Joint ETUCE/EFEE Statement on

Opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for the education sector

In the last decades, digital technologies, the use of ICT tools and Artificial Intelligence have brought a significant and rapid change to the education sector. While the use of digital technologies requires a complex set of skills for students, teachers, school leaders and other education personnel to make conscious and critical use of these tools, the increasing use of digital technologies in pedagogical practices is accompanied by potentials, and challenges that need to be adequately addressed by the education community.

In this context, the European Social Partners in Education, the ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education) and EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers), have worked jointly on the social dialogue project *"e-Speed – European Social Partners in Education Embracing Digitalisation: Challenges and opportunities for European education trade unions and employer organisations in the digital era"*. The project was carried out in 2019-2021 in light of the joint work programme of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE), taking into account the joint work conducted in the course of the ESSDE meetings.

Moving on the ETUCE-EFEE joint declaration 'Towards a Framework of Action on the attractiveness of the teaching profession'(2018) which shed light on the potentials and challenges of the digital era for the attractiveness of the teaching profession, the 'e-Speed' project seeks to enable a ETUCE-EFEE reflection on how to ensure a proper application of digitalisation in education with the aim to foster quality and inclusive education in the digital era. Building on the 'ETUCE-EFEE Statement on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on sustainable education systems at times of crisis and beyond'(2020), the project further draws lessons from the experience of emergency remote and online learning and teaching as well as education management during the COVID-19 pandemic to support a fair and inclusive long-term approach to digital education and a sustainable digital transition, in particular in the context of the Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

ETUCE and EFEE recognise the vital need to assume a meaningful role as social partners in education in addressing the challenges and opportunities stemming from the use of digital technologies in the education sector to ensure the optimal use of digital tools in education with a view a to:

- Improve equal access to high-quality and inclusive education to all and increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession.
- Improving social inclusion and foster well-being of students, teachers, academics, other education personnel and school leaders in education.

- Enhancing the relevance of sectoral social dialogue and collective bargaining on digital education.
- Ensure regular consultation processes with education social partners for the development of policies on digital education at local, regional, national and European level.
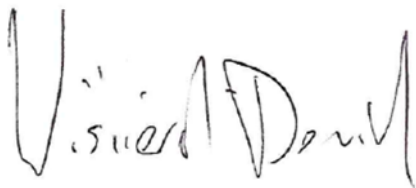
Therefore, ETUCE and EFEE, the European Sectoral Social Partners in Education, and their member organisations commit to:

1. Raise awareness on the **potentials and challenges of digital education** as a supportive tool for students, teachers, school leaders, other education personnel and education employers to foster quality, inclusive and innovative pedagogical methods, in the full respect of the social and pedagogical **value of face-to-face teaching and learning**.

2. Support a **need-based approach** to digitalisation in education to ensure that digital tools for education are developed and used in the best way to respond to the **specific needs** of students, teachers, school leaders, academics, other education personnel and education institutions, while respecting the **professional autonomy** and **academic freedom** of teaching professionals.

3. Advocate for **increased and equally accessible public investment** to provide inclusive and environmentally sustainable **digital infrastructure** and digital tools as well as high-quality and accessible **initial and continuous professional development** on **pedagogical methods** for digital education for teachers, education personnel and school leaders.

4. Lobby for improving **concrete social dialogue and collective bargaining with education social partners at European**, national, regional, and local levels regarding the formulation of policy recommendations on digital education.

5. Continue to promote **equal access to digital tools,** enhanced **digital literacy and digital awareness -** with particular attention to counter the increased challenges faced by socio-economically disadvantaged groups and rural areas - to ensure that students, teachers, academics, other education personnel and school leaders make a **conscious and informed use of digital tools in education**.

6. Raise awareness and call on the EU institutions and Member States to address the increasing and deregulated involvement of private actors, such as the **EdTech companies,** in the provision of digital education platforms and content in order to preserve the public value of high-quality education for all and address the challenges related to **data privacy** as well as **intellectual property rights** of educational material vis-à-vis the importance of promoting of increasing **open science**.

7. Support education institutions, school leaders, teachers and other education personnel in addressing the **health and safety issues** stemming from digital education (e.g. work-related stress, screen fatigue, cyber harassment, social exclusion, data privacy, increasing workload, internet addiction, and right to disconnect) and enhance social partner cooperation to embed

the digitalisation dimension in the assessment tools (e.g. OiRA), while promoting a continuous monitoring of their efficacy.

8. Continue to identify and address the **challenges and opportunities of digital education** at all level of education and **exchange information, share good practices** on the use of digital education among education social partners at European national, regional and local levels.

9. Explore the possibility for **further joint work** of European Sectoral Social Partners in Education as regards new emerging developments of digitalisation in education.

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