

ETUCE Conference 'Education in Europe: Public Investment, Privatisation and Reforms: What role do education trade unions play?'

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On 30 May 2017, ETUCE is hosted a Conference titled: '*Education in Europe: Public Investment, Privatisation and Reforms – What role do education trade unions play?*', in Brussels. The one-day event marks the culmination of the ETUCE-led project '[Investing in Education: Strengthening the involvement of teacher trade unions in the European Semester on Education and Training](#)' that was carried out from 2015 to 2017. With this conference, ETUCE brings together around a hundred participants from ETUCE member organisations from across Europe, social partners, the European Commission, as well as other stakeholders. In line with the commitments and decisions taken by the 2016 ETUCE Conference, the ETUCE Conference aims at sharing effective practices on the active involvement of education trade unions in the European Semester on education and training. This is done with a view to advocate for sufficient, predictable and equitable long-term financing of education and to protect public education systems against the detrimental effects of budgetary and reform policies across Europe.

The event is also the occasion to unveil the outcomes of an important [ETUCE Research](#) "Education and Training Policy in the European Semester. Public Investment, Public Policy, Social Dialogue and Privatisation Patterns across Europe", conducted by the University of Nottingham, aimed at identifying the effects of the European Semester on education reforms at the national level

and privatisation patterns in education across Europe. Presented by the principal investigator, prof Howard Stevenson, it reveals to what extent market and business driven ideology and approaches in education, combined with strict budgetary and financial rules within the EU, are leading to the commodification, privatisation and marketisation in and of education. The research results are feeding in the ETUCE [Complementary Strategy Plan](#) on the [EI Global response](#) to Commercialisation and Privatisation in/of Education. Commenting on the report, ETUCE European Director Susan Flocken said *“the research reveals a mounting degree of internal privatisation in education across Europe. We, the educators, have a responsibility to oppose this trend and to defend the value of education beyond economic interests and market-driven ideology”*.

Organised in four thematic sessions, ranging from 1) the effects of the European Semester and European cooperation on national reforms of education and training systems, 2) the role of education trade unions in policy making, 3) education investment patterns across Europe and 4) the need to develop strong social dialogue to rebalance economic and social priorities, the Conference directly supports the future work of education trade unions at the European and national level in the field of education financing and policy making. It also serves as a knowledge-enhancing tool to prepare the national social dialogue in education in the framework of the European Semester. To maximize national opportunities to influence the Semester on education and training, ETUCE member organisations are also provided with a [Practical Guide](#), as an important project result.

Opening the Conference, Flocken stated that *“this Conference is organised just a few days after the publication of the European Commission’s Country Specific Recommendations, which represent a key-stage in the European Semester. This timely occurrence makes the context particularly appropriate for constructive debates and reflections on the current state of public investment, privatisation patterns and reforms, as well as the strategies for education trade unions to engage in social dialogue on new policies, that is exactly where it needs to take place if the professional voice of teachers is to be inserted in the policy making and to contribute to building the future of new generations”*.

Presentations [H Stevenson pt1](#) - [pt2](#), [A Gavrielatos](#), [P Cammilli](#), [D Obidniak](#), [K Aaltonen](#)

New report by ETUCE: Education and Training Policy in the European Semester – Public Investment, Public Policy, Social Dialogue and Privatisation patterns across Europe

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On 30 May 2017, at the occasion of the [Conference](#) ‘Education in Europe: Public Investment, Privatisation and Reforms: What role do education trade unions play?’, ETUCE released the research report and the practical guide for education trade unions to strengthen their involvement on the European Semester, thus concluding the two years project ‘[Investing in Education: Strengthening the involvement of teacher trade unions in the European Semester on Education and Training](#)’. The report, titled: ‘*Education and Training Policy in the European Semester – Public Investment, Public Policy, Social Dialogue and Privatisation patterns across Europe*’, is the result of a two years research conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, on behalf of ETUCE. Alongside the research report, ETUCE published an on-line [toolkit](#) “Practical Guide for an effective involvement of education trade unions in the European Semester on education and training”, with the aim of supporting ETUCE member organisations in their strategies to influence the various phases of the Semester.

The [research report](#) was commissioned with the aim of providing an evidence-based insight into the impact of the European Semester on education and training policies across Europe, the involvement of education trade unions in policy and reform making and the changing nature of investment in education. The report has explored the link between the European Semester and education policy in EU Member States. The report is based on research conducted between March 2016 and March 2017, and the principal data

sources are: project seminars, interviews, survey conducted to establish the views and experiences of ETUCE member organisations and document analysis.

The report's main findings are the following:

1. Public investment in education: The research report provides evidence that investment in education continue to lag behind. The paradox is that an area of public investment seen as central to driving recovery continues to suffer with the potential to impact on growth and employment.
2. The role of the education-related Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) within the Semester process - The focus on fiscal surveillance and the dominance of economic issues in the Semester process have a significant impact on education-related CSRs, despite the important social dimension embedded in the EU2020 Strategy.
3. The extent of social dialogue in relation to the Semester process - Despite the notable impact of the CSRs for shaping education policy across European countries, the research report reveals a 'democratic deficit' in policy making. There is a disconnect between the importance of education issues in the Semester process, the European Commission's commitment to social dialogue within the process and the actual experience of education unions, who report limited engagement
4. The perception and experience of privatisation in and of education across Europe - Survey respondent reported significant 'internal privatisation' in the statutory sector education, in which private sector and business practices are common, thus revealing widespread forms of hidden and creeping privatisation. Non-statutory aspects of education (Early Childhood Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education and Research) represent a mix of public and private provision. However, Higher Education stands out as that part of education systems most exposed to privatisation pressure.

These findings are to contribute and to support education trade unions across Europe in their struggle for quality education for all based on increased public investment in education, and for professional expertise of teachers to be inserted into the policy and reform making.