

**Education and training in OECD countries:
Some good news but TUAC sees no room for complacency**

A well educated and well trained workforce is essential for social and economic development. Trade unions therefore, have got a strong interest in ensuring appropriate investment into education and training. Moreover, they are also committed to ensure equal access to education and training. In this regard the new edition of *Education at a Glance 2003*, the annual edition of OECD indicators on education, presents some good news: in a broad range of learning activities participation has increased, the demand for learning and training opportunities is tending to rise.

However, “notwithstanding the progress reported by the OECD, there is no room for complacency regarding education and training policies. There are challenges which need to be addressed immediately”, said TUAC General Secretary *John Evans*. He expressed particular concerns regarding the following aspects:

- There is a striking contrast between the public rhetoric on education and training and public spending on education. In around two-thirds of OECD countries the proportion of GDP devoted to educational institutions has decreased in recent years.
- Access to education is uneven despite increased enrolment. Participation patterns and progression through education vary widely within and between countries. Job related continuing vocational training offered by employers remains mainly restricted to young prime age male employees, who are already well trained.
- The increasing unattractiveness of teaching is causing a shortage as well as a lack of future supply of highly qualified and motivated teachers. This requires decisive action to improve working conditions and training opportunities for teachers.

TUAC urges the OECD to give more attention to ongoing efforts to make lifelong learning a reality for all. The 2004 edition of *Education at a Glance* should focus more on issues regarding access to lifelong learning. It must analyse and document opportunities to participate in lifelong learning in greater detail. Moreover, it must shed further light on investment of employers in training and in continuing vocational education.