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ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

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ETUCE Activity Report on

Higher education and research

To BFUG Plenary meeting 12-13 November 2019, Helsinki

The following report is a summary of ETUCE¹ activities on higher education and research **between February 2019 and November 2019.**

ETUCE and its member organisations take actions on the issues and challenges specific to the higher education and research sector.

Academic freedom discussed in World Congress of Education International

The global union of education trade union, EI hold its World Congress on 19-26 July in Bangkok. Approximately 1700 representatives of education trade unions participated in the event, which is the supreme decision-making body of Education International. Higher education and research were also subject of discussions.

[Resolution on Academic Freedom on Higher Education](#) recalls that the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel and the UNESCO Recommendation from 1974 define academic freedom as the right of all academic and research staff. However, these recommendations must be implemented in order that higher education teaching personnel and researchers should also enjoy, without interference, internationally recognised civil, political, social and cultural rights applicable to all citizens.

[Resolution adopted on Safeguarding Academic Freedoms in Higher Education and Research](#) puts and emphasis on the essential role of academic freedom in relation to proper development of research, better working conditions for researchers, lecturer-researchers,

¹ The *European Trade Union Committee for Education* (ETUCE) is a recognised European social partner for education and represents 11 million teachers and educators affiliated to 131 education trade unions across 49 European countries. It was established in 1975 and, since 2010, has been the *Regional European Structure of Education International* (EI). It is also a European Trade Union Federation of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). ETUCE is composed of national trade unions of teachers and other staff at all levels of general education, including higher education and research.

stable jobs, decent salaries and public funding and reaffirms joint efforts of education trade unions on this issue.

Trade unions of higher education and research staff continue fight for academic freedom

Higher Education and Research Standing Committee (HERSC) is a permanent body of ETUCE representing 45 education trade unions whose membership covers higher education and research staff. HERSC meets twice a year and discusses education trade unions' reactions to higher education and research policies in Europe.

On 10-11 September 2019, the Standing Committee met in Brussels to discuss the following issues:

- Academic freedom, enhancing support to higher education and research staff, ensuring supportive working environments in higher education and research,
- The future of the Bologna Process Anniversary Conference and the 2020 Ministerial Meeting;
- European Universities initiative of the European Commission
- European Research Infrastructure Consortiums of the European Commission

More information: [here](#)

ETUCE Campaign: “Shape the Future of Europe with Teachers”

ETUCE launched its *“Shape the Future of Europe with Teachers”* campaign at the Special Conference which took place in Athens in November 2018. Due to the many challenges facing Europe and its education systems, namely the privatisation of the education sector, austerity measures, the rise in xenophobia and populism and a teaching profession which fails to attract fresh graduates, ETUCE strongly felt that teachers' and education trade unionists' voices needed to be heard. In light of the European parliamentary elections in May 2019, the idea behind this campaign was to make four key demands to election candidates to raise awareness about the issues at stake.

The four key demands are:

- Quality education for all;
- Increased public investment and a more attractive teaching profession;
- Strengthened social dialogue and the involvement of education trade unions in decision-making;
- The promotion of democratic citizenship and inclusion.

More information: [here](#)

Issues discussed in European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Education

ETUCE, as a recognised social partner at the European level, is committed to enhancing and strengthening social dialogue at European, national, regional and local level. The European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) gathers national delegates from ETUCE and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) member organisations in order to debate, identify and promote common viewpoints at the European level. ETUCE and EFEE organised the final conference on their shared project *“European Sectoral Social Partners in Education Promoting Effective Integration of Migrants and refugees in Education”*. During

the conference the participants discussed joint guidelines of ETUCE and EFEE on this topic. These guidelines will form the base for a quality framework for the effective integration for migrants and refugees, which is to be adapted by the ESSDE Plenary.

The ESSDE working group met in the end of June. It considered the role of school leaders and teachers in facilitating innovation in schools, the impact of AI and learning analytics in education, the dangers of cyber harassment and the context of the digitalisation of the teaching profession, the role of education and social partners in promoting inclusion and common values, civic education, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship to combat all forms of intolerance and social exclusion.

Sustainable funding in higher education and research

Ensuring public funding to higher education is a crucial part of ETUCE work at the European level. The economic crisis and the ensuing creation of the European Economic Governance Coordination mechanism (European Semester) and Europe 2020 Framework have led to the increasing influence on the European coordination mechanism on national socio-economic policies, including on public higher education and research.

ETUCE closely follows the process and various mechanisms of Economic and Social Governance, and more specifically the evolutions of the European Semester both as a system of economic governance and as a process of policy coordination, including in the education and training field.

The European Semester 2018-19 focused on investment. This need was also present in the demands to increase the investment in education in the [Country Reports](#) and the increased number of CSRs on education. While welcoming the support when demanding further investment in education the [ETUCE renewed its demands](#) to focus the European Semester more on education in its priorities for the European Semester 2019-2020.

The 2019-2020 cycle of the European Semester was kicked off by ETUCE publishing its education priorities for the Annual Growth Survey (AGS) in September 2019. The [priorities](#) address the ongoing underinvestment on education, the simultaneous increase of the level of private investments in the educational systems and the shift towards a dominance of economic prerogatives over educational objectives. It demands a change towards inclusive and high quality education that boosts skills, knowledge and critical thinking, and where teachers and other education personnel are provided with the resources, tools and professional space they need.

ETUCE urges for enhanced public investment, academic freedom, and fair working conditions in higher education and research through a dynamic three-way process: 1, by informing ETUCE member organisations on their opportunities to influence the process of the European policy coordination and governance (e.i. through the European Semester), 2, by raising the awareness of policy-makers at national and European level on education workers' viewpoints on these issues and 3, by promoting social partners' effective involvement in the use, management and governance of EU funds in the area of higher

education and research, as to increase transparency, democratic governance, and to ensure that resources effectively meets those who are most in need, so as to address challenges of equity and equality in higher education systems across Europe.

Adoption of the Copyright Directive in the Digital Single Market

In April 2019, the EU Copyright Directive was adopted, with direct implications for the work of higher education and research personnel. ETUCE has, since the early drafts of the Copyright Directive, advocated for fair access to copyrighted content for educational purposes, enabled by an education exception to the copyright-related licensing fees. This was formally stated in the ETUCE [Statement](#) on the Copyright Directive. On the day of the adoption of the Directive, ETUCE has [reiterated](#) its concerns and called on national governments to consult education trade unions on the adequate implementation of the education exception of the Directive in the national legislations.

Solidarity with education trade unions of higher education and research staff

In September 2019 ETUCE expressed its solidarity with UNIVERSITAS, one of its member organisations in higher education and research in Estonia sharing concerns in relation to planned activities in the sector, namely suspending all additional commitments, including any increases in volumes and ancillary activities agreed in the most recent management contracts; reducing the amount of classroom work in 2020 and 2021 and post part of the staff on unpaid leave for certain periods of time; and reducing or abandoning regional activities to maintain the quality of learning at main learning locations.

In July, 2019 on occasion of the 66th Bologna Follow-Up Group Board meeting on 24 September 2019 in Istanbul, ETUCE wished to recall the Turkish authorities about the very principle guiding not only the work of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) but also fundamental commitment of its members to respect academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Gender equality in higher education

Among other sectors in ETUCE Project Social dialogue and gender equality: Empowering education trade unions to address gender equality in the teaching profession through social dialogue with the following outcomes: a leaflet on gender equality, a [research report](#) on gender equality, including higher education and research sector, and an [Online Database of Good Practices on Gender Equality](#). We are currently updating ETUCE Action Plan on Gender Equality, which focuses on all sectors, including issues specific for Higher Education and Research

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