

Joint Statement of the European Social Partners in Education, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE), on the organisation of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education and on post-Val Duchesse Summit

In light of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue reorganisation initiated by the European Commission, which led to reduction of financial support of social dialogue meetings and fewer resources available within the DG EMPL, and while recognizing the crucial importance the political and financial support that the European Commission provides to social dialogue in line with the Treaties (Art. 154-155 TFEU), and the European Pillar of Social Rights, the committee of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue of Education (ESSDE) calls on the Commission to reconsider the decision taken and adapt it to the needs of European sectoral social partners.

The paramount importance of the education sector cannot be understated: it is the main sector that plays a crucial role in educating the young generations, shaping the future of Europe and democratic citizenship equipping them with skills and competences for quality employment in European economy. The ESSDE covers all sectors of education and addresses issues related to employment and working conditions of those working in the sector: teachers, academics, school leaders, other education personnel, employers in education, including in the relevant ministries. Social Dialogue in education at national and European level has an extremely valuable function in times of labour shortage in the sector, of digital transition and climate change, to improve working conditions and the quality of education for all.

EFEE and ETUCE acknowledge the importance of the greenhouse gas (GHG) targets set by the Commission to limit the emissions created by European meetings organised in-house. However, these limitations risk endangering the core functioning of the social dialogue committee of education and jeopardising the capacity of education social partners to adequately represent their national memberships. ETUCE and EFEE consider it necessary to introduce more flexibility and transparency in this system so to allow some adaptations to the rules adopted by the European Commission.

ETUCE and EFEE ask for an end-of-the-year assessment to verify whether the reduction of GHG emissions has been proportional to the cut of reimbursements applied to this Committee, and possibly introduce a proportionality principle, based on GHG emissions, when calculating the number of yearly reimbursements for participants to the ESSDE meetings.

Such issue is strictly intertwined with the results of the Val Duchesse Summit called by the President of the European Commission Von der Leyen. The results of the summit have been largely underwhelming due to the limited engagement of the European Commission towards accommodating European social partners, in particular those representing the European sectors.

As European social partners in the sector of education, we are particularly concerned that the constructive spirit that had inspired the Summit, had vanished following the failure of the negotiations on a European agreement on telework and the right to disconnect, as a result of the unilateral withdrawal of BusinessEurope from the agreed final text. Only upon the request of the social partners at the Summit, the European Commission accepted to open a series of negotiations leading to a new “Pact for European Social Dialogue”, to be finalised by early 2025. ETUCE and EFEE request a strong sectoral focus in the pact.

ETUCE and EFEE believe that the future pact for European social dialogue will have to take into consideration and recognise the role of sectoral social partners at European and national level: without the appropriate representation of the sectors, social dialogue risks losing the crucial granularity that allows social partners to adequately tackle employment and work-related issues. For this reason, ETUCE and EFEE consider it necessary that the Commission engages a large representation of European sectors during the negotiations leading to the new Pact for Social Dialogue.

ETUCE and EFEE call on the European Commission to contribute to this Pact by providing a clear strategy and plan for the years ahead of the support, both political and financial, that the Commission will provide to social partners at sectoral level, including the role and cooperation of the Social Dialogue Envoy of the European Commission with the ESSDE. As stated above, the current arrangements openly contradict the political statements in support of social dialogue made by the Commission, and they rather reveal a vision that denies the principles themselves of social dialogue: social partners cannot be supported only when it is considered most convenient.

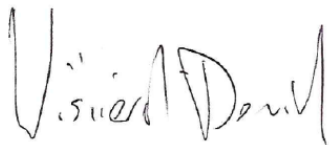
It remains of the utmost importance to ETUCE and EFEE that the Commission adopts a transparent, accountable and reliable procedure for the transposition of social partners' autonomous agreement into European Directives and Council Decisions, that clarifies the indications of the Commission Communication [COM(2023) 40 final]. The Treaties prerogatives of European social partners on reaching agreements and requesting for their transposition (art. 155 TFEU) shall not be undermined. Today, in several Member States, we observe a shrinking of the public space available for social partners to meet and represent their affiliates.

Therefore, ETUCE and EFEE request the European Commission:

1. To intensify its support to national social dialogue with financial means and to act in line with the Treaties' mandate to ensure stronger support to social dialogue at all appropriate levels;
2. To carry out an end-of-the-year assessment on the impact of its budget cutting and internal staff reduction policy on the quality of European sectoral social dialogue, in particular in the ESSDE, and on sectoral collective bargaining at national level;
3. To ensure large and comprehensive engagement and consultation of the European sectoral social partners and their members in the negotiations leading on the new Pact for Social Dialogue.

ETUCE and EFEE attach to the present joint statement their replies to the questionnaire on the organisation of social dialogue meetings in 2025, circulated to social partners by the DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion of the European Commission.

Brussels, 5 March 2024,



Daniel Wisniewski PhD MBA
EFEE Secretary General



Susan Flocken
ETUCE European Director