



Education International

Internationale de l'Education

Internacional de la Educación

ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education

EI European Region

ETUCE reply to European Commission's Public Consultation on

Pathways to School Success

20 May, 2021

**EUROPEAN REGION-
ETUCE**

President

Larry FLANAGAN

Vice-Presidents

Odile CORDELIER

Andreas KELLER

Trudy KERPERIEN

Dorte LANGE

Galina MERKULOVA

Branimir STRUKELJ



Boulevard Bischoffsheim, 15
1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92
Fax +32 2 224 06 94
secretariat@csee-etuce.org
<http://www.csee-etuce.org>

European Director

Susan FLOCKEN

Treasurer

Joan DONEGAN

Background

The European Commission will propose a recommendation to the Council on reducing underachievement of pupils in basic skills (reading, mathematics and science) and to increase the attendance rate in upper secondary education by reducing early school leaving.

Following up on the [European Commission's Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#), the Education Council of the European Union adopted a [Council Resolution](#) on 19 February 2021 that establishes the European Education Area as the new strategic framework for the European cooperation in education and training for the period 2021-2030. This Council Resolution replaces the [ET2020 Strategic Framework](#) and sets up new targets, indicators and benchmarks for national education systems to be achieved by 2030. The Council Resolution sets up priorities and targets to be reached by the EU member states within 10 years. Among them the Pathways to School Success initiative will provide policy recommendations to the EU Member States how to reach the following benchmarks by 2030:

- The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, by 2030.
- The share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%, by 2030.
- Reduce the share of early leavers from education and training to less than 9%.

The European Commission issued a [public consultation](#) on 7 May which is open until **4 June** accompanied by a [Roadmap](#) which explains the challenges the European Commission identifies on this policy and ideas for a policy initiative. The 1st phase of the public consultation, which takes 4 weeks asks the stakeholders' views about the Roadmap. The second phase of the public consultation will take 12 weeks and it will be launched in a later stage. The below reply considered ETUCE's [Embracing Diversity in Education research report](#) and [ETUCE's Factsheets on Key elements of Inclusive Education + Teachers' Training and Professional Development](#).

ETUCE's response

ETUCE which represents 127 education trade unions within 51 countries in Europe welcomes that the European Commission's initiative contributes to the implementation of the 1st principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights. [Inclusive education](#)¹ allowing all learners to achieve their full potential by providing high quality education to all in mainstream settings with special attention to learners at risk of exclusion and

¹ ETUCE's [Embracing Diversity in Education research report](#) and [ETUCE's Factsheets on Key elements of Inclusive Education + Teachers' Training and Professional Development](#).

underachievement by actively seeking out to support them and responding flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all learners is key in a fight against early school leaving (ESL).

The EU initiative should not only focus on measurable basic skills (reading, mathematics and science) and labour market needs, but rather on key competences and holistic approach to inclusive education, and it should examine what kind of support teachers and education staff have received to include key competences in their teaching since the [2018 Council Recommendation](#) and what additional support they need. Teacher shortage is also a key problem to address: education institutions with many students coming from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds find difficulties in recruiting teachers, which makes these education institutions even more vulnerable. It is important to recognise a holistic approach and that the sense of belonging is as important as basic skills: inclusive education based on safe physical and social learning environments, reinforce the sense of belonging to the school community and to a wider society.

The initiative should motivate governments to set up comprehensive policy measures based on the clear and shared understanding of inclusive education with effective cooperation among different ministries (education, employment and social affairs, finances, digitalization and innovation, etc) and with the education social partners and relevant stakeholders to effectively fight against ESL and underachievement. These policy measures have to be supported by efficient and coherent mechanisms for implementation and accompanied by sufficient resourcing. We also remind that mostly socio-economic disadvantages result in low achievement in schools, thus this problem should be solved with effective government policies not only on education but also on housing, welfare and healthcare. The EU Member States need to ensure sustainable national public investment to education which is an essential prerequisite to fight against ESL and underachievement. We welcome that the European Semester process will provide targeted recommendations to countries to invest to fight against ESL and that EU funds (Erasmus, ESF+, RRF) will further support this.

Democratic governance of education and democratic culture and collaborative leadership in schools are fundamental requirements of high quality inclusive education systems to fight against ESL and underachievement. We welcome that the initiative will focus on learning environments which need to be safe, healthy and supportive working environments and ensure good working conditions for the teachers, including the availability of specialised teacher support personnel and mechanisms. As the initiative foresees reforms on curricula, pedagogies, assessment, etc., it is important that the Commission proposes effective solutions to the Member States on how to prepare teachers for the profession to accommodate them for working in a diverse education setting, and to make the profession attractive.

We request that the initiative also contribute to the implementation of the [Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future](#) (2020). In order to provide quality education for all and to fight effectively against ESL and underachievement, it is essential to ensure better career opportunities, adequate workload, high job security and social protection, decent salary for the teachers and reinforce collective bargaining. Thus, the initiative should recommend to the Member States the essential involvement of

education trade unions in the framework of effective social dialogue in designing and implementing necessary educational reforms this policy will entail.

The initiative should also take into account the impact that the use of digital technologies and ICTs in education have on underachievement and ESL. The European Commission should call on the Member States to ensure sustainable public funding to provide all the students with equal access to digital infrastructures and to conduct further research on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the educational achievements. Accessible and free CPD on using digital technologies and promoting inclusive education should be guaranteed to teachers at all levels of education