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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

### Education trade unions' demands to the Paris Ministerial Conference of 24-25 May 2018

#### The future of the Bologna Process is jeopardised by inadequate working conditions and the low status of employees in the sector

ETUCE, the European Trade Union Committee for Education, representing 11 million education and research sector employees in 40 European countries, is deeply concerned about the implementation of the Bologna Process and the future of the European Higher Education Area.

The Paris Communiqué, to be adopted by the Paris Ministerial Conference, will focus on ensuring 'fundamental values' such as freedom of expression, autonomy for institutions, academic freedom, independent students' unions and free movement of students and staff remain integral to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In Europe, employees in the higher education and research sector are facing a certain number of difficulties which result in the downgrading of their professional status.

As a matter of fact, ETUCE member organisations regularly report<sup>1</sup> threats to teachers and researchers professional autonomy through the assertion of their right to academic freedom. They also highlight the deteriorating working and living conditions of academics, including salary freezes, cuts and some unacceptable changes in pension schemes. The precarious employment through casual contracts without any clear future career paths for young academics continues to jeopardise the attractiveness of the teaching profession in the higher education and research sector.

In our report published for the attention of the ministers, we present **four demands** concerning the future of the Bologna Process:

1. A better protection of **academic freedom** as one of the **fundamental values** of the Bologna process;
2. The importance of substantial **core public investment** in higher education and research;
3. The need to ensure a **supportive working environment for staff**, including improved job security and working conditions, and
4. A call for better **recognition of teaching** in higher education.

In view of the situation facing the higher education and research sector in Europe, ETUCE invites the ministers participating in the Paris Ministerial Conference:

<sup>1</sup> ETUCE – EPSU: [Pay in the public services – how workers continue to pay for the crisis, 2017](#)

1. To take measures to guarantee that national higher education and research policy is underpinned by **democratic and fundamental values and** respects the freedom of citizens and the scientific, cultural, social, ecological and economic development of our societies.
2. To ensure **democratic governance** of decision making on higher education and research policy and of institutions, aiming at the successful implementation of EHEA goals in line with effective and meaningful **social dialogue and collegial governance** with education trade unions and staff.
3. To ensure the full implementation of the 1997 UNESCO recommendation on the **status of higher education teaching personnel** with respect to institutional autonomy, academic freedom and self-governance and collegiality.
4. To **guarantee academic freedom** for higher education and research personnel and institutions, including **freedom of research** and diversity of research subjects, approaches, methods and time frames;
5. To restrain from further marketisation of the higher education sector, including performance-based funding models. Instead, governments across the EHEA must **view investment in higher education and research in a long-term perspective**, increase public spending on universities, colleges and research institutes and refrain from introducing tuition fees for students.
6. To ensure high investment in pedagogical tools with special attention to high-quality **digital equipment** and continuous professional development for academic staff.
7. To introduce policies to **eliminate inequalities** and **make academic life an attractive profession** for all, in particular for young and female academics and for colleagues from socio-economically and racially disadvantaged backgrounds, including migrants and refugees. .
8. To introduce initiatives and measures to significantly **increase the percentage of women** holding senior posts in higher education institutions.
9. To put an end to the casualisation and precarious employment and **end the proliferation of part-time and fixed term contracts** in the sector and convert part-time and fixed term contracts into full time indefinite (permanent) positions in order to move towards a more stable and attractive profession.
10. To provide adequate support to **reduce the workload of academics**, including a reduction in class contact time and the provision of administrative support, so that academics can achieve a better work-life balance.
11. To ensure greater **parity of esteem between teaching and research** in academic careers, and guarantee that both teaching and research are an integral part of the life and work of academics.

## 12. ANNEX

Eurydice<sup>2</sup> in its study *Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Academic Staff (2017)* reported last year, that:

- **Job security** is not the norm in the academic world: in almost all European countries the higher education sector offers both **fixed-term and indefinite job opportunities**, but in some countries all academics are employed only on fixed-term contracts.
- Concerning their **salary**, many academics experience an increasing 'performance pressure' in various areas, including research, teaching or qualification upgrading.
- Senior academic staff tend to have more favourable **working conditions** and secure contracts than their junior colleagues;
- **Women** continue to be under represented in academia;
- External quality assurance agencies examining institutions focus on teaching and research, and often neglect **human resource management** (recruitment procedures, performance appraisal systems and promotion practices);
- Across Europe, there are almost no large-scale **continuing professional development** (CPD) programmes providing academics with the opportunity to improve their teaching skills.
- The **profession is ageing** while qualifications and performance requirements are extremely high: the share of 50-64-year-olds is above 40 % in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Finland and Switzerland, and in five countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Italy, Latvia and Slovakia – the proportion of staff above 65 exceeds 10 %. All these countries have a relatively low share of staff in the category under 35, which could signal some difficulties in the generational renewal of the academic staff population.

In addition, an *ETUCE Report on 'Academics united for quality higher education': the voice of the profession* was published for the attention of the ministers participating in the Paris Ministerial Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> Eurydice: Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Academic Staff – 2017. Full version: [DE](#) [EN](#) [FR](#) ; [Summary](#)