

The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a confederation of more than 40 national and European trade union organisations from over 20 European countries, with a total of more than 5 million individual members. Founded in 1990, CESI advocates improved employment conditions for workers in Europe and a strong social dimension in the EU. Most of CESI's affiliates are employed in the different fields of the local, regional, national and European civil and public services. In the education sector, CESI represents several hundred thousand teaching professionals across Europe, covering all main sub-sectors of the education system. CESI participates in the European sectoral social dialogue 'Education' as complementary social partner.

CESI welcomes the initiative of the European Commission for Recommendations on enabling factors for success in digital education and on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training.

CESI generally supports the considerations, scope and objectives of the initiatives as laid out in the European Commission's roadmaps on the subject matter published on August 1 2022 (Ref. Ares(2022) 5499369 and Ares(2022) 5499420).

Based on its Manifesto for the Teaching Profession¹, CESI stresses that the Recommendations should not miss to focus on the following:

1. In education, teaching in digital technologies should be further expanded – but curricula for students must not be emptied of subjects that help them become responsible citizens of tomorrow, such as history, politics and ethics. In a world where political apathy is in many places substantial and liberal democracies often increasingly threatened, the formation of socially engaged and responsible, cosmopolitan, open-minded citizenry is crucial.
2. In employment, it is vital that employers – enterprises and public service providers alike – further recognise the importance of digital skills provision for the workforce. Digital skills help employees become more productive and allow them to develop professionally, and they allow companies to successfully manage inevitable digital transitions. It is an investment that pays off. As such, training opportunities in digital skills should be further fostered and encouraged by employers, and the provision of digital skills should take place in principle during paid working time.

¹ <https://www.cesi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EN-21x21-BD.pdf>

3. In both education and employment, up-to-date teaching and training in digital technologies requires well-trained teachers. In particular, successful digital education and training necessitates that teachers are constantly trained and upskilled in relevant digital pedagogy and teaching methods. Face-to-face teaching methods which teachers acquired during their initial formation cannot be mapped one-to-one to new digital contexts. Their effective training and further training is a prerequisite for their ability to successfully teach pupils, students, and workers. Teachers must receive high-quality basic digital training and they must have opportunities to perfect their digital skills during the course of their careers.
4. Furthermore, for digital education to function, the provision of digital equipment for students and schools is just as important to close digital gaps as is the provision of digital equipment for teachers, which should not be neglected. Too often, teachers still have to chip in digital equipment for teaching from their private resources.
5. Moreover, generally, employment and working conditions for teaching must improve in many Member States in order to attract, recruit and retain more talented young persons into this occupational field and to counter widespread teacher shortages. This is especially true for the areas of VET, lifelong learning, and the education of adults. Several Member States still see abusive uses of precarious consecutive fixed-term work contracts for teachers that expire every year during the summer vacation time so that no wages and social security coverage needs to be paid during this time. Also, teaching is too often still not a profession that enjoys a high social standing in the eyes of a majority of the population. Its low prestige frustrates the recruiting and retaining teachers in both rich and poor countries. Teaching is a highly valuable profession, and guaranteeing teachers decent salaries and improving their working conditions on all levels of the educational system is of central importance. With regards to this major responsibility, education professionals must enjoy high-quality working conditions. Their work and contribution to society must be adequately valued and recognised.