

EU PRIORITIES ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING POST 2020 – TOWARDS A EUROPEAN RIGHT TO TRAINING FOR ALL

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A **skilled workforce** is one of the main assets of the European social and economic model. *Education contributes to boosting economic growth and increase productivity and wages.*

However, close to 70 million Europeans struggle with basic reading and writing, calculation, and using digital tools in everyday life, while there are new challenges ahead of them concerning the **changing job market**. Energy transition, digitalisation, technological change, values and critical thinking are among the main challenges to be tackled. *Support for training to adults is an important gain to the individual, the employer and the whole economy.*

18.1 million men and women in the EU-28 were unemployed in November 2017 of which 3.7 million are young persons (under 25). Recent studies show that the ET2020 goals have not been fully reached. There are only 10.7% of adults taking part in lifelong learning. At the same time, ETUC member organisations observe **inequalities in accessing training** to workers at company level, making it difficult for those most in need of training, such as low- and high-skilled workers, to improve their skills, qualifications and therefore wage levels, working conditions and career prospects.

Heading towards 2020, discussions started at EU level in order to evaluate the achievements reached since the goals of the EU2020 Strategy¹ and the ET2020 Strategy Framework² were set up, and on targets to define **priorities after 2020**.

To participate actively in this debate, the ETUC proposes the following demands for the post-2020 education and training strategy:

- A. A **European right to training** guaranteeing high quality employee training for all workers, in particular low skilled ones, including paid educational leave;
- B. A real “**Skills guarantee**” allowing low skilled workers to obtain at least certified basic skills and key competences;
- C. **Investment in education and training** to ensure appropriate funding by the EU (and member states) in the future Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020;
- D. **Effective social dialogue on VET** to consolidate an efficient governance on vocational training at all levels.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

Challenges for Education and Training policies

Effective access to training is still an important challenge in Europe in supporting workers and unemployed people in a changing labour market. According to the *Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways* (2016)³, low-qualified people with low levels of basic skills usually constitute a high proportion of the unemployed (in particular long-term unemployed) and other vulnerable groups, for instance older workers, economically inactive people and third-country nationals. It is still more difficult for them to integrate, stay or return in the labour market.

Recent studies show that the ET2020 goals⁴ have not been fully reached. According to OECD PIAAC results, one fifth and one quarter of adults have low levels of literacy and numeracy respectively, and only 10.7% of adults take part in lifelong learning. In 2015, there were 64 million people, more than a quarter of the EU population aged 25-64, who had left initial education and training with at most a lower secondary education qualification. Approximately 60% of early school leavers are either unemployed or inactive and the employability of graduates has become a severe problem in countries most affected by the crisis.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights**⁵ adopted on 17 November 2017 is an essential achievement for a social Europe and for the trade union movement. Its first principle states that *"Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market."*

When adopting the Social Pillar, the European leaders in Gothenburg put a special emphasis in their discussion on education and training in the future, guided by a European Commission paper on **"Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture - The European Commission's contribution to the Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg, 17 November 2017"**⁶. The text sets out the vision of a European Education Area, building on the New Skills Agenda for Europe⁷ and the investing in Europe's youth initiatives⁸ and underlines that *"education is part of the solution to get more people into decent jobs, respond better to the economy's skills needs and strengthen Europe's resilience in a context of the rapid and profound changes induced by the technological revolution and globalisation."*

The European leaders discussed the **key challenges for the future**, and how these challenges would need to shape the VET policies of post-2020, such as *"continued digitisation, automation, artificial intelligence and the need to keep up with technological progress; the future of work, its impact on working conditions and future needs for skills and competences; the modernisation of European welfare states, social inclusion and*

³ *Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults:*
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOC_2016_484_R_0001

⁴ The following EU benchmarks for 2020 have been set for education: At least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education; fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science; the rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 should be below 10%; at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education; at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning; at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad; the share of employed graduates (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at least 82%

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1510827810343&uri=COM:2017:673:FIN>

⁷ COM(2016)381

⁸ COM(2016)940: *Investing in Europe's youth*; COM(2016)941: *Improving and Modernising Education*; COM(2017)248: *School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life*; COM(2017)247: *A renewed EU agenda for higher education*.

the need to share the benefits of growth and reduce inequalities, including gender inequality; demographic trends, an ageing workforce, and the need to integrate a culturally diverse migrant population; new patterns in communication, social media, the phenomenon of "fake" news and the need to promote media literacy among all citizens; as well as a flaring-up of populism and xenophobia, the risk of violent radicalisation and the need to strengthen the sense of belonging together". In line with these challenges the European Commission proposed new benchmarks for the future.

Goal 4 of the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** states that our societies must "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning"⁹ by 2030, for example by "substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" and by eliminating gender disparities and discrimination in accessing education in all levels, including adult learning and technical education.

At the basis of the European Commission initiatives and ETUC work - in cooperation with member organisations and European Trade Union federations, in particular with ETUCE¹⁰ - skills provision to the future and present workforce of Europe, in particular vocational education and training for all, has received high attention in line to ensure economic growth and fair employment in Europe.

Recent ETUC policies on Education and training

The European Commission's "A New Skills Agenda for Europe" (2016) aims at ensuring higher and more relevant skills for all; promoting better visibility and use of available skills; and reaching a better understanding of skills needs and trends in the labour market. As a reaction, **ETUC Position on the "New Skills Agenda": Improving training opportunities for workers in Europe**¹¹ highlighted that vocational education and training is indeed the main lever to empower workers as persons and citizens and foster their employability. But it is the case only if workers are provided with a right to training, high quality training provisions and if sustainable economic growth can provide quality jobs and apprenticeship positions. Still the challenge is that many initial and continuous vocational education and training provisions are not attractive and do not offer high quality.

ETUC resolution: Supporting Workplace Learning to tackle unemployment in Europe (2013)¹² underlined that employee training (workplace learning) is essential in order to provide workers with an opportunity to develop as active citizens, to acquire and update their knowledge, skills and competences and to improve their employability. Equally it provides employers with skilled workers to boost competitiveness, develop innovation and increase productivity. The European social partners are leading a project on employee training (2016-2018) to map our existing systems in Europe, improve social dialogue, and provide capacity building to national social partners.

ETUC resolution on digitalisation: "towards fair digital work" (2016)¹³ underlines that future jobs will require different skills from the ones people are being trained today, and should have ongoing opportunities and support throughout their career/lifetime to

⁹ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

¹⁰ ETUCE: European Trade Union Committee for Education is the European Social Partner in education and a European Trade Union Federation in ETUC

¹¹ <https://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-position-new-skills-agenda-improving-training-opportunities-workers-europe#.WjfATjdukdu>

¹² <https://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-resolution-supporting-workplace-learning-tackle-unemployment-europe#.Wje9qDdukdu>

¹³ https://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-resolution-digitalisation-towards-fair-digital-work#.Wje_KTdukdu

improve key competences and basic skills, including digital skills. Digital skills are an important leitmotiv to ensure an inclusive transition towards good and fair digital work for all. Thus, companies should increasingly become learning entities for training people on the job, by means of a coherent programme.

ETUC Resolution on Improving quality of Apprenticeship and Work-based learning (2014)¹⁴ highlighted the need of setting up quality apprenticeships schemes in Europe which, when properly implemented, can significantly contribute to facilitating transition processes, to tackling skills mismatches in the labour market, and to encouraging employers to provide young people with fair and good jobs.

As a result of two projects of ETUC (2012-2014 and 2014-2016) "**A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships**"¹⁵ was developed and integrated to a "**Joint statement of the European social partners - Towards a Shared Vision of Apprenticeships**".¹⁶ The 20 quality standards proposed by the ETUC set a definition of quality and fair apprenticeship in Europe with fair pay and good working conditions. It was integrated to the "**Tri-partite opinion on quality and effective apprenticeships and work-based learning**"¹⁷ adopted by the representatives of the governments, employers and trade unions. The EU Commission translated this ETUC demand to a **Council recommendation on European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships**.¹⁸

Following joint ETUC-CEEP¹⁹-ETUCE-EFEE²⁰ project on "**Improving social partners' involvement in EU support for public investments in training and education**"²¹ (2015-2017), ETUC is pushing for investment to education and training for all that can boost recovery and create jobs. Public investment to improving quality of education, and employers' contribution to apprenticeship and employee training is a prerequisite of success to the future. 80% of businesses in Europe had cut or frozen their expenditure on skills and training during 2016.²² Between 2005 and 2010, cost per employee for CVET decreased in Denmark (by 1/3rd), Czech Republic and the UK (by more than 20%) and costs per employee for CVET increased: Austria, the Netherlands or Germany report an increase of enterprise investment in CVET²³.

The ETUC continues to support and contribute to transnational projects undertaken by ETUC affiliates. In 2016 a toolkit was published for trade unions on developing workplace learning²⁴. The SACADOS project²⁵ aims to contribute to a European trade union strategy to support trade union representatives to make better use of information,

¹⁴ <https://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-resolution-improving-quality-apprenticeship-and-work-based-learning#.WjEqDdukdu>

¹⁵ <https://www.etuc.org/press/trade-union-contribution-quality-apprenticeships-europe#.WjfrQTdukdu>

¹⁶ <https://www.etuc.org/documents/towards-shared-vision-apprenticeships-joint-statement-european-social-partners#.WjfiRITdukdu>

¹⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2691&furtherNews=yes>

¹⁸

https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0ahUKEwiY1dG95JPYAhXOEVAKHZ9BCdQQFgg4MAM&url=http%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FblobServlet%3FdocId%3D18330%26langId%3Den&sg=AOvVaw3kk2PpGttgQad_ElhiCg4y

¹⁹ CEEP, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of general interest

²⁰ European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE)

²¹ https://www.etuc.org/publications/investment-education-and-training#.WnM_cTdulQL

²² ETUC-CEEP-ETUCE-EFEE: Final Study Report - Investment Education, 2017, using reference to: Accenture 2012: News release - Majority of European Employers Cut Skills and Training Investment. Despite Skills Shortages, Finds Accenture and FEB Survey, 25 April 2012. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/subjects/management-consulting/majority-of-european-employers-cut-skills-and-training-investment-despite-skills-shortages-finds-accenture-and-feb-survey.htm>

²³ ETUC-CEEP-ETUCE-EFEE: Final Study Report - Investment Education, 2017, using reference to Eurostat, Cost of CVT courses per employee (all enterprises), by type of cost and size class [trng_cvts62]. Extracted October 2016

²⁴ <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/developing-workplace-learning-toolkit-trade-unions>

²⁵ European funded project involving German, Italian, Bulgarian, Latvia and Romanian trade unions.

consultation and participation procedures in the workplace and to anticipate change and develop skills. Unions4VET²⁶ (with German, Greek, Italian, Latvian, Portuguese and Slovakian trade unions) seeks to increase cooperation among trade unions to facilitate a common European position on VET.

ETUC Mandate on the next European social partners' 2018-2020 Work Programme, adopted at the ETUC Executive Committee on 13-14 June 2017 put education and training as one possible topic for a negotiation at European level. A right for a paid educational leave should be introduced (paid leave for both professional and more general training).

Implementing the Social Pillar and setting priorities for EU policies on education and training post-2020

A European right to training for all

As part of the implementation of the 1st principle of the **European Pillar of social Rights**, a European-level initiative establishing a right to training to all workers should be a target to be reached. The EU should ensure training rights and opportunities for all workers. A European right to training should be implemented through social dialogue with appropriate capacity building ensured (see ETUC mandate for European social partners' Work Programme 2018-2020) and/or through an EU Council recommendation. This principle must be then transposed by collective agreements if not by law and ensure all workers a right to training and effective access to training provisions regardless of their statutes (employee, self-employed, platform, freelancers, etc.). High quality employee training should be guaranteed via strengthening / setting up national rules and get the company to implement quality training plans, negotiated with trade unions, and ensuring **equal access to training for workers** which should be free of charge to the workers. It should include the right of validation and recognition of the training in order to gain higher qualification levels.

Several findings justify a European-wide initiative for a right to training:

A. Workers suffer from an **unequal access** to training in Europe as there are many different national legislations and rules on effective right of workers to training. Some countries benefit from wide and strong vocational training policies, while other have limited if not any training provisions set by law or collective agreements. In the later countries, workers depend solely on employers' good will and strategy, if any.

B. There are unequal opportunities for workers in Europe to access training depending on the **size of their company**. Workers in SMEs have less chances to benefit from training provisions than those in bigger businesses and multinational groups. Training should be guaranteed to all workers regardless of the size of their company.

C. A European **right to training** is key in the age of **changing skills needs linked to digitalisation**, technological change, social, demographic and environmental transitions. Workers should enjoy strong training entitlements to keep their jobs, improve career opportunities, and improve quality of life.

In the post-2020 EU strategy there should be a strong emphasis on implementing the **ILO's Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974** (No. 140) to ensure the right to training (time allowed, limited possibility for employers to oppose workers application for training, etc.). The European right to training should go hand in hand with the establishment of a "right to paid educational leave": for training and education throughout

²⁶ <http://www.unions4vet.de/>

life and ensure workers can adapt, start a new stage in the career, and gain qualifications not related to their current job. The full implementation of the Convention should ensure the right to training for professional mobility and career development.

High quality employee training should be guaranteed to all workers to improve their **basic, transversal and professional skills** with the objective that their training is recognised for higher qualification, career development and promotion.

Workers should be equipped to remain in employment while continued digitisation, automation, and artificial intelligence changes their everyday work. **Digital skills** are seen from the perspective of different users among the workers, such as highly skilled workers, low-skilled workers and IT professionals, who will have different needs of digital skills. This huge diversity of sectoral needs and definitions of digital skills sustains our demands on ensuring continuous upskilling on professional and basic skills reaching all kinds of workers.

Skills guarantee for low-skilled adults

European measures aiming at upskilling low-skilled adults should be continued. The tool can be the effective implementation of the *Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (2016)* aiming at helping low-skilled adults to **acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence and wider set of skills**, knowledge and competences, relevant for the labour market and active participation in society.

With regard to adult education and training strategy, EU policies should ensure more **inclusiveness** and an increase in the proportion of the population that participates in learning throughout their lives. Right to employee training, paid educational leave and skills guarantee should be equally accessible to **all groups of adults, in particular to socio-economically disadvantaged people, migrants and refugees**. To achieve this, from one hand the various structural barriers (for example age limits) that prevent adults from accessing training and apprenticeship must be eliminated, and on the other hand provision of information and guidance services on career development should be intensified through the professional life.

Investment in education and training

Sustainable investment by member states and improved access to EU funds should be guaranteed via the European Semester and under the future Multi-annual financial framework post-2020. Under the **future MFF** the focus of investment should be put on "human capital development". Under the future MFF EU funding should also be made available to EU-level organisations. The budget of **ESF** should be improved and at least 30% of the overall envelope for structural funds should be allocated to ESF, in order to further provide sustainable and effective support to human capital development and training for adults In particular the most vulnerable ones.

Future EU policies should encourage governments to ensure sustainable **public investment in high quality lifelong education to all starting** with high quality and inclusive early childhood education. Vocational education and training should lead to fair employment, decent work and active participation in society. In particular, urgent investment should target reducing **early school leaving, supporting NEETs** (people not in education, employment or training) to reintegrate into education and employment, and inclusion of **migrants and refugees** to education and to the labour market. In order to succeed, it is crucial to ensure that the teaching profession is attractive and teachers and educators receive continuous professional development.

Future EU policies should support the implementation and effective follow-up of the *Council Recommendation on the **European framework for quality and effective apprenticeship*** by encouraging appropriate investment from governments and companies. The scaling-up of the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAfA) towards a more sustainable European platform for the promotion of apprenticeships should be discussed.

The future EU policies must encourage governments and employers to invest in employee training via cost-sharing of sufficient, stable, equitable and transparent funding, and through the establishment of the corresponding training plans or programs.

Under the overall future **Erasmus+ programme**, the envelope allocated to adult learning should exceed 4%. Short-term international mobility for adult learning / upskilling should be available for all adults. While the status of mobile people under Erasmus+ is of a student, mobility of adults and apprentices should be supported under the **long-term mobility programmes, such as Erasmus Pro**, by allowing double-status of the individuals receiving both Erasmus+ grants (as students) and additional salary or transfer of salary (as workers). The bureaucratic requirements to apply and manage Erasmus+ projects should be revised and make the grants more available for social partners supporting employee training.

Effective social dialogue on VET

Existing **high quality VET systems in Europe** are characterised by a strong involvement of social partners in governing VET policies and defining training strategies. Social dialogue must be set as an integral component of EU policies on VET. Governments must favour social dialogue in designing and implementing education and training for all in line with the **Lisbon Treaty of the EU and ILO's recommendation in its Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)**. These texts recognize the role that social partners play in the field of training, through bipartite dialogue and collective bargaining. The EU must support **collective bargaining** and capacity building for social partners at all levels to set out training provision for workers.

Effective **social dialogue on vocational education and training** and training policies must be ensured including trade unions at sectoral and company level. The future EU policies must support governments in establishing adequate **regulatory frameworks** that make effective the participation of trade unions in defining training strategies with employers.