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Boulevard Bischoffsheim, 15  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92  
Fax +32 2 224 06 94  
[secretariat@csee-etuce.org](mailto:secretariat@csee-etuce.org)  
<http://www.csee-etuce.org>

### European Director

Susan FLOCKEN

### Treasurer

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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

**To: Estonian Educational Personnel Union and UNIVERSITAS**

Brussels, 17 May 2021

Ref.: SF/10199

**Subject: In support of a Social Agreement to ensure the development and sustainability of Estonian education**

Dear colleagues,

With this letter, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), representing 127 education trade unions from all levels of education in 51 countries, e.g. more than 11 million education employees across Europe, strongly and fully supports the *Social Agreement to ensure the development and sustainability of Estonian education* signed by Federation of Estonian Student Unions, Estonian Educational Personnel Union, Council of Academic Unions, UNIVERSITAS, Estonian Young Academy of Sciences and Estonian School Students Councils' Union to ensure high quality and accessible education in Estonia.

Ahead of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and throughout, teachers and other education personnel have been continuously showing their extraordinary professionalism and commitment to the profession and students, and have been relentlessly securing education for all, notwithstanding many and unprecedented challenges they have had to address on a daily basis.

Highlighting that indeed it is high time for governments to live up to their responsibilities and promises, together with you we ask the Estonian government to take decisive actions against the chronic underfunding, lack of young professionals, high workload, and unstable research funding in the education sector. Sharing your opinion on proactive long-term strategy with sufficient financial coverage to ensure the salary security of education work in Estonia, we robustly back the positions of the *Social Agreement to ensure the development and sustainability of Estonian education* that are outlined as follows:

- 1 **increasing the state funding of the salary fund of general education teachers as well as the state funding of higher education to at least 1.5% of the GDP** and maintaining the funding at least at the same level in the future. To this end, the 2021 state budget strategy has to contemplate the achievement of the target level within three years by adding equal parts every year.
- 2 **free higher education in Estonian** as a public good that must be ensured general access.

- 3 Increase in state funding must ensure attractive working conditions (incl. job and salary stability) for all education workers, and their duties must fit into the working time set forth by law.
- 4 Recognition of the appreciation and status of the teaching profession in society:
  - **A career system must be developed** which motivates people to become a teacher and continue working in this profession.
  - **The salary of early childhood education teachers** must remain linked to the salary of a schoolteachers and form at least 90% of the latter's minimum salary.
  - It is important to consider vocational teachers equal to general schoolteachers and **increase trust in vocational education** – a vocational school diploma must ensure the opportunity to continue studies in higher education.
- 5 **Student scholarships and grants** must be adjusted to changes in the cost of living.

Recalling the [ETUCE Education Investment Priorities for Recovery and Resilience](#), we emphasise that investing in teachers and other education personnel, whose contribution is essential to the recovery in education and society as a whole, and that supporting the most disadvantaged and hardest hit by the pandemic should be prioritised. They should not come out of the crisis carrying a greater burden of injustice than they bore during or before.

Quality education systems require and deserve the sustainable public investment!

In solidarity,



Susan Flocken  
European Director