



2020

**ETUCE  
CONFERENCE**

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# **BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

Campaigning to Enhance  
the Teaching Profession  
for Solidarity, Democracy,  
Equality and Sustainability



ETUCE - EI European Region

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# FOREWORD

Dear colleagues,

This ETUCE Conference is indeed going to be extraordinary and the first time we will be holding an ETUCE Conference online.

2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. Little did we expect in January that the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus would have such a heavy impact on our lives, our work and our education systems. Whilst for some the crisis has been a time of anxiety for their own and their loved one's health and life and they will have experienced the detrimental impact of the virus on their relations with relatives and friends, for others the time of confinement has been a call for moderation, a period of reflection and an opportunity to spend more time with their close family. Others again will have struggled to work and take care of their families at the same time in a context of financial and economic burdens where democratic processes, trust and social cohesion are all under pressure.

In many terms this health crisis has exacerbated the already existing trends that we as education trade unions had long since been warning about.

In a need to protect citizens' health, most states closed their borders and sought national solutions rather than striving for a universal and collective approach. Governments in many countries took steps unilaterally without involving trade unions. The closure of education institutions and a rapid switch to remote and online emergency teaching showed just how vital it is to equip school communities with the appropriate tools and teachers with quality training. Authorities, decision-makers, parents and students quickly became aware of the importance of the social, emotional and pedagogical aspects of teaching, which cannot be delivered in the same way remotely as they can in schools, colleges and universities.

Public education institutions and their teachers are crucial for ensuring equal access to quality education for all. COVID-19 has confirmed that education for life in our constantly changing world requires substantial public funding and trust in the teaching profession in order to close gaps in society and allow students to reach their full potential. The future

of education cannot be built on privatisation and commercialisation. Successful education systems depend on well-prepared, committed and fairly-paid teachers, academics, trainers and other education personnel whose professional autonomy is respected and valued.

Preparing students to become confident and responsible citizens in a democratic society, working towards sustainable environmental goals based on social fairness and wellbeing, teachers across Europe must be able to rely on the leadership of their trade unions. As we discuss our new work programme and elect the ETUCE leadership for 2021-2024, we need to have these goals in the forefront of our minds. If there is one thing that this crisis has clearly shown us, it is that we cannot solve any of the current societal challenges on our own. No single state or government has the magic solution. If we want to make a change, we need to work together on tackling the evolving challenges of our modern society.

Across Europe, we will join our forces together in the recovery period after this health crisis and beyond to work in solidarity for democracy, equality and sustainability in the society we live in and for the society we want to live in in the future.

I wish you a fruitful, inspiring and successful ETUCE Conference.



*S. Flocken*

**Susan Flocken**  
ETUCE European Director

# INTRODUCTION

In 2020 the world experienced an unprecedented health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has had serious implications for people's lives and socio-economic wellbeing, sustainable development and cohesion within and among our societies. Education systems are struggling with the consequences of the outbreak and the measures which some governments took to control it. Meanwhile, Europe is caught in a tremendous economic slowdown with soaring unemployment.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges to the foreground which had existed long before the health crisis, such as the lack of comprehensive national digitalisation programmes for the education sector. In particular, education systems across Europe were critically unprepared to respond to a crisis requiring emergency distance teaching. This has magnified issues such as inequalities in access to remote teaching and learning tools, as well as the lack of training for education personnel on the use of ICT tools in teaching. Indeed, in order to prepare the teaching profession and education sector for the 21st century, we must urgently address these points of concern - and many others.

The crisis shone a spotlight on inequalities in all areas of life, including the education sector. Women were more likely to face a significant increase in unpaid care work and precarious employment schemes. Vulnerable groups like people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees were disproportionately disadvantaged, as teachers often lack access to the professional development and support which would enable them to create inclusive learning spaces. These problems are, however, not the result of this sudden crisis. They are the predictable consequence of governments' neglect of the public sector. Long-term measures will be necessary to ensure equality and equity for all, and to promote education as a public good and an essential part of democracy.

While some attempt to reduce education policy to questions of economic efficiency, governments have resorted to unilateral decision-making in the face of urgent economic concerns. These trends have weakened distinctive features of many European democracies, such as well-functioning industrial relations systems. Across Europe, social dialogue and collective bargaining are undermined by the increasing influence of businesses and the glorification of market mechanisms in education policy and governance, jeopardising fair societies and challenging freedom and democracy.

The context in which teachers work is also changing: increasing mistrust towards public services like education; attacks on trade unions; labour market deregulation; fragmentation in the education workforce; increasing pressure on teachers and other education personnel; decreasing resources.

The ETUCE Conference on 1-2 December 2020 will be the opportunity to discuss, in the context of the COVID-19 recovery, the challenges that lie ahead for the teaching profession. We will identify the ways that education trade unions in Europe can address these challenges in the years to come. This background document is intended to sow the seeds of a fruitful discussion, offering factual input and food for thought on some of the most striking issues which our movement must face. It ends with a set of questions aiming to stimulate and support the debate at Conference.

Highlighting the existing and future challenges facing the teaching profession, as well as professional autonomy, this document discusses education as a tool for social change in vital areas such as environmentally sustainable development, active democratic citizenship, equality and inclusion. It addresses education and the digital transformation of our society, including the digital skills gap and the impact of artificial intelligence. The marketisation and commercialisation of education are discussed, as are trade union solidarity and social dialogue in the context of wider political developments. The document concludes with a chapter on trade union renewal.

# **FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

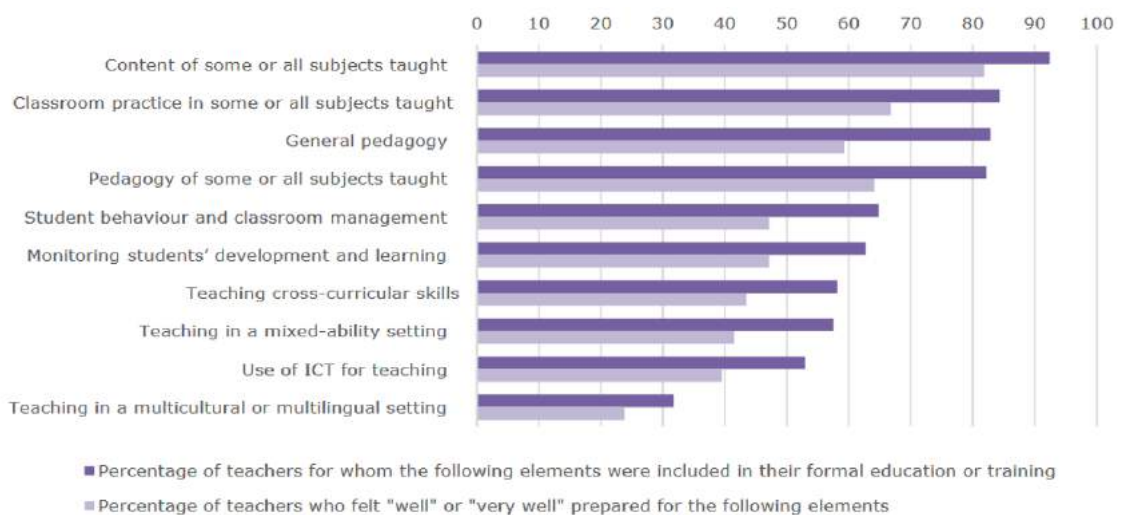




For many years now, the education sector has been facing a growing expectation that **teachers and other education personnel can solve and address society's broad and general problems** in and through education.

The OECD's [PIAAC survey](#) shows that about 70 million Europeans lack sufficient **reading, writing and numeracy skills**, while 40% of the EU population lack digital skills. The OECD Learning Compass 2030 defines '**transformative competencies**' as a type of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that students need in order to transform society and shape the future for a better life.

Let us not forget the **multicultural setting of Europe's education systems**. The OECD 2018 TALIS survey shows that, following the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, 32% of teachers work in schools where at least 1% of pupils have a refugee background. This proportion reaches 50% for Finland and Belgium, exceeds 60% for Cyprus and Denmark, and peaks at 74% for Austria and 84.2% for Sweden. However, when it comes to initial teacher education, only 31.7% of teachers learnt about teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings (OECD TALIS 2018).



Source: OECD, TALIS 2018.

Along with demands that impact on the **environment and nature of teaching and learning processes**, the **age of the teaching population** puts further pressure on the sector. The upcoming waves of retirement in the sector will result in further teacher shortages across the region unless governments commit themselves to safeguarding the teaching profession. The OECD estimates that several countries, including Italy, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, will have to replace **about one in three teachers by 2030**. In the EU, 32.8% of primary school teachers and 39% of secondary school teachers were at least 50 years old in 2017. In primary education, the proportion of teachers aged 50 or over exceeded 40% in Italy (56.3%), Bulgaria (48.1%), Lithuania (45.8%), Estonia (44%), Greece (43.1%), Czechia (42.2%) and Hungary (40.6%).

What is more, the situation has been deteriorating due to demographic change that has led to a large increase in the student population, difficulties in attracting students into teacher education, and poor success in retaining both teaching students and in-service teachers in the profession.

Across Europe, it appears that teacher shortages lead to policies which claim that teachers are not necessary in the learning process, or which plan to **overcome teacher shortages by deregulation of the profession**. The Education and Training Monitor 2019 shows that many education systems, for instance in Germany, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Luxembourg, have introduced alternative pathways into the teaching profession alongside the main model(s) of initial teacher education. This implies shorter initial education for teachers and/or recruitment from other sectors without the need for teaching qualifications.

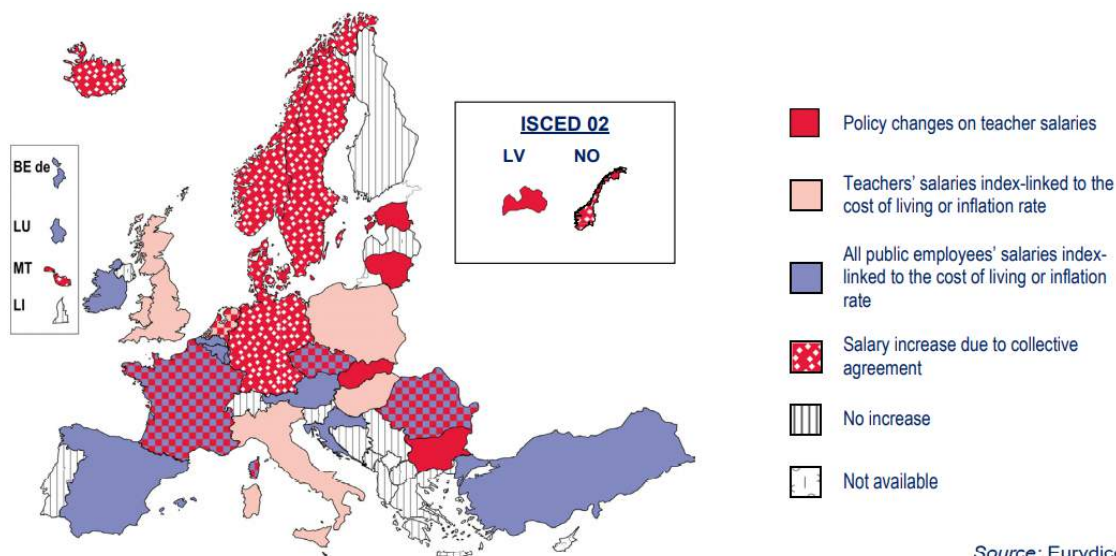


**TEACHERS'**  
**WORLD OF WORK:**  
PROFESSIONAL  
AUTONOMY AND  
ACADEMIC FREEDOM



The decreasing level of professional autonomy for teachers and other education personnel is linked to their poor status, image, and salaries.

Across OECD countries, teachers' salaries at pre-primary, primary and general secondary levels of education are on average 78% to 93% of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers. According to Eurostat, statutory salaries increased in most European education systems in 2017/18.



Source: Eurydice.

Effective and sustainable public funding remains a basic requirement for institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Yet, in a number of countries, particularly in parts of Southern and Eastern Europe, higher education remains severely underfunded.

In the **higher education and research sectors**, academic freedom has been subjected to serious attacks. In the 2018 Paris Communiqué, Ministers of Higher Education made a firm commitment to promoting and protecting fundamental values throughout the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), stating that *'academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education form the backbone of the EHEA.'* However, there have been significant disparities in the prioritisation of different fundamental values by governments and higher education leaders.

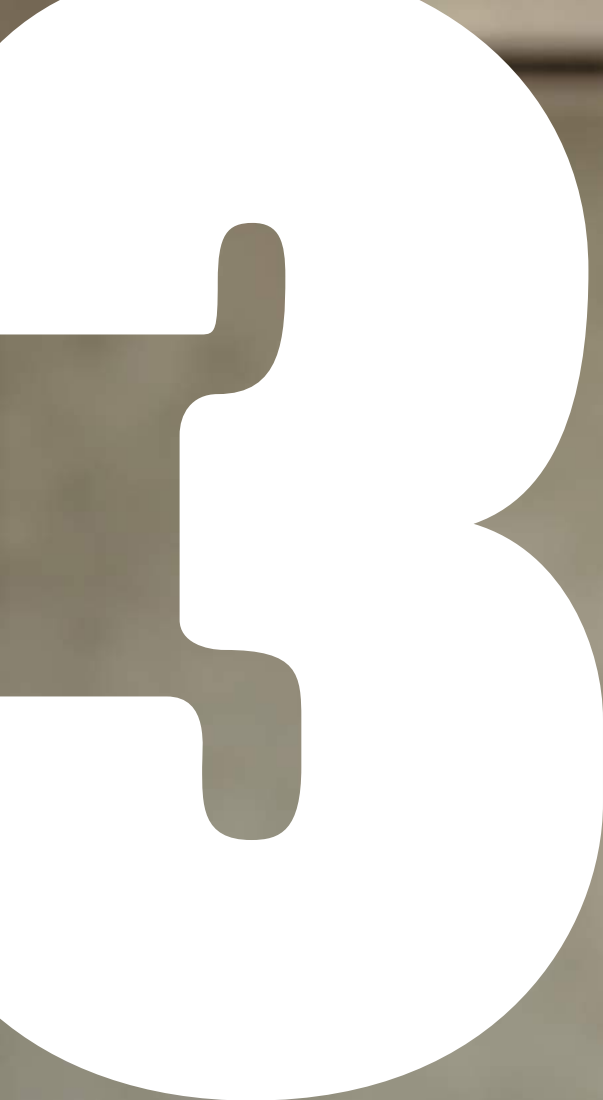
On the one hand, there has been a strong focus on protecting and promoting institutional autonomy in areas such as higher education funding and staffing. This, for example, enables universities to bring in alternative sources of finance or offers university management **more autonomy** to hire and fire education personnel. On the other hand, the protection and promotion of **academic freedom** has been largely neglected and **proven to be an underdeveloped area for national and European policymakers.**

Across Europe tenure systems have been eroded over the last two decades, while fixed-term and casualised employment contracts have been continuously increasing. Academics who are employed on these kinds of contracts are often excluded from meaningful participation in university governance. Their precarious employment situation makes it harder for them to question received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing their careers in [jeopardy](#).

In recent years, the 'new public management' paradigm has been introduced in higher education systems, inspired by governance and organisational models that are common in the private sector. **Major changes in university governance** have also taken place, including few places for academics and students on governing bodies, fewer elections for senior university appointments and the creation of centralised senior management teams who, in the interests of protecting the 'university brand', exercise greater control over what higher education employees can say in the [public domain](#).

All of these developments have resulted in reduced academic participation in decision-making processes and have made it more difficult for academics to exercise their freedom to criticise the functioning of their own institution.

In **early childhood education**, reducing play time and demands to shift early childhood education to primary education directly affect the professional autonomy of teachers and other education personnel. In **general education** the push towards labour market related curricula and skills and competence development result in less flexibility for teachers to choose their teaching methods and materials.



# PREVENTING AND COMBATTING OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS IN EDUCATION



**In the world of work, occupational health and safety (OSH) is paramount for decent working conditions.** While the COVID-19 pandemic has been an overdue wake-up call for the general public about the importance of workplace health and safety, OSH has always been a cornerstone of trade union work. Ensuring that workers do not risk their health in the exercise of their profession, to this day, and after decades of trade union hard work, achievements and sometimes setbacks, remains a priority for colleagues across Europe. The education sector faces various longstanding issues when it comes to the health and safety of staff, from the fight against violence and harassment in education institutions to tackling threats that are often less tangible and harder to identify: such as **psychosocial risks, like work-related stress**. Education trade unions have also sounded the alarm about the impact of the growing use of digital technologies on the psychosocial wellbeing of teachers and other education personnel.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In a 2014 [study](#) by EU-OSHA, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 25% of workers said they experienced work-related stress for all or most of their working time, and a similar proportion reported that work affects their health negatively. When examined by sector, psychosocial risks were of greatest concern in health and social work, followed directly by the education sector. EU-OSHA explained these staggering figures by reference to the **emotional demands** that are characteristic of these jobs, defining 'emotional labour' as work in which the job content is expected to affect workers emotionally. Psychosocial hazards, such as work-related stress and burn out, are indeed increasingly affecting teachers' health and wellbeing. Teachers and other education personnel face a complex range of psychosocial hazards in the working environment, and these risks are the biggest cause of teacher burnout. These psychosocial hazards in the education sector take many forms: **work and/or role overload; lack of support from education institutions; poor student behaviour; physical or mental exhaustion; pressure for examination results; workplace harassment and third-party violence.**

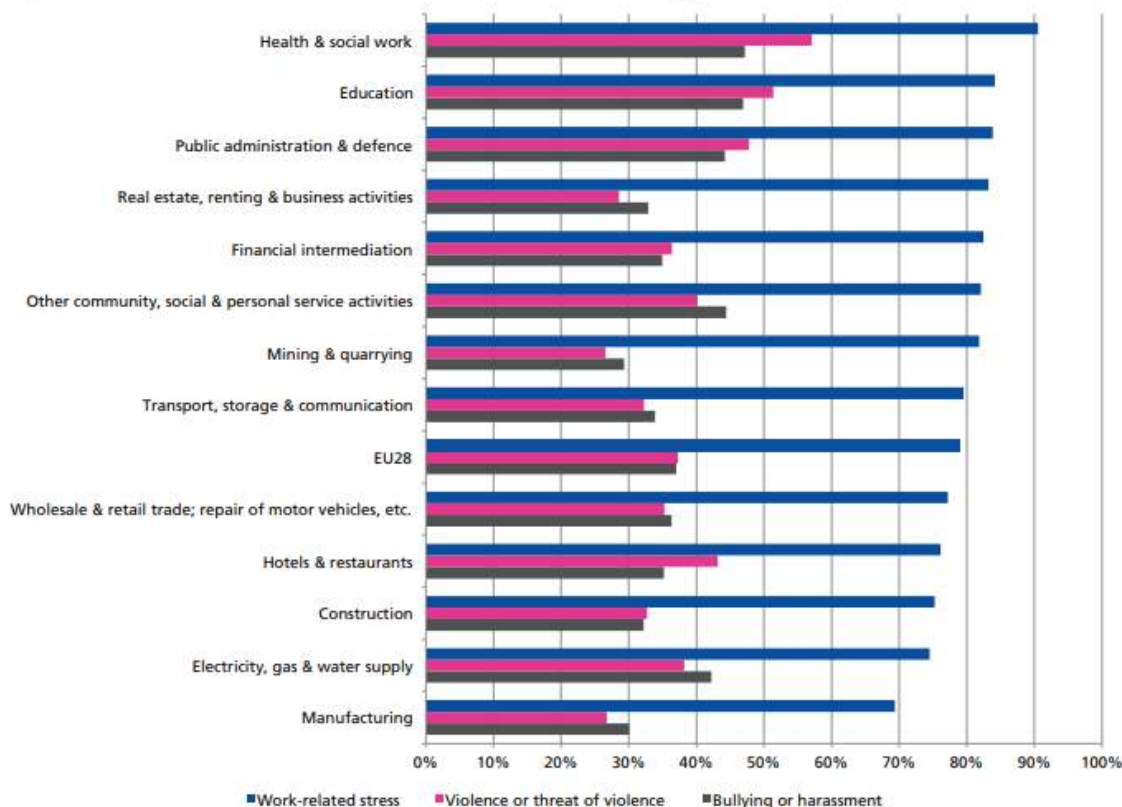
The 2018 edition of TALIS brings us more insight on the concerns of the teaching profession regarding teachers' wellbeing at work, a **vital perspective on the attractiveness and sustainability of the teaching profession**. Indeed, acute stress at work is strongly associated with teachers' job satisfaction and **their intention to continue teaching**: 18% of teachers report experiencing a lot of stress in their work, and 49% report that having too much administrative work is one of the main sources of stress. The report highlights that teachers who report experiencing a lot of stress in their work are **more likely to report a wish to leave their work within the next five years.**

Additionally, the report reveals that psychosocial risks affect certain categories of workers more than others: high levels of work-related stress are more prevalent among **female teachers and teachers under age 30** (in both groups, 20% report experiencing a lot of stress) than among their male peers and colleagues over age 50 (15% in both groups). **Teachers working in city schools, publicly managed schools and schools with a high**

**concentration of disadvantaged students are also more likely to report experiencing a lot of stress.** With respect to the impact of this stress, 7% of teachers report that their job 'negatively impacts their mental health a lot', while 6% report that it 'negatively impacts their physical health a lot', and 6% of teachers consider that their work 'never leaves room for their personal life'.

At European level, the 1989 Framework Directive on measures to improve safety and health at work obliges employers to implement preventive measures to guard against occupational accidents and diseases. Accordingly, **psychosocial risks must be addressed in organisations' health and safety strategies.** In addition, the European social partners have recognised the importance of psychosocial risks by signing the Framework Agreements on Work-Related Stress (2004) and on Harassment and Violence at Work (2007). These agreements represent a commitment to the development and application of their content at national level, and therefore require further national adaptation and implementation.

Figure 26: Concern about work-related stress, harassment and violence, by sector (% establishments)





## **EMERGING RISK:** THE IMPACT OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES ON TEACHERS' WELLBEING

Work and workplaces are constantly changing due to the introduction of new technologies, substances and processes, shifts in the structure of the workforce and the labour market, and new forms of employment and work organisation. These changes may give rise to **new risks and challenges for workers' safety and health**, which must be anticipated and addressed in order to ensure safe and healthy workplaces in the future. The education sector is not immune to this, and the introduction and increasing use of digital technologies into the workplace are set to create a new range of occupational risks for teachers and other education personnel. In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most European education systems implemented prolonged closures and a transition to solely remote teaching, the issues arising from teaching online were heightened. In a working environment where contact is sustained throughout the working day, the emergence of communication technologies **adds pressure from employers, parents and/or carers for education personnel to be available outside of working hours**, thus generating further workload. Additionally, the growing reliance on new technologies to perform non educational tasks, such as administrative work can cause a multiplication of additional burdens. These factors can lengthen working hours and increase an already heavy workload, leading to more psychosocial work-related stress. In addition, the forced use of new technologies within the classroom can result in a sense of loss of professional agency, increasing work-related stress and loss of confidence in the exercise of one's job duties. Lastly, the question of data privacy and e-safety, including questions of cyber-harassment and undue technological surveillance and collection of education staff's data, are causes for concern in connected education institutions.



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# EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



In an increasingly interconnected and diverse world, influenced by social media, people live with constant change and have to adapt to many different challenges, such as **innovation and digitalisation, environmental degradation and climate change**, anti-democratic and xenophobic tendencies, and even violence, hatred, radicalisation, inequality and exclusion. Teachers and other education personnel have a crucial role in helping young people to become active and critical citizens who show solidarity, are able to make responsible life choices and actively participate in creating fairer, more equal and more sustainable societies.

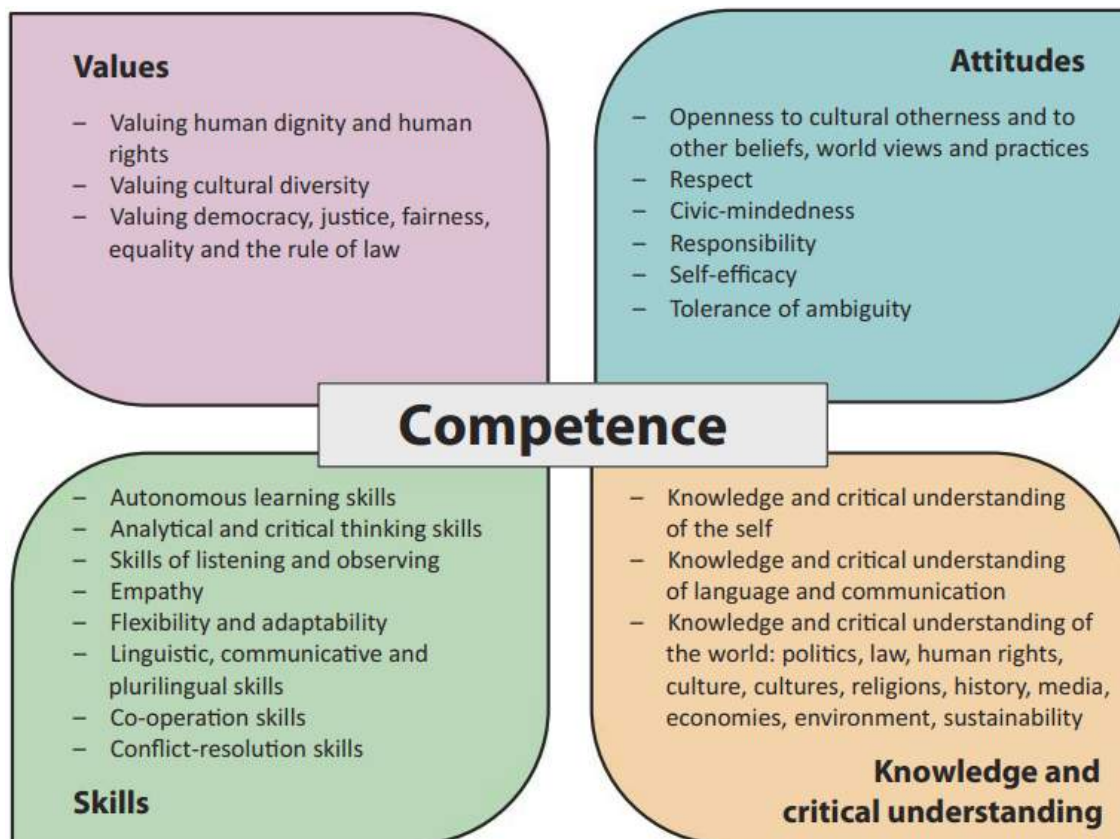
## DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

It is crucial to support the **fundamental values of freedom**, tolerance, democracy, equality and human rights in this time of spreading radicalisation, extremism and xenophobia in Europe. Teachers, school leaders and other education personnel are key in **promoting democratic citizenship and human rights** education. Developing social competences and active citizenship as well as promoting **equity and social cohesion** through school education are important parts of the [OECD Education 2030 framework](#), as well as the [UNESCO Education 2030 framework](#) and the [European Framework on Key Competences for Life Long Learning](#). However, it is challenging to find a common definition and shared relevance of 'citizenship and fundamental values' such as democracy, freedom, tolerance, non-discrimination, equality and solidarity due to the variety of political, historical, religious, cultural and social national contexts in Europe. **Citizenship education** is defined by [UNESCO](#) as 'educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society'. Furthermore, the European reference framework on key competences for lifelong learning stresses that civic competence 'equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation'.

According to the 2017 EURYDICE [study](#), citizenship education was part of national curricula for general education in all countries surveyed. At the same time, nearly half of the countries did not have regulations or recommendations on the development of prospective teachers' citizenship education competences in teachers' initial training. This contradicts the EU Council [Recommendation](#) on key competences for lifelong learning (2018) which advocated that *'teachers should be supported and empowered through measures to create an open learning culture and environment and deal with diverse learning groups in order to teach civic competencies, transmit Europe's shared heritage, promote common values and act as role models for learners'*.

The findings of the research [report](#) *Challenges and Good Practices Related to Promoting Citizenship and Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination through Education* of the ETUCE-led project [EU CONVINCe](#), show an urgent need to support teachers and school leaders in the delivery of citizenship education as well as the need to develop critical and

analytical thinking. The findings also highlighted the demand for a **democratic school culture** that allows space for debate on controversial issues and relies on the active participation of students and teachers. Moreover, it made evident that relevant policy frameworks are required that link curricular with extracurricular activities, including support for children and young people to participate safely, effectively, critically and responsibly in a world with social media and digital technologies.



Council of Europe, *Competences for Democratic Citizenship Culture*, 2016.

## ACTIVE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

It is key that we teach how to use digital technologies and how to use them in an appropriate way. Of course, new technologies offer opportunities to easily access information and communication tools, and to engage in innovative ways in society. However, they also bring various risks which must be addressed in education, including online privacy issues, exposure to fake news, as well cyber-bullying and harassment. The Council of Europe has defined digital citizenship as *'the ability to engage positively, critically and competently in the digital environment, drawing on the skills of effective communication and creation, to practice forms of social participation that are respectful of human rights and dignity through the responsible use of technology'*. Teachers and other education personnel are at the forefront of teaching responsible online behaviour and critical thinking skills to use when interacting on digital platforms.

## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education has an important role in addressing environmental challenges for social change and the sustainable development of the world. Clearly, the discussion on education and environmental issues is broader than any one educational subject. It is a discussion about social change where trade unions work together in solidarity for a collective society that is based on the principles of democracy, social justice, fairness and sustainability. Furthermore, this is a topic which requires international solidarity around the globe.

According to [UNESCO](#), *'education is critical in helping populations understand and address the impacts of climate change, and in encouraging the changes in attitudes and behaviour needed to help them address the causes of climate change, adopt more sustainable lifestyles and develop skills that support different modules of economies, as well as to adapt to the impact of [climate change](#)'*. Education for sustainable development is a component of the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on education, while the 13th goal on climate action includes the improvement of education on climate change. Furthermore, the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), an international environmental treaty signed in Rio de Janeiro back in 1992, introduces the importance of the development and implementation of educational and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects, including 'training of scientific, technical and managerial personnel' and 'development and exchange of educational and public awareness material'. The more recent [Paris Agreement on climate change](#) goes further and demands cooperation among countries on these measures.

Today, global movements aiming to force governments to introduce policies addressing climate change (such as #FridaysForFuture and #ClimateStrike) have already spread among many students in Europe who call for action with massive online events, or, pre-COVID-19, were protesting in front of parliaments and local city halls. There is a growing demand that teachers, academics and other education personnel address, critically discuss and **teach about the causes and consequences of climate change** and possible actions to slow down environment destruction. Nevertheless, even now in 2020, education on environmental issues and climate change is almost completely absent from national curricula, except for a few discussions in specific subjects such as biology or environmental studies. The [Global Education Monitoring Report 2016](#) found that about three quarters of the 78 countries investigated had included sustainable development in their curricula. In 2020, [Italy](#) became the first EU country to make climate change lessons compulsory in schools, with 33 hours – approximately one per school week – dedicated to climate change and **sustainable development**. The European Commission Communication on the [European Green Deal](#), published in January 2020, included an article on 'activating education and training', mentioning three points:

- Preparing a European competence framework to help develop and assess knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable development, as well as providing support materials and facilitating the exchange of good practices in EU networks of teacher-training programmes;

- Providing Member States with new financial resources to make school buildings and operations more sustainable;
- Ensuring pro-active re-skilling and upskilling for Europe's workforce necessary to reap the benefits of the ecological transition.

While education about the environment needs to be integrated into all levels and aspects of the education system and accompanied by sustainable and adequate technical, financial and staff resources from the public budget in order to bring about an actual social change, the European Commission's Communication [Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture](#) does not mention addressing any environmental issues in the priorities for the post-2020 EU Strategy on education and training. As indicated in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), education aims to empower children and adults to realise their full potential and to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market. Education is also supposed to prepare people to understand, live in and reflect on the physical and social world around them, while taking actions and participating in decision-making. Therefore, as environment and climate are inherent parts of our physical world, climate change education naturally must be part of [citizenship education](#) and teachers and their education trade unions have an important role therein.

In the era of the internet, social media, fake news and disinformation, teachers, academics and other education personnel need to take the lead in educating future generations to become responsible citizens who preserve their environment because they are informed about the causes and consequences of environmental and climate change. Teaching how to develop adequate responses, reduce vulnerability to environmental consequences, and prevent further destruction of the environment is crucial. In order to do so, teachers, academics, and other education personnel need to be supported in teaching climate change education with relevant and up-to-date teaching materials, methods and practices and with initial and continuous teacher training on the topic.

Indeed, climate change and environmental issues have a strong impact on the work of education institutions. They can obstruct learning and teaching processes and lead to environments that do not support learning and teaching (e.g. temperature or air quality problems in classrooms, periods where schools have to be closed or relocated due to changes in nature). Climate-induced migration, natural disasters, food shortages and other similar events interrupt education and prevent people from obtaining quality education. Environmental problems also tend to deepen significantly socio-economic gaps between people, countries, and regions. They have a bigger impact on disadvantaged social groups, economically poorer countries, and girls and women. Education trade unions fight for an equal and inclusive society where all young people have access to sustainable high quality and inclusive education regardless of their gender, socio-economic status, geographical location, migratory and citizenship status, abilities and educational needs.



**THE DIGITAL  
TRANSFORMATION  
AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Societies across Europe are facing profound changes, with fast-evolving new technologies set to irrevocably transform the world of work and as we know it. Automation and digitalisation are affecting working life, along with the wider society, and have already started to impact citizens in terms of **skills needs and job practices**. Additionally, the ever-increasing use of new technologies in everyday life requires a minimum level of understanding and awareness of the safe use of digital tools from an early age. At EU level, the Digital Competence Framework [DigiComp 2.0](#) (2016), developed to reflect the objectives of the European Commission's [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), identifies the key components of digital competence in the five following areas: 1) information and data literacy, 2) communication and collaboration, 3) digital content creation, 4) safety, and 5) problem solving.

At the heart of these developments, the education sector is under considerable pressure to adjust in all sectors and professions to this fourth industrial revolution, which numerous decision-makers and businesses representatives seem to be embracing as a potent force for economic growth. The introduction of new technologies affects education personnel daily and in many aspects of their profession. Staff and their trade unions are sounding the alarm about the potentially negative impact of the unbridled use of emerging technologies in the education sector on the quality of education, particularly if introduced without a thorough and balanced reflection, in which **education professionals must have a central role**. Additionally, with growing calls for an increased use of digital tools, including learning analytics, in developing individual learning pathways, **the social aspect of the interaction between teacher and student**, essential to the optimal development of the student, is at risk. Also central in the concerns of education personnel is **the impact of digitalisation on their employment and working conditions**, in particular with rising demands for out-of-working hours availability, risks of online harassment, and possible infringement of data protection rules aided by the use of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. These issues all endanger the wellbeing of education personnel, and jeopardise the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

At the same time, digital technologies, introduced with the full inclusion of the views, expertise and experiences of teachers and education trade unions, show promising potential in supporting their work in and outside the classroom or lecture hall. A thoughtful and balanced use of ICT in teaching and learning, mindful of the **safe use of online technologies** and respectful of teachers' **professional autonomy**, can have many benefits. These include fostering the interest of students in various subjects, such as science, technology and maths (STEM) topics, and encourage them to explore careers in these fields. It can also help to retain students in formal education who are at risk of exclusion, including special needs students.

The potential benefits of new technologies for the education sector can only be reached if governments and education authorities in Europe **maintain and increase the level of public investment in education at all levels** and recognise education trade unions as equal partners in relation to future developments affecting the education sector. The permanent and central role of education trade unions in national and European decision-making needs to be assured when developing education policies, with social dialogue at national and European level, in respect of the principle that **new technologies should be used as supplements to, and not replacements for, in-class instruction**.



The following section looks at the present and upcoming challenges for education personnel in the digital era to provide points for reflection and discussion on the topic of digitalisation in the education sector.

## ADAPTING TO THE DIGITAL ERA

Digitalisation has a huge impact on the attractiveness of the profession and brings about a new set of challenges for the wellbeing of education personnel. For many years, education trade unions have been concerned about **rising workloads, growing work-related stress, and the loss of professional agency and work-life balance**. It is important to address these concerns with a view to promoting the attractiveness of the teaching profession, not least in the context of digitalisation, particularly when many countries are challenged with teacher shortages and the sustainability of the teaching profession is jeopardised. In a working environment where contact is sustained throughout the working day, it is important to ensure that communication technologies help to alleviate the workload of teachers and that the **right of teachers to disconnect** is respected, so that teachers are not expected to reply to queries outside of working hours.

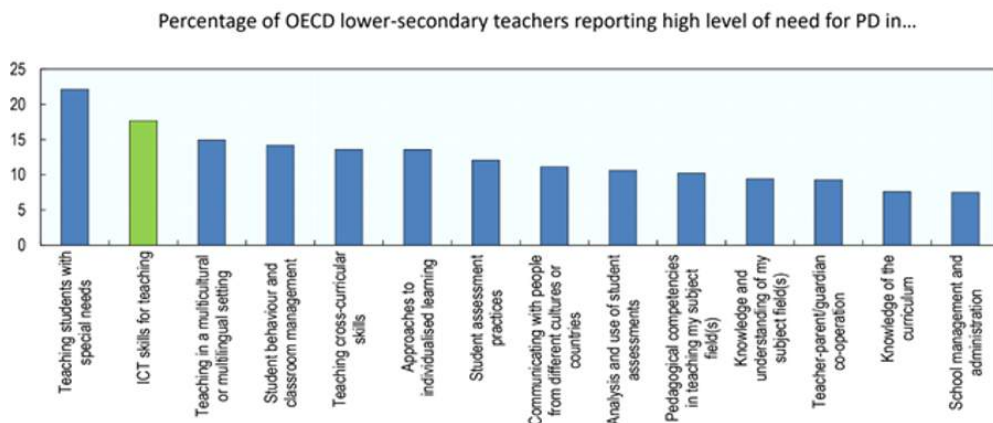
The growing expectation that teachers use new technologies to perform non-educational tasks, such as administrative work, is often increasing disproportionately. Indeed, the uptake of tasks not related to teaching can cause a multiplication of additional burdens, such as longer working hours, and an increase in an already heavy workload. It is essential that the use of new technologies within the classroom does not result in a loss of professional autonomy.

With the technological change teachers and other education personnel need to adapt to emerging technologies and to include them in their teaching practices. A crucial question is whether they are being provided with the **adequate training** to enjoy a full grasp of how these technologies work, and the best ways they can be used to support teaching. TALIS 2018 reveals that although many teachers actively participate in professional development, they consistently report high needs in certain areas, particularly teaching students with special needs and using ICT skills for teaching. The most commonly cited reasons for not taking part in available training were 'conflict with work schedule' (54%) and 'no incentives for participating in professional development' (48%)

Also according to TALIS 2018, only 56% of teachers in OECD countries received training in the use of ICT for teaching as part of their formal education or training, and only 43% felt well or very well prepared for this when they had completed their initial teacher education. Teachers still report a **high level of need for professional development in ICT skills for teaching**, second only to teaching students with special needs. As explained in previous sections, teachers need to receive quality training in the use of digital tools to integrate ICT effectively into teaching. Further to basic digital technologies, teachers are not necessarily trained in other important digital competencies such as digital literacy or digital citizenship. Teacher education at both the initial preparation and continuing professional development levels will have to expand to better prepare and support teachers to teach

these important 21st century skills. Teaching professionals need to make informed professional decisions in relation to the design and implementation of digital education for their students. In the 21st century, **digital competence is a core competence for all teachers**. Additionally, there is growing evidence that teachers need and want to participate in digital learning experiences that are relevant to their discipline and to their level of competence. Therefore, there is a need to provide a **range of learning** experiences that enable teachers to engage and explore. Ultimately, teachers at all levels are education professionals and their use of digital technologies enhances learning. Teachers should be able to participate in regular, in-service, digital training, bearing in mind there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

**TPL in digital environments**  
**ICT is one of the most frequently reported needs for PD**



Source: OECD TALIS 2018, Table I.5.21., and OECD (2019) *Working and Learning Together*, Fig. 4.4

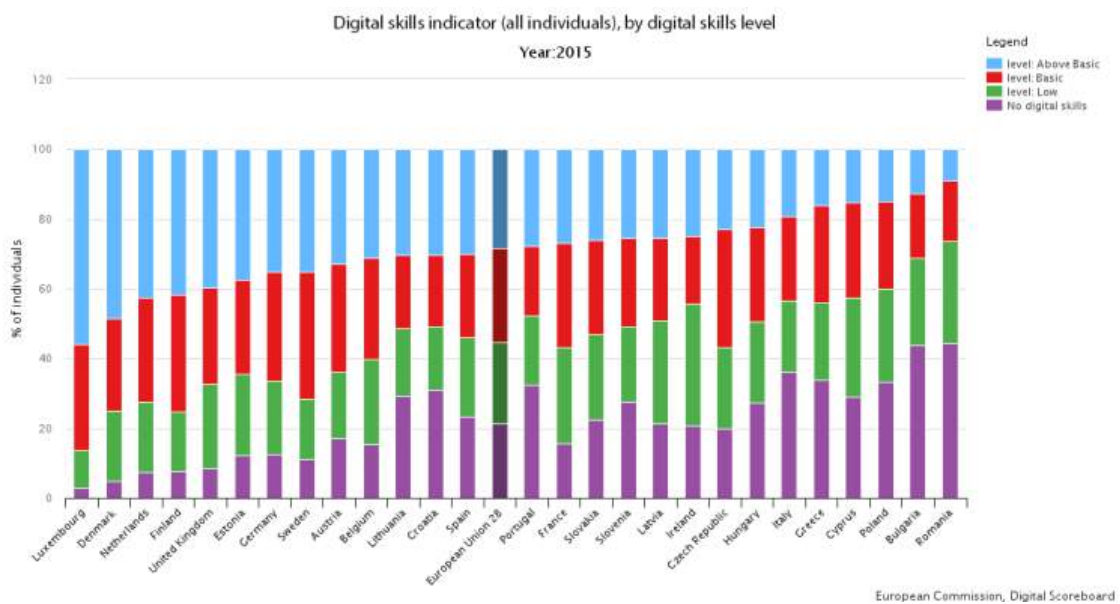
## THE WIDENING DIGITAL SKILLS GAP

With the digital transformation, citizens require new elementary digital skills to enter the labour market and to complete basic everyday tasks. Social and administrative actions increasingly require one form or another of digital activity, without which citizens may not be able to access essential services. Indeed, basic digital skills have become a requirement to participate in society. However, current figures show that Europe is lagging behind on this issue. In 2017, 43% of the EU population had an insufficient level of digital skills. 17% had none at all, as they either did not use the internet or barely did so. Additionally, the three main reasons stated for not having internet access at home remained the lack of need or interest (46% of households without internet access in 2017), insufficient skills (43%) and high access and equipment costs (32%). In light of this, and bearing in mind the importance of access to up-to-date digital tools at home and in class for students and

education personnel alike, as the COVID-19 pandemic made explicit, the provision of quality digital education needs a **coordinated approach to mitigate the digital skills gap**.

Tech companies are aiming to capitalise on the higher demand for digital tools in the education sector and to increase their presence in education institutions, be it in schools or university campuses, and reinforce partnerships with public education structures. These partnerships can have detrimental consequences for the quality and inclusiveness of education, in so far as they can lead to the commercialisation of education, as well as the intrusion of private interests into the design of public education policies and impact on the professional autonomy of education personnel. In addition, increasing **reliance on private providers of resources, hardware and software risks furthering inequalities**, where education institutions and students who are unable to buy such resources are left behind. Therefore, digitalisation measures must be implemented to ensure quality digital education reaches all, and in particular vulnerable populations.

While social justice, equal opportunities and solidarity are at the heart of trade union values, equal and fair societies are important to sustain democracy. Rising inequalities lead to social exclusion, and, in the worst cases, to marginalisation and radicalisation. Education is a key aspect in preventing this, in particular in the fight against fake news on- and offline.



## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FACILITATED BY DIGITAL TOOLS

There is a growing need to ensure **equality in digital education in Europe**, and despite continued high levels of unemployment there could be around 800 000 unfilled jobs in the European ICT sector by 2020 . Further to this, in 2015, women made up only 13% of the graduates in ICT-related fields working in digital jobs compared to 15% in 2011 .

ETUCE recalls the *'need to increase efforts to overcome the gender stereotypical use of ICT and create more incentives for both boys and girls to become competent ICT savvy users, to prepare them for life and for the labour market of the future which relies to a growing extent on digital skills and competences'*.



## THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA MINING

It is common that experts and policymakers, outsiders to the education sector, evaluate new technologies as potential tools to improve teaching and learning practices. Too often, however, 'innovative changes' are pushed on teachers without their consultation, and practitioners are often unjustly portrayed as reluctant to change. In recent educational debates, artificial intelligence (AI), data mining and learning analytics have been discussed in many fora as promising tools for more inclusive education which are adapted to individual students' needs. However, as for all innovative tools, **AI, data mining and learning analytics require a thorough adaptation to the education sector** at all levels. The specific needs of education systems, and the potential risks of these technologies for the quality of education, education personnel and students, must be acknowledged, openly discussed, and understood. In this section, we look at some of the risks that artificial intelligence and data mining expose the education sector to, as well as interrogating their potential drawbacks.

Artificial intelligence, as defined by the European Commission-mandated [High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence](#), a group comprising of various experts stakeholders including trade union representatives, refers to 'systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions - with some degree of autonomy - to achieve specific goals. AI-based systems can be purely software-based, acting in the virtual world (e.g. voice assistants, image analysis software, search engines, speech and face recognition systems) or AI can be embedded in hardware devices (e.g. advanced robots, autonomous cars, drones or Internet of Things applications).' AI is, as a matter of fact, divisible into two applications. Machine learning is a subset of AI associated with algorithms trained to modify themselves without human intervention to achieve a desired result - by feeding themselves structured data. Meanwhile deep learning is a subset of machine learning with several additional layers of such algorithms, each having a specific understanding of the data it conveys, ultimately capable of further deduction.

## Artificial Intelligence

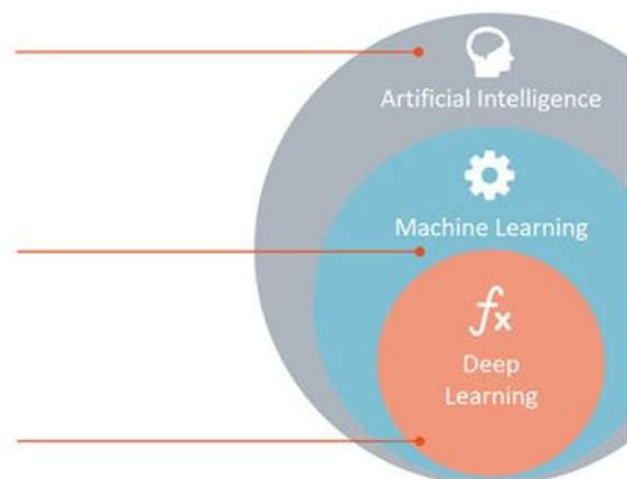
Any technique which enables computers to mimic human behavior.

## Machine Learning

Subset of AI techniques which use statistical methods to enable machines to improve with experiences.

## Deep Learning

Subset of ML which make the computation of multi-layer neural networks feasible.



Source: [KD Nuggets](#)

AI therefore refers to the capacity of a machine for a certain level of autonomous deduction, having been enabled by an initial programming and feeding of data. In the education sector, AI is, in particular, currently discussed as a tool to develop programmes that enable **personalised learning pathways**, with a view to ensuring that all students benefit from a monitoring tailored to their individual needs. Linked to the use of AI in the classroom, data mining and learning analytics are two specific areas in adapting education to each student's learning pathway: data mining is the process of a software uncovering patterns and relationships by processing large volumes of data; learning analytics refers to the process whereby AI software critically evaluates raw data and generates patterns to analyse students' learning processes and determine their strengths, weaknesses, and possible learning outcomes. Both these applications are currently primarily discussed in assessment and evaluation of students' learning processes and outcomes. **Assessment and evaluation are central aspects of teachers' work and require the expertise of a trained professional.**

AI is also increasingly used in higher education beyond the lecture hall, e.g., in the higher education management field, supporting collaboration and student services. However, research shows that there are projects that seek to “model common student misconceptions, predict which students are at risk of failure, and provide real-time student feedback that is tightly integrated with learning outcomes.” In addition, AI is used in teachers’ recruitment in the same way as big companies use recruitment engines to analyse candidates’ applications via certain key words. This use of AI, however, objectifies teachers, academics, researchers, and other education personnel and deprives them of the possibility of presenting themselves in real interviews, should the CV fall outside the key word search grid. This contributes to the growing perception that AI is able to replace teaching.

While the use of artificial intelligence, data mining and learning analytics is in principle meant to facilitate the work of education professionals and alleviate some of their workload, these technologies present specific risks to the education sector which need to be urgently addressed to ensure they do not negatively impact on the quality of education in the long-term. In particular, the following principles **ensuring ethical use of AI** should be considered by decision-makers: the **protection of personal data of students and teaching staff**; **transparency** on the functioning of algorithms and the destination of the data provided; **fair, non-discriminatory practices** in the use of the data collected; **fair employment and working conditions - for instance regarding recruitment procedures**. Additionally, the use of internet resources presents a **risk of algorithmic biases** that can be detrimental for **independent quality education, in particular for the field of research**. These principles are laid out in the March 2020 [ETUCE Statement on the European Commission White Paper on Artificial Intelligence](#).

A photograph of a male teacher with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt, leaning over a desk to assist a female student with long blonde hair wearing a grey t-shirt. They are looking at papers on the desk. In the background, another student in a red shirt is visible at a desk. The scene is set in a bright, modern classroom.

**BOOSTING  
PROGRESS  
TOWARDS EQUALITY  
AND INCLUSION**



Despite the overall progress in addressing inequalities in 21st century society, there is still a **lack of funding for inclusive education** and many equality topics and challenges in Europe are still not addressed through social dialogue in the education sector. The teaching profession does not sufficiently reflect the diversity of society (e.g. 73% of education workers are women and education is one of the sectors with the lowest percentage of immigrants among key workers), and this deprives students of a broad range of role models. **Lack of political will** and public investment to implement equality and non-discrimination strategies and policies are among the key reasons why many inequalities continue to exist in Europe. In addition, the spread of right-wing and nationalist political discourses and growing poverty and social exclusion in a number of European countries undermine the equality and inclusion agenda in our society.

Education trade unions are working tirelessly to ensure that the teaching profession and education systems are inclusive, diverse and equal. Today, education trade unions continue to face numerous lingering issues as well as many new challenges, namely an ageing European population and teaching profession, brain drain, budget cuts in education, growing privatisation in the education sector, increasing attacks on trade union rights and the declining membership of trade unions. These trends not only jeopardise inclusive and equitable education, they have forced many education trade unions to reduce their work on equality.

While a growing number of governments view education as a means to solve economic problems and feed the labour market, the education trade union movement understands education from a holistic perspective that aims to develop tolerant, open-minded and active citizens with an inherent respect for human rights.

The recent socio-economic developments linked to the pandemic spread of the COVID-19 virus, which affected the whole European region has magnified all existing inequalities. It has also deepened the gaps between people from different socio-economic backgrounds, cities and rural areas, migrant and non-migrant backgrounds, gender and age generations. Government measures of social distancing and quarantine, implemented in every almost European country to prevent the spread of the virus, affected women disproportionately and impacted on gender equality, significantly increasing the unequal distribution of household and care responsibilities as well as the gender pay gap.

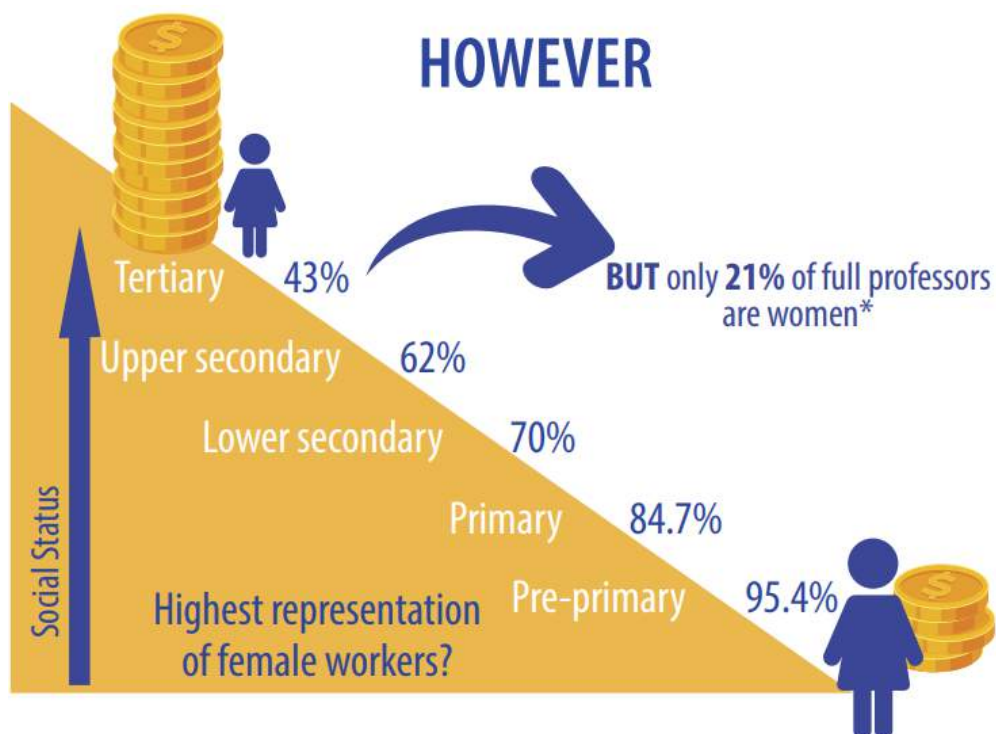
It is crucial to keep in mind the **intersectional dimension** of many inequalities, whereby multiple discriminations take place based on several factors at the same time. Many progressive initiatives, policies and strategies aimed at eliminating different forms of discrimination can sometimes actually reinforce multiple and intersecting levels of discrimination. Intersectionality is defined as the understanding that people's identities and social positions are shaped by several factors at the same time, creating unique experiences and perspectives. These factors include, among others, ethnic origins, sexuality, gender identity, disability, age, socio-economic background, migratory status, nationality, faith, and others. Supporters of the intersectional approach to equality argue that the intersections of these identities and social positions create specific and unique realities for individuals, which are not adequately reflected in existing single-factor or multiple discrimination approaches to equality and inclusion.

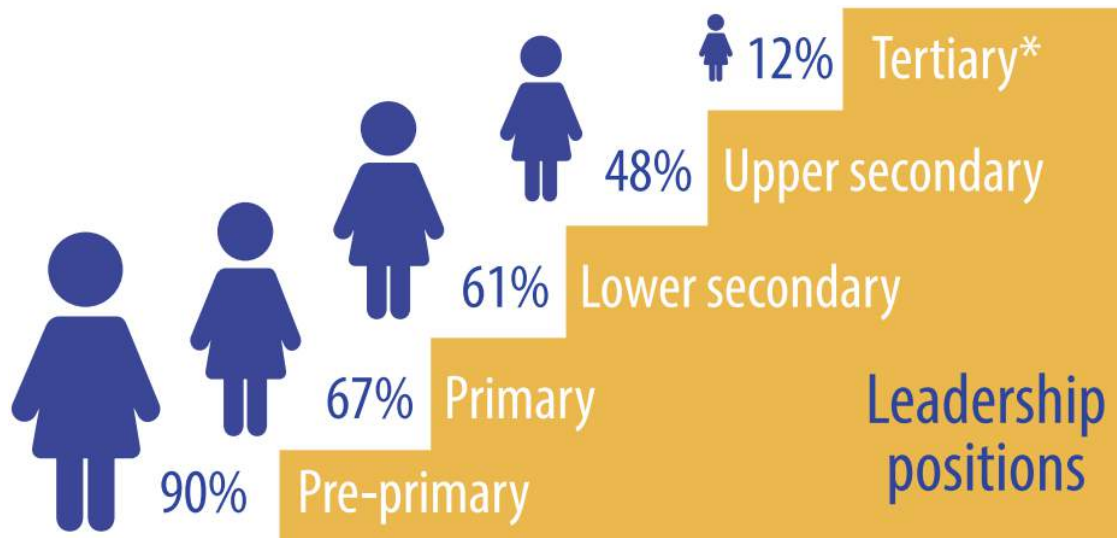


## PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION, THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

The ambitious new [EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) contains many important proposals addressing gender stereotypes, gender segregation in study fields and the labour market, gender pay gaps and gender-based violence. However, as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) indicates in its Gender Equality Index, over the past decade progress towards gender equality in Europe has been made *'at a snail's pace'*. Meanwhile threats to gender equality do not remain unchanged, they develop **new, often more subtle, forms** while new inequalities arise from the changes in our societies.

**Deeply rooted gender stereotypes** in our daily lives, publicity and media, continue to persist in relation to perceptions of women's and men's role in the household, caring responsibilities, the labour market and public life. These perceptions lead to horizontal and vertical gender segregation, a widening of the gender pay and pension gaps, and the spread of gender-based violence and harassment. Gender segregation in the labour market is especially reflected in the public sector, with teaching being a highly gendered profession. **Horizontal gender segregation** in the teaching profession, with men mainly employed in better-paid, higher-status positions (e.g. in tertiary education), and women mostly working in early childhood and primary education, also undermines gender equality in education and the labour market. Furthermore, despite making up a high share of the workforce in the education sector, **women are still under-represented in leadership and decision-making positions** in education institutions. Also, a high percentage of women work in part-time employment and on short-term contracts.





Eurostat. Education statistics. 2016 \*European University Association. Data on female university leadership in Europe. 2017

In the overall labour market in Europe, the **gender pay gap** remains at 16.2% and the [gender pension gap](#) stands at 37%. These gaps are also widening when gender inequality intersects with such factors as migratory status, ethnic origins (e.g. Roma women), age and others. Even though in most of the EU countries, teachers' salaries are fixed and based on state salary grids, male teachers usually advance in their career faster than their female colleagues due to career breaks or part-time work taken more often by women due to caring responsibilities. Men are also more present in better-paid and higher-status positions, and they are often given extra-curricular opportunities to earn more. Such arrangements result in significant gender pay and pension gaps in the sector. Horizontal segregation in the teaching profession also contributes to the gender pay gap, as teaching in the primary and ECE sectors where the majority of education personnel are women, is in many countries undervalued and paid less than other education sectors.

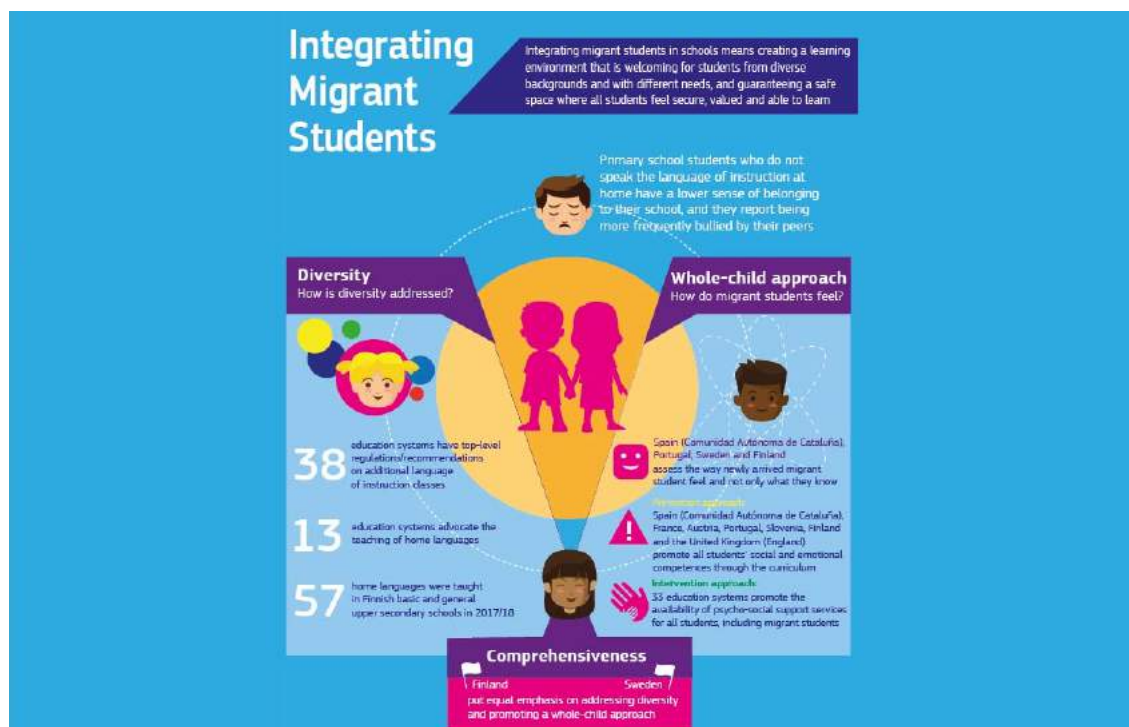
The results of a recent survey among education trade unions in Europe show that gender equality topics and challenges are still to a large extent not addressed in national and European social dialogue in the [education sector](#).

## INCLUSION AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

**Support for education personnel and students with diverse backgrounds** - socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and more - is key to promoting an inclusive education which embraces and celebrates diversity.

The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) report on [Integration of young refugees in the EU](#) shows that in some EU countries, refugee children have to wait up to one year to attend compulsory school. The report sees language barriers, administrative bureaucracy, limited school capacity and a lack of qualified teachers as the main reasons for enrolment delays. Furthermore, some refugees experience pressure to attend vocational education instead of tertiary education. A difficult socio-economic situation, social stereotypes and prejudice still existing in European countries also tend to increase the chances of students from a migrant minority background leaving school before finishing upper secondary or vocational education.

With increasing numbers of **migrants, refugees and asylum seekers** arriving at Europe's shores and land borders to seek shelter and protection from wars, persecution or natural disasters, many new challenges confront education and training systems and their personnel. Support is needed to address a wide range of issues: language acquisition; teaching and learning in the mother tongue and in a second language; catering for displaced students having experienced trauma; transport to and from asylum centres; addressing stereotypes and prejudices inside and outside of classrooms and lecture halls; supplies for a supportive education environment; psychosocial support for these students. The research report of the joint ETUCE-EFEE project [Promoting Effective Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Education](#) (2019) highlights another significant challenge linked to the sense of temporality developed by migrant and refugee students, their





parents and to a large degree by the teachers, especially in situations of asylum seekers. The report comments that inclusion requires the remodelling of education institutions' traditional approaches towards support-based inclusion which demands efforts from all teachers, not only second language teachers, and additional resources. Therefore, lack of and decreasing public funding and financial support for education poses an additional threat to the sustainability of the integration and inclusion process. Education systems need additional public resources to accomplish their task of providing equal education to newly arrived migrant and refugee students, including the provision of relevant and sustainable professional development to teachers, trainers, and other education personnel.

Eighteen years after the adoption of the [Racial Equality Directive](#) and 10 years after the adoption of the [Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia](#), people from minority backgrounds continue to face widespread harassment, structural discrimination, entrenched prejudice and discriminatory ethnic profiling across Europe, as the [Fundamental Rights Report 2019](#) shows. Racism, anti-Semitism, and political hate speech against ethnic minorities are still a reality in European society, while there is a lack of policy responses to racism, ethnic discrimination and hate speech.

Education trade unions report existing school and class segregation for students from ethnic minority backgrounds, as well as strong prejudices and stereotypes about ethnic minorities, in particular regarding Roma communities ('anti-gypsyism'). [Economic challenges](#), such as the risk of living in segregated areas or in poverty, tend to increase the chances of students from an ethnic minority background leaving school before finishing upper secondary or vocational education.

Inclusion of **students and education personnel with special needs** into local and mainstream schools and other education institutions continues to be a challenge for reasons that include cuts to public funding in the education sector and growing privatisation trends in education. The recent analysis of the implementation of [European Disability Strategy 2010-2020](#) showed that education and training is one of the worst performing areas among eight key areas for action mentioned in the Strategy: only 36% of the goals related to education and training had been met by the [end of 2019](#).

Even though some legal and organisational barriers to general education and lifelong learning systems were removed for people with disabilities, [none of the EU countries](#) has a fully inclusive system where 100% of learners attend mainstream education institutions and are educated with their peers for 100% of the time. Furthermore, even though teachers and trainers play a key role in helping students with disabilities to access high quality and inclusive education, they are not being adequately equipped to carry out their responsibilities due to the lack of initial teacher training and continuous professional development opportunities related to special educational needs. Furthermore, many European countries experience shortages of specialised teachers, academics, other education personnel and support personnel to cater for the needs of special needs students. Education trade unions also point out that learning groups comprise too many children and teachers are often left alone in classes, without additional support personnel and without adequate training.

## ENSURING EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION FOR LGBTI PEOPLE

In the past few years, some positive legislative and social progresses regarding equality for **LGBTI people** can be observed in many European countries, including the expansion of family rights, reforms or the establishing of legal gender recognition procedures, and bodily integrity<sup>1</sup> for intersex people gaining more prominence on the political agenda of governments and institutions. However, according to the ILGA-Europe [reports](#), 70 UN Member States still reinforce 'state-sponsored homophobia' where same-sex relationships are being criminalised, and many countries prohibit freedom of speech for LGBTI people, thus violating their human rights. The recent FRA Report [A long way to go for LGBTI equality](#) shows that even though LGBTI people live more openly than in 2012, at the same time, more feel discriminated in various areas of life and many still sense the 'need to conceal their identity to avoid discrimination, hate or even violence'. ILGA Europe's [9th Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People](#) (2020) also observes a sharp rise in hate speech against the LGBTI community throughout Europe, often coming from public figures (e.g. in Bulgaria, Poland, Turkey, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Portugal and Spain). This situation is being reflected in the education sector: the Review gives numerous examples of cases of homophobic bullying, harassment and violence against LGBTI students and staff in schools across Europe and Central Asia. Furthermore, school leaders and higher authorities, but also the public, are often reluctant to take measures like providing training on LGBTI issues or inclusive sex education (23 of 49 countries in Europe do not address sexual orientation and gender identity expression explicitly, according to the [UNESCO Global Education Monitor report 2020](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> The principle of bodily integrity sums up the right of each human being, including children, to autonomy and self-determination over their own body. It considers an unconsented physical intrusion as a human rights violation. (ILGA-Europe, Protecting Intersex People in Europe: A toolkit for law and policymakers, 2019).



**AGAINST THE  
PRIVATISATION AND  
COMMERCIALISATION  
OF EDUCATION**

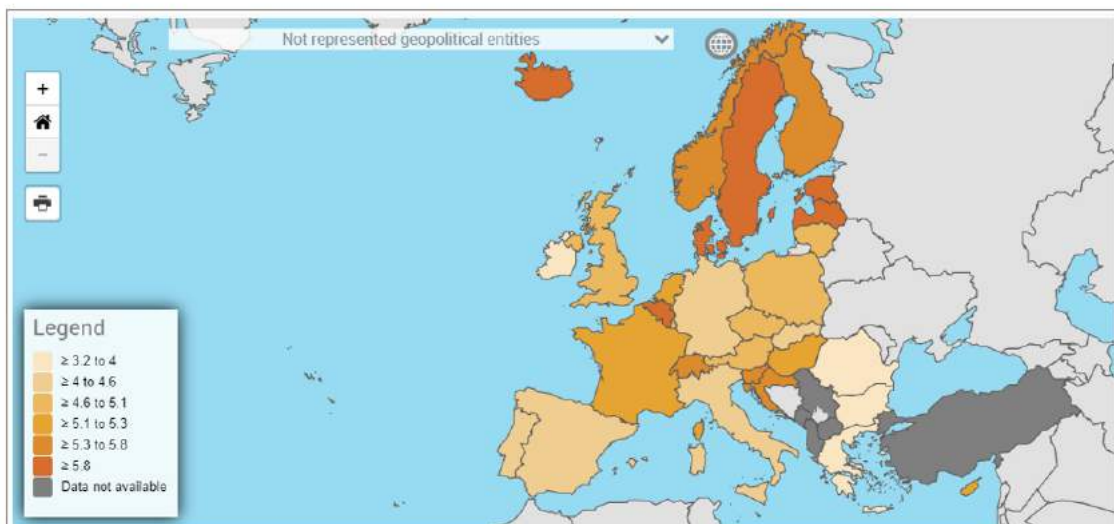


Over the past decades, research has documented that cuts to education budgets and attempts to harmonise education systems in Europe have played a central role in **shifting** education **policy towards liberalisation and deregulation**, further contributing to marketisation, commercialisation and commodification of education. By emphasising the need for *effectiveness* and *efficiency* in public spending and governance, the education narrative and debate have been increasingly narrowed to economic concerns as defined by business, market mechanisms and market attitudes.

**Some of the education reform processes** promoted across the EU with the aim of *modernising* and *restructuring* education systems, have resulted in the private sector's growth in education systems both directly, as external agents providing rapid injections of investment in education (namely through Public-Private Partnerships - PPPs) and indirectly, in the form of private business techniques applied to public management and governance of education. This has been reflected in the expansion of market-like discourses in education and business-like administration of schools and education institutions, increasingly tying performance to rewards and sanctions, standardised testing and mechanical measurement, alongside the introduction of competition, choice-based policies and consumer-oriented educational offers as well as the outsourcing of ancillary school services (e.g. technology, assessments, tutoring, school meals, etc.) to new providers.

The expansion of such a narrative from Anglo-Saxon to Southern, Central European and Balkan countries has been accelerated in the aftermath of the economic crisis by a generalised **mistrust towards public governance**, a **widespread belief in the greater efficiency of the private sector** and an **openness to market dynamics** in education, together with **strict budget limitations for public investment** to comply with the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact and Fiscal Compact. In 2018, record low levels of public investment in education institutions as a share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) were **reported** in Romania (2.8%), Ireland (3.3%), Bulgaria (3.6%), Slovakia, Italy (3.8%), and Greece (3.9%). Outside of the EU, in three of the six European Neighbourhood Policy-East countries public spending on **education** was a higher proportion of GDP than in the EU-28 (4.6 %), led by Moldova (5.5 %), Ukraine (5%) and Belarus (4.9%), while Azerbaijan (2.5%) and Armenia (2%) are still lagging behind in terms of GDP proportion allocated to education.

**Figure 1** General government expenditure in education as a percentage of GDP



Source: Eurostat, data 2018, extracted March 2020

The [OECD Education at a Glance \(2019\)](#) confirms that **many education systems are increasingly relying on private sources of funding to compensate for setbacks in public investment** (see Figure below). Between 2010 and 2016, across OECD countries, the share of private spending increased by 3 percentage points, while the share of public spending fell by about the same amount, with Portugal, Spain, Italy and the UK increasing private support by more than 5% in that period of reference.

As governments struggle to provide free quality education for all in time for 2030 when the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the European Pillar of Social Rights are to be fully implemented, a 2017 [Whitepaper by Frost & Sullivan](#) commissioned by Corporate Social Responsibility Europe (CSR Europe), estimates the consolidated **market opportunity in education for European companies to be over €235 billion by 2025**. Commercial opportunities are measured both in terms of outward facing wins such as new sales, new customers and value propositions, and inward facing wins such as cost savings, enhanced processes, and a more motivated workforce.

Against this background, even the OECD and the World Bank warn that **applying market mechanisms to the provision of schooling** leads to a growing segregation of students and negatively impacts on education quality. Similarly, in Europe, the [European Court of Auditors](#) in its special report *Public Private Partnerships in the EU: Widespread shortcomings and limited benefits* (2018) assessed negatively the use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in harnessing the public and private sectors to provide public goods and services which are conventionally supplied by the public sector alone. The report makes particular reference to health and education. Despite such evidence, EU-wide policy frameworks and new EU financial instruments are promoted to allow and even to encourage **public and private finance mixes in education and training** systems.

The global push towards liberalisation in education reform, the strengthening of socio-economic governance with the introduction of the European Semester, and the austerity and recovery measures affecting public policy and education sectors during the last decade have had major **repercussions for the teaching profession across Europe**. When these reforms reach the classroom or lecture hall, they change the context and organisation of the work of teachers and other education personnel. They impact on how education professionals are recruited, the access they have to continuous professional development, and how they are evaluated and compensated. In some cases, reforms come with the erosion of the status and security of the teaching profession, with de-professionalisation, limited autonomy and influence over curriculum and teaching practices, and with unrewarding working conditions in increasingly competitive working environments characterised by work-related stress, instability and individualisation.

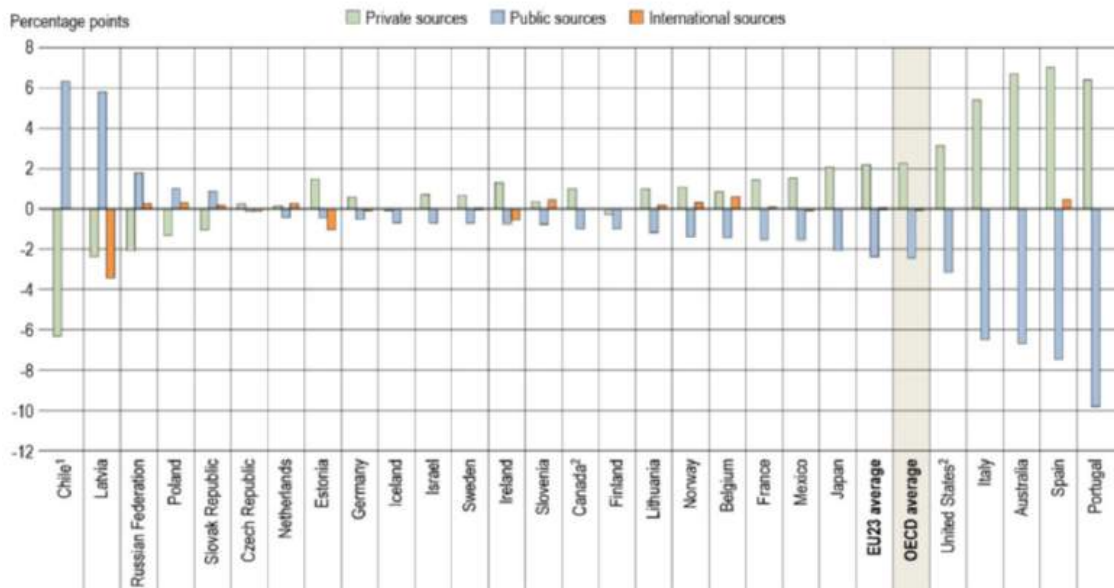
These changes also impact on the **relations of education personnel with their trade unions**. In the last few years, education trade unions have had to face major challenges to adapt to a changing landscape, both in terms of recruiting and organising members in a more fragmented, deregulated and individualised system which undermines traditional forms of solidarities. To an increasing extent, education trade unions' role, power and influence are undercut in a world of work where labour relations are increasingly decentralised and/or fragmented, and social dialogue and collective bargaining coverage is substantially narrowed.



Across Europe, education trade unions have been campaigning and mobilising for many years to challenge these policy shifts, especially through industrial actions, or to secure advantages by pragmatically negotiating to maximise the benefits for teachers. However, the recognition that industrial and professional developments naturally tie in with broader pushes for a marketised and commercialised view of education has been the first step for many education trade unions to **enhance their organisational efforts** at national, regional and local level. By refocusing on the needs of the most marginalised in the education labour market (young or other under-represented groups), and by organising around a broader narrative and ideas on quality public education and against privatisation and marketisation, they have managed to turn the tide of decline in membership, to adapt to a new context, based on collective and democratic values.

**Figure C3.3. Change in relative share of public, private and international expenditure on educational institutions (2010 and 2016)**

Final source of funds, primary to tertiary education



1. Year of reference 2017.

2. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

3. The figures for the United States are for net student loans rather than gross, thereby underestimating public transfers.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage point change in the share of public expenditure on educational institutions.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2019), Table C3.3. See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).



8

**EDUCATION TRADE  
UNIONS IN SOLIDARITY  
FOR STRONG SOCIAL  
DIALOGUE**

While dealing with numerous issues around education and the profession, education trade unions are forced to fend off attacks directed at undermining and dismantling the teaching profession. For example, the [ITUC Global Index 2019](#) reveals that in Europe 40% of countries exclude workers from the right to establish or join a trade union, 68% of countries violated the right to strike and 50% of countries violated collective bargaining rights. Continuous violation of trade union rights and freedoms, neglect of social dialogue and collective bargaining as well as repression of strike and protest actions require further reinforcement of education trade union structures to meet these challenges.

In 2019, education trade unions across Europe launched the 'Shape the Future of Europe with Teachers' campaign to demand, among other things, education trade unions' fundamental rights - the fight for social dialogue and involvement in decision-making. Social dialogue plays a central role in **reinforcing social rights and enhancing sustainable and inclusive growth**.

Social dialogue arrangements are not static. They are the outcome of wider political developments and contexts. In the complex multi-level governance systems in Europe which impact on education policy and the world of work of education personnel, it remains a challenge for education trade unions to capture the dynamics and mutual implications between industrial relations at European level (**European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education**) and at national level. It is equally challenging to understand and keep up to speed with the influence of national social dialogue within member states on education policy issues and the involvement of education trade unions in social dialogue in relation to the **European Semester**. Even in countries where social partners are strongly involved in collective bargaining, a limited involvement in social dialogue with the European institutions relating to the European Semester might point to an existing 'democratic deficit'.

A recent [ETUI publication](#) analyses the **evolution of employment and labour relations in the public sector**, including education, in the last decade across Europe. Education personnel have frequently had to bear the burden of budgetary pressures and of pushes to increase efficiency, not only through **declining job quality**, but also through **stagnating or even declining real salaries**. Wage policies, which were the result of **long-standing collective bargaining traditions** across European countries, were undermined by unilateral legislative acts, by the decentralisation or even the dismantling of bargaining systems. These changes made it even harder for education trade unions to secure large gains through sectoral agreements. Broad trends in the field of social dialogue and collective bargaining have emerged and can be summarised as follows:

- more unilateralism by governments in the first years of the crisis, and the emergence of other actors in industrial relations in the education/public sector;
- widespread increase in industrial action;
- the coming together of trade unions in the public sector and other social actors around the value of quality public services.

Confronted with a number of challenges, well-functioning, inclusive, quality and equitable education systems across Europe need to rely even more on strong, effective social dialogue and collective bargaining mechanisms. **Political commitment** and support for **capacity building** have a key role in achieving this goal.

Capacity building requirements vary from country to country, based on established industrial relations systems and linked **organisational cultures and strengths**. In a recent report, [Eurofound](#) (2019) identifies **structural gaps in industrial relations systems** across Europe that are of utmost importance to address when it comes to capacity building for effective social dialogue. Among these are:

- Weak trade unions and low membership levels within trade unions linked with de-unionisation of the workforce;
- Low or declining collective bargaining coverage;
- A fragmented landscape of actors;
- Social partners' lack of autonomy, representativeness and capacity/mandate to negotiate;
- Lack of trust between the social partners;
- Representation gaps due to new forms of work and changes in the labour force composition.

Efforts are needed for more strategic intervention in supporting national and European-level social dialogue capacity building initiatives for a more effective social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels.



**TRADE UNION  
RENEWAL TO BUILD  
THE ALTERNATIVE:  
MOBILISING THE  
COLLECTIVE POWER  
OF EDUCATION TRADE  
UNIONS**



As the last decade's developments have demonstrated, **effective bargaining cannot be conducted in isolation from efforts to organise and mobilise the membership**. A connection with broader society is essential in advocating for quality public education policies and in addressing inequality, social distress and disaffection towards democratic structures in many European countries.

Recognising the decades of attacks on education trade unions and their membership across Europe, the [ETUCE Resolution Shaping The Future of Europe: The Role of Education Trade Unions](#) (2018) in Athens called on ETUCE and its member organisations to *'give priority to strategic discussions and decisions on organising and development, membership recruitment and retention and leadership training on the main features of trade union renewal with full respect for national differences in legal frameworks, structures and traditions'*. Underpinned by the necessity for union growth, efforts have been strengthened to collectively understand what trade union renewal looks like in different contexts. Education trade unions have joined forces to shape the narrative and to highlight that they do have power to counterbalance the effects of globalisation, deregulation, fragmentation, technological and demographic changes on free, universal, high quality education, and that they are not just victims of such attacks.

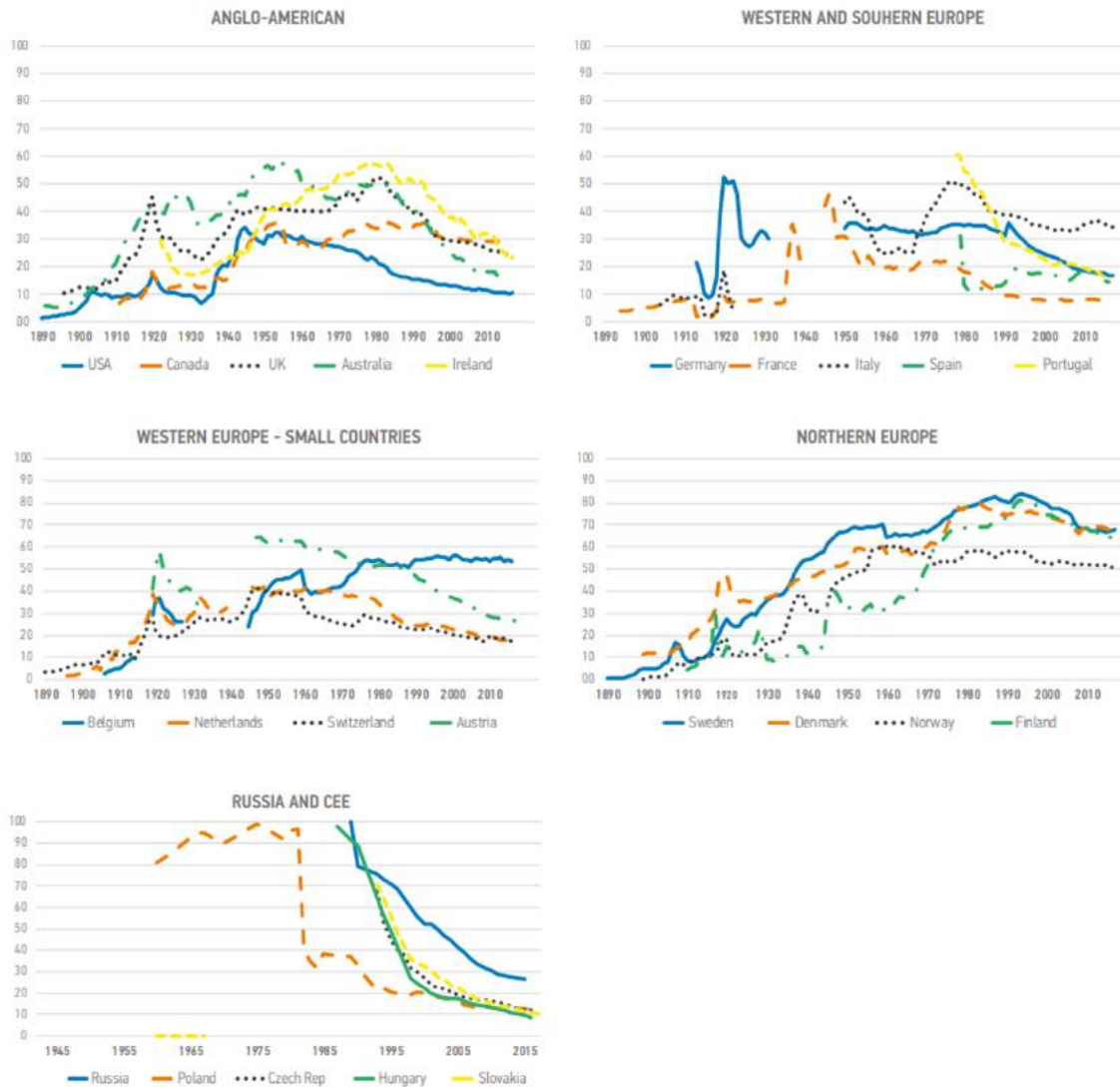
Acknowledging the **deterioration of the environment** in which education trade unions operate, the potential **decline in trade union membership** and in membership **engagement within the unions**, as well as its impact on the union capacity to successfully defend and promote the collective interests and voice of the teaching profession is a pre-condition for any effective assessment and strategy.

On the occasion of its 100th anniversary, the [International Labour Organisation called for](#) reinforced capacity and encouraged the development of strong and representative social partner organisations. It is in this light, and against the background of the challenges for the future of work and for trade unions, that the recent ILO ACTRAV publication [Trade Unions in the Balance](#) (2019) sketches four possible futures:

- **Marginalisation** if the decline in the current trend of decreasing rates of unionisation and ageing unions continues;
- **Dualisation** of unions defending their positions and focusing decreasing resources on defending the members closest to them at the expense of outsiders or precarious workers;
- **Replacement** by other actors who provide for social action and protection such as emerging social movements, NGOs or other agencies;
- **Revitalisation**, based on expanding the current membership and success in organising the most under-represented part of the workforce in union structures.

According to Visser, one of the facts pointing towards further membership decline is the ageing of union membership, observed in nearly all developed countries, as a result of a **lower unionisation rate of younger people** and **demographic changes**. It is important that, in order to maintain current membership levels, trade unions additionally recruit an estimated 3- 4 % of their membership each year.

**Figure 17: Long-term trends in unionization**



J. Visser, Trade Unions in the Balance, ILO ACTRAV Working Paper, 2019

Although the education sector and organised teachers have resisted the membership crisis which hit other industrial sectors harder, by retaining high levels of trade union density, education trade unions' work cannot be seen in isolation from trends in the international trade union movement.

Education trade unions are confronted with questions about how to deal with both internal and external challenges, and with uncertainties over the future of education and the world of work of teachers and other education personnel. They must assess how to identify and tackle threats, how to face problems, how to reorganise resources and to use them in a creative and effective manner. Strategic **trade union renewal** largely depends on the different institutional and political economy settings (e.g. the level of funding of public

education); the different ideas, narratives and assumptions in public education determining the way education institutions are organised and shaping the confidence in the public sector and in unions; as well as the different organisational and workplace cultures in which education trade unions operate. However, understanding how education trade unions **engage with their members and with teachers and other education personnel who are not (yet) organised** has emerged as a common feature underlying any successful strategy to mobilise collective union power, to reverse the negative trends and to stay relevant.

Members' active participation and engagement in trade union activities and elections is a basic principle of **trade union democracy**. When outlining challenges for education trade union renewal, H. Stevenson and N. Bascia, in their study [Organising teaching: developing the power of the profession](#) (2017) identify the need to strengthen the connection with the education workforce ('**build at the base**') as a critical and integral element to union renewal. **Inclusive trade union practices** further deepen trade union democracy. These can take the form of formal and informal activities encouraging more members into active contact and engagement with the union.

As a knowledge-based and mission-driven sector, teachers' and other education personnel's motivation for the development of all students is high. Because of these inner characteristics of the profession, the social base of the education workforce tends naturally towards solidarity and cooperation. However, reforms in the education sector highlighting productivity at the expense of democracy, the decline of institutional support towards trade unions, negative media campaigns and spreading perceptions that trade unions are outmoded, have contributed to a decline in the status of the profession in society, and increasing mistrust for its representative organisations.


In the face of such challenges, originating in a wider societal context, education trade unions across Europe have sought the chance to mobilise their membership, and to attract new members, around a vision of quality public education for all. **Engaging with others and building solidarities** is key for organising around ideas, **reframing the narrative** and challenging stereotypes in society.



# CONCLUSIONS



10



AIMING TO LAY THE FOUNDATION AND FURTHER  
CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEBATE AT THE ETUCE CONFERENCE,  
**CONFERENCE DELEGATES ARE INVITED TO  
REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- 1.** What are the specific challenges that teachers in different sectors face in your country?
- 2.** What strategy does your education trade union take to support members?
- 3.** Do you observe a declining tendency in respecting professional autonomy and academic freedom in your country?
- 4.** How are funding, professional autonomy and academic freedom linked in your country?
- 5.** What impact does the climate emergency have in Europe and on education trade union policies, and what are the key concerns for education trade unions regarding education and the environment for social change?
- 6.** How can education trade unions take an active role in promoting education on environment for social change as social partners in education?
- 7.** Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your organisation's Occupational Health and Safety priorities and strategies, and if yes, how so?



- 8.** Can you think of additional emerging occupational risks due to the increasing use of new technologies in the education sector?
- 9.** Can you think of inspiring trade union and/or social partners' actions to mitigate emerging psychosocial risks at work?
- 10.** Are emerging risks to the well-being of the teaching profession, due to digitalisation in education, acknowledged and are they the object of adequate measures within your national legislation? (e.g. right to disconnect)?
- 11.** How has your organisation addressed the impact of digitalisation on the well-being of teaching personnel in your country?
- 12.** What are the main obstacles in your country for educators accessing adequate and quality training on digital skills?
- 13.** What are the main dangers and pitfalls of the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) identified by your affiliates?
- 14.** How can education trade unions tackle deeply rooted gender stereotypes?



- 15.** How can education trade unions address new challenges for gender equality resulting from new technologies and digitalisation?
- 16.** How can education trade unions encourage school leaders to create inclusive teaching and learning environments for students, teachers and other education personnel with a disability?
- 17.** How can education trade unions combat homophobic and transphobic bullying, harassment and violence against LGBTI students, teachers and other education personnel?
- 18.** How to make better use of research around privatisation and commercialisation with a view to reaching out to society at large and to strengthening solidarity for more public investment in education?
- 19.** How do education trade unions support teachers who are increasingly exposed to the detrimental effects of privatisation and commercialisation pressures in their workplaces and professional rights?
- 20.** What are the main factors that we, as a European trade union movement, can address together to support capacity building for effective social dialogue at all levels?



- 21.** Are there new communication or training strategies that can help trade unions achieve their goals?
- 22.** What are the long-standing elements and the changes which have occurred in your union that have made the union stronger and even more relevant in teachers' life?
- 23.** What are the main challenges/priorities for action to reach, organise and develop the engagement with unions with under-represented teachers and other education personnel in union structures?
- 24.** What are the main challenges/priorities for action to organise teachers and other education personnel in the workplace, in the community and in society?
- 25.** What are the main challenges/priorities for action to organise teachers and other education personnel around industrial and professional issues, and around campaigns and ideas?
- 26.** How can we work together as a European movement to learn from each other and to further build solidarity?



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