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Report of the Closing Conference

Implementing and reinforcing
teacher trade union actions on
gender equality in times of austerity

Sofia, 25 – 26 September 2014



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«Rapport de la Conférence finale du projet: "Mettre en œuvre et renforcer les mesures des syndicats d'enseignants relatives à l'égalité des genres en période d'austérité»

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1 Introduction

The conference has been organised in the frame of the [ETUCE gender equality project 2013-2014](#). The project seeks to describe and discuss how the economic crisis and austerity policies have influenced gender equality in the teaching profession and within teacher unions. The final conference is the last activity among several activities that the ETUCE Secretariat has organised in the framework of this initiative. Apart from a seminar in Utrecht, ETUCE carried out an online survey and established an online information platform (SharePoint group) on gender equality issues in the teaching profession.

In her welcome words, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Bulgaria, Ms **Vania Kastreva**, remarked that it is crucial to be aware of gender equality in education. She emphasised that equal opportunities are a social responsibility for governments and education authorities and they cannot be easily skipped.

Janka Takeva, President of SEB highlighted discrimination, poor working conditions and low prestige in society that especially female teachers experience in Bulgaria nowadays.



Julian Petrov, President, PODKREPA remarked that Bulgaria had only recently started tackling gender equality and discrimination against women in the education system. For him gender education is the first step to reinforce women's position in public life.

Kounka Damianova, Chair of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality put the focus on the need to change people's attitude: *"Teaching social values such as gender equality to the students should be crucial in the teacher task. And the best example is to start with our behaviour"*.

Based on the findings collected from the ETUCE member organisations in the online survey and the other project activities (seminar and closing conference), a set of *practical guidelines for teacher unions for the further implementation and reinforcement of teacher union actions on gender equality in times of austerity* on how to promote gender equality in times of austerity was developed.



2 Aims of the conference

The main objectives which were reflected on the conference were:

- ☑ Present the results of the ETUCE online survey on the impact of the economic crisis on gender equality in the education sector and within national teacher union structures
- ☑ Find out what teacher unions can do to promote gender equality in times of economic crisis and budget cuts in education
- ☑ Discuss and amend practical guidelines to promote gender equality in the education sector and within teacher union structures
- ☑ Exchange different national approaches regarding the practical implementation of the guidelines at national/regional/local level
- ☑ Discuss how the social partners can contribute to gender equality in the teaching profession

3 The Project Advisory Group



Kounka
Damianova,
Bulgaria



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Benedetti, Italy



Dorota Obidniak,
Poland



Trudy Kerperien,
The Netherlands



H el ene H emet,
France



Maire Mulcahy,
Ireland



Ann-Christin
Hartmann,
Sweden



Teacher union representatives from seven countries work together in the project's advisory group. They come from Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, The Netherlands, France, Ireland, and Sweden.

4 Gender Equality in the Teaching Profession

Education has a twofold impact on gender relations in society. On the one hand, it is a sector of the labour market where women and men develop careers.

At present, the great majority of employees working in education are women, but the number of women decreases dramatically the higher one goes up the hierarchical scale of the education system. This is to say that there are relatively more women teachers in primary education than in lower and upper secondary education. With regard to leadership positions in education, women are underrepresented at all levels.

On the other hand, the education sector has a particular role and a major impact on other sectors and on society as a whole. School systems have the capacity to reproduce or transform gender relations. The interactions between girls and boys, female and male teachers shape gender relations and gender roles every day. This is why gender equality matters particularly in the education sector.

Studies have shown that gender roles have a major impact on the individual decisions of women and men. Gender roles may lead to stereotypical education outcomes and career choices (e.g. career paths, working arrangements, family, fertility, etc.). For example, although women account for nearly 60% of university graduates today their academic achievements are hardly reflected in their careers. Often women interrupt or slow down their careers to care for other family members



*"Women representation in trade union organisations should be higher and the balance between men and women should be improved in a professions dominated by women such as the education sector". Kounka Damianova
Chair of the Standing Committee for Equality*

5 Promoting Gender Equality in the Education Sector: Evidence from Data across the EU

Key Note Speaker

Anne Laure Humbert has been a Gender Expert (Research, Statistics, and Indices) at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) since 2012, where she works on the development of the Gender Equality Index and on the reports monitoring selected critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action.



She initially studied Mathematics and Statistics at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, followed by a Ph.D in Statistics, Gender and Entrepreneurship at Trinity College Dublin. She has been a Senior Lecturer at Middlesex University London and Visiting Scholar in several European universities. She has done extensive work in the area of women and/or gender within the economy and society, with particular attention to work and organisations, entrepreneurship, and the integration of work and life. She is also interested in the applications of advanced quantitative methods applied to comparative social and economic analysis.

Economic crisis and austerity policies have a major negative impact on gender equality in Europe. Although the first sectors that were affected by the financial and economic crisis were male-dominated sectors, such as construction and manufacturing, the situation shaped by austerity policies nowadays severely affects female employment and sectors where mostly women are employed, for instance in the education sector. The equal share of assets and equal dignity and integrity between women and men should be included

in curricula across Europe and put high on the agenda of trade union as a priority issue.

After 50 years of gender equality policies in Europe with an average score of 54% the EU remains far from reaching its gender equality aim although its overall score shows that it is half way there.

The range across Member States shows the large amount of variation throughout the EU in the level of Gender Equality achieved in the European Institute for Gender Equality overall. Sweden, Denmark, Finland and The Netherlands, are clearly leading the ranking of the Member States. Even like that the numbers should continue to improve because Europe is far from the best score.

Work: Only two-thirds of the way towards equality in the domain of work with four member states going over the threshold of three-quarters of the way towards gender equality (UK, Sweden, Denmark and Finland)

Moreover, the gap that exists between women's participation in the labour force and the Europe 2020 targets because of part-time work is predominating.

According to full-time equivalent employment rates for women, all Member States fall short of meeting their national targets. A total of 15 Member States obtain a difference between the headcount and the full-time equivalent employment rate that is between 10 and 19 percentage points¹ A further 8 would need to increase women's full-time equivalent

¹ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, France, Cyprus, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden

employment rates by between 20 and 29 points to meet their national targets² The biggest gap, with 32 percentage points, can be found in The Netherlands.



Men who are working part-time, do so mostly because they could not find a full-time occupation, but in the case of women due to personal and family responsibility as ‘looking after children or incapacitated adults’ together with ‘other family or personal reasons’ is the main reason why women have a part time job.

Gender gap is a historically demand.

In relation, the gender gap that exists in the income, earning and pensions is growing each day. According to data from the European

Institute for Gender Equality the Gender Pay Gap difference was 16% in 2011. This mirrors in pensions, where in 2009, the gender gap was 39%.

Transmitting gender equality values through the education system is fundamental. The education sector is uniquely positioned to promote gender equality, not only in the teaching profession but more widely in society. That is why teacher unions have to work to find strategies that allow teachers to reconcile work and family life, both for men and women. And the key for that is education from gender equality perspective.



Share of part-time work by Member State and sex, 2012, 15-64



6 Gender Equality in Teacher Unions in Times of Austerity

Project Expert

Angelika Striedinger, Research associate and PhD student at the University of Vienna, gave an overview on the preliminary results of the online survey.



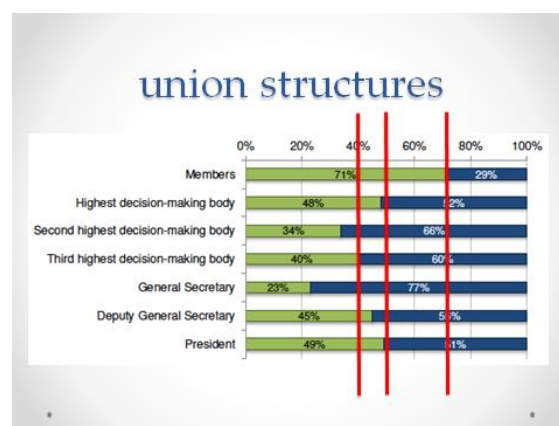
Angie's research centres on organisation sociology, academic careers, and gender. She has worked on issues related to gender inequality and organisations, both in the framework of her academic education and research, and in the context of student representation, for over a decade. Through her work in the European School Student Union (OBESSU) in 2001, and in the European Student Union from 2004 to 2006, she gained insight into the European education landscape. From 2009 to 2012, she worked in Education International on equality issues, co-organizing EI's first World Women's Conference, writing EI's 2011 Quadrennial Report on the Status of Women, and preparing the EI Gender Equality Action Plan.

In most teacher unions gender equality issues are not seen as a priority because in the higher decision-making positions gender equality is not considered to be a critical issue. Therefore there are not enough financial/personal resources and equality work is embedded in other units as a minor priority.

There is also a lack of information and statistics about gender equality. This affects all sectors and teacher unions. In most decision-making meetings gender equality is understood as side issue. It is very important

to have a female expertise and men qualified on gender equality issues to be more involved on the high-level meetings; and for that Data resources are essential.

Teacher unions should try to find a way to achieve gender equality in the out-dated union structures. The difference between the membership numbers, (71% women) and the top positions in teacher unions that are highly filled by men is significant.



The economic crisis and governments' austerity measures have indeed gendered effects. For instance reconciliation of work and family life is now more complicated for women teachers. GL Denmark realises after a data survey that the need for psychological support aid in the female teacher is increasing nowadays. Another inconvenience from the crisis budgets cuts is that support centres and services for victims of violence are decreasing. As a consequence violence against women is increasing around Europe.

What can Teacher unions do?

Backlash against / disinterest in feminism
 → Gender knowledge, awareness
 Difficulties in reconciliation union/care duties
 → Arrangements to facilitate reconciliation
 Personality traits: confidence, assertiveness → Leadership trainings.

7 Social partners contributing to Gender Equality in the Teaching Professional

Panel Discussion



Kounka Damianova
SEB (Bulgaria)



Gitta Franke-Zöllmer
Chair of the ETUCE Women's
Committee



Anne Laure Humbert
Gender Expert at EIGE



Helen Fairfoul
(UCEA) UK



The panellist agrees that teachers have a mission: to show younger generations from a different and equal gender stereotype model. Appreciate the teachers own ability to understand equality should be appreciated and for that is crucial to have academy freedom and reinforce the teacher power on

the society. Women teachers should be the example, if they do not change themselves, there is no way that younger generations will change.

Solidarity in this interconnected world is crucial in order to achieve strong international organisations working together on gender equality, pulling in the same direction. Gender equality should be one of the priorities of our member organisations.

The panellists agree that the main problems in the teaching profession concerning gender equality issues encompass 6 big areas:

7.1 Gender Stereotypes in Curricula:

Equality initiatives which tackle and challenge the hidden stereotypes they should be adopted as an important issue in the programme. One of the biggest problems is the socialisation of young people.

The low visibility that equality values have in the curriculum is dangerous because it supports the continuation of non-visibility of this issue in the education sector. The trend that we can observe in young people and the sexualisation from early childhood is worse every day and reinforces attitudes in favour of gender inequality. Education Staff have the opportunity to change things, by focusing their knowledge on what gender means or what sexualisation means and this could be adapted to all education grades.

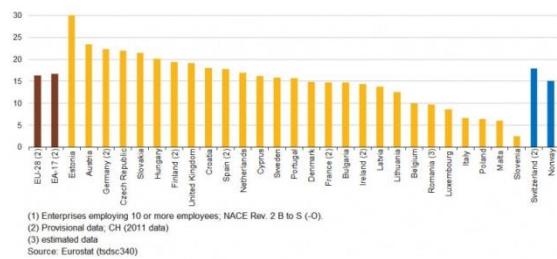
It is important to arouse the curiosity of both, boys and girls, in all areas of the curriculum to avoid the division by sex depending on the subject matter and further work.

Also, the impact of the media on the matter counts; e.g. 80% of the experts appearing in media debates are men. In a more interconnected world it is more necessary than ever to have gender balance in the media. The younger generations can build their stereotypes values and beliefs based on what the media presents.

7.2 Pay Gap/Pension Gap:

Pay inequality is a systemic practice in all employment sectors. The panellist agreed that it is necessary to be much more imaginative and determined in order to change that.

The panellists highlighted that it is more than ever necessary to agree on the measures which unions and the social partners should pursue so as to eradicate the gender gap in salaries in the immediate future.



Source: Eurostat

The gender pay gap is still wide.

Social Dialogue can and should help all organisations and education authorities to fix this historically unfair pay gap.

We need consensus between all social partners. Compilation of high calibre data is essential to achieve results at both national and European level.

“Without data an argument remains an opinion and opinion never wins an argument”

7.3 Work Life Balance:

“We would like to, but we don’t have the money” this is the catchcry that teachers heard frequently from employers. Better arguments and better resources are needed data resources to prove that work life balance is good for everybody. It is not easy to change women’s and men’s roles. Concerning the amount of working hours, teachers spend many hours in school and in many countries work-related stress is increasing in the profession. At the same time, it is imperative that both sexes have time for their union activities without discrimination against women.

Expectations → motherhood/fatherhood → the different roles that society promotes for men and women

7.4 Maternity Leave

Motherhood is still a cause of pay inequality in our society, even if the breastfeeding period in women’s working life accounts for only 3%.

Most economists believe the gap between women’s and men’s wages does not stem primarily from employers paying women less than men for the same job. It occurs mostly because men and women take different jobs and follow different career paths. Part of this difference may be a result of discrimination in hiring and promoting practices. Much, though, is a result of the constraints of motherhood.

7.5 Gender and Decision-Making Positions

Across the EU, women are underrepresented in positions of responsibility in all fields. The reasons for the under-representation of women in power and decision-making are multi-faceted and complex. Particularly at the highest levels, women are still largely outnumbered by men in leadership positions in politics and business, as well as in other fields. Here the trade unions should ask one question: why do women not vote for women in leadership positions? The reasons could be multiple, however it is clear that the majority of leadership positions are populated by men and societal expectations tend to match this. Teacher unions need to change the values that member organization expects from their leaders and moreover this expectation should avoid stereotypes. Again, Education is the key to change that.

7.6 Women in Higher Education

Women have to demonstrate more competence to reach the same position as men. In general women’s university career focuses frequently on typical fields like nursing or teaching. The generation of young women have to take the initiative and also study engineering and maths. Women’s organizations possess equality measures designed to achieve equal educational opportunities for women. Women’s in higher education should open their training fields and prove that women are equally capable of achieving in what might be stereotyped as a traditional male sphere of competence.

8 Outcomes

The discussion on the guidelines draft document was the working groups focus and in the plenary, the member organizations suggested several actions for teacher unions at national and European level.

These practical guidelines have been developed based on the teacher union online survey and the Utrecht seminar to which the ETUCE member organisations actively contributed. It is time now to open the network to new stakeholders so as to strengthen our influence at the European level decision making.

Following the discussion, the conference participants address the competences needed to tackle the challenges of gender equality in the teaching profession. Two main areas for specific teacher union action have been identified (European and national teacher union level).

European level: according to the discussion in the plenary session, recommended that there should be, gender balance in delegations to all ETUCE conferences. It advocated also the maintenance of a platform for sharing good practices and/or EU – funded initiatives in operation in schools and in unions.

ETUCE should challenge the promotion of international solidarity between teacher unions, especially in times of crisis. This solidarity that ETUCE represents is more necessary than ever after the budget cut that the most of European countries experienced in educational serviced. This affects directly and indirectly the working conditions of teachers in many European countries.

Cuts in maternity leave, holidays and pensions and advocate for the increased implementation of parental leave schemes in

support of shared responsibility of both parents when it comes to caring for children and other family members. This is against work balance life.

The gender pay gap should be in the agenda for the European Sectorial Social Dialogue. Regards equal pay for work of equal value, and to address issues such as the so-called glass ceiling in women's careers.

National and regional level: it is important to maintain the fight against the replication of gender stereotypes, e.g. build up students' self-esteem, especially the self-esteem and self-dignity of girls and women; and show that gender equality is a common goal for both women and men.

Focus on practical actions and solutions and work towards continuous progress, e.g. set up a union teacher training scheme that includes training on equal opportunities or train-the-trainer activities; organize union work in such a way that women with caring tasks can participate in union activities, e.g. funded child care facilities at union meeting.

These are some of the major proposals that the member organisations discussed during the working groups and the plenary session. The complete set of guidelines will be presented for adoption to the ETUCE Committee in October 2014. The final guidelines will be published in the project brochure in English, French, German, Spanish and Russian³.

³ Practical Guidelines for teachers unions for the further implementation and reinforcement of teacher union actions on gender equality in times of austerity will be published after adopted by the Committee in ETUCE website.

9 Acronyms

AOb	Algemene Onderwijsbond (Dutch Education Union)
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
CISL	Italian Confederation of Trade Unions
Eğitim Sen	Education and Science Workers' Union of Turkey
EI	Education International
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
Läraryrbundet	Swedish Teachers' Union
STEM	The academic disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
OBESSU	Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions
SEB	Bulgarian Education Union
UIL Scuola	Labour Union for Education (Italy)
UNSA Education	Federation of Education Professions (France)
ZNP	Polish Teacher Union





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