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2026/0348 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on an attractive teaching profession: the EU Teachers Agenda

{SWD(2026) 800 final}

(Text with EEA relevance)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

• Reasons for and objectives of the proposal

Providing better support to teachers is essential if Europe's ambitions for democracy, social and territorial cohesion, competitiveness and resilience are to be achieved. Teachers play a key role in facilitating students' learning and socialisation and fostering critical thinking and civic engagement. Addressing underachievement in literacy, mathematics, science, digital and civic education requires qualified, well-prepared teachers in sufficient numbers[1].

However, nearly all EU countries face shortages of qualified teachers, and patterns of teacher supply and demand vary across subjects, geographical regions and school settings[2]. These shortages in turn limit the quality of instruction. The objective of this proposal is to support Member States in ensuring that enough qualified teachers enter and remain in the profession, across the subjects, regions and schools where they are most needed to ensure quality education for all. The proposal also aims to strengthen Member States' capacity for workforce management in education and training settings. It focuses on increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession and on what matters to teachers: attractive careers and working conditions, strong initial teacher education and continuing professional development, and agency in an age of artificial intelligence (AI). In line with national practices, social dialogue in education, including collective bargaining, also plays a significant role in designing balanced approaches. Combining such policies with financial investment can strengthen the teaching profession and support sustainable investment in Europe's human capital.

Teacher job satisfaction is shaped by a range of factors. These include the degree of respect they are afforded in society, their salary, the professional autonomy they enjoy, the influence they have on education policies, and their working conditions[3]. Administrative workload,

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1 Gambi and De Witte, 2023. The literature shows that differences in teaching effectiveness explain a substantial share of the variation in student achievement, within countries, not only between schools but also within them (Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2005; Chetty, Friedman and Rockoff, 2014. These effects are cumulative: several consecutive years of effective teaching can substantially narrow achievement gaps for disadvantaged students (Hanushek, 2011). Teachers' preparation and qualifications have also been found to be associated with student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

2 This proposal draws on the most recent quantitative, cross-EU comparative evidence presented in the following reports: European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023. *Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe 2023: The teaching profession*, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/849109; European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2026; *The teaching profession in the EU – A comparative analysis building upon the TALIS 2024 results*, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/3841850; Investing in education 2026: Focus on the teaching profession, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/4146282*; School principals in the EU: a comparative analysis based on TALIS 2024*, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/3385642 Sorensen T. B., 2026, *Research for CULT Committee - Teacher Shortage Crisis in the European Union*, European Parliament, Policy Department for Citizens, Equality and Culture, Brussels.

3 For a state of play and an analysis of key elements of appealing working conditions, teacher preparation for evolving demands, and teacher's agency in the age of AI, see the European Commission 2026 Staff Working Document 'Elevating the teaching profession: evidence and analysis supporting the EU Teachers Agenda'. Furthermore, the teachers' dashboard provides a compass for navigating aspects of relevance to the attractiveness of the teaching profession in the EU context. It is available at https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor/en/monitor-toolbox/themes/teaching-profession.html.

classroom demands and insufficient support can undermine their well-being and intentions to continue in the profession. School leaders, multiprofessional support teams and fit-for-purpose school buildings and infrastructure, including digital, support effective learning environments, yet administrative overload especially among school leaders, limited preparation[4], insufficient support and outdated facilities continue to place a major strain on teaching and learning. A large stock of old educational buildings poses challenges in relation to their accessibility, safety and health[5]. Moreover, many buildings are energy-inefficient and ill-equipped to cope with climate-related impacts[6].

Teachers report strong preparation as regards subject content. Gaps remain in continuing professional development, including for the use of AI for teaching and learning, special educational needs, classroom management, individualised learning, social-emotional support, multicultural or multilingual settings[7], and the specialised pedagogical and occupational, up-to-date knowledge required for vocational education and training (VET). Responding to the diverse needs of adult learners also requires teacher preparation. Stronger initial teacher education and continuing professional development can help address these gaps, be beneficial for the quality of teaching and make the teaching profession more attractive[8]. Closer cooperation among teacher education and professional development providers, alongside staff learning mobility can also support teachers' preparation, although individual and institutional barriers still limit participation in learning mobility[9].

Strengthening teacher agency is essential to ensure that digital technologies and AI support teachers' professional judgement. To build the AI that we want – a technology that supports educational quality, professional autonomy and staff well-being, and that anchors human interaction at the heart of teaching, its introduction should involve teachers and their representatives and preserve professional judgement and human interaction. The role of teachers is growing, not shrinking with AI and they need to be prepared for the safe, ethical and effective use of AI[10], to assess when and how AI is educationally appropriate, to help learners engage critically and ethically with AI, and nurture their motivation and curiosity for learning.

The Commission will establish a regular European dialogue with the teaching profession, building on the governance of the European Education Area (EEA) and the Education and Skills Summit, bringing together Member States, social partners and teachers' representatives. The Commission will also support national action to strengthen initial teacher education and continuing professional development, in particular in addressing emerging classroom challenges, including on the pedagogical use of AI, including drawing on Erasmus+, the

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4 Leadership-specific preparation is considerably less widespread than standard preparation: 63.8% of principals report having completed a school administration or principal training programme, while only 45.9% indicate having received formal training in instructional leadership.

5 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Investing in our future – Quality investment in education and training, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/45896.

6 European Environmental Agency, 2022, *Climate change as a threat to health and well-being in Europe: focus on heat and infectious disease.* Report 7/2022. Available at https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/climate-change-impacts-on-health/climate-change-impacts-on-health/@@download/file.

7 TALIS 2024/European Commission 2026a

8 OJ C, 14.6.2024.

9 SWD(2023) 719 final.

10 TALIS 2024/European Commission 2026a. In 2024, two out of three teachers had not used AI yet for teaching, and among those, the most frequently cited obstacle is a lack of knowledge and skills (74.3%).

National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP) and the Interreg Plan. The NRPP will bring together all EU funds implemented by Member States and regions, including the European Social Fund, and give additional opportunities to support strong public policies for education through integrated investments and promoting reforms, related to education and training, skills development. while promoting synergies and coherence across policies.

The Commission will also reinforce the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies to increase their impact, effectiveness and widen their added value to the entire teaching community. Furthermore, the Commission will assess progress on reforms affecting the teaching profession in the annual country reports under the European Semester and, where relevant, propose country-specific recommendations, in line with the Council Recommendation of 9 March 2026 on human capital in the European Union. The Commission will report on the implementation of this Recommendation based on a two-stage monitoring: updating the Teacher's Dashboard as part of the Education and Training Monitor Toolbox on a regular basis and, by 2031, it will report on the implementation of this Recommendation, drawing on reporting within the European Semester and the results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2030. Erasmus+ support aims at expanding the number of countries participating to TALIS and TALIS Starting Strong.

- **Consistency with existing policy provisions in the policy area**

This proposal forms part of a broader 'Education and Skills Package', with the Commission's policy framework and longer-term vision set out in the 2026 Communication 'Stronger education foundations for all in the age of AI'. The Education and Skills Package includes two proposals for Council Recommendations on reversing the decline in basic skills and on the EU Teacher's Agenda, respectively. It further includes a European strategy for vocational education and training. It also involves the creation of a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium on Education. The actions under the Education and Skills Package to be implemented, with complementary European actions to support its implementation, include strengthening cooperation through the European School Alliances, the EU Network of Advisory and Support Services, the new generation of Teacher Academies and an AI-ready education initiative. These actions complement the measures recommended to Member States under the present proposal by strengthening the European infrastructure for cooperation, knowledge-sharing, evidence and capacity-building.

This proposal contributes to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan[11], notably its first principle on education, training and lifelong learning, principle eight on social partner consultation, and principle eleven on childcare and support to children.

It builds upon the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area[12]. The interim evaluation of the 2021-2030 European Education Area strategic framework[13] found persistent EU-wide challenges, especially to teacher shortages, the attractiveness of the profession, and working conditions and showed that less progress had been made to improve the competences and motivation in the education profession, relative to other strategic priorities. This Council Recommendation is proposed as a dedicated EU policy framework to support the efforts of EU Member States in this area, creating momentum for urgently needed change with dedicated and supportive EU actions outlined in the corresponding umbrella communication.

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11 COM/2021/102 final.
12 OJ C, C/2026/3720, 10.7.2026.
13 COM (2025) 340 final.

This proposal contributes directly to the Union's broader objectives on skills development, competitiveness and social cohesion, notably those pursued under the Union of Skills[14], with its emphasis on human capital development and attractive teacher careers, and its Action Plan on Basic Skills[15] and STEM Education Strategic Plan[16]. By giving comprehensive guidance on teacher workforce management, this proposal is also consistent with and complementary to the Council Recommendation of 9 March 2026 on human capital in the European Union[17], which invites Member States to ensure adequate incentives to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, especially for STEM subjects, and to support initial and continuous professional development at all levels.

In the field of digital education, this proposal complements the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027[18], which aimed to strengthen digital competence and fostering the effective use of digital technologies in education and training. It is also consistent with the 2023 Council Recommendations on digital education and skills[19].

In addition, it builds on earlier Council actions and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies by bringing them together in a more coherent policy framework for teacher professional development and learning mobility.

This proposal takes into account the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care System (ECEC) and highlights specific challenges for ECEC staff, where applicable[20]. These relate to the lack of recognition of the profession, addressing staff shortages and poor working conditions, in view of the need for greater recognition of the educational value of early childhood education and care and the related need for increased professionalisation of ECEC staff.

This proposal further aligns with Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience[21] and the Herning Declaration of 12 September 2025 on attractive and inclusive Vocational Education and Training for increased competitiveness and quality jobs 2026-2030[22] which stresses the need to address shortages of VET teachers and trainers, ensure their physical and mental well-being, promote their mobility and ensure they have the skills needed to understand the risks and benefits of using AI. It addresses measures that are relevant for teachers of all sectors and highlights specific challenges for VET teachers, where applicable. Furthermore, this proposal complements the European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training of 4 November 2026, which focuses on key actions at European level to support Member States in strengthening the quality, agility and strategic relevance and openness of VET. Teachers, trainers and VET leaders are central to the quality and agility of VET systems.

The proposal addresses persons with teacher and ECEC educator or equivalent status under national law and practice, including VET teachers, and trainers in vocational education and

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14 COM/2025/90 final.
15 COM/2025/88 final.
16 COM/2025/89 final.
17 OJ C, C/2026/1687, 13.3.2026.
18 COM/2020/624 final.
19 OJ C, C/2024/1115, 24.1.2024 and OJ C, C/2024/1030, 23.1.2024.
20 OJ C 189, 5.6.2019.
21 OJ C 417, 2.12.2020.
22 https://wayback.archive-it.org/12710/20260919115725/https:/danish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/new-declaration-to-strengthen-european-cooperation-on-vocational-education-and-training/

training, including workplace trainers. It does not cover teachers in higher education, who are covered by the Council Recommendation of 25 November 2024 on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education[23].

- **Consistency with other Union policies**

This proposal is aligned with:

The Commission Communication of 24 March 2021 on the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, which recalls children's right to quality and inclusive education[24].

The Commission Communication of 29 January 2025 Competitiveness Compass[25], with its emphasis on human capital development.

The European Democracy Shield[26], which includes the role of schools in fostering democratic participation, critical thinking, media literacy, active citizenship and resilience against foreign information manipulation and interference and disinformation.

The principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, notably its first principle on the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, its eleventh principle on the right of children to quality early childhood education and care, and principle eight calling for the consultation of social partners on policies.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy[27], with the strengthened European Child Guarantee and the Care Strategy[28]. These initiatives are relevant for equitable access to education and support for disadvantaged learners, in deprived areas. The present proposal complements them through measures on teacher recruitment, retention and support in disadvantaged settings.

Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, which provides the legal framework for the professional mobility of teachers. Secondary school teachers are the second most mobile (regulated) profession, with 4 953 recognition decisions[29] in 2024.

Council Directive 1999/70/EC of 28 June 1999 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP, which prohibits discrimination against fixed-term workers.

Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the framework agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC.

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23 OJ C, C 7282, 5.12.2024.
24 COM (2021) 142 final.
25 COM (2025) 30 final.
26 JOIN (2025) 791 final.
27 COM (2026) 538 final.
28 Communication on breaking the cycle of child poverty – strengthening the European Child Guarantee, COM (2026) 539 final, 6.5.2026; Communication on the European Care Strategy, COM(2022) 440 final, 7.9.2022.
29 https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof.

The Quality Jobs Roadmap of 4 December 2025[30] renewing the commitment to fostering quality jobs and the two-stage consultation of European social partners on the possible direction of EU action to further improve quality jobs.

The Skills Portability Initiative proposals which will make it easier to have qualifications understood, verified and, where needed, recognised across borders. The proposals include a Skills Portability Act, addressing the digitalisation and availability of reliable, comparable and verifiable information on qualifications, a revision of the Professional Qualifications Directive, proposing to modernise the procedures for recognition of professional qualifications to access regulated professions, in particular by introducing a new digital workflow in all EU Member States and by shortening procedural deadlines; and a Directive on recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, proposing to introduce common EU rules for recognising such qualifications.

The Communication from the Commission of 12 November 2025[31] on a Cultural Compass for Europe to strengthen the provision of arts and cultural education and improve its quality, promote stronger cooperation between culture and education policies, foster partnerships among artists, cultural institutions, community cultural organisations, schools and non-formal education providers.

Multilingualism, which promotes language awareness and language sensitive teaching as a key skill for all teachers and identifies the quality of language teaching and better training of language teachers as key challenges.

The Union of Equality strategies[32], which create the conditions for everyone to live, thrive and lead regardless of differences based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics.

The EU Preparedness Union Strategy[33] outlining the importance of including preparedness in school education curricula and educational staff training.

The upcoming Right to Stay strategy to ensure people live, work and thrive in the place they call home.

The use by the Commission of all instruments for implementation and enforcement of legislation.

2. LEGAL BASIS, SUBSIDIARITY AND PROPORTIONALITY

• Legal basis

The proposal is based on Articles 165(4) and 166(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and on Article 292 in conjunction with Article 153(1), points (b) and (i).

Article 165(1) of the TFEU provides that the Union is to '*contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by*

30 COM (2025) 944 final.
31 COM (2025) 785 final.
32 Equality and inclusion: key actions - European Commission
33 JOIN (2025) 130 final.

supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education systems'. Article 165(2) of the TFEU further specifies that Union action in education has the aim of '*promoting cooperation between educational establishments*' and '*encouraging mobility of students and teachers'*.

Article 166(1) of the TFEU stipulates that the Union is to '*implement a vocational training policy which shall support and supplement the action of the Member States, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training'*. Article 166(2) of the TFEU states that Union action aims to '*stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms*'.

Additionally, the proposal is based on Article 153(1) point (b) and point (i) in conjunction with Article 292. Article 153(1) point (b) states that the Union is to '*support and complement the activities of the Member States*' in the field of '*working conditions*'. Article 153(1) point (i) concerns equality between women and men in labour market opportunities and treatment at work. Article 292 of the TFEU provides the legal basis for the Council to adopt recommendations based on a proposal from the Commission.

The initiative does not propose any extension of EU regulatory power or binding commitments on Member States. It is the Member States who will decide, based on their national circumstances, how they implement this Recommendation.

- **Subsidiarity (for non-exclusive competence)**

The proposal is in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity as provided for in Article 5(3) of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU). Member States are responsible for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education and training systems. At the same time, evidence shows that they face a number of shared challenges relating to the attractiveness of the teaching profession. The proposal seeks to increase transnational cooperation in school education while safeguarding the ability of the Member States to take independent legislative decisions and implement measures aiming to foster deeper cooperation between school education systems and teacher education (at higher education institutions). Action at EU level adds value through comparable evidence, mutual learning, transnational cooperation between school education systems and teacher education at higher education institutions and complementary funding to address shared workforce challenges. Decisions on staffing, curricula, recruitment and the organisation of education remain with the competent national, regional and local authorities.

- **Proportionality**

The proposal is in conformity with the principle of proportionality as provided for in Article 5(4) of the TEU. Neither the content, nor the form of the proposal exceeds what is necessary to achieve its objectives. The actions proposed are proportionate to the objectives pursued, as they respect Member States' practices and the diversity of systems. Any commitments by Member States are voluntary in nature and each Member State remains free to decide on the implementation of the proposal. This Recommendation proposes non-binding guidance, allowing Member States to select and sequence measures according to local needs, institutional arrangements and available resources.

- **Choice of the instrument**

To achieve the objectives referred to above, Articles 153(1), points (b) and (i), 165(4) and 166(4) of the TFEU, as well as Article 292, provide for the adoption by the Council of recommendations, on a proposal from the Commission. A Council Recommendation is an appropriate instrument within the area of education and training, in which the Union has a supporting responsibility. As a legal instrument, it signals the commitment of Member States to the measures presented and provides a stronger political basis for cooperation in this area, while fully respecting Member State authority in the field of education and training.

3. RESULTS OF *EX-POST* EVALUATIONS, STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- ***Ex-post* evaluations/fitness checks of existing legislation**

The interim evaluation of the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme and the final evaluation of the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme[34] found that the programme produced lasting effects on participating organisations. These effects include improved teaching practices, increased opportunities for cooperation, capacity building, organisational development and internationalisation. Streamlining programme rules are key to ensuring easier access to Erasmus+, including for teachers.

The interim evaluation of the 2021-2030 European Education Area strategic framework[35] identified basic skills gaps, teacher shortages and weakening democratic engagement among young people as the remaining significant challenges, as well as the need to further support Member States in adapting their education systems to enable students and teachers to thrive.

- **Stakeholder consultations**

The stakeholder consultations that have informed the proposal include:

– a hearing of the education sector social partners in June 2026;

– an implementation dialogue between Executive Vice-President Mînzatu and stakeholders to discuss European support for the teaching profession in June 2026;

– a consultation with youth representatives organised in the framework of the Youth Check process in June 2026;

– a call for evidence open between 30 July and 8 September 2026;

– discussions at meetings within the European Education Area Strategic Framework carried out in autumn and winter 2025-2026;

– workshops with education sector social partners, civil society organisations, researchers, international organisations and EU agencies, and teachers and school leaders carried out in autumn and winter 2025-2026;

– targeted stakeholder consultations with teachers and policymakers during the review of the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027), carried out between 2024 and 2025;

[34] COM (2025) 395 final.
[35] COM (2025) 340 final.

– an online survey on the European School Education Platform on building attractive teaching careers in November 2025;

– focus group meetings with teachers and other educators in January 2026.

More information about these consultation activities is included in the accompanying Staff Working Document.

• **Collection and use of expertise**

The proposal is based on:

– the results of the OECD TALIS and the Teaching and Learning International Starting Strong Survey, and the Commission's analysis, which builds on these results[36];

– Eurydice reports[37];

– academic expertise provided in the form of literature reviews by the Expert Network on Economics and Sociology of Education and Training[38];

– lessons learned from the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area (reports from working groups and peer learning activities);

– lessons learned from Erasmus+ projects, in particular policy experimentation and Erasmus+ Teacher Academies.

• **Impact assessment**

The proposed activities would complement Member States initiatives. An impact assessment was not carried out, given their voluntary nature and the expected limited magnitude of the impacts, also as the proposed instrument cannot ensure consistent outcomes across the Union. The development of the proposal was informed by studies, and consultations with social partners, stakeholders and Member States.

• **Regulatory fitness and simplification**

Not applicable.

• **Fundamental rights**

The proposal respects the fundamental rights and observes the principles recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, namely the right to the protection of personal data laid down in Article 8, freedom of assembly and of association under Article 12,

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36 European Commission, Directorate for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2026. *The teaching profession in the EU – A comparative analysis building upon the TALIS 2024 results*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/3341850.

37 European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2023. *Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2023: The teaching profession. Eurydice report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/849109.European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2021. *Teachers in Europe: Careers, Development and Well-being. Eurydice report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/997402.European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2026. Digital Education at school in Europe 2026: bridging gaps in access, teaching and learning. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/7577152.

38 https://education-socioeconomic-experts.ec.europa.eu/index_en.

the respect for the arts and scientific and academic freedom under Article 13, the right to education under Article 14, non-discrimination under Article 21, equality between women and men under Article 23, the rights of the child under Article 24, integration of persons with disabilities under Article 26, the right of collective bargaining and action under Article 28 and the right to fair and just working conditions under Article 31.

4. BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

This initiative will not require additional resources from the EU budget.

5. OTHER ELEMENTS

• Implementation plans and monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements

The Commission intends to:

- facilitate peer learning among Member States, social partners and stakeholders;
- develop mechanisms ensuring the recognition of teaching and involvement in transnational cooperation activities;
- foster synergies between this proposal and the proposal for a Council Recommendation on reversing the decline of basic skills, and a Commission implementing decision on a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium on Digital Education;
- facilitate evidence-based policy and monitoring of this proposal through the annual Education and Training Monitor.

No dedicated reporting mechanism is envisaged. The implementation of this Recommendation will be monitored within the second cycle of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area (2026-2030), in particular through the annual Education and Training Monitor, while challenges and relevant policy actions will be followed up under the European Semester. This avoids additional administrative burden while allowing progress to be assessed regularly and experience to be exchanged among Member States. The Commission will report to the Council on the implementation of this Recommendation in 2031, drawing on the results of the strategic framework cycle.

• Explanatory documents (for directives)

Not applicable.

• Detailed explanation of the specific provisions of the proposal

The proposal establishes a framework to support Member States in making the teaching profession more attractive, while reinforcing European cooperation. The provisions, all addressed to Member States, are organised around action at the level of education systems.

Points 1 and 2 of the proposal cover the scope of the proposal (point 1) and definitions (point 2). The proposal invites Member States to take a comprehensive approach to making the teaching profession more attractive (point 3). The measures suggested focus on more attractive careers and working conditions (points 4 to 12), strong initial teacher education and continuing professional development (points 13 to 19), and teachers' agency in the age of AI (points 20 to 24).

The proposal pays particular attention to teachers' agency and professional autonomy and covers both material and non-material working conditions.

Points 25 to 29 of the proposal cover provisions on investment and delivery of actions and invite Member States to strengthen dialogue and a shared understanding, collective bargaining and social dialogue processes (point 25), implement the necessary reforms and make effective use of national and regional investment, supported by Union funding instruments (point 26), promote, support and contribute to research, experimentation, evaluations, evidence-building, capacity-building and sharing (point 27), to translate evidence and consensus into an implementation strategy that includes clearly defined objectives and a timeline (point 28) and to make use of the High-Level Group on Education and Training to review strategic issues and exchange implementation experience on the topics addressed in this Recommendation (point 29). Points 30 and 31 cover reinforcing implementation through European cooperation.

These measures acknowledge the diversity of the education systems and the teaching profession across Europe and fully respect Member States' responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education and training systems, as well as the role and autonomy of social partners.

2026/0348 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

on an attractive teaching profession: the EU Teachers Agenda

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 292 in conjunction with Article 153(1), points (b) and (i), and Articles 165(4) and 166(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

WHEREAS:

(1) The European Pillar of Social Rights[1] stated in its first principle that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning. In its eleventh principle it emphasised the right of children to quality early childhood education and care. Principle eight called for social partners to be consulted on the design and implementation of policies.

(2) The Council Resolution of 29 June 2026 on the second cycle of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area (2026-2030)[2] established six strategic priorities in the field of education and training. Among these strategic priorities is ‘enhancing attractiveness, competences and motivation in the education and training profession’.

(3) The Council Recommendation of 9 March 2026 on human capital in the European Union[3] considered the significant risk posed to the quality of education by the shortage of qualified teachers across many Member States, regions, cities and remote and rural areas. It noted that the lack of attractiveness of the profession and the low earnings, compared with other occupations to which a degree can give access, contribute to teacher shortages across the Union. It called on Member States to ensure adequate incentives to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, especially for STEM subjects, and to support initial and continuous professional development at all levels. This Recommendation sets out a comprehensive approach for acting on that guidance.

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1 OJ C 428, 13.12.2017.
2 OJ C, C/2026/3720, 10.7.2026.
3 OJ C, C 1687, 13.3.2026.

(4) The Commission Communications of 5 March 2025 on the Union of Skills[4] announced an EU Teachers and Trainers Agenda to help Member States tackle teaching shortages, improve teachers' working conditions, and improve career prospects. The Commission Communication of 5 March 2025 on the Action Plan on Basic Skills[5] reiterated that further policy action is required to improve teacher training, increase the attractiveness of the profession and ensure that novice teachers receive the support they need. The Commission Communication of 5 March 2025 on the STEM Education Strategic Plan[6] noted significant shortages of qualified STEM teachers in nearly all Member States.

(5) The proposal for a Regulation of 17 September 2026 on an EU KIDS Act[73] and the Commission Communication of 17 September 2026 on an EU approach to online child safety[74] highlighted the impact that excessive screen time, digital distraction and addictive design features can have on children's well-being, development and learning. Tackling such distractions and promoting safer, age-appropriate and purposeful use of digital technologies can support learning and well-being. Teachers need appropriate preparation and support to contribute to these objectives. These initiatives build on the Council Conclusions of 9 December 2022 on supporting well-being in digital education[76] and the Commission Communication of 10 February 2026 on the Action plan against cyberbullying 'Safer online, stronger together'[77].

(6) The Commission Union of Equality Strategies underlined the need to address gender imbalances in the education sector, tackle stereotypes, fight inequalities and discrimination, promote diversity, and ensure accessibility.

(7) The 2025 PISA results reveal a deepening basic skills crisis: around one in three 15-year-olds in the EU now underachieve in reading and mathematics, and one in four in science, while the share of top-performing pupils is falling. Large socio-economic gaps persist, and the EU compares poorly with other major economies. Persistent teacher shortages tend to reduce the quality, continuity and intensity of instruction, and constrain the support available to learners, particularly in educational institutions facing greater challenges.

(8) This Recommendation builds on existing policy provisions on the teaching profession, in particular Council Conclusions[7] and Council Recommendations[8], and is consistent

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4 COM/2025/90 final.

5 COM/2025/88 final.

6 COM/2025/89 final.

7 In particular the Council Conclusions of 11 May 2026 on teachers in the era of artificial intelligence; the Council Conclusions of 26 May 2020 on European teachers and trainers for the future; the Council Conclusions of 5 April 2022 on enhancing teachers' and trainers' mobility during their initial and in-service education and training, as well as the Council Conclusions of 19 October 2026 on equality as a driver for economic growth and competitiveness, which stressed the need take an inclusive and gender-responsive approach, such as attracting more men to the teaching profession.

8 Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training; the Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training; the Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success; the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems; the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages; the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on promoting common values, inclusive education and the European dimension of teaching;

with relevant Union policies, in particular the European Democracy Shield[9], the Preparedness Union Strategy, the European Affordable Housing Plan[10], and Europe on the Move.

(9) This Recommendation should cover persons who have the status of a teacher, ECEC educator or equivalent under national law and practice, including VET teachers and trainers. Teachers in higher education should remain outside the scope of this Recommendation, as they are covered by the Council Recommendation of 25 November 2024 on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education[11]. This Recommendation should be applied in a manner appropriate to the distinct roles and employment arrangements of teachers, ECEC educators and VET trainers, including workplace trainers.

(10) The ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers underlined the need to address teachers' professional, social and economic status in a manner commensurate with their essential role. The United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession[12] called for decisive action to invest in education; develop national teacher policies; support teachers' evolving roles; ensure decent work for teachers; and promote the use of digital technology to augment – but not replace – the critical human relationship that is the foundation of teaching. The Santiago Consensus of 29 August 2025 also identified priority actions including teacher policies; teacher education and professional development; social dialogue and teacher participation in decision and policymaking; sustainable financing of the teaching profession; and inclusion, equity and gender equality,

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT MEMBER STATES:

With due regard to the national organisation of education systems and the role and autonomy of the social partners, and in accordance with national law and practice:

(1) This Recommendation concerns persons who have the status of a teacher, ECEC educator or equivalent under national law or practice, including VET teachers. It does not cover teachers in higher education.

(2) For the purposes of this Recommendation:

(a) 'teacher' means a person who is acknowledged as having the status of a teacher or ECEC educator, or an equivalent status, according to national law and practice;

(b) 'trainer' means a person who carries out one or more activities linked to a theoretical or practical training function, either in an education or training institution or in the workplace;

(c) references to teachers should be understood as including trainers where relevant for their roles and responsibilities.

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9 JOIN/2025/791 final.

10 COM(2025) 1025 final, 16.12.2025.

11 OJ C, C 7282, 5.12.2024

12 International Labour Organization, UNESCO, United Nations. United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession: Recommendations and summary of deliberations: transforming the teaching profession. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54675/OIOH9275.

(3) Make the teaching profession more attractive through a **comprehensive approach** combining:

(a) attractive careers and working conditions;

(b) initial teacher education and continuing professional development;

(c) teachers' agency in the age of artificial intelligence;

(d) investment and delivery.

Create attractive careers and working conditions

(4) Foster **teacher agency and professional autonomy,** in particular by:

(a) fostering teacher agency in implementing applicable curricula and selecting teaching, learning and assessment methods;

(b) promoting and strengthening teachers' professional autonomy and academic freedom, framed by rigorous scientific, professional, ethical and quality standards;

(c) protecting teachers against intimidation, discrimination, violence or harassment and safeguarding their professional independence from undue external interference, while respecting the responsibilities of competent authorities and institutional leadership;

(d) promoting governance and quality assurance models that balance accountability with professional trust, with a view to supporting teacher motivation and ensuring quality teaching and education outcomes, while reducing unnecessary administrative burden for teachers and school leaders.

(5) Reinforce actions to **attract and retain qualified teachers** in subjects, sectors and areas facing recruitment challenges, in particular by:

(a) using workforce planning to better align recruitment and retention measures to shortages;

(b) reviewing recruitment and deployment policies and, where necessary, introducing targeted incentives to attract and retain qualified teachers in areas that are rural, remote, high-cost, socio-economically disadvantaged or otherwise challenging;

(c) reducing obstacles to teachers' transitioning between different subjects or education levels, while supporting subject knowledge and pedagogical competences;

(d) promoting gender equality, workforce diversity and inclusiveness by removing barriers for under-represented groups, including teachers with disabilities, and from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds;

(e) where alternative pathways into teaching are used, ensuring that their design and implementation include robust qualifications and pedagogical preparation that meets professional standards, which may be acquired through different quality assured pathways including modular or employment-based preparation, and carrying out evaluations of their impact on teacher shortages and education outcomes;

(f) considering the specific circumstances of VET teachers and trainers, including by developing flexible and quality-assured pathways into teaching for experienced professionals from industry and other relevant occupations; promoting two-way mobility and flexible career pathways between enterprises and VET institutions; and supporting, where appropriate, hybrid employment models allowing individuals to combine teaching with relevant professional activity.

(6) Evaluate and, where appropriate, address the extent to which teacher **salaries and terms of employment** constitute a barrier to attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Take into account the distinct roles and employment conditions of teaching assistants, ECEC educators, VET teachers and trainers, and primary school teachers in that assessment.

(7) Ensure that teachers have reasonable and sustainable **workloads** that do not compromise their well-being and teaching quality, in particular by:

(a) carrying out regular assessments of teachers' tasks and work intensity, considering contextual factors such as class size, students' specificities and learning needs, the number of subjects and classes taught; and taking account of the specific working conditions of ECEC staff, which may include heavy physical work, multitasking, and an absence of breaks;

(b) evaluating whether working-time arrangements adequately recognise teaching and other professional duties including preparation and planning, assessment and feedback, professional development, collaboration and school engagement, communication with parents and students, and administrative tasks, to guarantee sufficient time for quality teaching;

(c) minimising the administrative burden on teachers and school leaders by promoting the simplification of administrative processes and reinforcing support from administrative staff and IT experts.

(8) Improve the attractiveness of teachers and school leaders' **careers**, in particular by:

(a) creating greater opportunities for career progression; diversifying the roles and responsibilities that teachers can undertake. Improving recognition and reward of responsibilities such as mentoring, leadership, pedagogical guidance or coordination, professional development, curriculum development, research and innovation, and continued engagement with professional practice;

(b) reinforcing career guidance, from initial teacher education onwards;

(c) reinforcing leadership careers in ECEC and school education, promoting gender balance and developing context-specific strategies in areas including school administration, learning environments, human resources, relations with parents and communities, and digital infrastructure;

(d) incentivising collaborative models of school and institutional leadership that support teacher and student voice, and foster a leadership pipeline.

(9) Evaluate and, where necessary, strengthen structured **multidisciplinary support** to improve teaching quality and the capacity for adaptive and differentiated instruction, which may be provided through shared or external arrangements. Such support should ensure adequate access to educational staff, including teaching assistants, and specialised teachers (for specific learning difficulties) with a view to addressing

learning gaps in basic skills, especially among disadvantaged learners, as well as supporting learners with the potential to be high performing. It should also include other non-educational staff, such as school doctors and nurses, psychologists, cultural mediators, language therapists, student counsellors in multi-professional teams.

(10) Improve systematic advice and support services to all schools on evidence-informed practice, prioritising institutions with greater needs. Enable feedback for practice to inform policy and research, including by using EU initiatives such as the forthcoming network of advisory and support services.

(11) Strengthen the accessibility, safety, maintenance and climate **resilience of school buildings** and infrastructure to heatwaves, extreme weather events and other climate-related impacts, in cooperation with the authorities responsible for the facilities.

(12) Ensure that the public **status and social recognition** of the teaching profession is adequately reflected in national policies and public communications and promote the recognition of teachers as qualified professionals exercising expert judgment.

Strengthen initial teacher education and continuing professional development

(13) Strengthen the access to and the quality of **initial teacher education**, by:

(a) taking into account and addressing barriers to accessing and completing initial teacher education, including tuition fees, student housing costs and other barriers;

(b) reinforcing the support provided to initial teacher education providers, while fully respecting their autonomy, to bolster their ability to attract talented and diverse students into initial teacher education programmes and sustain the students' motivation to graduate and become teachers;

(c) ensuring the relevance of teacher education regarding subject knowledge, pedagogical practices, and skills needed for classroom challenges, and better adapting teacher education to the full scope of teachers' professional responsibilities, including by encouraging and supporting cooperation between initial teacher education providers, research, teachers and school leaders;

(d) promoting structured, practice-based learning opportunities and professional integration beginning in the early stages of initial teacher education.

(14) Reinforce **induction** and **continuing professional development**, in particular by:

(a) broadening access to structured **induction** programmes, including mentoring and participation in professional learning communities, while considering a reduced teaching load; supporting the dedicated professional preparation of staff having a mentoring role and ensuring that early-career teachers are not assigned more demanding classes or responsibilities until completion of the induction phase;

(b) ensuring that **continuing professional development** is relevant and responsive to evolving needs, strengthening quality assurance mechanisms including the evaluation of the impact of professional development on teaching practice; fostering collaborative practices, classroom observation and peer-learning in schools for teachers to continuously reflect on their practice; removing barriers

such as accessibility, time, replacement cover or participation costs; and in that context, considering the use of individual learning accounts and micro-credentials, in line with the European approach to micro-credentials, while taking into account national needs and circumstances;

(c) ensuring diverse professional development opportunities for VET teachers and trainers, including company internships, professional exchanges, secondments and professional networks;

(d) supporting teacher appraisal and professional review systems that inform professional development and contribute to educational quality.

(15) Foster a **European dimension of teacher education and professional development**, in particular by:

(a) creating strategic and sustainable European partnerships of teacher education providers and, in particular using the Erasmus+ funded Teacher Academies 2.0 to design modern, flexible and inclusive teacher education aligned with evolving needs, and benefit from excellence beyond national boundaries. Encourage authorities responsible for teacher education and professional development to join Teacher Academies 2.0, according to national circumstances;

(b) promoting student teacher, teacher and staff mobility by reinforcing access to language learning, and funding, and by ensuring that time is available for these activities, including teacher replacement where needed to maintain teaching provision;

(c) fostering transnational cooperation, in particular by promoting participation in European School Alliances, and by promoting also the visits by experts from other Member States, job shadowing and teaching or training assignments in schools abroad;

(d) supporting schools, especially those serving disadvantaged pupils, embedding learning mobility for staff and transnational activities in their school development, including by helping them access and use EU instruments, such as Erasmus+, and tools such as the European School Education Platform and e-Twinning, which offers schools a secure online space for shared projects and teacher collaboration;

(e) ensuring formal recognition of skills and competences acquired through learning mobility and transnational cooperation, in line with national regulations and context;

(f) improving the recognition of teachers' professional qualifications across Member States, in line with the relevant Union directives.

(16) Strengthen and respect teacher **professional standards and competence frameworks.** Ensure that they align with educational demands, are tailored to career stages and education levels, and are supported by assessment, recognition and improvement mechanisms. Balance subject knowledge with pedagogical competences and transversal competences.

(17) Strengthen teacher preparation and support to deliver **citizenship education** at all levels of education, uphold democratic values in the classroom, deal with controversial topics, facilitate informed and respectful discussion and support students' critical thinking and awareness.

(18) Improve teacher preparation to understand and identify **educational disadvantage** and **high performance,** and to offer targeted support that enables every learner to reach their full potential.

(19) Support school leaders, and the teacher community, to **prepare for, respond to and recover from crises** which disrupt education, such as cyber-attacks, pandemics and natural disasters, through continuity arrangements coordinated with the competent authorities.

Strengthen teachers' agency in the age of artificial intelligence

(20) **Ensure that digital technologies and AI remain under meaningful human oversight and support teachers' professional judgement**. Ensure that digital technologies and AI are selected and used where educationally justified and appropriate to learners' age, in ways that support educational quality, professional autonomy and staff well-being, that technology supports learning effort rather than replacing it, and that human interaction remains at the heart of teaching. Involve teachers and their representatives in decisions on the introduction of AI in education.

(21) **Support teachers in developing digital and AI literacy and, where relevant to their responsibilities and learners' ages and needs, the competence to teach about AI and use it appropriately, in particular by:**

(a) including digital and AI competences, and their pedagogical use, in initial teacher education curricula and in teacher professional standards, in line with the updated European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu);

(b) enhancing access to quality-assured professional development on the pedagogical use of AI, including its use to support learners with special needs and disabilities, and awareness to prevent discriminatory biases, with dedicated time allocated to this and, where relevant, recognition, including through micro-credentials;

(c) supporting teachers in adapting assessment practices to preserve their validity in the age of AI, including through professional development;

(d) supporting teachers in developing pupils' AI literacy, as appropriate to their ages and applicable curricula, drawing on the EU-OECD AI Literacy Framework for primary and secondary education;

(e) supporting teachers in addressing the challenges raised by digital technologies, including disinformation, cyberbullying and the risks of excessive use for the development of reading, writing, mathematical competences, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

(22) **Involve teachers, teacher education providers and experts in digital technologies and AI in the design of teacher education.** Support structured, multi-stakeholder partnerships between education institutions and teachers, teacher education

providers, researchers and educational technology companies to co-design teacher training that is aligned with national or regional curricula. Such cooperation should focus on the pedagogical use of technology rather than on training in specific products, while safeguarding pedagogical independence and transparency about commercial interests.

(23) Foster the use of AI when it helps to **reduce administrative burden** and help teachers and school leaders manage their workloads more efficiently, while ensuring human oversight so that AI-driven administrative and classroom systems are not used for intrusive tracking or algorithmic monitoring.

(24) **Provide teachers the tools, infrastructure and support they need where AI use is educationally justified.** Ensure that teachers have access to safe, age-appropriate and pedagogically sound AI tools and to a trusted digital education infrastructure and ecosystem, including through the co-creation of educational solutions bringing together teachers, industry and researchers, and through cooperation at Union level on interoperable digital education infrastructure.

Invest and deliver

(25) **Support dialogue with the aim to build a shared understanding** regarding the challenges involved and the measures required to make the teaching profession more attractive in particular by:

(a) in accordance with national law and/or practice and while respecting the autonomy of social partners, promoting an enabling environment for social dialogue, including collective bargaining;

(b) recognising teachers as partners in shaping the future of education by encouraging regular, structured dialogue between teacher unions and employers' organisations at all appropriate levels in accordance with national law and practice;

(c) where relevant, taking supportive action allowing employers to provide attractive, supportive working conditions and to address identified workforce and organisational needs;

(d) strengthening partnerships between VET providers, enterprises, including SMEs, chambers of commerce and industry, and social partners to support the recruitment and retention of VET teachers and trainers.

(26) Implement the necessary **reforms** and ensure adequate and sustained **investment** from national and regional budgets, seeking greater synergies between EU and national funding programmes under the current and next multiannual financial framework (2028-2034), in particular to:

(a) reflect the reform and investment needs on the teaching profession identified in particular in the European Semester (in the Council Recommendation on human capital in the EU and the country-specific recommendations) and other

relevant measures in the programming of the proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans[13];

(b) use Erasmus + and the related measures under the National and Regional Partnership Plans, when appropriate, to support initial teacher education, induction and mentoring, continuing professional development, and measures to attract and retain teachers and trainers, notably in disadvantaged, rural and remote areas and in shortage subjects and priority sectors.

(27) Promote, support and contribute to **research, experimentation, evaluations, evidence-building, capacity-building and sharing of effective practices** in teacher education, recruitment and retention at local, regional, national, Union and international level.

(28) Translate evidence and consensus into an **implementation strategy** at the level of the education system, through existing or updated national or regional strategies, to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, in line with the above recommendations, with clearly defined objectives and implementation timeline.

(29) Make use of the High-Level Group on Education and Training to review strategic issues addressed in this Recommendation. The High-Level Group should receive support and draw on expertise as it requires, including from exchanges with stakeholders in the context of the EEA Working Group under the second cycle (2026-2030) of the strategic framework.

Reinforce implementation through European cooperation by:

(30) inviting the European social partners in education and other representatives of the teaching profession to the High-Level Group on Education and Training twice a year, to promote a closer and regular European dialogue with the teaching profession and to allow for a European-level discussion on key priorities and challenges in education and teaching that need to be addressed to strengthen Europe's human capital, without prejudice to the competences of the Member States and to the role and autonomy of the social partners;

(31) further supporting the implementation of this Council Recommendation through mutual learning and exchanges with other Member States and all relevant stakeholders, and by supporting capacity building and policy learning on the teaching profession through:

(a) the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area (2026-2030), including the EEA strategic framework Working Group, peer counselling and the Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training;

(b) a Commission report by 2031 on the implementation of this Council Recommendation, drawing on the Education and Training Monitor and the European Semester;

(c) sharing successful practices, policy guidance and practical tools to support system-level and school-level actors, using the online platforms and communities of practice

[13] Without prejudice to the ongoing negotiations on the future financial framework

for education and training, in particular the European School Education Platform, including eTwinning.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council
The President