



Education International  
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**RE: Trade union rights and collective bargaining in Serbia**

Brussels, 12 November 2009

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of Education International (EI), the Global Union Federation of education unions which represents over 30 million teachers and education workers in 172 countries.

EI has been informed by the Teachers Union of Serbia (TUS) about the failure of the Serbian government to fulfil its commitment to negotiate on the material status of employees in education before November 15, as defined in the existing collective agreement. The freeze of wages in the public sector does not prevent the authorities from negotiating terms and conditions of employment with the workers organisations. Quite the contrary.

The Serbian authorities have also recently entered into a commitment with the IMF to implement structural spending reforms, including in the area of public employment and pensions. Consultation with the workers organisations about the implementation of the conditions attached to such loans would indicate that social dialogue, as recommended by the European Union, is valued by the authorities of Serbia.

EI would like to remind the government of the Republic of Serbia of its obligations to secure the right to trade union organising and collective bargaining, as defined in ILO Conventions 87 and 98. The involvement of social partners is necessary to assure a climate of constructive dialogue and smooth implementation of reforms, especially in times of crises.

EI believes that the best strategic response to the economic crisis is to invest in education, not to cut spending. Through its member unions around the world, EI is working hard to ensure that all governments include education at the core of their plans for economic recovery. Such investment in education must include investment in teachers, in order to have well-motivated, well-trained, well-supported and fairly remunerated teachers.

Education International therefore asks the government of the Republic of Serbia to:

- Immediately fulfil its obligation as defined in the collective agreement to enter negotiations with the teacher organisations;
- Include trade unions of all sectors in the implementation mechanisms of the conditions for the IMF loan;
- Invest in education and in teachers to secure long-term economic recovery.

Thank you for your consideration of this very serious matter.

Yours sincerely,

Fred van Leeuwen  
General Secretary

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