



## ETUCE Statement on

# The new policy of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union on Vocational Education and Training

*Approved by the EI/ETUCE Bureau on 22/10/2010*

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Hereby the ETUCE would like to express its views on the new VET strategy that is developed in the *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament [...]: The new impetus for the European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 Strategy* and in the *Draft Conclusions of the Council [...] on Priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020*.

The fact that the Communication and the Draft Conclusions endorse a modernised agenda for the next decade by re-launching the Copenhagen process is unusual, considering that an independent ministerial meeting preceded the Copenhagen process. This leads the ETUCE to question whether the Member States should rather issue new discussions on VET and avoid a possible centralisation of the national VET systems. As a European teacher trade union representing 4.5 million teachers and 110 member organisations, the ETUCE would expect some recommendations directly from the Member States to be involved in the modernisation of VET. Furthermore, the ETUCE would like to point out to the European Commission that the present initiatives on VET that are running in parallel are also causing some confusions amongst the VET stakeholders. The ongoing work in the Copenhagen Process should concentrate on a limited set of issues making sure that the outcome is operational and not just complementary or even overlapping other issues in the Process.

The ETUCE agrees with the objective to increase the status of VET through modernisation by promoting attractiveness both for teachers and students. However, equality and equity should also be taken into account. Considering the investment in VET education, the ETUCE is dissatisfied with the Draft Conclusions which do not support the provision of additional resources in this field in spite of the fact that VET is to become a "World class VET"<sup>1</sup>. Without supplementary funds to study and training mobility periods of learners and VET professionals cannot be ensured, and teaching quality that is essential to an attractive VET-system cannot be improved.

As far as the ETUCE is concerned, VET and education systems have to fulfil first and foremost the individual needs and not only the demands of the labour market. As a result, the ETUCE disagrees with the approach being developed in the Draft Conclusions and the Communication on an entrepreneurship, business and industry orientated VET and that VET should be transformed to fulfil labour market needs. Partnerships in form of "skills councils" solely on monitoring and forecasting the needs of the labour market, developing labour-skills oriented profiles, curricula and certification would focus on over technical adaptation of VET to the labour market rather than supporting the individual to get the best education in life.

<sup>1</sup> *Draft Conclusions of the Council [...] on Priorities for enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020*.

The ETUCE would like to highlight the importance of validation of non-formal and informal learning that is essential not only for reintegrating the people into the labour market but also into society.

The ETUCE welcomes the fact that the European Commission stresses the role of teachers and trainers in the process of VET modernisation and focuses on how they are recruited, on their professional development and on their status in society. However, the ETUCE would like to underline that neither school curricula nor initial and further teacher education can respond entirely to labour market needs. The ageing European teacher population does not necessarily mean that initial and continuous training have to focus on company-based learning rather than a holistic approach of the profession.

Finally, the ETUCE wants to emphasise the role of the social partners. In the re-launch of the Copenhagen Process, the social partners should play a key role in the process. Until now, the process has been far too much driven by top-down initiatives that can be one of the reasons why implementation of reforms has been described as being slow.

*The European Trade Union Committee for Education represents 110 teachers' unions in the EU and EFTA countries and more than 4.5 million teachers from all levels of the education sector. As a European Social Partner in education at EU level, the ETUCE is a member of the ETCG. The ETUCE is also an autonomous organisation within the Education International Pan-European Structure.*