

Press Release

World Teachers' Day 2017: Freedom and Empowerment of Teachers across Europe

5 October 2017

Each 5 October, since 1994, teachers are celebrated across the world for their hard work, dedication and invaluable contribution to society. This year's World Teachers' Day theme - "*Teaching in Freedom, Empowering Teachers*" – is significant as freedom and empowerment are vital to enable teachers to carry out their profession to its fullest potential.

In 2017, globally and in the European region, teachers are still being prevented from fulfilling their functions due to outright violations of their human rights, as illustrated by the [alarming situation of Turkish teaching personnel](#). Indeed, threats to teachers' freedom and status can also be subtle and far-reaching: ETUCE member organisations daily report about teachers' deteriorating working and living conditions, including salary freezes and cuts (ETUCE [briefing paper](#), 2017). ETUCE is also at the forefront of the advocacy for a European-wide response, led by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), calling for a generalised [Pay Rise for all European workers](#), who were the first casualties of the economic crisis and who have yet to overcome the detrimental effects of a lost decade of low growth and stagnation.

World Teachers' Day 2017 also marks the 20th anniversary of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel. ETUCE, especially through its Higher Education and Research Standing Committee ([HERSC](#)), closely monitors the working conditions of higher education and research personnel. It repeatedly denounces and opposes precarious employment practices in the sector, as universities and research institutions increasingly resort to fixed-term and part-time contracts. Such practices, directly linked to cutbacks in public funding and to trends towards the commercialisation of research outcomes, put higher education and research personnel under additional pressure as these practices hit at career development and life fulfilment.

"On behalf of ETUCE, I wish all teachers a good World Teachers' Day," said Susan Flocken, ETUCE European Director. *"Education is a cornerstone of society, and its workers' ability to practice their professions freely, without any interference or restriction to their professional rights, is no less than an absolute requisite for democracy."*

ETUCE takes this opportunity to reflect and to praise the essential work of teachers and other education personnel in providing quality education for all. It continues to promote, defend and engage so that teachers and other education personnel across Europe can be empowered with the space, tools, support, and working conditions they need to exercise their profession. Good quality education requires commitment and resources.

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 132 Education Trade Unions and 11 million teachers in all countries of Europe, 4.2 million teachers in the EU, from all levels of the education sector. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of **Education International**, the global federation of teacher unions.

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