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Branimir STRUKELJ



5, Bd du Roi Albert II, 9th
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92
Fax +32 2 224 06 94
secretariat@csee-etuice.org
<http://www.csee-etuice.org>

European Director

Martin RØMER

Treasurer

Mike JENNINGS

ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

Statement

on the European Commission's Communication on Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan

Adopted by the ETUCE Bureau on 25 April, 2013

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)* welcomes that the European Commission intends to solve the very serious issue of increasing unemployment resulting from the current economic recession across the EU. Youth unemployment is creating a lost generation across many countries in Europe and this is not only an immediate catastrophe but the ramifications will be with us for many years. However, we have the following views on the European Commission's Communication on Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan:

1. ETUCE disagrees with the very narrow perception of entrepreneurship conceived as a business development model as outlined in the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. It suggests that from 2015 on we will no longer be talking about schools but about education institutions that promote a business environment to generate growth and competitiveness. Education and training will, as envisaged by the Action Plan, from this time on, be in service of the economy. Through this Action Plan the whole process of education becomes an entrepreneurial development process solely aimed to generate economic growth. ETUCE believes that the definition of "entrepreneurship education" must extend far beyond the business model.
2. ETUCE regrets that the Action Plan fails to draw upon the valuable work done over many years by the *Open Method of Coordination thematic working Group on Entrepreneurship education* of DG EAC on developing a far wider approach to entrepreneurship awareness, education, skills and development. The work continuing within the current group capitalises on the far wider definition of entrepreneurship education.
3. ETUCE disagrees with the definition of entrepreneurship education outlined in the Action Plan. We think that entrepreneurship education should prepare the students to obtain democratic skills and educate people for life promoting initiative, taking responsibility and analysing situations. We believe that developing skills and competences like creativity, initiative, tenacity, and teamwork are essential for all students and not only for future entrepreneurs to develop businesses. These skills are essential to equip a generation that will work effectively in all sectors and fuel the whole infrastructure for a successful European economy. Entrepreneurship education cannot be considered as competitiveness training, for example as the case of school competitions.
4. Sustainability lies in creating a sound infrastructure where encouragement, support and inspiration is given through education to inspire creativity,

encourage problem solving, develop teamwork and capitalise on the huge potential that already exists but seems to be currently ignored. We believe that the Entrepreneurship Action Plan does not contribute to a way forward to achieve these goals.

5. We believe that investing in general education and maintaining this investment in the course of the financial and economic crisis is just as significant as investing in entrepreneurial education. In order to be effective, the culture in education needs to support learning that capitalises on pupils and students being supported, guided and mentored rather than just “taught”. The cultural change should be fuelled by an investment in education and teachers, something that does not get a clear mention in the EC Action Plan. We welcome that the European Commission proposes to utilise Structural Funds to provide resources for entrepreneurial education for students and adult learners.
6. Furthermore, while the European Commission proposes new initiatives on education and training that the teachers should implement, it should also recommend to the Member States to provide appropriate working conditions for the teachers and sustainable investment in education to accomplish these tasks. We ask the European Commission to recommend to the Member States that they should ensure appropriate investment and funding for the continuous professional development for teachers, for new materials and for the additional working hours of the teachers to be trained “*on effective entrepreneurial learning methodologies into the classroom for the teachers*”.
7. If the Commission recognises that Europe “needs a through, far-reaching cultural change”, it should also recognise that to introduce effective entrepreneurial learning methodologies in the classroom, a change in the common teaching training must be introduced and the state members should be advised to make provision specifically for teacher development in this area. Such cultural change extends across all stakeholders - teachers, principals, parents, communities and all need to be supported.
8. ETUCE regrets that the European Commission has a too narrow focus on solely entrepreneurial education and training concerning the role of the higher education institutions. We do not agree with just increasing partnerships with businesses and that education should only serve the need of businesses. We strongly disagree with the proposal of a so-called “framework for entrepreneurial universities”, which was developed by the European Commission and OECD because it may contribute only to make higher education and research a commodity. ETUCE reminds the European Commission that education is not a commodity and the role of education is not to fulfil continuously the changing economic and labour market objectives.
9. We are against obtaining entrepreneurial skills through volunteering, which may contribute to the exploitation of the students and apprentices in enterprises, as this form of education does not require training and working contracts from the

companies. Also, quality teaching and training is not ensured in this framework for the students.

- 10.** ETUCE regrets that there was a complete lack of consultation with social partners in education on the text of the Communication. We would like to remind the European Commission that ETUCE is a European level social partner in education, with whom consultations on the decisions on European level education policy initiatives should be always taken place. We also regret that the Communication does not provide an important role to the social partners in the realisation of the objectives in the Communication.
- 11.** The proposal further weakens the working conditions in the context of regulatory burdens with so-called simplified employment legislation and flexible working arrangements, including short-time working arrangements. We believe that there should be a serious focus on sustainable job and growth creation in the course of the economic and financial crisis.

**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.*