

World Teachers' Day

Standing with teachers: 60 years of protecting the profession,
advancing its status and shaping our futures

5 October 2026

Concept note



Visit the [World Teachers' Day webpage](#) for more information.

Background

Sixty years ago, acknowledging the essential role of teachers in advancing education, and their contribution to individuals, economies and societies, the international community mandated UNESCO and the ILO to develop a normative instrument establishing common standards for the teaching profession. It sought to “*ensure that teachers enjoy the status commensurate with [their] role*”.

Today, teachers are expected to navigate transformations unforeseen in 1966: digital technologies and artificial intelligence, climate change, inclusion, migration, conflict and displacement, learner wellbeing, and increasingly uncertain futures. These pressures affect the profession's symbolic status, when teaching is not sufficiently recognised or valued; its professional status, when teachers lack autonomy, support, learning opportunities or voice in policy; and its material status, when salaries, workloads, resources and working environments do not allow teachers to fully exercise their role (UNESCO and

TTF, 2024; Arnold, B. & Rahimi, M. 2024).¹

Status was defined in 1966 as *“both the standing or regard accorded [to teachers], as evidenced by the level of appreciation of the importance of their function and of their competence in performing it, and the working conditions, remuneration and other material benefits accorded them relative to other professional groups”* (UNESCO, 2016, p. 21).

This definition, together with other UNESCO recommendations and normative instruments,² points to three dimensions of status: 1) symbolic, encompassing teachers’ social standing and appreciation; 2) professional, reflecting their authority, competence and responsibility; and 3) material, covering the financial support and enabling conditions needed to perform their role.

The notion of status, embraced in the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966), captures the expectations that societies place on teachers, but also the rights and obligations that accompany them. The Recommendation identified the responsibility of the State as duty-bearer, and, in some instances, teacher organizations and employers. It emphasizes investing in the profession to enhance the status of teachers in these three dimensions, but it only implicitly recognised the support that society, and institutions within it, can provide to sustain or elevate status.

The symbolic dimension – the appreciation and recognition of teaching as a prestigious profession and teachers as policy actors – requires a whole-of-society approach to ensure a positive public regard for the profession and facilitate the full realization of the Recommendation.

Likewise, teaching as a profession is built on bodies of knowledge, practice, and the codes of conduct and service that bring teachers together as a professional community. Professional identity and belonging begin in teacher education institutions and are sustained by actors that facilitate teacher professional development and career progression, such as universities, teacher councils and others. Societal trust in teachers and the autonomy and agency granted to them depend on their recognition as capable professionals.

Finally, labour rights and resources allocated to teaching and education sustain both the professional and symbolic dimensions cited above. Teachers’ working conditions shape students’ learning conditions; salaries, workloads and working environments determine teachers’ wellbeing and motivation, as well as the learning and wellbeing of their students and communities.

Since “status” is relational, teachers’ social standing also depends on the importance societies and actors attach to education, and their perceptions of its needs. These perceptions and expectations translate into legal, political and institutional arrangements that sustain or hamper teachers’ work and are intertwined with economic factors such as wages, working conditions, resource allocation and sustained public investment in education systems.

Therefore, the SDG 4 – Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee has focused on resilient education systems, highlighting that financing and the teaching profession are inseparable pillars of transformation and asserting that sustainable investment in education must go hand in hand with strengthening teachers’ status, working conditions, professional development and recognition. This is

¹ UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. 2024. Global Report on Teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession. Paris: UNESCO; Arnold, B. & Rahimi, M., 2024. Global Status of Teachers 2024. Brussels: Education International (EI).

² In addition to the Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997), UNESCO has used the concept of status to frame, among others the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers (1974), the Recommendation on the Legal Protection of Translators and Translations and the Practical Means to Improve the Status of Translators (1976), and the Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist (1980).

especially the case today, as the world needs 50 million more teachers to achieve SDG 4 by 2030.³

Sixty years after the adoption of the Recommendation, World Teachers' Day 2026 provides an opportunity to ask how societies envision the purposes of education today, the role of teachers in achieving them, and the obstacles to realising these purposes and enabling teachers to fulfil their role.

At a time when the Recommendation is being revised, World Teachers' Day will examine how effective policies are in elevating the status of teachers; whether these policies are negotiated through social dialogue and collective bargaining with teachers and their representatives; and the quality and availability of data and evidence used to ascertain teachers' "status" and determine policy actions.

Building on the call of the first World Summit on Teachers and its outcome document, the Santiago Consensus, adopted in August 2025, World Teachers' Day 2026 will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, discuss progress in its revision and call on society and policy-makers to protect, promote and elevate the status of teachers. It will also celebrate teachers' work and the progress enabled by the Recommendation, while considering its limitations, including challenges in monitoring and implementation.

Official international event to commemorate World Teachers' Day on 5 October 2026

The 2026 event will have three main objectives: (i) celebrate World Teachers' Day, drawing the attention of decision-makers and the international community to the chosen theme by sharing data, analyses and knowledge about the facts and challenges related to teacher status around the world, as well as promising strategies for addressing these challenges; (ii) advocate for changes in teacher status by calling on relevant actors to take action to address the challenges facing the profession; (iii) recognise innovations and promising practices in teacher professional development through the awarding of the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Teacher Development.

The international event will be hosted at UNESCO House in Paris, France. Participants will include heads and representatives of the co-convening agencies (UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF and Education International), as well as the highest representatives of the Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation for Medical and Educational Sciences (Hamdan Foundation). Ministers of Education, teacher educators, academics, representatives from youth and teacher organizations, and teachers themselves will also be present.

Format and registration

The international event will include two key moments: (1) a morning session featuring the official World Teachers' Day commemoration and the award ceremony for the 9th edition of the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Teacher Development, including a discussion with the 10 finalists on their innovative approaches and projects; and (2) an afternoon session featuring a high-level discussion with Ministers of Education and international experts on policy solutions to elevate the status of teachers and support the transformation of the teaching profession.

[Register for in-person attendance](#) by 30 September 2026.

To watch the event online, please refer to the information that will be posted on the [World Teachers' Day webpage](#).

³ This figure accounts for 44 million teachers needed to ensure universal primary and secondary education and an additional 6 million pre-primary educators needed by 2030 to meet SDG 4 targets (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024 and UNESCO & UNICEF, 2024)