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ETUCE reaction on *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Tracking Graduates*

to the Committee of Regions hearing

11 July 2017

On 30 May 2017 the European Commission published its *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on tracking graduates*. This proposal was announced as one of the sub-initiatives of the European Commission's [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) initiative in June 2016.

The following text is the first reaction of the ETUCE on the proposal.

ETUCE welcomes the following:

1. The aim of the proposal is to encourage countries to improve their graduate tracking systems in order to identify **solutions regarding youth unemployment and to provide feedback to vocational education and higher education institutions** and policy makers. We welcome that the proposal for graduate tracking intends to strengthen curriculum development of vocational schools and universities as well as career guidance.
2. The proposal suggests that each Member State should **collect the same data about graduates**, early drop-outs and of those not in education nor in employment (NEETs), while ensuring data protection, in order to make the information comparable around Europe. From our understanding this comparability could help European policy makers to have more information on educational outcomes, employability, mobility, and brain drain.
3. The proposal acknowledges that **transitions to the labour market are influenced by economic context and socio-demographic factors** such as sex, country of birth, citizenship, ethnic origin and socio-economic background of the family. Thus, the data on graduate tracking can shed light on employability difficulties from the side of the economic and industrial situation of countries and regions. At the same time, socio-demographic factors can contribute to better understanding inequality in recruitment and in the labour market.
4. We welcome that Member States would need to **report on their achievements** on improving this proposal on graduate tracking in two years, then annually, and that the European Commission foresees funding to support improving national graduate tracking systems and encourages Member States to share their experiences on improving their systems.

Furthermore, ETUCE comments the following:

1. While graduate tracking is important, the results on graduates' achievements need to be analysed and used with great sensitivity. For example, it is essential to consider the **short-term vision of labour market needs**, which blames the education sector for skills mismatch.

2. The list of proposed content of data to be collected about graduates and early school leavers **via tax and social security databases** should be handled cautiously in relation to its potential impact on education. These data should come to better use for improving employability, the offers of companies, quality jobs and economic/social ranking of professions, as these factors narrow the labour market perspectives for graduates.

3. The proposal puts emphasis on the role of education without considering **companies' job offers for graduates, salary and quality working conditions**, recruitment procedures and employers' responsibility to invest in continuous upskilling of employees. Graduate tracking as it is presented in the proposal has a narrow view on education, not considering the possibility that graduates can be employed also based on their soft skills and competences.

4. It is not clear **who assesses the following criteria** and how:

- 'relevance of study to employment', and
- 'perceptions of the quality and relevance of their education and training experience'.

5. We underline that graduate tracking should **not be used to evaluate individual institutions** with a view to link employability rates to performance-based funding of schools and universities. Graduate tracking should not narrow the labour market perspectives for graduates. It is essential to have a **broad view on education** so that professionals can be tracked among wider professional opportunities, than their strict professional titles of their degree. It is high time that companies understand the learning outcomes of graduates and stop being exclusive on several degrees, e.g. on arts. Furthermore, in their own interest of maintaining a skilled and competent workforce, companies should have a long-term vision of graduates and invest in their continuous upskilling.

Finally, we welcome that the recommendations to Member States highlights the need for "close cooperation with stakeholders", and how essential and beneficial the **involvement of teachers and education trade unions** is in the process. In line with this, ETUCE confirms its interest to actively contribute to the foreseen group of *Network of Experts* which is to provide advice to the European Commission on the implementation of this proposal.