



EFEE-ETUCE JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON Promoting Quality of Academic Teaching and Management Project (2021-2022)

BACKGROUND

The European Sectoral Social Partners in Education, EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) and ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education) are strongly committed to improving the attractiveness and image of the higher education sector as well as sustain high-quality education. The twin green and digital transition of the economy and of society, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic have had a great impact on all higher education institutions, teachers, and researchers. Thus, it has never been more important to ensure access to quality and inclusive education for people from all backgrounds. The [Rome Communiqué](#) (2020) outlines how academics “require stable employment and career opportunities, parity of esteem for teaching and research, attractive working conditions, access to up-to-date staff development, and recognition of their achievements”. It also outlines the commitments of the countries involved in the Bologna Process of “upholding institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education”. These aspects have a large impact on the attractiveness and quality of academic teaching and management, and are essential for the recruitment and retention of staff.

The “Promoting Quality of Academic Teaching and Management” project aimed to focus on the implementation of the Rome Communiqué Annex III entitled [Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA](#). This document underlines that higher education institutions should be supported in “creating a sustainable and supportive environment at institutional and national levels for the transformation, especially digital, of quality teaching and learning. Such an environment should be created in collaboration with staff responsible for teaching, and include a framework with decent working conditions and a manageable teaching workload as well as attractive tenure opportunities”.

The education social partners play an active role in transforming higher education institutions in supportive working environments for all education personnel and learners of all ages, while contributing to the improvement of quality and inclusiveness of learning and teaching in higher education. ETUCE and EFEE wish to move forward in their commitment to jointly implement their 2018 Declaration [Towards a Framework of Action on the attractiveness of the teaching profession](#). Specifically in light of the [ESSDE Work Programme 2020-2021](#), EFEE and ETUCE aimed to continue this work and help achieve its overall goal through the Quality of Academic Teaching and Management Project (2021-2022). Furthermore, the project contributed to the implementation of recent key



European priorities which underline the role of the social partners in designing, governing and implementing higher education reforms. These European policies are, among others, the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017), the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan \(2021\)](#), The European Commission communication [“A strong social Europe for just transitions” \(COM\(2020\)14\)](#), [the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#), and the [Rome Ministerial Communiqué \(2020\)](#).

The project’s scope consisted of two Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) and a final conference which provided opportunities for the project partners to exchange best practices, experiences, and challenges on this topic. The PLAs were organised in a hybrid format in Portugal, and online with a special focus on the Netherlands. They illustrated the key role of social partners in education and social dialogue in higher education systems and in any discussion where applicable decisions are being made. Social dialogue is necessary to expand the social partners’ bargaining agenda and finding consensus in decision-making on issues including quality teaching and learning, which is also based on the grounds of decent working conditions and the stable employment of academics. The project discussions further addressed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on effective social dialogue and collegial governance, as well as the working environment of academics and the quality of management in the higher education sector, which are all essential in supporting quality teaching and learning. The following joint recommendations are a direct reflection of the lessons learned through these project activities. A more detailed description of the project outcomes, including practical examples that underline the joint recommendations, can be found in the final project report.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As social partners in higher education representing both education employers and education workers, EFEE and ETUCE are committed to:

1. Call on their members and policymakers to safeguard **institutional autonomy and academic freedom** in higher education systems and institutions as fundamental values of the EU and of the Bologna Process.
2. Ensure **supportive work environments and decent working conditions** for academics and higher education staff within higher education institutions.
3. Advocate **good learning environments** for the students to improve the quality and inclusiveness of higher education, handle the twin digital and green transition, and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.
4. Promote effective and meaningful **social dialogue** with the social partners in the higher education sector and ensure the involvement of social partners in broadening the social dialogue agenda. Ensure that social dialogue takes place at all levels where decisions regarding teaching and learning are being made.
5. Ensure that **social dialogue** creates the best conditions for quality teaching, learning and research, such as decent working conditions, salaries, stable employment and the fair and transparent recruitment¹ of academics.
6. Ensure effective **collegial governance** and contribute to the implementation of the UNESCO 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel² to guarantee the staff's involvement in decision making in academic bodies within higher education institutions to improve academic excellence and quality. Based on the UNESCO Recommendation, "Collegial decision-making should encompass decisions regarding the administration and determination of policies of higher education, curricula, research, extension work, the allocation of resources and other related activities. [...] The intellectual property of higher-education teaching personnel should benefit from appropriate legal protection, and in particular the protection afforded by national and international copyright law."³
7. Promote the principles of **democratic governance** with the involvement of all social partners, student representatives and relevant stakeholders in internal decision-making

¹ European Commission [Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers](#), 2005

² See [UNESCO 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#)

³ See [UNESCO 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#)



structures and practices. Participatory engagement in decision-making should encompass a range of issues including those on funding and investment.

8. Call on policymakers to guarantee consistent and sustainable public **investment** to support high quality research-informed teaching in higher education.

9. Ensure meaningful involvement of the education social partners in decisions on **quality assurance schemes and accreditation systems** in higher education involve the while in particular ensuring that systems are based on sustainable workloads and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

10. Promote and support the fair **mobility** of academics to support the professional development of staff and therefore high-quality teaching and learning. This must always be based on secure transferability of salaries, pensions, and social benefits while protecting permanent employment status.

11. Advocate for **diversity and inclusion** for all staff relating to career development for all academics, for example tackling gender inequalities in accessing the same career opportunities.

12. Promote models of **career development and progression** that recognize the equal contribution of teaching and research. Such models require secure contractual arrangements that must be developed with the full participation of education social partners. The criteria for development of progression should reflect all aspects of academic work and ensure equitable non-discriminatory career pathways.

13. Support the access of academics to quality, properly resourced, and inclusive continuous **professional development programmes**. Professional development is essential to promote quality research and teaching including in developing areas such as digitalization, and therefore needs to be included in necessary reforms co-designed with the social partners. Such programmes should be developed within sustainable workloads and co-designed with social partners.