

Empowering Educators: EU Teachers & Trainers Agenda Stakeholder Policy Discussion

12 December 2025, Kamilou Joseph II, Brussels, Belgium

SOLIDAR+ and [Association for Teacher Education in Europe \(ATEE\)](#) co-organised a stakeholder policy discussion on the forthcoming EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda within the framework of [Lifelong Learning Week 2025](#). The meeting brought together policymakers, civil society organisations, teachers, and adult education representatives to reflect on current challenges in the teaching and training professions and to consider priorities for the upcoming EU initiative.

Opening & Welcoming Remarks

The event started with opening remarks from **Elisa Gambardella**, Director and Policy Coordinator for Education and Lifelong Learning, SOLIDAR+, who welcomed participants and set the context for the discussion. She noted that the forthcoming EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda represents an important opportunity to invest in the education profession, improve working conditions, and recognise the full ecosystem of educators.

In his welcoming remarks, **MEP Marcos Ros Sempere**, S&D Group, emphasised the importance of lifelong learning as a foundation for a fair, resilient, and forward-looking Europe. Drawing on his experience in the CULT Committee, as well as his background as an architect and professor, he highlighted the ongoing need for reskilling and upskilling, especially in light of the green and digital transitions. In addition, MEP Ros Sempere referred to the recent INI report [on a new vision for European University Alliances](#), and to his role as rapporteur of the upcoming INI report on a new strategy for media literacy and digital learning, noting that **lifelong learning is essential for enabling people of all ages** to navigate increasingly complex digital environments. He underlined that education is not merely a public service but a public good, shaping society's ability to grow and thrive. He concluded his remarks by noting that the European Education Area plays a key role in promoting quality, equity, and inclusion for all learners.

Roundtable Discussion: Defining the Path: What Should the Teachers & Trainers Agenda Include?

These introductory remarks were followed by a roundtable discussion on **Defining the Path: What Should the Teachers & Trainers Agenda Include?**, chaired by Elisa Gambardella, SOLIDAR+, with contributions from **Ulrike Storost**, Deputy Head of Unit, B2 DG EAC, **Ekaterina Efimenko**, Policy Coordinator, ETUCE, **Raffaella Kihrer**, Secretary General EAEA, **Petra van Beveren**, member of the ATEE Administrative Council, and **Ronny Smet**, Vice-president of ATEE.

Ulrike Storost, DG EAC centred her intervention on the current state of the teaching profession in Europe, drawing on recent [OECD TALIS](#) findings. She highlighted that while teachers report a high sense of meaning in their work, there are **serious warning signs**: nearly all Member States are struggling to fill teaching positions, especially in **STEM, foreign languages, early childhood education**, and in **disadvantaged areas**. These shortages are expected to worsen, as the teaching workforce is **rapidly ageing**. She noted that according to OECD TALIS data, a significant share of teachers under 30 consider leaving the profession within the next five years, with sources of stress being one of the drivers to leave, while school leadership, teacher participation

in decision making and positive relationships at school can increase job satisfaction. Ms Storost also warned that **media narratives** which repeatedly focus on the challenges of the profession risk discouraging potential teachers. She stressed that civil society organisations (CSOs) play an important role in highlighting positive examples and in showing that teaching can be a deeply meaningful profession when the right conditions are in place.

Ms Storost reiterated the Commission's commitment to a **strong EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda**, aimed at enabling **diversified career paths** and supporting **professional development**. She pointed to several elements the upcoming Agenda could address:

- factors that help **retain teachers**, such as effective school leadership, a positive school climate, and teacher involvement in decision-making;
- the importance of **civil society organisations (CSOs)** in amplifying teachers' voices and shaping policy;
- the role of **professional relationships**, which are key predictors of job satisfaction;
- recognition that teachers do not work in isolation, that multiprofessional teams are important and that **all educational staff** form part of the school community, including **non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) educators** (as highlighted in *Pathways to School Success*).

She explained that the EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda is currently in its **stakeholder phase**, with a **call for evidence** expected in early 2026. Stakeholders are invited to contribute ideas on strengthening EU tools and supporting systemic reforms at national level. She emphasised that the Commission is eager to hear proposals on how to increase the impact of EU-level support measures and encourage systemic reforms. She also referenced the recently adopted [Council Recommendation on Human Capital](#), which recommends, to all EU-27 Member States, incentives for the attractiveness of the teaching profession potentially a basis for more structured reforms.

The discussions with **Ekaterina Efimenko**, ETUCE focused on ETUCE's position on the forthcoming Teachers and Trainers Agenda, and the organisation's views on recognising the contribution of trainers and educators outside formal education. In her intervention, she underlined that the current moment presents a significant opportunity to strengthen the attractiveness of the teaching profession and stressed that a Council Recommendation would be the strongest instrument to drive meaningful reform at national level.

She highlighted several key areas that should be reflected in the Agenda, starting with the need to guarantee **professional autonomy** and ensure their full involvement in decisions affecting curricula and pedagogy, and improving working conditions through attractive and competitive salaries. Ekaterina stressed the need for **high-quality initial teacher education** and strong systems for continuous professional development, noting that upskilling and reskilling must be supported through **free CPD provided during working hours**.

Responding to the question of recognising educators beyond formal settings, she cautioned against short-term solutions to teacher shortages, such as recruiting individuals without appropriate qualifications, as this risks undermining professional standards across the sector.

She emphasised the importance of **governance and social dialogue** with teacher trade unions as the most effective way to ensure that reforms reflect real needs in classrooms and learning environments.

She also proposed several measures at EU level. One idea was the creation of an **Education Scoreboard** for the Teachers and Trainers Agenda, developed with education stakeholders and covering areas such as teacher policies, funding, social dialogue, and occupational health and safety. Such indicators, she suggested, could feed into the **EU Semester's Social Scoreboard**.

She additionally recommended establishing an **EU advisory group** on the teaching profession, organising a **European Summit on the Teaching Profession**, and creating dedicated **funding streams specifically for teacher organisations**, allowing them to compete on equal terms. Finally, she emphasised that education stakeholders should be involved in co-designing future **Education Summit** content at EU level.

Raffaella Kihrer, Secretary General, EAEA was invited to reflect on the challenges adult educators would like to see addressed in the forthcoming Teachers and Trainers Agenda, and how governance structures could better support a lifelong learning approach in light of the shift from the European Education Area to the Union of Skills. She highlighted that adult educators often work **under precarious and short-term contracts**, which makes it difficult to sustain quality, ensure stable professional development, and respond effectively to learners' diverse needs. Many adult educators take on multiple roles, especially when supporting disadvantaged learners, and require access to continuous professional development and more predictable funding.

Regarding the digital transition, she highlighted the need to **equip adult educators with the skills** to navigate increasingly complex learning environments, particularly when working with disadvantaged or multi-challenged learners. Adult educators often take on multiple roles as teachers, counsellors, and coaches requiring a specialised skill set to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Raffaella also noted that the current shift from the EEA framework to the Upskilling Strategy (UoS) **risks narrowing the understanding of education** solely through skills, which is often unregulated at national and regional levels, and places additional pressure on national and regional systems. She also emphasised the need for **sustainable funding mechanisms** to support lifelong learning, stronger peer learning at grassroots level, and involvement of adult educators and teachers in the centre of the policy making.

Lifelong learning, she noted, happens lifelong and life wide, and everyone involved in the system has a role to play. Finally, she underlined that **adult learning and education (ALE)** must stand on equal footing with other education sectors and be recognised as a central pillar of lifelong learning.

Petra van Beveren, member of the ATEE Administrative Council shared her valuable insights on the challenges in teacher education that ATEE wishes to see addressed in the forthcoming Teachers and Trainers Agenda. She opened her intervention by emphasising that **education is the backbone of society**, and highlighted the need to renew the teaching and educational profession in response to ongoing social changes. She stressed that working together at

European level can help make education more accessible, attractive, and better aligned with the needs of learners and educators.

She outlined the main challenges facing education in Europe, including teacher shortages, high levels of illness and burnout, and teacher drop-out and turnover. She also pointed to declining literacy, numeracy, and oracy skills among children, alongside growing psychological and motivational difficulties, which she linked to the urgent need to **renew the educational profession** through strong professional development at all levels. This includes sharing experiences, developing new knowledge bases for **European Educational Professionals**, and creating dedicated spaces for **European Teacher Educators**.

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She highlighted the need to improve basic skills by promoting a **language-oriented, inclusive educational approach** at all levels, including school-university partnerships. She also emphasised the importance of **innovative teaching methods** for literacy, numeracy, oracy, and digital skills. She highlighted the importance of integrating these methods into teacher education programmes and student teacher internships in collaboration with local authorities. Petra also called for investment in early childhood education through stronger child centres linked to primary schools.

She concluded by emphasising the need to build **lifelong learning ecosystems across Europe**, and the need for **stronger investment in teacher education**, particularly for early career teachers and those entering the profession as a second career, across Europe.

Ronny Smet, Vice president of ATEE, also highlighted the importance of elevating the status of the teaching profession and giving greater recognition to teacher educators. He noted that many teachers experience fear and uncertainty about future developments in education and worry about becoming obsolete. Emphasis was placed on the human dimension of teaching, which involves sharing human values and skills and integrating the personal, relational aspects that make teaching unique. Central to this is fostering a sense of appreciation for teachers, ensuring that their work is valued and recognized as meaningful.

Q&A

During the Q&A session, participants focused on the challenges and opportunities for the teaching profession and the broader educational ecosystem.

Ulrike Storost emphasised that appreciation for teachers is central, alongside the need to alleviate administrative workload. She highlighted positive examples, such as the high level of teacher appreciation in Finland.

She noted the challenge of striking the right balance in communication, ensuring that educators feel valued in what motivates them most, i.e. for the human dimension of their profession. Ms Storost explained that the Union of Skills addresses the issue of EU competitiveness in a tense geopolitical landscape, while also highlighting that education is under pressure, with declining PISA results, teacher shortages, and other indicators pointing to areas where investment is needed.

Beyond preparing learners for the labour market, she stressed the importance of developing human beings, fostering skills such as critical thinking and enabling students to engage and express their voices, in line with the European Commission's broader vision and renewed focus on citizenship education. She also referred to practical tools and guidelines already available to support teachers and school leaders, such as the SELFIE tools, which help schools and educators integrate digital education effectively into their teaching, as well as new self-assessment tool for schools on wellbeing and inclusion that was recently launched.

Ekaterina stressed that **education is not an expense but an investment in the future**. She highlighted that professional autonomy may be even more important than pay, and that trusting teachers and allowing them to co-design policies and standards is crucial. In this context, she also emphasised the importance of the right to disconnect for teachers as a way to protect their wellbeing. She added that the administrative burden should be addressed to reduce teachers' workload and allow them to focus on their core educational responsibilities.

Concluding Remarks

Elisa Gambardella, SOLIDAR+ thanked all the speakers for their contributions and invited **Agnieszka Szplit**, President of ATEE, to deliver concluding remarks.

Agnieszka emphasised that **teachers and trainers are the backbone of education systems** and highlighted the need for robust frameworks for **continuous professional development** and **cross-sector cooperation**. She stressed the importance of approaching the teaching profession from both an evidence-based perspective and acknowledging the passion and personal involvement that educators bring to their work. She underlined that teacher shortages must be addressed in a sustainable way, and that wellbeing, professional trust, and autonomy are fundamental to achieving this. ATEE also called for systematic training in **digital skills** and other key areas, while stressing that **stable contracts and a manageable workload** are essential to attract and retain teachers.

Agnieszka summarised the panel discussion by highlighting the need to **build a lifelong learning ecosystem** that benefits all learners and educators. The discussion showed that teacher support can be viewed through policy, practice, professional, and personal perspectives. Together, these highlight the need to value and support educators, ensure lifelong and relevant professional development, strengthen cross-sector cooperation, address teacher shortages sustainably, and protect teacher well-being, trust, and professional autonomy.

Agnieszka underlined that the message from today is both clear and urgent. European educators are partners, innovators, and the foundation of a vibrant, inclusive, and high-quality education system. Investing in them means investing in our shared future: more inclusive societies, stronger democracies, sustainable economies, and empowered citizens. She stressed that

supporting educators in all their diversity – teachers, teacher educators, adult educators, and non-formal educators – is not optional; it is essential. Only by combining investment, recognition, collaboration, and trust can we build a lifelong learning ecosystem that benefits all learners and strengthens Europe as a whole. She concluded by thanking everyone for their engagement and contributions.