



## **ASSOCIATION OF LITHUANIAN TRADE UNIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

to:

Martin Romer  
General Secretary  
European Trade Union Committee for Education  
Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
B1210 Bruxelles  
Belgium

Vilnius, June 18, 2010 No. 2010/13

Dear Mr. Martin Romer,

By this letter we, Federation of Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Unions (FLESTU) including Association of Lithuanian Trade Unions of Higher Education (ALTUHE), as the representatives of employees of Lithuanian universities and colleges are going to pay your attention on deterioration of the financing for education and research in Lithuania. This situation is the result of such predictors as the lack of social dialogue, ignoring the priority of education, experimenting with free market paradigms in the area of education and science by the Lithuanian Government, ignoring the evidence and experience of socially oriented European countries. Also we are asking for your intervention in assisting for the social dialogue between the Government and the professional organization of employees of education and science sector in Lithuania.

One year ago Lithuanian Government has started the reform of higher education by elaboration of new Law on Science and Studies (30-04-2009; N. XI-242). Our trade union has criticized these unbalanced reforms extensively and carried out many public actions. Community of university teachers, other employees understand the need of changes in this dynamic area of advanced knowledge economy. However, acceleration of trends towards privatization of education services, establishing strict free market principles of reimbursement (bank lawn system) for students provide a lot of negative effects for the staff, students and the whole society. The following negative consequences were observed after the start of these radical revolutionary but not socially acceptable reforms of the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science:

- Increased inequalities in access to higher education for less affluent groups of young people;
- Occurring the high number of students study loan bearers with life-long commitments, who are forced take the loans from the private banks;
- Emigration abroad of young people including secondary school graduates;
- Emigration of young teachers and researchers;
- Loss of work places for university teachers and researchers etc.

The recent reforms are conducted in the period of the global economic recession and are followed by significant (up to 15-20 percent) decrease of financing for the universities. Research sector also is badly affected - 30-40 percent cuts were applied for employee places at many research institutes in Lithuania starting from January 2010. Basic financing for research is planned to reduce to 50% of its requirement in 2011. At the same time alternative, grant based and competition oriented funding system is not developed properly.

In addition the significant increase of accreditation requirements for researchers and university teachers was imposed by the bureaucratic and research elite related Research Council of Lithuania - newly established and free market oriented institution. Their new Regulation on Minimal Qualification Requirements (12-10-2010, N. VII-20) was approved without any discussion and without any social dialogue with community of researchers (Lithuanian Scientific Society) and without consultations with Association of Lithuanian Trade Unions of Higher Education (it is a part of FLESTU) or representatives of administration of the universities, research institutes. This unprecedented decision was criticized by researchers and university teachers, but continues disturbing our academic community. Such dialogue ignorance and financial mismanagement, in context of the budget cuts, which are carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science, seems are aiming to increase the commercialization of the educational and research sector and leads to privatization, decrease of work places of the university employees and also the number of students at the universities.

We, representatives of the Lithuanian trade unions of the universities and colleges, understand importance of the international support and solidarity and are asking for your any possible intervention, advocacy and advice in solving the mentioned above problems of social dialogue in our country.

dr. Asta Lapinskiene



Chair of Association of Lithuanian Trade Unions of Higher Education (ALTUHE)  
Co-Chair of Federation of Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Unions (FLESTU)