



EFEE

THE
EUROPEAN
FEDERATION
OF
EDUCATION
EMPLOYERS

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

A joint declaration on education, training and research

The purpose of this joint declaration is to express our shared views on education, training and research so as to frame the context within which the Education Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee will approach its first work programme. While the social partners' role is focussed on employment and related matters, this Declaration also covers issues of education policy which are the responsibility of member states. This reality is understood and accepted by the Education social partners, but we believe that our agreed work programme will need to be undertaken in accordance with a shared understanding of this broader policy context.

1. Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations achieve recognition as joint European social partners in the Education sector at a very challenging time. Europe has been facing a financial crisis and an economic recession on a scale unseen globally since the 1930s, the accelerating rise of powerful new economic competitors in Asia and Latin America, the ageing of our population and the growing challenges of integrating migrants from outside the EU.
2. The way forward for the EU to thrive economically and socially is through an innovation-driven and knowledge- and competence-based economy. The EU is economically powerful, but our population is an increasingly small proportion of the global population and it is only through effective application of knowledge, skills and competences that the EU will continue to succeed economically and maintain a good quality of life, underpinned by high standards of social protection.
3. Education, training and research are at the core of the EU 2020 strategy. There cannot be "a smarter, greener social economy, underpinned by the key input of

knowledge” (Commission’s consultation paper on the future EU 2020 strategy) without fair access to high quality education and training at all levels, from early childhood education to advanced research.

4. Such **high quality** and **fair access** depend on substantial levels of investment, in those who teach or train, in leadership and support staff, and in buildings, books and equipment including ICT.
5. Both teachers and employers in the education sector have a responsibility to innovate, to be flexible in adapting to change and to be open and accountable to the outside world.
6. The education social partners recognise that a broad-based education, starting with early childhood education, develops the “transversal competences” which enable people to function successfully both in the community and in the labour market. In addition to core basic skills in literacy, numeracy, problem solving and IT, these competences include attitudes and values such as the ability to work in teams, the tolerance and acceptance of diversity, the willingness to take personal responsibility and to look after the more vulnerable members of society.
7. To make a reality of “lifelong learning”, education providers at all levels need to equip learners with the ability to learn. Job-specific knowledge and skills now change so rapidly that for most people success in the labour market will depend on the acceptance that new skills and knowledge will need to be acquired throughout life. This requires member states and employers to make the appropriate investments and organisational arrangements to ensure that all Europeans are provided with attractive opportunities for lifelong learning.
8. At the same time, education should not be limited to the needs of the labour market. There is always room for “learning for learning’s sake” as well as for the most business-oriented technological research. Furthermore education makes a major contribution to social cohesion, active citizenship, equality and cultural diversity that make it possible to live and work together in a democratic society.
9. Spending on education, training and research, whether by public authorities, private institutions, employers or individuals should be seen as a prerequisite for sustainable growth and social well-being and is therefore an investment in the future.
10. The most successful economies will in the future increasingly be underpinned by strong education and training systems. Therefore in a time of global economic downturn it is no less essential than at other times to make full use of each individual’s potential and to promote higher, more efficient and targeted investment in quality education and training, as well as appropriate organisational change and development. Upgrading and adapting the knowledge and skills of all citizens is

crucial to paving the way out of the crisis, as well as to meeting the long-term challenges of global economic competitiveness, employment, and social inclusion.

11. Programmes of fiscal consolidation, such as are currently being implemented in many member states, should, in the opinion of the education social partners at the European level, give priority to such areas of spending which are an investment in the future, thereby supporting access to learning at all levels.
12. Education stakeholders are familiar with the need to demonstrate value for money in the allocation and spending of public money and to adjust to major developments in financial circumstances.
13. There are thousands of variable factors which go towards the explanation of why some education systems or institutions are more successful than others. One of the main potential benefits of the European social dialogue in education will be in learning from other countries. The European Social Partners in Education fully accept that education should continue to be a national competence and that it therefore should not be regulated at European level. But there is wide scope for European co-ordination of policies, for example through instruments such as the open method of coordination which sets advisory European benchmarks in selected areas of education and training. The success of EU education and training programmes, such as the Lifelong Learning Programme including Leonardo and Erasmus, and the voluntary process of harmonising qualification frameworks, demonstrate the scope for Europe acting as a catalyst for improvement in a decentralised system. The social partners too can act in a similar way, analysing the reasons behind the most successful arrangements and identifying the extent to which such factors could be introduced into different contexts in other countries.
14. Indeed the contribution of the social partners can improve the outcome of EU processes through the partners' closeness to the education providers in early childhood education, in schools and in colleges and universities. It is therefore the responsibility of the European social partners to work together to influence European initiatives so as to ensure that they are useful and practical.
15. Many challenges currently face education. According to the most recent evidence in relation to the European benchmarks, some basic standards need to be improved. Without prejudice to the considerations made in paragraph 8 of this declaration, the social partners in education recognize that the links between education, most notably in the vocational education and training (VET) area, and the world of work, need to be strengthened. Employers generally have a part to play in investing in company-funded training so that enterprises have the skills that they need for the economic upturn. Many countries face challenges in replacing the ageing workforce in education and in improving the gender balance in the teaching profession. Many

schools have to serve a much more ethnically and linguistically diverse population than in the past.

16. The mobility of workers has become an increasingly important issue and also a matter of interest for education providers. The European Social Partners in Education support the efforts undertaken by the member states under the Copenhagen process to achieve the European Qualification Framework (EQF), the European Credit for Vocational Education and Training system (ECVET) and Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).
17. Vocational Education and Training (VET) is a full part of the education sector and a significant element for the achievement of the EU 2020 goals. Appropriate measures are necessary to make it more attractive for both students and adults. Non-formal and informal learning bring an important added-value to knowledge and should be integrated in the VET certification system.
18. Teacher Education is vital to ensure that there is a sustained flow of high quality entrants to meet the needs of each sector of the education system, and also to provide continuous professional development that is relevant to each stage of teachers' careers. Teacher education needs both to be rooted in schools and to draw on the results of evidence-based research into what works best in teaching.
19. Higher Education's contribution to economic growth, social coherence and the transmission of culture and values has always been rightly recognised. In recent decades there has been a dramatic expansion of the numbers of students benefitting from Higher Education. The innovation that the sector has shown in developing new disciplines and modes of study has demonstrated that this responsiveness can be achieved without compromising academic freedom and that Higher Education must be sustained as a long term asset in the general interest.
20. High quality research, based on the principle of the freedom of inquiry, is also crucial to sustainable quality higher education.
21. To consider these challenges and to formulate practical answers, the education social partners at all levels from the European social dialogue to the individual place of learning have an important role in working together with all stakeholders, in conformity with the established European and ILO norms of social dialogue.
22. The European social partners for education welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of European programmes and initiatives that relate to our sector, for example the EU 2020 Strategy. The future of Europe depends very considerably on the efforts of our members and we understand the importance of our role in promoting their central contribution to that future.

23. In conclusion, we agree that: “It is precisely in times of economic difficulty that the key strategic importance of sustaining open and efficient, high-quality education and training systems – as a means of enhancing future competitiveness while fostering social cohesion and active citizenship – must continue to be emphasised.” (Council of Ministers, February 2009).

This Declaration was agreed upon by the European Social Partners in Education on the 18th of January 2011 in Brussels.

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