

The Transforming Education Summit: A Toolkit for Education Unions

Education International
July 2022



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Education International (EI)

Education International is the voice of teachers and education workers around the world. Through our 383 member organisations, we represent more than 32 million teachers and education support personnel in 178 countries and territories.

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Introduction

For the first time ever, the Heads of State of the world are meeting to discuss progress in education. Convened by the UN Secretary General, the *Transforming Education Summit* (TES) is taking place on 19 September 2022 in New York. It is a very important opportunity for us as education unions to make our voices heard.

The Summit is a crisis response: it aims to reverse the downward trends that we currently see in education, with deepened and exacerbated inequity, and cuts to education budgets. Not only is the [world off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 \(SDG 4\)](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has wiped out 20 years of education gains. This is why the UN Secretary-General is calling for urgent action. The Summit is the biggest international education event since the adoption of SDG4 and a significant political opportunity for all EI member organisations.

What is the purpose of the Summit?

The Summit seeks to mobilize political ambition, action, solutions and solidarity to transform education: to take stock of efforts to recover pandemic-related learning losses; to reimagine education systems for the world of today and tomorrow; and to revitalize national and global efforts to achieve SDG-4.

<https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit>

What is the TES and how can you get involved?

There are multiple ways that education unions can engage in the lead up to the Summit. This toolkit includes EI's key policy messages for the Summit and aims to support EI member organisations in their advocacy efforts to ensure the Summit has concrete, tangible outcomes that advance teachers' status and rights and the fulfilment of the right to education for all.

The one-day Summit is the culmination of a broader process which includes national consultations and a Pre-Summit event.

National Consultations

The first stage of the TES process is taking place at the national level because progress on education is made at country level and requires a contextual approach. The UN Secretary General has invited all member states to organise national consultations in the lead-up to the Summit. 105 countries held a consultation before the Pre-Summit. Others will be held between now and September.

The purpose of these consultations is to develop a shared vision for transforming education in the national context. It is a moment to take stock, discuss priorities and agree on new initiatives for the implementation of SDG 4. Importantly, these consultations will also help set the level of ambition for the Summit and EI strongly encourages you to participate in them.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

→ Demand your right to be part of the national consultation!

It is the responsibility of the government to plan the consultation, and they have been instructed to include all stakeholders, including education unions. You can find the official guidelines for organising the consultation [here](#).

EI has been assured of education unions' right to participate in this process, and anyone who has any trouble in this regard should contact Antonia Wulff at: antonia.wulff@ei-ie.org.

The Pre-Summit

As part of the preparations for the Summit, **Ministers of Education** met at a [Pre-Summit](#) at UNESCO in Paris on 28-30 June 2022. This was an opportunity for the education community to have more in-depth discussions about progress, challenges and strategies moving forward.

With 154 Ministers and vice-Ministers of Education taking part, the Pre-Summit was the largest meeting of Ministers of Education. This signals a high level of commitment ahead of the Summit in September. Many of the ministerial statements have been uploaded and we encourage you to have a look at what your Minister said [here](#).

A small Education International delegation attended the Pre-summit [and brought the voice of the profession](#) to the different discussions and side events.

The Summit

The Summit itself is going to take place on 19 September 2022 at the United Nations in New York. It is a high-level meeting held in connection with the 77th UN General Assembly – and the first time that Heads of State meet to discuss education.

The Summit has the power to set the tone and the level of ambition for the collective SDG4 efforts over the coming years. The exact format of the Summit is yet to be determined but there will be space for Heads of State to make statements, outlining their commitments to education. The expectation is that many will present new national initiatives and/or be part of different regional/global “spotlight initiatives”. The UN Secretary-General will publish a “Summary and Call to Action” where he reflects upon the outcomes of the event and makes recommendations for the future.

EI is part of the Advisory Committee for the TES and is working to influence the Summit Agenda as well as to ensure that teacher voices are heard at the Summit. We are currently investigating opportunities for an event by, for and with teachers in connection with the Summit. On World Teachers' Day (Oct 5), EI will publicly follow up on the commitments made at the Summit.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Request a meeting with your government to discuss national priorities and commitments ahead of the Summit. Please find a model letter in Annex I.
- Push for your Head of State to commit to attending the Summit in person and to include an education union leader in the national delegation to the Summit.

To find out more about the Summit, see [here](#) or [here](#).

Priority areas of the Summit

The UN has identified five thematic priorities for the summit. These so-called action tracks cover five areas that are preconditions for making progress on SDG 4 and transforming education systems.

The **five tracks** are as follows:

- 1 EQUITABLE, SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS**
- 2 LEARNING AND SKILLS FOR LIFE, WORK, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**
- 3 TEACHERS, TEACHING, AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION**
- 4 DIGITAL LEARNING**
- 5 EDUCATION FINANCING (DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL)**

While EI is influencing each of these areas, we worked especially hard to ensure that **there is a dedicated track to teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession**. Now is the time for governments to deliver on their promise to fulfil every child's right to a trained and qualified teacher. To this end, Education International is calling for a "new deal for teachers":



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To transform education, governments must:

1. **Increase** investment in quality public education systems.
2. **Guarantee** labour rights and decent working conditions.
3. **Invest** in quality teacher training and professional development.
4. **Trust and respect** teachers and their pedagogical expertise.
5. **Involve** teacher unions in policy through social dialogue.



Examples of commitments under this umbrella include:

Country commitments to end the teacher shortage.

As part of efforts to end the teacher shortage, we call on all governments to set and ensure they meet ambitious [national benchmarks](#) on the percentage of trained teachers, with specific targets for all levels of education by 2025 and 2030, respectively.

Country commitments and global cooperation to support strengthened social dialogue mechanisms in the education sector.

Governments should commit to strengthening real and effective social dialogue mechanisms and respect the right of all teachers to unionise and bargain collectively, whether in the public or private sectors. Donor countries and international organisations should come together to ensure compliance with international labour standards and support teacher union engagement in policy development and the strengthening of institutionalised social dialogue mechanisms.

Government use of [the EI-UNESCO Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards](#)

These professional standards can be used to develop and/or strengthen countries' national teaching standards. Standards defined in collaboration with teacher unions are crucial to maintain and raise the status of the profession and ensure quality teaching.

Education International's Key Messages by Track

In the next section of this toolkit, we outline the key messages that EI is bringing to the Summit. These messages are informed by a consultation that we held for members on 7 June 2022. We hope that knowledge of education union messages at the global level can support your advocacy at the national level.

1. *Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools*

Education International's advocacy on this track is focused around the following three pillars:



1 Make equity and inclusion a top priority.

No student should be denied their right to quality education. Governments must urgently address the exacerbated inequities following the pandemic and accelerate progress towards universal completion of primary and secondary education.

Ensuring the provision of gender transformative education is a key component of inclusive and equitable education systems. Teachers must be trained and supported to promote gender equality. This includes quality initial teacher education and professional development on gender transformative pedagogies to teachers at all levels of education.

Particular attention must be paid to inclusion of students with disabilities, migrants and refugees, LGBTIQ students, indigenous students, students affected by crises and students with compound disadvantages, taking an intersectional perspective. Beyond access, curricula and learning materials must be inclusive, teachers trained in inclusive pedagogies and targeted interventions made to support the most vulnerable.

2 Guarantee student and teacher safety and wellbeing.

Education institutions around the world are threatened by war, violent attacks and climate induced extreme weather events. Governments must ensure that they are protected and that every student and teacher's right to learn and work in safety without fear of attack or natural disasters is guaranteed. The adoption and implementation of the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) and the [comprehensive school safety framework](#) are good starting points. Both students and teachers should receive the support necessary to foster their wellbeing.

3 Remove all cost-related barriers to education.

Despite governments' SDG 4 commitment to provide free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, cost remains a barrier for many students. Currently households account for 30% of total education spending globally and 39% in low and lower-middle income countries. All direct and indirect costs of education should be abolished, and targeted support made available to disadvantaged students.

Education International Resources

- [Auditing Educational Equity in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [The bedrock of inclusion: why investing in the education workforce is critical to the delivery of SDG4](#)
- [Gender Equality Action Plan 2020 – 2023](#)
- [Effective and Equitable Education Recovery: 10 principles](#)
- [International Barometer on Education Personnel's Health and Well-Being](#)
- [Rethinking disability: A primer for educators and education unions](#)
- [Are we there yet? Education Unions assess the bumpy road to inclusive education](#)

2. *Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development*

Education International's advocacy on this track is focused around the following three pillars:



1 Ensure a broad notion of quality at all levels of education.

A quality education goes beyond the basics of numeracy and literacy. It provides people with the critical knowledge, abilities and skills that are needed to conceptualise, question and solve problems that occur both locally and globally, in line with the right to education. Governments must invest in quality education for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, and sustainable development through curricula reform and teacher training.



2 Ensure quality climate change education for all.

Quality education at a time of climate crisis must include climate change education. Every student should enjoy quality climate change education. It should be included in curricula at all levels of education, be based on science and address the ethical, cultural, social, economic and political aspects of climate change, and foster civic action. Teachers need to be trained, supported and involved in both design and implementation.



3 Targeted investment in equitable early childhood and post-secondary education

Whilst global investment and attention often centres on primary and secondary education, it is vital to expand access to early childhood as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education. Governments must ensure quality at all levels, including through trained, qualified, and well-remunerated teachers, and abolish tuition fees, particularly the prohibitive costs of early childhood education. TVET must provide students with holistic skills for both life and work, enabling a just transition to a green economy. Governments must increase public investment in higher education and research across subjects and domains.

Education International Resources

- ▶ [Education International's Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All](#)
- ▶ [EI's Climate Education Ambition Report Card: An analysis of updated Nationally Determined Contributions submitted to the UNFCCC](#)
- ▶ [Teach for the Planet: An Education Unionist's Guide to Climate Education Advocacy](#)
- ▶ [Teachers Have their Say: Motivation, skills and opportunities to teach for sustainable development and global citizenship](#)
- ▶ [Global Trends in TVET: a framework for social justice](#)

3. *Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession*

Education International's advocacy on this track is focused around the following three pillars:

1 Invest in teachers.

Every child has the right to a qualified teacher. Governments must urgently end the teacher shortage and ensure recruitment and retention. To make teaching a lifelong career, teachers must be valued, supported, and well remunerated, enjoy quality professional development opportunities and mentoring, manageable workloads, a healthy work-life balance and working conditions that support their mental and physical wellbeing.

Investment in the profession is crucial. Austerity policies and public sector wage bill constraints that put downwards pressure on the teacher wage bill must be rejected and governments must instead view investment in teachers as an essential investment in quality education. There are no short cuts when it comes to ending the teacher shortage – short term solutions such as hiring un(der)-qualified, cheaper contract teachers will impact on children's futures.

2 Involve teachers.

Teachers and education support personnel are at the heart of successful education systems. Being in the classroom working with students every day, educators are best placed not only to identify and evaluate problems, but to find solutions for improving education systems. Teachers and education support personnel should be recognized as key partners for transforming education systems and be involved in policy planning through collaboration between governments and education unions. For this to happen, we need immediate action to strengthen social dialogue mechanisms and ensure that the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining is enjoyed by educators worldwide.

3 Trust teachers.

Teachers must be qualified and as professionals, their skills, knowledge and expertise must be respected. High stakes and punitive accountability must be replaced with systems that trust teacher professionalism and teachers' professional decision making. Professional autonomy as well as academic freedom must be guaranteed, and educators must be empowered to be agents of transformation.

Education International Resources

- ▶ [The Global Report on the Status of Teachers 2021](#)
- ▶ [Teacher professional development and curriculum: Enhancing teacher professionalism in Africa](#)
- ▶ [Learning from the past, looking to the future: Excellence and equity for all](#)
- ▶ [Report from the 2021 International Summit on the Teaching Profession](#)

4. *Digital learning and transformation*

Education International's advocacy on this track is focused around the following three pillars:

1 Ensure access to digital tools for students and teachers.

Governments must address digital inequalities by improving access to digital tools and materials, and connectivity both students and teachers. Copyright laws must be reformed to address the use of digitally supported education and



investments made in Open Educational Resources. Teachers, education support personnel and school communities should be involved in developing digital strategies that work for local communities, including the most marginalised. This may include developing other forms of technology—analogue and other broadly used technologies, such as educational television and radio.

2 Ensure technology supports teachers and pedagogy.

Governments must not use technological advances as an excuse to neglect every child's right to a qualified teacher. Technology is a tool for teachers, which can support them to provide quality education. Teachers should be involved in decisions related to educational technologies through social dialogue with education unions. This will ensure that the technology is relevant and useful and not an additional burden for teachers. Teachers must also have the right to disconnect – collective bargaining is essential to define teachers' roles and responsibilities in the face of a changing work context.

3 Stop commercialisation of education through edtech.

The rise in edtech products has contributed to an increasingly commercialised education landscape. Governments must ensure democratic control over education systems and favour free, open-source technology and resources for digital education.

In addition, governments must go beyond corporate data-driven approaches to education. Data collection and research relating to students' digital lives must respect their privacy and meet the highest ethical standards.

Education International Resources

- [Commercialisation and privatisation in/ of education in the context of Covid-19](#)
- [Pandemic Privatisation in Higher Education: Edtech and University Reform](#)
- [Teaching with tech: the role of education unions in shaping the future](#)
- [A Review of Technology in Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Is it Legal? Education and Copyright in the Digital Age](#)
- [E-commerce, Education and Copyright: A Policy Brief](#)

5. *Financing of Education*

Education International's advocacy on this track is focused around the following three pillars:

1 Increase the size and share of education funding through tax justice.

Education financing is in crisis: there is a \$148 billion-dollar annual financing gap to achieve SDG 4 and this could be exacerbated by almost a third as a result of government responses to the COVID pandemic. Governments should invest in public education by both increasing the size of national budgets and increasing the share of finance going to education. They must meet the financing commitments outlined in the 2030 Framework for Action: 20% of total government expenditure and 6% of GDP on education must be reached.

To increase the size of national budgets, we need both domestic and global tax justice. In addition to increasing the tax base domestically, it is essential to ensure that all companies pay their fair share of tax and that tax loopholes are closed. Austerity must be rejected. Debt relief and debt justice is also crucial to ensure that education spending is not curtailed by debt servicing obligations.

2 Invest in teachers and reject austerity.

Teachers should not be considered a cost but an investment. Austerity, including public sector wage bill constraints, must be rejected and instead adequate investments made in the education workforce. Qualified teachers and education support personnel with decent employment conditions and attractive salaries are crucial for quality education. The only way to stop teacher shortages is through investment in the profession.

3 Ensure free public education for all students.

Governments are the duty bearers to the right to education and are responsible for ensuring quality, equity and inclusion in education. Education privatisation that threatens quality and equity, including the proliferation of so-called 'low-fee private schools', commercialisation of public education, and misguided public-private partnerships, must be reversed. Education is a public good; it must be predictably, sustainably and sufficiently funded and not commodified. Equitable funding formulae should be developed to deploy resources to the geographical areas, institutions and communities where they are needed most.



Education International Resources

- [Education International's Roadmap to Financing Education](#)
- [The Public versus Austerity: Why public sector wage bill constraints must end](#)
- [Teacher Wage Bill Constraints: Perspectives from the Classroom](#)

Concluding Remarks

The Transforming Education Summit is a crucial moment for the education community. It is an opportunity to collectively agree on how to rapidly accelerate progress on SDG 4. However, if teachers are not part of this conversation, then there is no conversation.

Thanks to EI member organisation's daily work and struggles, Education International does have a seat at the table in organizing this Summit. But getting to the table is only the first step. We now need to ensure that our voices are heard.

Education International will bring the perspective of teachers across the world into discussions at the Summit, and we hope that this toolkit will support you to ensure that teachers' voices are heard in the Summit preparations at the national level too.

Do you have any questions or concerns, or want to find out more about TES and how you can get involved?

Please get in contact with EI's Policy, Advocacy and Research Director, Antonia Wulff at antonia.wulff@ei-ie.org.

Other Useful Resources

- [Transforming Education Knowledge Hub](#)
- [Off Track: EI's 2019 Assessment of Progress on SDG 4](#)

Annex 1. Model letter to your government

Dear XX,

I am writing regarding the upcoming Transforming Education Summit, convened by the UN Secretary General on 19 September at the United Nations in New York.

As the first-ever education meeting of Heads of State, this is a much-needed opportunity for world leaders to renew their commitment to quality education for all. Now is the time to address the deepened inequities in education exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, consider the necessary transformations of education systems and teacher policy, and take action against the shortage of qualified teachers.

Our union, [name of union], represents [teachers] at [level of education]. We are committed to playing our part in the transformation of education and are seeking an opportunity to meet with you to discuss our proposals.

In brief, we are calling for a new deal for teachers, aimed at supporting the profession, increasing its attractiveness, and ensuring that the necessary conditions for transformation are in place. Such conditions include decent working conditions, quality teacher training and continuous professional development, professional autonomy and representation in national policy-making through social dialogue. This fits well under the action track on teachers, one of the priority areas of the Summit, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

[We were pleased to contribute to the national consultation and look forward to continuing the conversation about how we best support transforming education in our national context.]

[Regrettably, we have not been given the opportunity to contribute through the national consultation and we are therefore particularly interested in discussing with you.]

I thank you in advance and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,



Annex 2. Communications toolkit

It is very important that our messages reach Heads of State, as well as the broader education community, and union activists everywhere. Raising awareness of the Summit and what is at stake can help increase pressure on governments to act decisively to transform education.

To support you in your communication efforts, we have created a dedicated communications toolkit for the Transforming Education Summit. The toolkit is available online, on the EI website, at <https://eiie.io/transform>.

The toolkit includes suggested social media posts, images, and a video explaining the Summit and rallying support for transforming education.

The online toolkit will be updated regularly as we approach the Summit so, please check in regularly for new materials.





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