



MALTA EU2017



Norwegian Ministry
of Education and Research

Last modified: 05.05.2017

ETUCE ACTIVITY REPORT ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

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.

ETUCE and its member organisations take actions on the issues and challenges specific to the higher education and research sector. Such particularities include public/private developments in higher education funding, the autonomy of universities and academic freedom, supportive environment and social dialogue on sectoral matters, as well as the mobility of academics and gender equality, pay and working conditions, and social protection for those working in the sector.

The following report is a summary of ETUCE activities between March 2016 and April 2017.

Results of the ETUCE Statutory Conference

ETUCE Statutory Conference took place on 6-8 December 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia and gathered together 350 education trade union delegates from 131 national education trade unions at all levels of education from 48 European countries. Conference participants kicked off new policies for empowering education trade unions as key for quality education and debated and voted on a new Work Programme 2017-2020 and several resolutions and a policy paper:

- Resolution on Empowering Education Trade Unions: the Key to Promoting Quality Education
- Resolution on Enhancing the Status and Recognition of Teaching in Higher Education
- Resolution on Education Trade Unions on the Refugee Situation in Europe: Promoting Education as the Key to Integration and Inclusion
- Resolution on Refugees and Displaced Children
- Resolution Against Privatisation and Commercialisation of Education
- Composite Resolution on Reinforcing Equalities within Education and Education Trade Unions In A Fast Changing World
- Resolution on Solidarity with Turkish education community
- Resolution on Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining at European Schools
- Resolution on Guaranteeing Quality in the Education System Through Renewal of Education Personnel and Working with Other Education Professionals
- Resolution on Education for Democracy
- ETUCE Policy Paper on 21st Century Teaching Profession and the Use of ICT

The main Resolution of the Conference on Empowering Education Trade Unions: the Key to Promoting Quality Education called for increasing public investment in the education sector, effective social dialogue, the enhancement of rights and fair working conditions for teachers and education personnel, and extending education trade union membership to provide support to a wide range of education personnel.

The second major resolution focused on Enhancing the Status and Recognition of Teaching in Higher Education. It underlined the importance of the teaching component in the academic career and the importance of peer review as a mean to evaluate the quality of higher education teaching. Via this resolution ETUCE member organisations call on governments and higher education institutions to:

- to ensure that educators are employed on decent, secure contracts;
- to introduce equality issues and the mainstreaming of equality measures in the framework of higher education policies, social dialogue and collective bargaining;
- to increase investment in activities that support the teaching function;
- to provide academics with high quality pedagogical training and continuous professional development that focuses directly on their academic practice and makes it possible for them
- to implement the principles of the scholarship of teaching and learning;
- to support research-led teaching and the principles of the teaching-research nexus in general as the best way to ensure the delivery of up-to-date knowledge and socially relevant education;
- to recognise teaching as a legitimate career progression route and ensure a better balance between teaching and research in academic staff progression and promotion decisions;
- to place peer review at the heart of the process for evaluating the quality of higher education teaching;
- to ensure that education trade unions are given consultative status by national quality assurance agencies.

The Higher Education and Research Standing Committee

One key component of ETUCE's overarching action plan regarding higher education and research is the establishment of the *Higher Education and Research Standing Committee* (HERSC). This permanent body of ETUCE represents 45 ETUCE member organisations 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. During the June 2016-May 2017 period, HERSC met at two occasions:

- In September 2016, HERSC met in Brussels and discussed various topics, including the role of higher education and research in the then upcoming European Commission's initiative entitled the *New Skills Agenda for Europe* and ETUCE's solidarity and financial support to academics and teachers in Turkey and ETUCE's Turkish member organisation (Eğitim -Sen). The trade unions discussed also on the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) developments, public financing and increasing privatisation of higher education and research, the Country Specific Recommendations of the European Semester, social dialogue and the ongoing developments of the *European Pension Fund for Researchers* (RESAVER).
- In March 2017, HERSC members discussed the education trade unions' reaction to the proposal to a Copyright directive, developments of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Education working group dedicated to higher education and research and dealing specifically, in 2017, with gender equality in academia and mobility, and the *Country Reports of the European Semester* on higher education and research as well as potential threats to autonomy of universities and commercialisation of university outcomes as a result of enhanced partnerships between universities and businesses. RESAVER, BFUG, as well as international-level work of Educational International were also in the agenda¹.

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's surveys proved that cuts in national public budget throughout Europe have resulted in negative consequences in quality in the education sector, including public higher education and research.

Therefore, ETUCE closely follows the process and various mechanisms of Economic and Monetary Governance, and more specifically the evolutions of the European Semester. From ETUCE's perspective the 2016 *Country Specific Recommendations* (CSRs) revealed some visible worrisome patterns. Regarding higher education and research, many CSRs advocated for reforms of higher education, in particular to increase the share of performance-based funding of research institutions and a demand for enhanced cooperation between businesses and universities. The 2017 cycle of the European Semester was kicked off with the unveiling of the Annual Growth Survey in November 2016, and followed by the

¹ <https://www.csee-etu.org/en/news/archive/1920-trade-unions-reaffirm-the-importance-of-investment-academic-freedom-and-fair-working-conditions-in-higher-education-and-research?highlight=WyJoZXJzYyJd>

publication of the 2017 Country Reports. The Country Reports are European Commission-issued assessments of Member States' economies and economic policies, and constitute a crucial basis for the CSRs. ETUCE produced a thematic overview² on the content of the 2017 Country Reports, which revealed the choice of European policy makers to carry on with the promotion of enhanced private/public partnerships and performance-based funding of higher education and research institutions, thus indicating that such initiatives will be further supported in the 2017 CSRs.

Education trade unions have publicly opposed these trends, as they risk enhancing the commercialisation and privatisation of higher education and research, and therefore pose a threat to institutional autonomy, academic freedom, collegial governance and working conditions for staff in higher education and research. These trends have also negative consequences in the implementation of the Bologna process.

ETUCE effectively promotes investment, academic freedom, and fair working conditions in higher education and research through a dynamic two-way process: 1, by informing ETUCE member organisations on their opportunities to influence the process of the European Semester, and 2, by raising the awareness of policy-makers at national and European level on education workers' viewpoints on these issues.

Social Dialogue

The European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education

ETUCE, as a recognised social partner at the European level, is committed to enhancing and strengthening social dialogue. The *European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education* (ESSDE) gathers the members of ETUCE and the *European Federation of Education Employers* (EFEE) in order to debate, identify and promote common viewpoints at the European level. As agreed upon in the 2016-2017 Work Programme of the ESSDE³, members meet four times a year under the umbrella of various formations: the Steering Committee, the Plenary, the Working Group on topics defined in the Work Programme, and the *Working Group on Higher Education and Research*. This group is comprised exclusively of ETUCE and EFEE members working in higher education and research institutions and meets once a year, tackling issues with regards to higher education. The aim of these meetings are, according to the agreed Work Programme of 2016-17, to discuss how the European Education Social Partners can contribute to improving the link between higher education and labour market, mobility of professors and researchers, gender equality.

The *ESSDE Working Group on Higher Education and Research* met in June 2016. This meeting gave social partners the opportunity to discuss topics such as: the New Skills Agenda for Europe, the role of higher education and research in providing adequate skills and fostering employability for students and early career researchers, diversity in higher education and research, as well as public and private developments and funding of higher education and research. In March 2017, the Working Group met and shared viewpoints on gender equality and staff mobility in Higher education and research, with special attention to the impact of the *European Pension Fund for Researchers* (RESAVER) on mobile researchers and on national collective agreements on pension funds.

Both meetings were attended by European Union officials who provided a precious insight into policy developments at the institutional level.

Survey on national social dialogue in higher education and research

Social dialogue in higher education and research is also monitored by ETUCE at the national level. In 2016, ETUCE issued a *Survey on Social Dialogue and Collegial Governance in Higher Education and Research*⁴. This survey was completed by 27 education trade unions from 23 European countries⁵. The survey questions focused on the various national traditions of social dialogue and collegial governance in

² This document is available at: https://www.csee-etu.org/images/Reports/2017_ALL_Country-Reports-Thematic-Overview.pdf

³ 2016-2017 ESSDE Work Programme:

https://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/FINAL_ESSDE_WP_2016-2017.pdf

⁴ The Report detailing the Survey results:

https://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/04.2016HERSC_SurveyReport.pdf

The Executive Summary is available in English:

https://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/ExecutiveSummary_HERSC-SurveyReport.pdf

In French: https://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/ExecutiveSummary_HERSC-SurveyReport-FR.pdf

⁵ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom.

higher education and research, as well as ETUCE's member organisations level of satisfaction regarding social dialogue and collegial governance. The main highlights of this questionnaire results were as follows:

According to the respondent ETUCE member organisations, *social dialogue discussions on higher education and research* cover the following topics:

- Working conditions of higher education and research staff;
- Human and trade union rights;
- Working time of higher education and research staff;
- Salaries of higher education and research staff;
- Employment contracts of higher education and research staff;
- Social protection rights;
- Higher education and research reforms ;
- Professional issues of higher education and research staff;
- Professional development and training ;
- Gender equality issues of higher education and research staff;
- Health and safety of higher education and research staff.
- Financing of higher education and research.
- Professional autonomy and freedom;
- Professional ethics;
- Professional standards;
- Curricula development.

However, concerning the level of *satisfaction in social dialogue* on higher education and research only a Swedish education trade union is very satisfied with the social dialogue on higher education and research with social dialogue at national, local and institutional levels. At the same time, 12 out of 27 unions are unsatisfied and 4 out of 27 unions are very unsatisfied with national level social dialogue.

According to the respondent ETUCE member organisations, topics of discussion and decision-making in the framework of *collegial governance on higher education and research* include the following issues:

- Institutional strategies, priorities;
- Curricula development ;
- Budget allocation;
- Professional issues of higher education and research staff;
- Institutional budget;
- Professional standards;
- Professional ethics;
- "Academic" matters;
- Professional development and training;
- Professional autonomy and freedom;
- Promotion;
- Career structures.

However, only 2 out of the 27 respondent unions reported that they are very satisfied with the level of collegial governance (the Swedish union is very satisfied with collegial governance at institutional, faculty and department level, and the Slovakian trade union is very satisfied with collegial governance at department level). 14 unions are unsatisfied at the institutional level collegial governance, and 3 unions are very unsatisfied with collegial governance either at institutional level, or at faculty level, and department level.

Joint Declaration on Supporting early career researchers in higher education in Europe

While higher education and research is a vibrant platform for knowledge dissemination, innovation and progress, its staff is exposed to increasing uncertainty and precarity, and the means publicly allocated to higher education and research institutions are shrinking in many countries. Such threats to the higher education and research personnel and students' optimal development are daily combatted by ETUCE member organisations at all levels of decision-making as they can risk the implementation of the Bologna Process.

In the framework of the *European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education* (ESSDE), EFEE and ETUCE have carried out the project “*Supporting early career researchers in Higher Education in Europe and the role of employers’ organisations and trade unions*”. This joint effort has resulted in the publication of the Joint Statement on “*Supporting early career researchers in Higher Education in Europe*”⁶ and of a Joint research report “*Supporting early career researchers in Higher Education in Europe: the Role of Employers and Trade Unions*”⁷

The joint declaration is addressed to social partners in education representing the Higher Education and Research sector and their national, regional and local members as well as the European Institutions and interested stakeholders at European or national and local level. The social partners agreed in several actions points how to promote the employability of early career researchers, the mobility of early career researchers, gender equality and equity for early career researchers.

Solidarity

In some countries involved in the Bologna Process, there have been major violations of academic freedom and collegial governance over the past year. EI/ETUCE have been actively involved in responding to these developments and two examples are provided below.

Hungary

Sharing its member organisations’ strong concerns about the Hungarian authorities’ non-transparent and undemocratic approach of submitting legislative proposals related to the Central European University (CEU), ETUCE sent a support letter to FDSZ, PSZ and PDSZ, three of ETUCE’s member organisations in Hungary, on 7 April 2017. The letter shares the view of the three Hungarian education trade unions and emphasises the unwillingness of the Hungarian government to take into account views and positions of national social partners and by these means raise great concerns about the functioning of the social dialogue in the country. Alongside the threat that these changes pose to democracy and academic freedom in the country, ETUCE member organisations in Hungary fear that such act of abuse of power could mean that the government authorities can easily apply the same measures on publicly funded Hungarian higher education institutions, too.

Turkey

In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in Turkey, EI/ETUCE together with other international and European institutions and organisations expressed their greatest concerns about the Turkish government’s mass dismissals of public employees, especially Turkish education personnel. ETUCE opposes that the large-scale and undemocratic actions undertaken by the Turkish authorities undermine not only the well-functioning of academic freedom but jeopardise quality education for all in Turkey as a whole.

In the last few months, EI/ETUCE have repeatedly called on the Turkish government to respect their international commitments and obligations.

At the recent ETUCE Conference in Belgrade on 5-8 December 2016, ETUCE member organisations reaffirmed their commitment to strive and advocate for democracy and fundamental rights as cornerstones for quality education. To that effect and unanimously adopting the Resolution "[Solidarity with the Turkish education community](#)", they clearly confirmed their aim to further support and demonstrate solidarity with their Turkish member organisation, Eğitim Sen, and its affiliates.

Education International and ETUCE have conducted numerous actions in supporting the Turkish education community, such as statements⁸, joint support and solidarity letters with other trade unions (eg. with the *European Public Services Union* (EPSU)) and Education International and ETUCE also cooperate with EPSU, ETUC, ITUC, Amnesty International and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) on this issue.

⁶ The joint-declaration is available at: https://www.csee-etuice.org/images/attachments/Joint_Declaration_EFEE-ETUCE_on_Early_Career_Researchers.pdf

⁷ The report is available at: <https://csee-etuice.org/images/Reports/FinalReportSupportingECR.pdf>

⁸ 20 July 2016, ETUCE statement “[European education community against the large scale violation of Turkish education employees’ rights](#)”;

20 July 2016, Education International statement “[Turkey must not use educators as scapegoats in response to failed coup](#)”;

Furthermore, ETUCE Conference on 6-8 December 2016 adopted a Resolution on "[Solidarity with the Turkish education community](#)" aiming to further support and demonstrate solidarity with Eğitim Sen and its affiliates.

On 27-28 February 2017, Education International and ETUCE organised a mission to Ankara. The mission was led by ETUCE President Christine Blower and ETUCE European Director Susan Flocken, and comprised representatives from 11 member organisations from Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The aim of the mission was to obtain a direct apprehension of the situation and of the scope and impact that the application of the emergency decree has on education staff and society as a whole in Turkey, as well as to strengthen and reconfirm education trade unions' solidarity with the Turkish education community. The delegation met representatives from EI affiliate Eğitim Sen, the Turkish Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions (KESK), the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, the ILO, and UNICEF, and with officials of various embassies in Ankara, along with dismissed teachers. The report⁹ on the mission can be found in ETUCE website.

EI and ETUCE and their member organisations continue supporting Eğitim Sen and the education community in Turkey and demonstrating financial solidarity with Eğitim Sen by making a contribution to the EI Solidarity Fund. The contributions to the EI Solidarity Fund made in support of Turkish colleagues will ensure that legal assistance to Turkish education personnel in need can be provided sustainably via Eğitim Sen. Eğitim Sen reported that through its efforts and international support, it has been able to help 10,407 suspended education personnel to return to their duties. The union provides legal assistance to education employees regardless of their affiliation to the union.

ETUCE continues monitoring the situation in the country.

⁹ Mission report: https://www.csee-etuice.org/images/attachments/RP_AnkaraFeb2017Mission.pdf