, IT, NL, AT, PL, SE. However, all these countries had gone through education cuts in the previous years, with high levels reached by EL (-7.0% variation 2010-2009), IT (-6.7% variation 2011-2012), and SE (-4.2% variation 2010-2009).

¹⁰ Namely: DK, EE, LU, MT.

¹¹ ILO Publication, 'The European Social Model in times of Economic Crisis and Austerity Policies', ILO, Geneva, February 2014, Executive Summary [available here](#).

¹² ETUCE [Solidarity webpage](#).



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defense of teachers and educators as well as of the right to quality education for all. At the same time, ETUCE has proposed ways forward targeting investments, job creation, including fresh jobs for graduates helping developing a knowledge-based economy, and social inclusion.

ETUCE and its member organisations have organized campaign activities and demonstrated support and solidarity to each other, especially towards those countries where trade union rights and public education were under fire. Recently, an [ETUCE film documentary](#) has been released with the purpose of being a wake-up call to policy makers. In the context of the [Action and campaign Framework on the Economic crisis](#) ETUCE has been supporting numerous actions by member organisations across Europe. It has expressed solidarity; participated in meetings with national governments to support member organisations in their calls to respect social dialogue, trade union rights and stop cutting education spending.

ETUCE [has mobilized its members for Quality Education](#) and has given voice to all teachers and educators in Europe by delivering their messages to the European Commission, the European Council and European Parliament. To this end, ETUCE has address the challenges arising from the European economic governance process, which has a major influence since the economic crisis broke out.

With its [position on Country-Specific Recommendations](#) (CSR) and its [Message on Investing in education](#), the ETUCE has proposed that education be excluded from the calculation of public deficit and debt within the European Growth and Stability Pact; stressed that any reform targeting education and training should go hand in hand with appropriate sustainable public funding; reaffirmed the key role of teachers in any education reform and the crucial involvement of social partners in education at all levels.



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Resources

ETUCE Action and Campaign Framework on the Economic Crisis

- ETUCE film documentary: '[When Europe forgot its homework: Education in crisis](#)' released, first screening September 2014
- [ETUCE Member organization mobilizing for Quality of Education](#) based on 10 Key Messages on 'What is needed to improve Quality of Education in Europe?', 2013-2014
- [ETUCE webpage on Crisis in Education](#),
- [ETUCE Surveys comparisons on 'The crisis and its drawn-out effects on Education since 2008'](#), 2014
- [ETUCE survey - The continued impact of the crisis on teachers in Europe](#), 2013
- [Analysis of a mini-survey on the impact of the economic crisis on teacher education in the European Union](#), 2012
- [ETUCE action and campaign framework on the economic crisis - Analysis of the mini-survey](#), 2012

Recent Positions adopted by the ETUCE Bureau/Committee

- [ETUCE Message to the new European Parliament, new European Commission, future Councils and the Italian Presidency on Investing on Education](#), July 2014
- [ETUCE Statement on CSRs 2014 on education and training](#), June 2014
- [ETUCE Statement on EU 2020](#), June 2014
- [ETUCE Statement on Statement on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership](#), April 2014
- [ETUCE Statement on the European Commission proposals in the framework of the European Semester 2012](#), June 2012

ETUCE resolutions adopted in November 2012 by the ETUCE Conference

- [Resolution on the Financial and Economic Crises DE ES RU](#)
- [Resolution on the Teaching Profession DE ES RU](#)
- [Fighting the Crisis an Essential Contribution of Higher Education and Research DE ES RU](#)
- [Resolution on Privatisation and Educational Inequality DE ES RU](#)

More information

- Education International: [Study on trends and freedom of association and collective bargaining in the education sector since the financial crisis 2008-2013](#), Nora Wintour, September 2013
- Education International: [Teacher Union Governmental relations in the context of educational reform](#), Nina Bascia & Pamela Osmond, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, September 2013
- ETUCE Circular 1/2014: [Spending on education is an investment: progress in countries in 2013](#)
- ETUCE Circular 3/2012: [Financing adult learning](#)
- ETUCE Newsletter 4/2011: [ETUCE Committee: Focus on the economic crisis](#)
- ETUCE Circular 3/2011: [Crises and education](#)
- ETUCE Newsletter 3/2011: [Follow-up on the ETUCE action to tackle the impact of the economic crisis on education](#)