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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

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**To: Mr Andrej Plenковиć**

Prime Minister of Croatia

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**Mrs Blaženka Divjak**

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Brussels, 14 May 2020

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**Subject: Solidarity with ETUCE member organisations in Croatia**

Dear Prime Minister,

Dear Minister,

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 132 education trade unions i.e. 11 million teachers in Europe. As a recognised Social Partner in education at EU level, ETUCE meets at regular intervals with the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) in the frame of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Education to negotiate and discuss education and employment topics relevant to teachers, academics and other education personnel in education. ETUCE is a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is also the European Region of Education International (EI), the global federation of education trade unions.

It is with deep resentment that the ETUCE member organisations - Croatian Teachers' Union, Independent Trade Union of Workers in Secondary Education of Croatia, Independent Union of Research and Higher Education Employees of Croatia and Trade Union of Workers in Pre-School Education of Croatia - informed us that the Croatian Government intends to impose restrictive measures through introducing changes in the standing collective agreement and reduce salaries for all public sector employees, including teachers and other education personnel.

Only last year the Government and social partners had negotiated and agreed to gradually increase the already low salaries in order to support further the quality of services and to counter the severe shortage of employees and in particular of teachers and other education personnel. The Croatian Government's intention to cancel the previously agreed 2 % increase in salary to be implemented as of 1 June 2020 and the additional 2 % starting from 1 October 2020 for all public service workers is a slap into the face of teachers who have been working hard during the COVID-19 crisis to ensure the continued provision of education to their students. Indeed, what teachers who are on the frontline and directly exposed to COVID -19 need, is fundamental, comprehensive, and sustainable support.

ETUCE welcomes the respect for social dialogue principles and importance of involving the social partners in education in all matters concerning education and the workers in the sector for a constructive and comprehensive dialogue. Indeed, measures to value the effort that teachers have been and are making in these difficult and challenging times in adapting to remote teaching, also taking into account the hardship when the recent earthquake happened need to be considered.

For years already, teachers and other education personnel in Croatia have been receiving lower salaries in comparison to all other public service workers. The sectoral collective agreement that the social partners signed at the end of 2019 for the education sector foresees that salaries in the sector are to increase by a total of 6 % in 2020 in order to put salaries in the public sector on an equal footing. With only half of the proposed increase achieved, the Government plans to terminate this agreement risks to further exacerbate the already existing alarming situation of teacher shortages in Croatia.

We warn the Croatian government not to fall into the trap of the economic crisis of 2008 where public budgets were cut to save the country's economy, leaving behind a trail of destruction in public education. Indeed, the [decade of economic crisis](#), austerity measures and systemic underinvestment in education, the increasing exposure of education to privatisation and marketisation pressures, have caused incalculable problems. They have eroded traditional forms of social solidarity and financial redistribution and emphasised the role of the individual and of personal ambitions above social aspirations and collective actions, leading to exclusion, segregation and increasing inequality.

Thus, together with our member organisations, we urge the Croatian Government to:

- learn from the 2008 economic crisis and not cut education budgets because further budget cuts will force teachers to leave the profession, thus imminently leading to the deterioration of quality and access to education.
- negotiate with the education social partners through meaningful, constructive, and permanent dialogue with the aim to jointly find solutions that value and safeguard the teaching profession.

Whilst sending robust support and solidarity to its member organisations, ETUCE believes that Croatia as the country leading at present the European Union, will set the example of democratic accountability and transparency and further contribute to the safeguard and renewed commitment to fundamental values and freedoms, in particular the right to free public quality education for all. Today, constructive cooperation, transparency and trust amongst social partners are indispensable. In Croatia and in Europe, we need strong education systems, well supported and trained teachers and sustainable public investment in the sector to provide quality education to the thousands of students who are the future of the country and the future of Europe. We cannot afford to leave anybody behind.

Yours Sincerely,



Susan Flocken  
European Director