



MANIFESTO FOR **THE TEACHING PROFESSION** : HORIZON 2025

EN

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CONTEXT

During the Social Summit of Gothenburg in 2017, the heads of State and government of the Member States committed to creating a European Education Area by the year 2025. In the same year, the CESI presented and obtained co-financing from the European Union for its related project entitled 'Education Professionals and Trade Unions in Europe: Horizon 2025'. The current 'momentum' was to be exploited by education trade unions to raise greater awareness among the governments and educational authorities – both on a European and national level – about the need to improve the reputation of the teaching profession through the process of the European Semester and in line with the spirit of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

By means of the present manifesto, CESI intends to contribute to the discussion relating to the reputation of the teaching profession with a view to creating widespread support within society for education and educational professionals as important agents of social change.

"Although it is widely recognised that teachers play a decisive role in the realisation of the objective of quality education for all, teaching is still not a profession that enjoys a high social standing in the eyes of a majority of the population. Its low prestige frustrates the efforts expended in recruiting and retaining teachers in both rich and poor countries. To remedy the situation, the governments and education partners must take bold steps with a view to improving the quality of basic and on-the-job training of teachers. Teachers must receive high-quality basic training while enjoying effective integration into the profession, and they must have opportunities to perfect their skills during the course of their careers. We must show the public that teaching is a highly valuable profession while guaranteeing teachers decent salaries and improving their working conditions on all levels of the educational system."

(Excerpt from the message on the occasion of World Teachers' Day, 2018)

FOREWORD

Our societies are evolving at an increasing speed. Information and communication technologies are revolutionising our habits and methods of communication and, more broadly, our relations to others and to events, even if sometimes indirectly.

The teaching profession – which includes all education professionals – is concerned about these developments. In fact, it is upon these professionals that a major share of responsibility falls on in these developments, not only for the transmission of crucial knowledge and know-how, but also related to the values which will make the societies of tomorrow harmonious, respectful and prosperous.

Education professionals are responsible for training the upcoming generations, supporting their integration into professional and social life, as well as laying a foundation for their present and future well-being.

With regards to this major responsibility, education professionals must enjoy high-quality working conditions. Alas, their profession, often at the “front line” with regards to the challenges facing our societies, is often poorly acknowledged.

We think that Europe has a particular position to maintain. Although subsidiarity is the rule, the participants in the CESI project on “Education Professionals and Trade Unions in Europe: Horizon 2025” consider that a minimum level of harmonisation has become unavoidable. It is not just a question of working conditions, salaries or academic minima. The values promoted by the European Union must be conveyed and transmitted by duly-recognised professionals.

This is an indispensable condition for the viability of a space for tolerance and freedom, as well as an effective lever against violence, social forfeiture and individualism to the detriment of solidarity.

In this context, the member trade unions of CESI reaffirm the utility of teacher trade unions as competent interlocutors and as the legitimate representatives of education professionals. They also underscore the crucial importance of upgrading the profession, which is sometimes denigrated or ignored.

The present manifesto calls for a re-examination of the place of the teaching profession in our present-day European society with the aim of enhancing its popularity.

(Luc Viehé, Rapporteur of the Working Group of the CESI project “Education Professionals and Trade Unions in Europe: Horizon 2025”.)

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I. The professional status of teachers

Teaching is a task as complex as it is demanding. However, in too many societies, the role of the teacher is hardly appreciated at its true worth. Also, in many countries, convincing high school graduates to become teachers is difficult, and it is even more challenging to get them to remain in the profession later on. The poor reputation of the teaching profession entails a loss of investment and makes the training of qualified professionals more difficult.

While education remains a national competence, the sector is facing cross-border challenges, especially economic and digital ones, as well as others resulting from the increasing diversity of our societies.

As a result, it is remarkable that the situation of teaching professionals within the territory of the European Union is so extremely varied, even disparate:

- There are enormous differences in salaries and living standards. In some countries, teachers form a well-paid category, while in others their professional situation is highly precarious.
- Working conditions in the various Member States of the European Union are difficult to compare, but arguably discrepancies exist as regards:
 - the total numbers of students per class
 - the number of teaching staff compared to the number of students
 - the quality of the premises in which educational activities are conducted
 - physical equipment, particularly in the field of IT
 - working hours
 - the nature of employment contracts
 - the status of the teaching profession also depends upon the level of training of teachers. Yet, once again, the discrepancies in this respect are too great.

An ambitious policy of exchanges prior to entry into the teaching professions as well as after several years in the profession, would be an effective way to boost the quality of working conditions and improve the situation of teachers, thereby raising the overall quality of the educational system.

Apart from the recognition of titles and diplomas, the recognition of professional experience should be granted more value in all Member States.

One of the responsibilities of the European Union should be to encourage the Member States to harmonise policies with regards to teachers. Their recognition of the profession, professional stability and decent living standards are three major areas which the Union should promote to a greater extent.

The practice of an educational profession is only beneficial to society if it is accompanied by acceptable working conditions. The more a teacher practises his or her profession under adequate personal and professional conditions, the more efficient the system becomes, and the more real educational added value is produced.

The member organisations of CESI consider that the European Union should advocate minimum basic conditions for the teaching profession, in cooperation with the Member States.

II. Teacher training

Studies, both national and international, have clearly shown a direct link between the quality of teacher training – both initially and later, over the course of a teacher’s entire career – and the “performance” of the educational system in the country concerned.

Practices are highly diverse, both globally and within the European Union. These differences relate to recruitment and basic training, their methods and contents, and, finally, to continuous training.

Some countries successfully provide young teachers with support over the first few years of their careers, while others, certainly under pressure due to shortages of teachers, content themselves with absolute minimum support.

High-quality basic training must of course ensure a perfect mastery of the academic discipline(s) which the teachers are called upon to teach: It is only upon a solid basis of this knowledge which will enable them to transmit the necessary knowledge and skills.

But this academic mastery can in no case suffice by itself. It must be accompanied by solid training and pedagogy and in the psychology of young people.

Moreover, in view of the increasing impact of information and communication technologies, as well as of social media and networks in our societies, particularly among young people, effective training in new technologies and media would permit teachers to use new tools in their profession, also with a view to strengthening the critical spirit of their students.

Finally, we believe that high-quality teacher support over the first few years of a teacher’s career is essential. The availability of skills of experienced teachers together with their advice and goodwill are indispensable to the beginning of a fruitful career of young teachers.

Basic training could be accompanied by an increased openness to the practices of other Member States of the European Union. To this end, the Union could put in place exchange networks of teacher trainers, inspired by the successful Erasmus+ Programme.

Finally – and this is not a minor matter – the basic training of educational professionals must be open to all. The teaching profession should not be open to privileged social classes only; on the contrary, the profession should represent a stepping stone towards upward social mobility.

III. Autonomy and educational authority

All teachers in Europe are responsible for adapting their teaching methods to the students entrusted to them. Teachers are responsible for making the educational and teaching choices which they consider best suited to the pupils or students for whom they are responsible.

Although teachers are at the core of today’s debate, they still lack sufficient weight in decision-making processes. Educational systems are a target of continual reforms, often without any real consultation and involvement of teachers. This is also a question of ethics: If we are aiming at sustainable democratic societies based on human rights, precisely those most intimately concerned with education should not be excluded from the decision-making process. It is also a question of effectiveness, because reforms only lead to real change if those concerned are involved as well.

A duly-trained educational professional confronted face-to-face with the reality of the students in his or her class is best qualified to make these decisions. But to do so effectively, teachers require quality basic training.

For teachers, autonomy is inseparable from a high-quality follow-up and competent support. Educational autonomy does not mean being left along with professional problems.

It is true that a new operational balance must be found. The European Union could push to establish guidelines in terms of knowledge, know-how and shared values. The Member States would then be responsible for the programmes and means, while the teachers – who are professionals with practical experience – would be responsible for the teaching methods.

It is thus also a question of restoring the institutional character of schools and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, while defending essential values such as human equality and dignity, thanks to clear and distinct regulations to be followed by all school partners. All value-based educational efforts will be futile if the state fails to grant schools the authority required to carry out their mission.

IV. The transmission of knowledge and values

Whereas knowledge is an indispensable means of integrating oneself into professional life and consequently into society, its transmission is central to the teaching profession. All young people, upon leaving school, must be able to make the responsible decisions and formulate the choices which will guide their lives.

The transmission of knowledge in itself is however insufficient. Knowledge cannot be well used if it is not accompanied by competences and social skills in particular. A teacher's professional skills are a function of three elements: knowledge, know-how and social skills.

Today's computer resources are unlimited. Knowledge is widely available on the Internet, and 'MOOCs' (Massive Open Online Courses) are now accessible to almost the entire population.

The digital revolution has the potential to transform methods of learning, while providing countless possibilities for the promotion of democratic values. Nevertheless, while this degree of interconnectivity promotes active participation, it also facilitates the promotion of intolerance, hatred and violence, including the spread of radicalisation.

The acquisition of academic knowledge and the resources required to mobilise one's knowledge for personal self-fulfilment within a group constitutes the professional framework of all participants in the educational system.

Therefore, the mission of teachers also consists of equipping students with the means to adapt that knowledge to their own requirements, the ability to place that knowledge into a hierarchy, integrating it with a constructive and critical mind and with the ability to recognise false or harmful information in particular.

The objective is not just to train future workers, but responsible citizens as well.

V. The European Union and its values

We live in a society which highlights human dignity as the foundation of its culture, as well as the values which are a consequence of that dignity.

The European Union is a champion of values such as solidarity, citizenship, respect for others and, above all, the freedom to think, act and circulate. These are the values which have led to peace and relative prosperity in Europe for, by now, over half a century. The unconditional defence of this must form the basis for all action and reflections.

Who better than education professionals can transmit these values, and, above all, make them come to life in harmony with the realities of each Member State? Who better than young people in training can perpetuate these values in the construction of a fairer European Union with greater solidarity?

That is why although we highlight that the transmission of knowledge is central to the teaching profession, the transmission of shared values is indispensable.

To this end, beyond the teacher's mission, all levels of political decision-making should take on their responsibilities, in cooperation with the other levels and in compliance with subsidiarity.

Within this framework, the European Union could:

- promote values and pillars of knowledge. A true European awareness shared by the majority will certainly emerge from these efforts.
- ensure the consistency – or at least the non-competitiveness – with the national systems. Subsidiarity does not mean disinterest or inaction. The rise of nationalism, radicalism and harmful ideologies which many young people find attractive must be countered.
- reinforce the consistency and recognition of diplomas and professional experience. This is a major precondition for a real European integration.
- further encourage the mobility of people. The Erasmus+ system for teachers and other officials with educational responsibilities could be promoted more effectively. Teachers having participated in vocational training in a foreign country consider that the experience produced a positive impact on their teaching abilities while helping their students learn.

Freedom versus solidarity and independence versus community may appear contradictory. The European Union, in which these values take form on a daily basis, shows that this is not the case: this lesson must be conveyed.

The European spirit, as well as the discovery of different religions and their common values, should have a place in each school system of the European Union, be it through the introduction of specific, in-depth courses that would be identical in all countries or through the (compulsory) integration of these ideas into subjects that already exist in the curricula, such as philosophy, civic education, ethics, etc.

However, not everything can depend on the teachers alone. The latter must have the necessary tools, training and institutional solidarity.

VI. Information and communication tools

Information and communication technologies are becoming increasingly influential in our societies. Of course, this implies far-reaching consequences for our educational systems. What is more, these tools know no borders. On the other hand, if badly mastered, technological progress may lead to growing social injustices.

This situation poses two major questions:

- How can it be avoided that costs of equipment widen the gap between young people and teachers from one country to another within the European Union?
- How can the internet of almost unlimited online resources - the essential part of human knowledge is accessible in the internet, usually without charge - be used in way that makes it possible to distinguish true from false information and useful from harmful information?

A failure to address these questions in a sufficient manner could generate serious consequences for social fabrics, not to mention existing harmful ideologies proliferating and prospering in the internet.

Furthermore, information and communication technologies permit uncontrolled access to databases. As a matter of fact, the digital revolution supplies a very rapid flow of information - perhaps too much so - leading simultaneously to the danger of increasingly violent discourses, also radicalist and extremist in nature.

The greatest challenge facing our educational systems and teaching personnel consists of assisting students in acquiring a critical spirit and discernment which will turn them into lucid and responsible citizens.

Teachers are therefore facing a two-fold challenge:

- Acquisition of the necessary equipment. Circumstances in Europe are once again highly dissimilar. In some Member States, all materials - both collective and personal - are supplied by the public authority, while in others, the teaching staff is required to purchase the required material from own funds.
- The training of teachers and the transmission of the tools permitting the use of digital technologies to their pupils and students in a lucid, constructive manner and with a critical spirit.

A Europe of shared values, concerned with the well-being of its citizens, is responsible for encouraging equal access to these technologies. Europe also has an urgent obligation to ensure that all are able to make use of IT tools as a means of social and human progress.

VII. A code of ethics

The object of a code of ethics is to assure a harmonious and rewarding existence for all. In educational fields, drawing up the code will involve defining professional and human good practices on a European level.

The essence of the European Union is based on compromise. Negotiations and concessions, as a sign of tolerance, are an expression of respect for others and for human dignity, and form part of the functioning of our society. Respect is a value which permits people to recognise, accept, appreciate and highlight the qualities, rights and dignity of others. This is an essential condition of social coexistence.

Respect for what others are and for what they believe is indispensable. It is the central object of a European code of ethics, which the CESI advocates too. Such a code would supply basic principles which could then be adapted and/or tailored by any educational establishment. It could involve the following aspects:

- Respect for others:

- Teachers must respect their students in their condition as future adults. Error should be considered as inherent to those in training and should trigger the implementation of methods and procedures that will allow the young to progress.
- Students must respect the teacher. For this, the teacher must possess the necessary authority and must make use of the available resources to create a relationship of respect. The public authorities must ensure that educators have all the required measures of protection.

- Shared values:

- Teachers are responsible for the transmission and adoption of the values embodied in the European Union. They are aware that, without these values, the European idea, and, as a result, the quality of life in Europe, will be under threat.
- Students must respect these values. They must understand that, without them, social coexistence will not be possible.

- Tolerance:

- Teachers are responsible for conveying the crucial importance of tolerance. Without tolerance, the ideas and opinions of every individual can become a source of confrontation instead of one of constructive complementarity.
- Students must accept differences in culture and faith. They must be sensitive to human differences, whether social, cultural or religious, while respecting the neutrality of the teachers and the school system. It is therefore also important to ensure that students, teachers and training and educational institutions reject ideals that are contrary to European principles.

- The common good:

- Teachers are expected to raise awareness among their pupils and students about the importance of the community. This is in no way a tool of confinement or indoctrination, quite the contrary. The European community, in this case, is a space of freedom, social progress and tolerance. No construction is possible in isolation: the space of freedom which currently prevails in Europe can only be preserved by citizens acting together.
- The students must be attentive to both their personal development and that of the society which surrounds them and supports them. Society has an urgent duty to provide for their education and their integration, while students are, in turn, responsible for contributing to the well-being of the community which has raised them.

VIII. Responsibility and trade union action

As an intermediary body par excellence, the primary mission of trade unions is to represent and defend salaried employees, improving their material and moral circumstances as well as their working conditions.

To this end, trade unions must have the means to act, but they also have responsibilities.

The (economic and social) situation of salaried teachers in Europe is highly disparate.

While teachers in some Member States are generally recognised as respected professionals that enjoy satisfactory living conditions, such situations are not usual: As a rule, it is much more common for teachers to suffer from a poor economic and social status.

A society cannot function and prepare for the future without salaried employees that are satisfied with their living and working conditions. The European Union can and must also promote social and educational policies oriented towards the future and towards the well-being of all citizens.

The teachers' trade unions can and must raise awareness among the public as to the need to invest in teaching personnel. CESI, as a European confederation representing several hundred thousands education professionals all over Europe, is determined to work in this direction. Investments in high-quality education are a social challenge requiring human investment. This means above all investments in teaching personnel.

IX. Conclusion and proposals

Education professionals are aware of their responsibility towards the future of our youth, our societies and the European Union. They are committed to practising their profession with the required skills and in line with professional ethics.

Being aware that educational policies remain the competence of the Member States, they nevertheless speak up for a more important role of education at the EU level. The values symbolised by the European Union are still struggling to be reflected in national policies. If the European idea is to prosper, it must be transmitted. If it is to be transmitted, it must be visible and must meet the expectations of young people. Educators must also be supplied with the means to transmit these European values.

This is why it is essential to us for the European Union to promote ambitious, high-quality educational policies, implemented by properly trained, recognised and paid professionals.

Without disputing the predominating subsidiarity principle in the field of education, the trade unions of CESI wish to contribute to the construction of a European Education Area by placing education professionals at the centre of this space by means of the present manifesto.



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Placing the teaching profession at the centre of the European Education Area 2025 will require striving to reach the following objectives on a European level:

1. Social recognition of the teaching profession;
 2. Professional stability;
 3. Decent remuneration and standard of living;
 4. Basic minimum conditions for professional practice;
 5. Access to professional training and development;
 6. High-quality initial and continued training;
 7. Professional mobility (encouraging and promoting the value of experience and stays in foreign countries);
 8. Recognition of diplomas and professional experience;
 9. Consultation and participation in decision-making procedures.
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