

Joint recommendations on:

Improving social partners' involvement in EU support for public investment in training and education at the European level

Adopted on 23 November 2016 by ETUC, CEEP, ETUCE and EFEE

According to Eurostat there were approximately 21 million unemployed in the EU in August 2016. People in Europe face increasing pressure to adapt in a changing labour market, and to a digital, carbon-free and ageing society. Education and training systems play a key role in providing all with new opportunities, regardless their socio-economic and cultural background, to enhance their chances for a good life, decent employment and proper participation in the democratic life. Education and training systems also have a key role in fostering mutual understanding and respect between people. However, following the economic crisis, investment figures show that in many member states' investment in education and training has declined in real terms with important consequences for national, regional, local and institutional budgets.

In this context, the EU funds are more than ever essential to achieve the goals of our education and training policies and are important supplementary contributions to the national education systems.

We acknowledge the importance of the EU funds in supporting education and training arrangements in Europe and promote the involvement of social partners in their design and implementation. This would enable the funds to reach all, including those who are most in need, for continually improving their skills. Nevertheless, despite this fundamental role, the results of our projects show an insufficient involvement of social partners in the governance and allocation decisions of EU funds for education and training purposes.

Following the first results of our joint project on the support of the EU institutions and other financial bodies to public budgets for training and education, hereby we identified the recommendations hereunder in order to enhance the role of European social partners in the design and implementation of EU funds.

We call upon the EU institutions

1. To encourage Member States to ensure sufficient, sustainable and predictable investment in education systems;
2. To guarantee that European funds are only an additional investment to the national education systems and they are not to compensate for the decline in national, regional and local budgets;
3. To ensure that social investment, especially in education and training for all is prioritised in the review of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2017-20 and in the new programming period for 2020-2026;

4. To expand the available calls of the EU programmes aiming at more societal development and to secure sustainable national and European funds dedicated to improving the social life and job prospects of all people, including the socio-economically disadvantaged, the NEETs, low-skilled employed and unemployed adults;
5. To contribute to sustainable support of the education and labour market integration of migrants and refugees;
6. To facilitate the process of application of the European and national social partners for EU-level funds and to ease their administrative conditions when applying to and reporting on projects granted;
7. To promote social partners' involvement in the design and monitoring of the impact of EU funds on education and training to ensure that the main European convergence targets are met;
8. To ensure that social dialogue and capacity building of social partners is sufficiently supported via the EU programmes at all levels;
9. To support the activities of the European social partners in their initiatives on education and training based on the results and agreements they reached;
10. To improve the governance of the ERASMUS+ programme by renewing the involvement of the European social partners in the ERASMUS+ Committee;
11. To reverse the trend of recent cuts and increase the available funds for the call for proposals of DG Employment for the social partners;
12. To support transparency and public scrutiny of EU funds on education and training.

Furthermore, the European social partner organisations participating in this project agree

1. To continue to shape the EU policies to ensure sustainable and predictable investment in education and training for all;
2. To enhance their role in the design and implementation of EU funds for education and training purposes;
3. To continue to inform and encourage their member organisations to apply for EU funds for education and training;