



Closing remarks by Susan Hopgood, President of Education International

This has been a very positive summit. Teacher union leaders and ministers have jointly shared the responsibility for taking part in the summit discussions. There has also been a major shift in understanding about teacher unions' capacity to meet teachers' professional needs.

It is abundantly clear throughout these discussions that teacher unions must be at the centre of their members' professional lives. We have learned of positive experiences in several countries where trade unions took on responsibility for in-service training for their members. The UK, the United States, the Netherlands, Denmark and my own organisation, among others, are just a few examples of this. They show us that these programmes need to be developed and delivered by teachers themselves and not implemented by bureaucrats.

This is a professional learning opportunity for all of us.

And it's not just the unions that are saying this. Andreas showed us in his report yesterday that a profession's practices must be determined by its members. This cannot be done by outsiders. This is what our findings have always said, and now we have the OECD's slide to support it. It is time that we make this a reality by listening to teachers.

The Summits are based on the shared understanding that without highly qualified and motivated teachers, countries would not have functioning and effective education systems. - and without education there are no free democratic, safe, and secure societies. This is why this summit was so special.

Visiting schools to see teachers in classrooms we are reminded of the reason we are here. But, the visits here in Berlin, and I think we all agree, showed us how important and central teachers are in all children's lives. What we saw was teacher leadership first-hand.

For the children we met, many here in Germany without their families, education provides them with an opportunity that was taken from them. Maybe most importantly, the experience showed us that the refugee crisis is not just a news story in a troubled region. These are real children who continue to overcome incredible hardships, and their teachers are working to guide them through this new life.

EI is currently planning on convening a forum of teachers and their unions in countries with a large influx of refugees to enable the sharing of good practice. We also hope that through this initiative we can influence and encourage governments and societies to meet their moral and legal responsibilities. As a profession we accept our responsibility.

Continuous professional learning and development is so very important, as it always has been, because it allows teachers to address the varied and changing needs of the children they teach.

This is why teachers must have the freedom to determine what their professional development needs are.

Policies supporting teachers' learning and their self-confidence to influence education policy and practice are vital to an effective and self-sustaining profession. Our experience as EI is that teachers' unions themselves can be and are providing teacher learning and vital professional spaces for the profession.

This is the reason why the ISTPs are unique. They are the only event in which the representative organisations of teachers and governments meet to discuss the future of the teaching profession. That is the strength of the Summits. They present an invaluable opportunity for teacher unions and Ministers to not only agree on objectives for the coming year but put into practice what OECD research recommends, to "build partnerships with education unions to design and implement reforms." We have seen some of those initiatives here in Berlin.

In closing, I would like to thank the KMK and our affiliates GEW and VBE for making this a great week. As we close the book on this Summit and look toward the seventh instalment next year, we see a growing enthusiasm from the teacher unions. Returning to teacher leadership, these Summits show just how infectious it is. The desire to continue building the profession through strong, honest, collaborative relationships with our governments is evident.

We are making progress for our teachers. Let us continue strengthening our profession for education for all students in all of our countries.

See you next year at the seventh summit.