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On the Importance of Well-being for the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in the European Education Area

Recommendations from the Erasmus+ Teacher Academy
Teacher Education for a Future in Flux (teff)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This White Paper was developed by the Erasmus+ Teacher Academy *Teacher Education for a Future in Flux (teff)*, to examine and recommend ways in which teacher well-being can strengthen the attractiveness of the teaching profession within the European Education Area (EEA). The results from cross-national surveys and collaborative research across ten European partner institutions reveal a tension between factors that attract and detract teachers to the teaching profession: While teachers are motivated by their impact and contribution to society, they face systemic challenges including high workload, administrative burden, and limited participation in decision-making. In order to address this tension, we recommend (1) early support of realistic professional expectation formation; (2) strengthened practice-oriented, research-based and well-being-informed initial training; (3) enhanced teacher agency and involvement in educational development opportunities; (4) expanded professional learning communities and European mobility opportunities; and (5) embedded well-being as a core indicator of educational quality across the EEA. We further recommend systematic monitoring of teacher well-being and sustained policy commitment to create resilient, attractive teaching careers across Europe.

I. WELL-BEING FOR A FUTURE IN FLUX

Teachers, teacher educators, and school leaders are the cornerstone of EEA efforts to build resilient and inclusive systems that promote quality and equal education; they “are and have always been the most important factor in education” (OECD, 2025, p. 3). Due to the pivotal role teachers play in shaping future political, economic, cultural, and ecological societies, it is in the interest of European policymakers to secure the attractiveness¹ of the teaching career. Especially in times of high teacher shortage across Europe, assessing the attractiveness of the teaching profession can help to understand inflow and retention rates (European Commission, 2023). If attractiveness is defined as the extent to which teaching is chosen as a preferred career path and sustained over time (OECD, 2025), it is worth considering attractiveness in light of individual motivations and the systemic conditions in which career decisions and retention are based.

New pathways to increase attractiveness, especially in light of teacher shortages all over Europe, are needed. Stemming from profession-related factors such as high workload, stress, and limited opportunities to realise professional development (European School Education Platform, 2025), as well as broader systemic issues related to working conditions, institutional support, and the capacity for meaningful change (OECD, 2025), teacher shortages reflect the degree to which education systems

¹ Attractiveness can be understood as the extent to which teaching is chosen as a preferred career path and sustained over time, influenced by a combination of individual motivations and systemic conditions (OECD, 2025).

provide coherent, supportive, and professionally meaningful environments in which teaching can be sustained over time (Martinkevica, 2026). While common strategies to attract future teachers focus on competitive salaries, recruitment measures, and public recognition, research shows that working conditions, professional autonomy, and also well-being are equally decisive factors in both entering and remaining in the profession (OECD, 2025).

We introduce well-being to this consideration. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), well-being can be defined as, “a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions.”

However, the definition of well-being extends beyond the medical model. Taking the definition from Layard and De Neve (2023), well-being can also be understood as “how you feel about your life, how satisfied you are. We do not mean the external circumstances that affect your wellbeing. We mean the thing that ultimately matters: your inner subjective state – the quality of your life as you experience it, how happy you are” (p. 1). The effects of well-being are wide-reaching: Teacher well-being, “teachers’ responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions pertaining to their work and their profession” (Viac & Fraser, 2020, p.18) also needs to be regarded as the important resource that it is. It is crucial not only for the well-being of teachers, but also for maintaining the quality of education (Roffey, 2012).

Occupational well-being is determined by the (school) system and vice-versa. It is increasingly recognised that well-being not only supports retention and recruitment, but also contributes to improved learning environments and outcomes. It is thus worth investing in well-being in education systems, and make it “available to schools that want happier learners, better learning outcomes and thriving communities” (Balica, 2026). Yet, well-being to-date plays a marginalized role in debates on practices and policy (OECD, 2020; Eurydice, 2021). To address teacher well-being at the policy level, “requires a systematic approach that acknowledges the intricate interplay between workplace demands and available support” (Dreer-Göthe, 2026, p. 17). This White Paper is a result of a co-creative process spanning three years with the intention of contributing towards a systematic approach to an otherwise complex and understudied field. We offer research-based recommendations for policymakers, higher education institutions, and educational stakeholders committed to strengthening the teaching profession within the European Education Area.

The following five recommendations for strengthening the attractiveness of the teaching profession through the lens of well-being are based on the work of the Erasmus+ Teacher Academy (TA) “Teacher Education for a Future in Flux” (*teff*). This TA was funded by the European Commission from 2023–2026 to offer pre-service and in-service teachers cross-phase training and professional development opportunities on future-oriented topics on digitalisation, sustainable development, diversity and well-being. Ten European universities, schools, further education institutions and the support of regional federal state education ministries recommend the further integration of well-being into teacher education and professional practice. This academy also works in cooperation with the Teacher Education Arena of the European University initiative *EUniWell* (European University for Well-being).

This paper is based on two complementary surveys conducted across the *teff* consortium in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and The Netherlands. The first survey targeted student teachers at the beginning of their studies, while the second focused on in-service teachers across the same countries, in order to capture perceptions, expectations, and lived experiences across different stages of the teaching career continuum. They aimed to scientifically identify key challenges and opportunities related to professional well-being in education. The study references the Tripartite Occupational Well-Being Scale (Collie, 2024), the EBED Teacher Well-Being Scale (Rebolo & Constantino, 2020), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and the EU Survey on Attractiveness of Teacher Careers (European School Education Platform, 2024) – this theoretical foundation informed the formulation of the research questions and overall study design.²

² The research sought to explore key patterns and relationships identified in prior literature while remaining open to emerging insights from the data. A structured, cross-sectional design was employed, combining two surveys (Survey A: Student Teachers and Survey B: In-Service Teachers). Notably, there

While this White Paper could only incorporate selected representative findings from the survey, several *teff* partners intend to present a more comprehensive overview of the results in the near future.

UNIVERSITY	COUNTRY	ABBR.	N =	
			SURVEY A <i>student teachers</i>	SURVEY B <i>in-service teachers</i>
KU Leuven	Belgium	KUL	28	18
Linnaeus University	Sweden	LNU	22	10
Nantes University	France	NU	116	29
Oslo Metropolitan University	Norway	OM	103	0
University of Florence	Italy	UniFi	121	10
University of Cologne	Germany	UoC	340	8
University of Helsinki	Finland	UoH	48	5
University of Murcia	Spain	UoM	76	17
Utrecht University	The Netherlands	UU	89	11
Saxion University of Applied Sciences		SUAS	48	

Results from *teff* activities such as *teff* Educathons, the co-creation of an online course on Teacher Well-being or collaborative work at partners meetings served to inform the following recommendations, ensuring the involvement of perspectives across all phases of teacher education – from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to further training.

were substantial differences in sample sizes across countries, which were carefully considered in the interpretation of the non-representative results. Data analysis followed an analytical strategy applied consistently to both datasets, ensuring coherence and comparability within the study's scope. Quantitative responses were analyzed using standardized procedures, while open-ended responses were examined qualitatively to identify recurring themes and trends. These trends were used to complement and contextualize the quantitative findings. Importantly, the study did not aim to conduct direct cross-country comparisons. Instead, analyses were performed within each national context to account for structural differences in sample composition and to avoid overgeneralization.

II. FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

RECOMMENDATION I

Continuously reinforce the societal value, professional meaning, and autonomy of teaching throughout all phases of teacher education and professional development.

Prospective teachers enter their studies with a highly positive and idealistic perception of the profession. Student teachers regard teaching as both attractive and deeply meaningful. In line with the recent results of the TALIS survey (OECD, 2025), high numbers of students across different *teff* countries perceive teaching as a meaningful career³ and believe that teachers can make a genuine difference in students' lives,⁴ indicating strong intrinsic motivation.

While intrinsic motivations, such as purpose and impact, are strong indicators of attractiveness (Ryan & Deci, 2000), a cooperative and supporting working environment⁵ and professional autonomy⁶ is also strongly connected to teacher well-being for many first year *teff*-students at the beginning of their teaching career as well as by in-service teachers. As one of the Dutch teacher participants stated: *"It is important that I, as a teacher, can maintain my autonomy, use my creativity, and contribute in the way that feels most natural and effective to me"*. This suggests that the decision to pursue a teaching career incorporates both idealistic and pragmatic considerations.

At the same time, the early enthusiasm is tempered by an awareness of structural and professional challenges associated with the profession already at the beginning of their studies.⁷ This demonstrates that a strong sense of purpose that characterizes the teaching profession is worth nurturing during ITE as well as in ongoing professional development, reflective practice, and institutional recognition structures.

This goes hand in hand with the overall appreciation of teachers – in schools as well as in public opinion and from society.⁸ The attractiveness of the profession is shaped by its public representation, impacting those who have not yet considered entering the teaching profession. Campaigns highlighting the societal importance of teachers⁹ should therefore be strengthened at national and European level, particularly in the context of ongoing teacher shortages as a means to tackle the negative reputation of the teaching profession in the public eye of many EU countries (EC, 2023). As one UoM student said: *"Make society understand that teachers are essential for children's education and that their well-being should be a priority"*. Another student from LNU further pointed out that *"the way teachers are treated today is problematic, considering that they are responsible for educating an entire generation"*.

Offering professional development opportunities that address declining appeal, factors that hinder teachers' well-being, and teacher shortages for initial teacher educators can help students assess their expectations and develop realistic, and manageable, teaching expectations (e.g. through Educathon s or

³ For example, 100% of the student teachers at SUAS, 99% at UoC and UU, 93% at OM, 98% at UoH, 89% at UoM, 83% at UniFi and 85% at NU agreed to the statement "Teachers have a meaningful and socially valuable job".

⁴ For incident, 99% at OM, 97% at UU, 92% at UoC, 95% at NU, 92% at UniFi, 91% at UoM, and 81% at UoH agreed that teachers can support and inspire students in their personal growth.

⁵ 77% of UoH student teachers and 70% of UoC students anticipate the aspect "Feeling part of a supportive team" to take up quite a bit / a lot of space in their daily life as a teacher.

⁶ 90% of students at UoH, 81% at OsloMet, 66% at SUAS, 64% at UniFi, and 64% at UU agreed that teachers have autonomy in designing lessons and choosing teaching methods.

⁷ For example, 73% of UoC students, 72% of OM students, 68% of SUAS students, 65% of UoH students, and 58% of UU students anticipate challenging pupil behaviour as one of the main challenges in their future profession. 68% of LNU students and 84% of UoM students expect a to struggle with high workload and their work-life balance.

⁸ In the *teff* surveys, teachers from Belgium highlighted the need for "a change in public opinion on teaching" and "more appreciation by society".

⁹ Such as *"Doe iets wat ertoe doet / Do something that matters"* (The Netherlands) or *"Was ist deine LehrKRAFT? / What's your teaching superpower?"* (Germany)

Blended Intensive Programmes to explore these issues from various perspectives, including international ones).

Sustaining both the idealism and the attractiveness of the teaching profession requires aligning its intrinsic value with supportive external conditions. By doing so, the profession can maintain its strong appeal among newcomers while also preserving enthusiasm and commitment among experienced teachers and supporting long-term teacher retention and recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION II

Strengthen practice-oriented and well-being-informed teacher education to better prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the profession.

Research highlights the importance of early, authentic, and well-supported practical experiences during Initial Teacher Education, as strong links between theory, practice, and mentoring contribute to the attractiveness and perceived relevance of teacher preparation programmes (European Commission, 2013). Developing sustainable teaching careers depends on a realistic portrayal of the profession from the outset of teacher education: *"Little is known about what teachers actually do besides teaching their profession"* (UU student). Challenges associated with administrative work, documentation requirements, or organisational responsibilities form a significant part of teachers' everyday professional reality across Europe and should not be overlooked. If these concerns are not explicitly addressed, there is a risk of mismatched expectations, which may contribute to feelings of unpreparedness and lower long-term retention.

To avoid such expectation gaps, ITE should be more systematically designed around the practical (*"Having a university course more directed towards the work"*, UniFi student) while simultaneously fostering research-based, practice-oriented, and well-being-informed professional competencies that are guided by robust professional standards that ensure coherent preparation and readiness for practice. Practical phases contribute towards strongest sources of motivation¹⁰ and engagement for student teachers, while also providing early exposure to administrative tasks, collaboration with colleagues, documentation duties, and communication with parents and external stakeholders.¹¹ Well-structured internship programmes with transparent task distribution, reflective elements, and strong mentoring systems can therefore serve as important models across Europe. Perceived support structures during practical phases – an aspect highlighted by Dutch students – can contribute significantly to students' professional confidence (cf. Klassen & Durksen, 2014) and well-being, especially in reflective and supportive learning environments.

ITE supports the development of professional resilience, teacher agency, reflective practice, and constructive approaches to professional challenges. Teacher well-being should be an integral dimension of professional competence and sustainable career development. Structural challenges within the profession also need to be addressed.

Across several participating countries, teachers partaking in the *teff* survey identified administrative burden as a major factor negatively affecting workload, professional satisfaction, and overall well-being¹². This is consistent with previous findings highlighting non-teaching tasks as a top unattractive factor of the teaching profession (EC, 2025; OECD, 2025). Reducing unnecessary administrative demands should therefore be a policy priority across Europe.

¹⁰ Rated as such by 86% of LNU students, 83% of UoC students, 81% of students at UoM, 76% of students from OM, 75% of UoH students and 72% of students at UU.

¹¹ Which was expected to be one of the most prominent challenges awaiting them in their future profession among student respondents at OM (94%), UoM (83%) LNU (82%), UoC (57%) and UoH (54%) and UniFi (39,7%).

¹² Italian teachers stressed that the teaching profession had become "increasingly bureaucratic", having to spend "too much time on computers" while a SUAS student even wished for "a part of the day off for administrative matters so that you are really free in the evening". German teachers called to "reduce teachers' administrative workload through additional administrative staff directly in school" and "refocus on core teaching tasks" to improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession. One French teacher stated that "administrative work has become so overwhelming that some highly valuable pedagogical projects are abandoned because paperwork and revisions require more time than the projects themselves".

The EU could support Member States through recommendations on simplifying documentation requirements, digitalising administrative processes, and strengthening administrative and multi-professional support structures in schools. Cross-European exchange on effective administrative structures – in the *teff* surveys, administrative burden was not mentioned at all by Finnish teachers – could further help identify successful national approaches that improve teachers' working conditions and allow them to focus more strongly on pedagogical and relational aspects of their work.

The future of teacher education hinges on a systemic shift towards realistic, action-oriented, and well-being-informed ITE that proactively supports sustainable professional identity formation and long-term teacher retention.

RECOMMENDATION III

Strengthen cross-phase teacher education through European learning communities, professional exchange, and mobility opportunities.

Social well-being is an individual responsibility and collective characteristic of supportive educational environments and healthy school cultures. The social dimension of teacher well-being plays a central role in teachers' professional lives and long-term engagement with the profession (McCallum & Price, 2010; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

In the *teff* surveys, student teachers and practicing teachers emphasised the importance of feeling connected to others, exchanging experiences, and learning collaboratively¹³: *"Taking time each day to talk with students and create a climate of trust and kindness is essential so that students feel heard, safe, and able to learn and grow"* (teacher from France). Additional protective factors for well-being and professional engagement included: mentoring structures, peer exchange, and supportive professional environments. This highlights the importance of strengthening collaborative structures and professional exchange throughout all phases of teacher education and professional development (*"strengthen collaboration between services, schools, and local organizations"*, UniFI student).

Teacher education programmes should place greater emphasis on networking competencies, interprofessional collaboration, and communication across stakeholder groups, including colleagues, school leadership, parents, and external support professionals. Such competencies are increasingly essential for building collaborative and resilient school cultures. At the same time, strengthening collaboration must be accompanied by clear institutional boundaries and supportive policies that protect teachers' well-being. Examples of this include transparent communication structures and reasonable expectations regarding digital availability.

In this context, professional learning communities and communities of practice – such as those initiated in *teff* – can provide important frameworks for strengthening collaboration across different phases of teacher education. They enable participants to exchange ideas, discuss challenges, co-create solutions, and act as critical friends. Cross-phase and cross-national exchange is particularly valuable as it connects pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, researchers, and policymakers (cf. Springob et al., 2023). This helps reduce fragmentation between stages of teacher education while strengthening professional identity, collaborative competencies, and a shared understanding of educational development across Europe. Promoting mobility opportunities for both prospective and practicing teachers therefore deserves particular attention. Exposure to different educational cultures, school systems, and professional traditions can broaden perspectives, strengthen reflective practice, and foster innovation in local contexts.

The EU should therefore further strengthen and expand European exchange platforms, professional learning communities, and mobility programmes for teachers and teacher educators. Short-term mobility formats should receive particular institutional recognition and structural support, as they are

¹³ Collaboration and exchange with fellow student teachers were named a key factor for motivation by 76% of UoC students, 72% of UoH students, 64% of UU students and 56% of SUAS students.

often easier to integrate into teachers' professional lives while still providing meaningful professional and intercultural learning experiences. European best-practice platforms could additionally facilitate exchange on topics such as healthy school leadership, collaborative school culture, teacher well-being, prevention of burnout, inclusive education, and innovative pedagogical approaches.

By enabling teachers to learn with and from one another across institutional and national boundaries, European education systems can strengthen both professional development and the long-term attractiveness of teaching careers across Europe.

RECOMMENDATION IV

Strengthen teacher agency, participation, and involvement in educational development and decision-making processes.

Preserving the attractiveness of the teaching profession requires the recognition of teachers as active partners in shaping the future of European education. Accordingly, criticism expressed by student teachers and practicing teachers should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment to the profession, but rather as a valuable resource for the development of education systems. As indicated by student teachers in the *teff* survey, teaching continues to be perceived as highly meaningful, socially relevant, and personally fulfilling. At the same time, both students and teachers increasingly report concerns about structural challenges within education systems, including limited translation of research into practice, insufficient mental health support, excessive administrative demands, and perceived inconsistencies in educational reforms.¹⁴

Among in-service teachers, these concerns become more concrete and experience-based. Respondents highlight challenges such as excessive bureaucracy, inadequate infrastructure, large class sizes, inequalities between schools, and increasing administrative and political pressures. As one teacher from UoC noted: *"What's challenging is the time spent on administrative and organizational tasks, so that actual teaching and preparing good lessons actually make up only a fraction of a teacher's job"*. Importantly, these reflections are not expressions of disengagement, but of daily professional reality.

The persistence of strong intrinsic motivation under such conditions demonstrates professional commitment rather than withdrawal. Teacher criticism should therefore be understood as a form of professional insight that can inform educational improvement.

From this perspective, strengthening teacher agency, professional autonomy, and participation in decision-making processes becomes a key lever for enhancing well-being, motivation, and long-term retention. Professional development is closely linked to processes of recognition and autonomy within organisations, as individuals are more likely to engage in professionalisation when their competencies are acknowledged and when they are given meaningful opportunities to act autonomously and contribute to organisational change (Wittorski, 2008). Teachers who are able to shape their working environment, contribute to school development, and participate in institutional decision-making report higher levels of job satisfaction and well-being (OECD, 2025).

In contrast, insufficient communication structures and predominantly top-down reform processes can contribute to frustration, alienation, and declining trust in educational institutions. These dynamics are also reflected in specific organisational and systemic conditions. In some contexts, teachers report being assigned to teach subjects outside their area of expertise. In France, for example, teachers may also experience limited influence over their geographical placement due to a centralised allocation system (*"Allow student teachers to remain in their preferred cities instead of having to move to remote*

¹⁴ Spanish teachers stressed that "teachers' professional judgment regarding students should not constantly be questioned by administrations and families. Fewer bureaucratic protocols and more practical action are needed, and existing protocols should lead somewhere instead of getting lost." / "Educational laws need reform; the current education system is outdated, with excessive paperwork that makes it impossible to manage everything effectively".

or *undesired regions*", NU student). Such conditions highlight the importance of ensuring not only formal employment security, but also meaningful professional autonomy.

Teacher education should not only prepare future teachers to function within existing systems, but also enable them to critically reflect on and actively shape educational practice. ITE and continuous professional development should therefore place greater emphasis on professional agency, reflective practice, democratic participation, and collaborative school development. Approaches such as job crafting may further support teachers in actively shaping aspects of their professional roles, thereby strengthening ownership, resilience, and long-term satisfaction.

At the systemic level, communication and cooperation structures between teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, researchers, administrators, and policymakers should be strengthened. Teachers need clear and accessible channels to raise concerns, contribute ideas, and participate meaningfully in educational development processes. Educational reforms should be developed through transparent, evidence-informed, and participatory approaches rather than predominantly top-down or short-term policy cycles.

By taking teachers' perspectives and participation seriously and embedding them structurally in decision-making processes, education systems can better align institutional conditions with the professionals who can improve these conditions from the inside out, an institution's best resource.

RECOMMENDATION V

Embed teacher well-being as a key indicator of educational quality within the European Education Area throughout all phases of teacher education and professional development.

Future-oriented teacher education should embed well-being as a core dimension across all phases of teacher education and professional development, rather than addressing it reactively, after stress, exhaustion, or burnout has occurred. Results from *teff* activities and findings from both *teff* surveys underline that well-being should no longer be treated as an additional or secondary topic within education systems, but as a central prerequisite for high-quality teaching, sustainable professional engagement, and resilient school communities. In the surveys, across participating countries and institutions, both student teachers and practicing teachers emphasized the importance of well-being-related topics within teacher education and professional development. In various *teff* Educathons, concrete ideas and products supporting the well-being of (future) teachers were pitched, e.g. with a specific focus on the lack of social and economic recognition, on poor working conditions, on the role of training and career guidance and on empowerment and professional identity.

From ITE to further training, this requires moving beyond an exclusively performance-oriented understanding of educational quality. We recognize that teacher well-being is closely connected to student learning, school climate, professional collaboration, and the long-term attractiveness of the profession. The emotional, relational, and social dimensions of the profession are as essential to attractiveness of the profession as the other requirements of a typical teacher education.

Particular attention should be given to the integration of well-being into practical phases of teacher education, which often represent students' first sustained encounter with the realities, pressures, and emotional complexity of teaching. Mentoring structures, reflective seminars, peer exchange, and supportive supervision during school placements can play a key role in helping student teachers develop realistic professional expectations, sustainable working habits, and an awareness of their available resources from the very beginning of their careers.

Teachers' well-being is strongly influenced by working conditions, leadership culture, collegial relationships, administrative demands, and access to professional support structures. Teachers' work-life balance must therefore also be focused on non-teaching tasks: "*Teaching does not stop when you leave the school building, unlike most office jobs*" (UU student). Embedding teacher well-being within

a whole-school approach therefore requires supportive institutional cultures as well as accessible support systems throughout teachers' careers.

The EU could play an important coordinating role by strengthening the position of teacher well-being within the European Education Area. This could include the development of shared European minimum standards and recommendations regarding psychosocial support, workload management, communication structures, and supportive working environments in schools. Positioning teacher well-being as a key indicator of educational quality would help ensure that discussions about educational excellence explicitly include the human and relational conditions under which teaching and learning take place.

By anchoring teacher well-being as a core dimension of educational quality within the European Education Area, European education systems can contribute to more attractive, resilient, and future-oriented teaching careers.

III. OUTLOOK

Prioritising teacher well-being is a critical investment in the future of education, as it directly impacts the attractiveness and sustainability of the profession within the European Education Area (Harju-Luukainen et al., 2026). To foster a thriving educational landscape, systematic monitoring and evaluation of (future) teacher well-being – comparable to existing educational indicators – should be established across Europe. The EU can play a pivotal role in supporting the regular collection of comparative data on professional satisfaction, mental health, workload, and overall well-being across diverse educational contexts. This evidence base is essential for developing more informed policies and for enabling Member States to identify both risks and effective practices.

Importantly, these developments must be situated within a broader recognition of the teaching profession itself. Teacher education is one of the most complex professional preparation processes, combining disciplinary knowledge, pedagogy, psychology, ethics, communication, and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. The competencies developed in teacher education are increasingly aligned with what is often described as 'future skills' in broader policy discourse. In this sense, teaching can no longer be framed as a secondary or devalued profession. It involves responsibilities comparable in complexity and societal relevance to fields such as medicine, particularly in its long-term impact on human development, equity, and societal cohesion. As one UU student stated in the *teff* survey: *"[We need] more emphasis on the existence of the profession as a necessary and important job which people choose to do to enrich the next generation"*.

At the same time, the rapid development of artificial intelligence adds a new layer of urgency to these considerations. AI is already reshaping educational processes, from lesson planning and assessment to personalised learning and administrative tasks. While AI offers opportunities to reduce workload and support teaching, it also raises important questions about professional autonomy, pedagogical judgment, data ethics, and the evolving role of teachers. Rather than replacing teachers, AI is likely to redefine aspects of their work, making human relational, ethical, and interpretative competencies even more central. This reinforces the need for teacher education and CPD to include critical digital literacy and AI literacy as core components, ensuring that teachers remain active agents in technologically evolving educational systems.

Ultimately, these efforts will have significant implications for educational policy, teacher education, and recruitment and retention strategies, paving the way for a more attractive, resilient, and sustainable teaching profession within the EEA.

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