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EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA INTERIM EVALUATION

CONTRIBUTION TO A PUBLIC CONSULTATION
BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a confederation of more than 40 national and European trade union organisations from over 20 European countries, with a total of more than 6 million individual members. Founded in 1990, CESI advocates improved employment conditions for workers in Europe and a strong social dimension in the EU. Most of CESI's affiliates are employed in the different fields of the local, regional, national and European civil and public services. In the education sector, CESI represents several hundred thousand teaching professionals across Europe, covering all main sub-sectors of the education system. CESI participates in the European sectoral social dialogue 'Education' as complementary social partner.

CESI recognises the crucial role that education and training play when it comes to shape future citizens and the future of Europe at large.

As a European trade union umbrella organization, CESI has been following the development of the European Education Area (EEA) since its launch, mainly focusing on the **role and the initiatives dedicated to teachers and education professionals** within this concept of European cooperation. CESI welcomes the achievement and further development of the EEA as an overarching objective of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training by 2030.

All initiatives aimed at supporting teachers, trainers and school leaders so far (most notably the Digital Education Action Plan, the European Digital Education Hub, the SELFIE Tools for teachers, eTwinning on the European School Education Platform) have been demonstrating the EU's commitment to support educators through continuous professional development, digital competency enhancement and collaborative platforms.

CESI is concerned about a 'crisis of vocation' in the teaching profession which causes **worrisome teachers' shortages across Europe**. The education sector has long faced issues of understaffing, which has been exacerbated by the recent crises, leading to work overload, burnout and a decline in the teaching capacities in schools.

As part of the interim evaluation of the EEA, CESI therefore voices the concerns of its education professionals affiliates that it represents across Europe, to put the needs and roles of teachers and educators even more in the centre of the EEA's future objectives and initiatives.

As stated in CESI's '[Manifesto for the Teaching Profession in the Era of Digital Education](#)' and '[Manifesto for the Teaching Profession: Horizon 2025](#)', education professionals are at the heart of the education system, and their preparation and motivation are critical to its success. Yet, the teaching profession often suffers

from a lack of recognition and support, although education is one of the main channels to also communicate on the role of the European Union and its values.

This is why CESI, supported by its member trade-unions active in the education sector, is recommending, for the further development of the EEA beyond 2025, to encourage governments and national education systems to continue joint cooperation at European level and further commitments to:

1. **Empower teachers** by ensuring that teachers have a say in decision-making processes that affect their work, promoting a bottom-up approach to educational reforms.
2. **Enhance the social recognition of teachers** by promoting the key role of teachers in society and fostering better working conditions by addressing fundamental issues in the areas of (often inadequate) wages and (usually excessive) workload.
3. **Support autonomy and professional development with training** by providing high-quality initial and continuous training to all education professionals, including in green and sustainable education as well as in digital technologies. These training programmes should be easily accessible and relevant to the needs of educators.
4. **Establish a reference framework for the digital literacy of teachers** by ensuring consistency across the EU, making sure that that teachers receive ongoing training in digital skills to keep pace with technological advancements and integrate them effectively into their teaching.
5. **Foster professional stability** by moving towards stable and secure employment conditions for teachers to retain the workforce, and by thus avoiding precarious working arrangements.
6. **Ensure the recognition of professional experience** by encouraging reward systems that acknowledge the contributions and achievements of educators at national level, but also promote the recognition of professional experience across Member States to facilitate mobility and career development for education professionals.

Generally, the building of the European Education Area should consider that **employment and working conditions for teaching** must improve in many Member States in order to attract, recruit and retain young workers into this occupational field and to counter widespread teacher shortages. This is especially true for the areas of VET, lifelong learning and the education of adults.

Several Member States still see **abusive uses of precarious consecutive fixed-term work contracts for teachers** that expire every year during the summer vacation time so that no wages and social security coverage need to be paid during this time.

Also, teaching is too often still a profession that does not enjoy a high **social standing in the eyes of a wide range of population**. Its low prestige frustrates the recruiting and retaining of teachers in both rich and poorer countries. Teaching is a highly valuable profession and should guarantee teachers decent salaries and quality working conditions on all levels of the educational system. Their work and contribution to society must be adequately valued and recognised.