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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

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### Statement

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## Post-2015 Development Framework and the future of the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have rallied the globe around a shared vision to achieve a better future in 2015, fifteen years after their formulation. A formidable array of initiatives sprang up to support this vision, and their due date is soon approaching. Although Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations secretary-general, stated in the 2012 Millennium Development Report<sup>1</sup> that halving extreme poverty was reached five years ahead of schedule – alongside the proportion of people who lack access to improved sources of drinking water – the most recent European Development Report<sup>2</sup> highlighted that close to one billion people remain undernourished, 0.9 billion lack access to safe water and 1.5 billion have no source of electricity. Much remains to be done.

Food, water and energy scarcity in many parts of the globe – and the unrelenting momentum of the financial and economic crisis – have set back development assistance commitments as well as public spending on an area with the power to change the world: education. “No country has ever climbed the human development ladder without steady investment in education,” states the MDG progress report coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)<sup>3</sup>. And yet, faced with pressure from the financial markets, and a steady stream of private interests, governments have hedged the future of their nations and cut from the pie reserved for the children of today, and of tomorrow.

The ETUCE, therefore, calls on all the stakeholders in global and regional development processes to recognize that neither the Millennium Development Goals, nor any subsequent framework, can ever be achieved without an expanded investment in education and redoubled efforts to provide equal access to high quality free public education.

The European Commission in its “Agenda for Change” Communication<sup>4</sup> stated that development objectives are intertwined and “it is critical for societies to offer a future to young people.” It is now time to take these conclusions to the next level and to lay out a comprehensive post-2015 development framework with education as its core priority.

Education plays a “key role in nation building,” according to the Commonwealth Teachers’ Group statement of 30 August 2012<sup>5</sup>. It demands a post-2015 framework

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The\\_MDG\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The_MDG_Report_2012.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://erd-report.eu/erd/report\\_2011/documents/erd\\_report%202011\\_en\\_lowdef.pdf](http://erd-report.eu/erd/report_2011/documents/erd_report%202011_en_lowdef.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2010\\_UNECE-Report\\_MDGs-in-Europe-and-Central-Asia.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2010_UNECE-Report_MDGs-in-Europe-and-Central-Asia.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/documents/agenda\\_for\\_change\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/documents/agenda_for_change_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Final%20Statement%20from%20the%20Teachers%20Forum-30%20August%202012.pdf>

which recognizes “human rights and the right to education” as its explicit foundation, echoing Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>6</sup> (Declaration). Regional tensions and armed conflict call for a deeper recognition of this provision, more than ever before. The ETUCE calls on the European Commission and on all the stakeholders in the post-2015 policy process to reflect on this article of the Declaration and to structure their framework proposals around it.

Quality education has always delivered on its promise. The purpose and scope of the post-2015 framework, if structured properly, should come to nothing less than the materialisation of Article 26 (2) of the Declaration. Indeed, quality education has the power to bring about “the full development of the human personality and ... the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” as well as promoting “understanding, tolerance and friendship among national, racial or religious groups.” Its promise is assured, and its delivery dependant only on the stakeholders’ courage to act.

Private interests in this process, however, must be reined in and diverted to its proper end: to serve the public good. The ETUCE strongly urges the European Commission to remind its partners in the post-2015 process that governments should never succumb to the lure of expanding their room for fiscal manoeuvre by shedding responsibility for education provision. Privatization and commercialisation of education services must be resisted, if the world is to succeed in addressing widening social disparities, “marginalisation in education” or “institutionalized discrimination,” and building “inclusive education systems,” as called for by UNECE. Private actors should be encouraged to contribute to the “provision of international aid to education” through efficient mechanisms for financing development. Therefore, the future development framework must create instruments to avoid private gain in education provision.

There is, however, a major hurdle to overcome. According to UNECE, in order to reach universal primary education in Emerging Europe and Central Asia alone, “additional primary school teachers will have to be recruited in about half of the 15 countries with data.” Globally, UNESCO’s 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report<sup>7</sup> estimates that “another 1.9 million teachers will be needed by 2015.” This, certainly, cannot be done without an immediate expansion in education budgets and an investment in teachers. The ETUCE reminds the European Commission, and every stakeholder in formulating the post-2015 policy framework, to bear in mind Article 98 of the Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration<sup>8</sup> of 6 September 2001, adopted by the UN General Assembly, which chose the path of “urging national Governments, local communities and the international community to commit significant resources towards education such as school buildings, books and teachers.”

Further, the 6th World Congress of Education International (EI) Policy Paper on Education<sup>9</sup> promoted education as a human right and a public good and called for “public investment in education of at least 6% of GDP.” This figure must be vigorously defended alongside the often cited 0.7% of GNI, the 2015 development assistance target under Article 5 (23) of the European Consensus on Development<sup>10</sup> of 2006. Global education targets can never be met without training new teachers and spending more on education. For this reason, the ETUCE urges EU Member States to become beacons for the rest of the world and to adopt pro-active education budgets, not life support. The ETUCE also calls on the European Commission – as its social partner – to “contribute to the development of quality education,” under Article 165 of the Treaty on

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/2007/hrphotos/declaration%20\\_eng.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/2007/hrphotos/declaration%20_eng.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2011-conflict/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan004152.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Education\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_AS\\_ADOPTED\\_BY\\_CONGRESS\\_E.doc](http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Education_Policy_Paper_AS_ADOPTED_BY_CONGRESS_E.doc)

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european\\_consensus\\_2005\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european_consensus_2005_en.pdf)

the Functioning of the European Union, by encouraging Member States to put their nations' future on a sustainable path and to invest in education.

Education cannot be narrowed down to serve the changing demands in the labour market, and neither should education policies aim to sculpt labour only for particular industries. UNECE agrees that the major recommendation to accelerate progress towards achieving MDG and the EFA goals is to address education through a "holistic approach and a lifelong perspective."

The road ahead requires access to education for all, boys and girls alike, with proper conditions not only to access school but also to finish it. European governments should be encouraged to create mechanisms to control student drop-out rates and to act not only as donors, but also as those for whom the post-2015 MDG framework is valid to the same extent as to others around the world.

In its public consultation<sup>11</sup>, the European Commission signalled openness to a "new approach to development." It is now time to take stock of the fifteen-year development project and to realize that there was never a time in history which needed teachers more than today. For this reason, the new post-2015 development framework should be structured around education. The children's future deserves to be heard. Now.

*The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 135 Teacher Unions and 12.8 million teachers in all countries of Europe, 5.5 million teachers in the EU, from all levels of the education sector. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of teacher unions.*

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<sup>11</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/public-consultations/towards\\_post-2015-development-framework\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/public-consultations/towards_post-2015-development-framework_en.htm)