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## ETUCE position on enhancing the mobility of teachers and trainers

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### Background

On 4-5 April 2022, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council approved the "[Council conclusions on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility, in particular European mobility, during their initial and in-service education and training](#)". These were written in the context of the [Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future](#), which invite Member States to motivate education and training institutions to embed teachers' and trainers' mobility in their learning, development and internationalisation strategies.

The Council Conclusion as adopted by the national education ministers calls on the Member States and the European Commission to take specific actions to integrate mobility in teacher and trainer initial education and continuous professional development.

For the purposes of these conclusions, 'mobility' corresponds to the concept of 'learning mobility' as defined by the EU Regulation on Erasmus Programme<sup>1</sup>. This includes physical mobility in order to undertake study, training or non-formal or informal learning, while also acknowledging virtual learning.

The following position paper represents the views of ETUCE – which represents 125 education trade unions within 51 countries – on the Council Conclusion on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility, in particular European mobility, during their initial and in-service education and training.

1. ETUCE welcomes that the Council of the European Union wishes to enhance teachers' and trainers' mobility during their initial education and continuous professional development. Furthermore, we support the **positive benefits of mobility** outlined in this paper, including that it contributes to the personal and academic development of teachers and trainers, and at the same time fostering their self-confidence. Mobility also helps teachers and trainers develop the capacity to influence and improve practices in their own education and training institutions, as well as in

<sup>1</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1288/2013](#)

their wider national education and training systems. This is a key element in building trust, enhancing cooperation and promoting mutual understanding amongst Member States in relation to each other's education and training systems. Additionally, it helps create a sense of belonging to the European teacher community. Therefore, ETUCE requests that Member States, upon implementation of the Council Conclusion, integrate mobility across the teacher education continuum including initial education and continuous professional development and learning.

2. ETUCE regrets that the Conclusion does not provide any recommendations or indications to Member States to ensure **democratic governance on policy developments**, and guarantee that there is **effective social dialogue** with trade unions on increasing mobility during continuous professional development. The implementation of the Council Conclusion should be done with the effective involvement of the education trade unions. Mobility of teachers for continuous professional development should be included in **collective agreements**.
3. ETUCE agrees and acknowledges the **obstacles to the mobility of teachers and trainers** laid out in the Council Conclusion, including the shortage of integrated mobility periods in curricula, the overregulation of the teaching profession, different school year structures across Member States, the lack of language competencies, family responsibilities of the teachers, and difficulties in arranging adequate substitute teachers and trainers. However regrettably, **financial means** were not listed in the Council conclusions as barriers to mobility despite the insufficiency of Erasmus grants being cited as the main obstacle to participating on Erasmus exchange programmes in 2016, as outlined in the [Joint ETUC=ETUCE Reflection to the Proposal on the Erasmus programme 2021-27](#). Therefore, we demand that the **funding available reflect the real costs of participating in Erasmus mobility for teachers and trainers**. Furthermore, we request that the **transferability of salaries and other benefits, including pensions, for teachers** taking part in international mobility through their continuous professional development be addressed with the involvement of the education trade unions in the decision.
4. ETUCE welcomes that the Council conclusions respect the subsidiarity principle and that education systems need to be respected. However, we regret **the flexibility** offered to Member States regarding these topics. We also regret that the recommendations are not obliging Member States to address in full the existing barriers to mobility. The document is significantly weakened by the continuous use of the term "where appropriate" when requesting the alterations or improvements to existing structures in order to enhance mobility for teachers. Nevertheless, ETUCE hopes that despite this Member States will effectively implement the points outlined throughout the Conclusion along with the further suggestions outlined in this paper. In order to ensure teachers and trainers benefit more from this mobility period we ask the European Commission to include ETUCE in developing a **policy framework** at European level for increasing the number and quality of learning mobility opportunities for both prospective and practising teachers and trainers in Europe based on their actual mobility needs. Such a framework could address the obstacles to mobility, give Member States support to promote mobility and a European dimension of teaching within initial and in-service teacher education and training, further develop learning mobility opportunities, and provide

information about funding and mobility opportunities. ETUCE also asks to be involved in the creation of a European guidance for the development of **national career frameworks** and lifelong guidance, thus supporting the career progression of teachers and trainers.

5. ETUCE also supports the Council's encouragement of the Member States to facilitate the **formal recognition** of the outcomes of mobility periods, particularly of teaching and training periods abroad, in initial teacher and trainer education, for continuous professional development or for career progression. However, we urge Member States to ensure that future and established **teachers are made aware of the mobility opportunities** that are available and be encouraged to participate in mobility during their initial and in-service education and training. We request that throughout the implementation of the Conclusion, Member States should ensure that free and high-quality **career guidance is** available for teachers wishing to access information on possible mobility opportunities. This would greatly increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession. It should be supported by the Commission and Member States by addressing the challenges in finding appropriate substitute teachers in order to make mobility more feasible.
6. Furthermore, while ETUCE supports the specific recognition and regard for **institutional autonomy** when defining specific periods in the curricula for teachers to participate in mobility, we regret that the professional autonomy of teachers has not been taken into consideration. Teachers should be trusted and provided with the **professional autonomy** to know their own personal and professional needs and to choose their own mobility periods accordingly. Furthermore, we request that teachers be entrusted to select how to implement new pedagogies acquired during mobility into their class structures.
7. Education and national requirements on teacher qualifications are national competencies, and the mobility of teachers should respect the [Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications \(2005/36\)](#). We fully support the automatic mutual recognition of the teaching profession when there are bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries that have been developed with the involvement of trade unions, on which there are several examples in Europe. Ensuring **automatic mutual recognition of qualifications of the teaching profession at European level** need to be in line with this Directive.