ETUCE EU Teachers Agenda

22 June 2026

Making the teaching profession attractive should be a top strategic priorty for the Commission and the EU members states. All students deserve a quality education and excellent teachers. Education and teachers haven't been a priority for a long time and we hope that the recent positive statements by the European Commission will result in an ambitious **Teachers Agenda**. Based on our policy paper on Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession, we require a comprehensive approach to make our profession attractive, focusing on:

- Ensuring **professional autonomy** and **academic freedom**
- Delivering **decent salaries** and **sustainable working conditions.**
- Providing **high quality initial education** and **continuous professional development**:
- Respecting **qualification standards** and **professional recognition**
- **Investment to education systems – 6% GDP, 20% government spending**
- Real **social dialogue with teacher unions** in teacher and education policy making and implementation at **all levels**

At the core of Europe's teacher shortage is a lack of recognition. Across Europe and at the European level teaching is not treated as a profession. A **profession** by definition has a fair amount of **collective professional autonomy at all levels**, and a fundamental say in: setting its own standards which guide: classroom practice (pedagogy, curricula), teacher education, induction and professional development and research. A profession also has a big role in implementing policies and programmes at all these levels based on these standards.

This is not the case in many European countries, and also not true at the European level. The TALIS report showed that **only 24% of teachers "agree" or "strongly agree"** that they can influence education policy in their country, on average. The TALIS report further states that:

"**Unlike in many other professions, where practitioners play a central role in shaping the standards and processes of their work**, **teachers often work under the direction of policymakers, administrators and stakeholders who are not involved in day-to-day classroom activities** . This governance distance may explain why they perceive their influence over policy to be limited, particularly in education systems where policy formation is highly centralised."

The **Santiago Concensus**, which was adopted at the World Summit on Teachers in 2025 urges governments (which includes the EU in our opinion) to "establish **permanent, inclusive and**

transparent mechanisms for social dialogue between g**overnments and democratically elected representatives of teachers**, including trade unions, in order to promote a genuine participatory and constructive **decision-making process at all stages of policy making and implementation** that have an impact on the teaching profession and the achievement of SDG4."

At the European level, this is where the EU can make a difference: enhancing collective autonomy and social dialogue across Europe through policies and implementation programess based on the principles of the Santiago Consensus. Involve teacher unions in the implementation of teacher and education policy programmes at all levels, including the European level. The EU should lead by example.

1. Social Dialogue/Santiago Consensus at the European level, strengthening the national level

This means establishing permanent and **structural representation for the profession** – meaning ETUCE- in all relevant policy forums: Council of Ministers, working groups, the High Level Skills Board, etc . Structure policy making and implementation with the profession as an ongoing, structural process instead of loose non-representative working groups and shallow consultations. This includes a social dialogue structure with the profession for **co-designing curriculum, literacy and teacher standards frameworks at the European level**. This will create coherence, focus and policies that will have buy in from the profession.

Policies regarding teachers must include **both DGEAC (education) and DG EMPL (labour and employment)** directorates structurally and working together. Work on the attractiveness of the teaching profession needs both a coherent and holistic approach including **professional (educational, teaching standards)** and **industrial (working conditions)** perspectives and policies. Include **ETUCE in the governance of relevant programmes** and **agencies** at European (and national level if relevant) eg: Erasmus+, SchoolsNet, E-Twinning. And **co-design** the **EU Education Summits with the profession.**

Establish a **European Summit on the Teaching Profession (ESTP)** and **a coalition of the willing** modeled after the **EI/OECD International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP)** to promote social dialogue between education ministries and teacher unions across Europe.

2. Budget and monitoring: invest in teachers and include teacher indicators

Reform **Stability and Growth pact and loosen the 3% limit**, to allow member states to **invest in public education and teachers**. The EU already has precedents for this in the COVID-response and more recently to allow for a huge increase in defence spending. With the increase in defence spending the 3% rule will push member states into austerity measures and cut education and research budgets. We need to invest in the future of Europe future. Meaning a commitment of 6%

GDP, 20% government spending. Establish an **Education Scoreboard**, including teacher indicators and link this to the European Semester.

3. Capacity building with the profession

For EU - Erasmus+, Horizon – programmes and grants related to teachers include an **indicator that national teacher unions** need to be involved.

Allocate **a portion of EU (Erasmus+, Horizon) programmes for national representative teacher unions and ETUCE** to develop structural and long-term capacity building by the profession itself, to elevate the profession accross Europe.

Establish a **European Teacher Institute** with ETUCE, modelled after The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), to develop research, professional development and capacity building at the European level by and for the profession.

Apply these same principles to work with national teacher unions and other Education International Regions for EU Abroad (Global Gateway Partnerships), and include **candidate and partner countries in the structures ETUCE proposes**, in coordination with the **European Training Foundation (ETF)**