

Promoting Public Sector Education in an Age of Austerity

Resolution: Fighting the Crisis an Essential Contribution of Higher Education and Research

Submitted for adoption by SNESUP-FSU (France) to the ETUCE Conference, the Regional Conference of Education International, meeting in Budapest on 26-28 November 2012, adopted on 27 November 2012

Consistent with the policy document, A quality education for building the Future, adopted by the 6th EI Congress, in 2011, the ETUCE Conference wishes to convey a message to European Governments and Higher Education authorities on the impact of government and European Union (EU) policies which tend to reduce universities to service providers for private enterprises and short-term interests.

ETUCE considers that:

- I. The expansion of humanity's store of knowledge and its transmission to a new generation is one of humankind's noblest pursuits.
- II. Our Higher Education and Research (HER) systems are an integral part of the heritage of our peoples and of free, democratic and peaceful societies. They are fundamental in building a better future. They have to change to take a full part in modern democratic societies, but must remain based on such core characteristics as cooperation, academic freedom of staff and institutions, and collegial direction.
- III. More HER and the quality, diversity and democratization of knowledge, are necessary to improve democracy in Europe, to develop critical analysis of society, as well as to increase scientific, technologic, economic, social, ecological, cultural and ethical development.
- IV. Problems and emergencies arise at international level, such as the rapid degradation of the environment of humanity or the growing world crisis of hunger. More generally, our societies are facing more and more complex problems. Research and education have a vital contribution, to conceive and implement solutions. But HER is not able to deliver answers and solutions because it is reduced by the current cuts in public expenditure, by the on-going implementation and intrusion in HER institutions of private-sector management models, competition, for-profit motives and the philosophy of the marketplace.

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In particular, ETUCE calls for support for the following demands.

1. Knowledge is a public good

The private ownership approach to knowledge compromises the freedom of research and teaching, threatens the authenticity of knowledge and hinders its development. The public nature of the European HER system must be defended and enhanced. In particular, research results should be published *in open access*, and the copyright must be protected.

Education and public research must be removed from the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) as well as from all inter-regional and bilateral treaties signed by the EU in the fields of trade and investment.

Education is an investment for the whole of society as well as a human right. Higher Education (HE) should be free. When tuition fees exist, governments should reduce them with the ultimate goal of elimination.

HER should be developed throughout Europe. European solidarity and logic of scientific cooperation, and respect for the diversity of national histories and cultures, should be applied, not a logic of competition. Therefore, ETUCE firmly opposes university ranking systems.

2. The crucial social role of Higher education

HE should aim at professional, citizen and human person training. It is a very important contribution to raise the skills of young people and adults, so the number of graduates must increase; this is essential in a complex society with high technological level. So, the quality of HE requires to be bound to research. HE must benefit all social and generational groups. It implies, among other measures, the implementation of more small teaching units and a variety of teaching methods.

3. Autonomy and collegiality

The quality of HER cannot be achieved without full academic autonomy and democratic characteristics, and the basis of these must lie in collegiality and shared responsibility. All staff must enjoy some scope for involvement in decision-making and participation in collegiate life. As a tool for improvement, the evaluation of structures, teaching and research must be non-punitive and collegial.

4. Working conditions

In order to boost the number and the quality of university teaching staff and researchers in Europe, and therefore to develop HER, attractiveness is a fundamental dimension of careers. Permanent employment, transparent, fair and non-discriminatory recruitment methods, the right sort of working environment, efficient facilities, full autonomy in research and in teaching, collegiality, career opportunities and adequate salaries – such are the major factors that make careers in teaching and research attractive. So, all higher education teachers and public institution researchers, whatever their status, should enjoy the same rights and protections (social, legal ...), offered by the collective

Promoting Public Sector Education in an Age of Austerity

negotiation procedures or a national status. All early stage researchers must be recognized as professional researchers and must benefit from these rights and protections.

The precariousness of university teachers and researchers is increasing rapidly. The framework programs of the EU reinforce this trend. The EU and governments must take measures to greatly reduce the precariousness of teachers' and researchers' jobs.

5. Mobility

The civic integration of Europe and its cultural and scientific development need absolutely to incentivize, without making obligatory, international mobility for teaching staff, researchers and students. For this to come about, however, on the one hand, provision must be made for professional and individual forms of guarantee and protection alongside with the mobility of personnel, while on the other hand, public financial means have to be given in order to provide concrete equality of access to mobility for students whatever their social and geographical background.

6. Gender

Women are underrepresented in higher academic and administrative positions, and we call for incentives to boost the proportion of women at all stages of the professional career, especially regarding the assignment of professorships and managerial appointments. To close the gap in treatment between the genders, a whole system of social services is needed, ensuring protection, rights and social services for all workers, men and women alike, with particular focus on parental rights, and, as stated in the European charter for researchers, working conditions must "allow both women and men to combine family and work, children and career". The focus of HER institutions should be on implementing the principle of gender equality.

7. The lack of investment

In the last few years, the European Union and most governments have invested all too little in HER. This situation has been worsened by the austerity measures adopted to limit public deficit. The current massive reduction in investments in basic and humanities and social sciences research is likely to undermine in the long run also the development of applied research. Support for fundamental or basic research and for those disciplines that generate no immediate economic advantage but which develop knowledge or enhance the quality of life for the citizens must be given ample scope. Research must be developed to challenge the present economic needs; this is one important part of the research missions, but not the only one.

The proposed European funding for research, as proposed in the draft *Horizon 2020 - the Framework Program for research and innovation* is seriously deficient: until 2020, only 11.4 billion Euros per year (0.08% of the European GDP) is proposed for research and science. The problems Europe and the world are facing will require substantial development of research, including basic research, and a much more appropriate budget.



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ETUCE will disseminate this resolution in order to stimulate public debate. It will mobilise to pursue its specific demands and it will recommend that its member organisations take action and mobilise, having regard to the full autonomy of each member organisation.