

World Confederation of Teachers (WCT)

After a discussion within the World Confederation of Teachers (WCT) for participation in the WSIS-forum we will present our text-suggestions for the Action Programme of the WSIS/UNESCO. We focus on the chapters 'General discussion', 'Acces' and 'Education, training and research'.

Our suggestions are :

1. General discussion :

- 1.1 the member-states and the international community have to take into account the enormous differences between the rich and the poor countries and acknowledging the fact that eliminating the distinction between information-rich and information-poor countries is critical to eliminating other inequalities between developed and developing countries;
- 1.2 the governments and the international community have to take up their responsibility for enough public financing measures to guarantee the equal opportunities for 'the education for all' , real opportunities for all countries in line with the Framework of Action as adopted in Dakar in 2000;
- 1.3 the member-states and the international community have to be aware of that technology has a role to play in the elimination of the division between the developed and developing countries, but that without rapid progress towards universal primary education, the foundations needed to close the 'digital divide' between rich and poor will not be in place;
- 1.4 the member-states and the international community have to realize that so far efforts to address the 'digital divide' have focused on the development of grandiose, multibillion dollar schemes for technology transfer, but that in countries where fewer than one in two children progress through the primary-school-system, where most leave the system without basic numeracy and literacy skills and where mass-illiteracy prevails, no amount of technology will have the desired effect;
- 1.5 public funding for education should remain a national responsibility and priority and must be the main financing resource since sponsoring or unilateral dependency from foreign powers would lead to unacceptable inequality between schools, rural areas and cities, between countries and regions because of a dependant relation and an unjustified influence of the sponsor on the curriculum and the organization of the school system, at the detriment of the cultural diversity, the identity, the values and the historical context of the education system concerned.

2. Access.

2.1 in the information society member-states and the international community has to realize more than ever the access of everybody to knowledge; the education system plays a very important role to realize this and it is the responsibility of the member-states and the international community to invest more in 'education for all' and the production of qualified educational software;

2.2 the governments have to stimulate or initiate the cooperation between education institutes, distance-education institutes, libraries and the media, as radio and television, so that the realization of the access of everybody to knowledge comes nearer;

2.3 governments have to consider that ICT can and should be the means of improving education and strengthening union rights by facilitating access to information;

2.4 governments have to consider that ICT can and should be the means of improving democracy, however they have to realize too that ICT also can generate inequality between developed and developing countries and between the privileged and the disadvantaged in all countries.

3. Education, training and research.

3.1 in the growing impact of new information and communication technologies (ICT) in education and training and in the day-to-day life of the people all over the world, governments have to be aware of the danger that overemphasising the importance of ICT in education could result in neglecting the basic pedagogical tasks of education as the teacher plays a foremost part in the personality development of the pupil/student and he is therefore an essential actor in social inclusion;

3.2 the governments have to take in consideration the conclusions of the strategic plans of the G-7, the European Union, the OECD, the relevant programmes from UNESCO, the ILO, the Council of Europe and other international bodies in relation to the introduction of ICT and e-learning in education and training, the development of adequate hard- and software, the implementation of ICT as a tool to be integrated in the pedagogy and the new visions on learning in the education systems;

3.3 the governments have to recognise that no amount of technology transfer will be able to compensate for the huge inequalities in education that divide rich from poor;

3.4 the governments have to take up their responsibility for financing the conditions for implementing new visions on learning in the initial and in-service-training of teachers, in the infrastructure for help-services and research, a free of charge internet-connection for all schools and for adequate equipment in ICT (hard- and especially software) as one of the important tools to reach the new goals of education in the 21st century; all governments have to provide major investments to reach these goals;

3.5 the member-states and the international community has to recognise that cross-border E-learning is likely to have a major influence on the future development of educational services, especially in higher education - it will increase the number of students taking foreign courses, it will accentuate the need for an agreed international quality framework for higher education, it might reduce the growth rate of international student mobility - and that growing cross-border activities will most likely accentuate national concerns to regulate these activities;

3.6 the governments and the boards of educational institutes have to negotiate in a transparent manner with the teacher unions about :

- the changing working conditions of the teachers and the educational personnel in the developing process from teaching to learning in the schools and universities also to prevent stress caused by overloaded tasks and expectations;
- the accreditation systems for ICT-training and the conditions for mobility, nationally and internationally;
- the new role and responsibility of the teacher and the educational personnel, the necessary competencies they need and the new possibilities for their career paths in the changing organisation;
- the facilities for their life-long-learning on the quality of their profession and the facilities for the development by themselves of quality-standards for the profession.