



2016 ETUCE Conference

5-8 December 2016

Belgrade

Background Document

Empowering Education Trade Unions:
The Key to Promoting Quality Education



*ETUCE- European Region of Education International
2016 Regional Conference*



*Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting
Quality Education*



*Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting
Quality Education*

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Status of the teaching profession.....	5
Sustainable financing for quality education.....	8
Trends of European education policy.....	10
Promoting equality.....	13
Role of education trade unions.....	15
Effective social dialogue.....	17



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Introduction

The teaching profession has been affected by radical economic and societal changes in Europe in recent years. The **economic and financial crisis of 2008** brought not only high rates of unemployment to Europe but also austerity measures, the weakening of social dialogue, and an increase in right-wing radicalism and fundamentalism.

According to PIAAC survey¹ of OECD, about 70 million Europeans lack sufficient **reading, writing and numeracy skills**, and 40% of EU population lacks digital skills.

[Eurostat](#) estimates that 21 million women and men in the EU countries were **unemployed** in May 2016 of whom 4.1 million young persons are under age 25. The lowest unemployment rates of **young people** were observed in Malta (6.9 %), Germany (7.2 %) and the Czech Republic (10.1 %), and the highest in Greece (50.4 %), Spain (43.9 %), and in Italy (36.9 %). Since 2012 in the **countries of Eastern Partnership** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), employment rates have increased. Youth unemployment rates are higher in Armenia and Georgia (35%).

40% of the European employers report² that they cannot find people with the “**right skills**”. Interestingly, international organisations, mainly the EU and OECD, have been blaming education for the high unemployment rate among young people and echo the claim of companies that education should prepare students for the constantly changing labour market. **Skills mismatch** between education and the labour market and skills forecasts for the labour market place enormous pressure on governments and on teachers. However, research³ proved that companies need to provide jobs with appropriate salary and working conditions through fair recruitment in order to find the right candidate for the job and avoid “skills mismatch”.

From the other side, the **terrorist attacks** of 2015-2016 (Paris, Brussels, Istanbul, Ankara, Tunis, Baghdad, etc.) underlined the failure of forcing education towards the single purpose of fulfilling companies’ needs while social values, democratic citizenship, and critical thinking are equally important to fight against fundamentalism and radicalism.

The launch of the UN Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism⁴ which emphasises the importance of quality education to address the drivers of **violent extremism** is a big step towards recognising education as a key element to tackle extremism at a global level.

In March 2015, the education ministers of the EU endorsed the **Paris Declaration** reinforcing the “*fundamental values that lie at the heart of the European Union: respect for human dignity, freedom*”

¹ OECD: [Survey of Adult Skills \(PIAAC\)](#), 2013.

² Eurofund: [Third European Company Survey](#), 2015.

³ CEDEFOP: [Matching Skills and Jobs in Europe](#), 2015.

⁴ http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR%202178_2014_EN.pdf.



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

(including freedom of expression), democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a European society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

These nice statements, however, did not apply when 1.26 million asylum seekers arrived in the EU in 2015. The large and sudden **flow of migrants, refugees, asylum seeking** children, young people and adults claiming international protection in Europe has developed into the greatest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the second world war. A third of the refugees arriving in 2015 were minors and around 90,000 unaccompanied children sought asylum in Europe. Many education trade unions mobilised their members to provide education to adult and young refugees.

The ETUCE conference seeks answers to these challenges from the teachers' perspective and to find solutions on how to empower education trade unions to ensure quality education for all.

The ETUCE Committee recommends the ETUCE conference to debate and adopt the following documents:

- Resolution on Empowering education unions for quality education
- Resolution on Education Trade Unions on the Refugee Situation in Europe: Promoting Education as the Key to Integration and Inclusion
- Resolution on Reinforcing Equalities within Education and Education Trade Unions In A Fast Changing World
- Resolution on Enhancing the Status and Recognition of Teaching in Higher Education
- ETUCE Policy Paper on 21st Century Teaching Profession and the Use of ICT

Status of the teaching profession

Challenge

The right to and quality of education is closely linked to the understanding and role of education in politics and society, but also to teachers' specific rights, professional autonomy and the support that is provided to them. The *ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers*, adopted in 1966, and the complementing *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel*, adopted in 1997, define the importance of education in society and economy and propose guidelines regarding the rights and conditions of teachers, their professional development and their capacity to enable quality education. For their application, the 1966 and the 1997 Recommendations share the same joint ILO/UNESCO monitoring group of Experts (CEART).⁵

⁵ [Synthesis of the two recommendations with an explanatory supplement](#) (UNESCO, 2008).



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

The status of the teaching profession is still low in many countries deriving from, among other reasons, bad working conditions and salaries, and this has created challenges for the recruitment of young professionals.

ETUCE surveys on the impact of the economic crisis on teacher education in the European Union (2012/2013) and [European Parliament report on teacher training](#) (2014) underline that aspects of the school environment such as **working conditions and rising workload** for teachers influence teachers' effectiveness. It is also evident from these reports that work-related **stress** experienced by teachers is not due to personal problems but rather to the organisation of their teaching activity and of the school system.

Considering the important role that the teaching profession covers within society, it should be recognised that **fair salaries** are fundamental to drawing people into the teaching profession and ensuring that teachers stay satisfied and motivated to continue teaching.

[Eurydice report on Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe](#) (2015) shows that teachers' **salaries increased** in comparison to the previous two year-period thanks to salary reforms (such as in Croatia, Slovakia and Iceland) and adjustments to the cost of living having been made. However, in many countries the increase followed salary decreases during the years of the crisis. In addition, despite the average data, there are six countries (Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Slovenia and Liechtenstein) in which a **salary freeze** is still being applied and in Serbia a salary decrease of more than 1% has been registered.

In these countries teachers' purchasing power has not reached the 2009 level yet. Also, compared to GDP per capita, the **minimum annual statutory salaries** for teachers in primary and lower secondary schools are lower in almost all countries (apart from Germany, Spain, Cyprus, Portugal and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey). The worst situation is recorded in Lithuania, where the minimum annual salary is 32% of the GDP per capita and in Romania, where it is 41% while the best ones are the German (129%) and the Portuguese (139%).

The lowest **minimum statutory salary/GDP per capita** ratio of teachers can be observed in Lithuania (32%), Latvia (42%) and Romania (44%). On the other hand, Spain with 151% and Turkey with 159% have the highest ratio. Regarding the maximum gross statutory salaries, in most countries, at all educational levels, the situation is quite different since they are higher than GDP per capita (best ratio is in Cyprus where it is 306% for ISCED 1, 2 and 3).

Concerning **minimum and maximum salaries**, there are differences among the countries: Hungary (at secondary school level), Austria and Romania, for example, face larger differences between minimum and maximum salary levels and it takes more years of service to rise from lower to higher salary. On the other hand, in countries such as Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and United Kingdom (in particular Scotland) the difference is smaller and the length of service needed to reach the maximum salary is shorter. In most countries salaries are set at the level of central or regional authorities, whereas in nearly all Nordic countries it is the local authorities who have this responsibility.

While **teachers' basic salaries** generally increase according to the length of service, the report shows how teachers are offered salary allowances (in almost a third of the countries surveyed) that are complementary payments for reasons like further formal qualifications, further continuing Professional Development (CPD), good student results and additional responsibilities or also geographical location,

Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

overtime and extra-curricular activities or teaching students with special needs. From the data average, we can see that, across Europe, the most frequent reasons for **salary allowances** are “additional responsibilities” and “overtime” while the least common are “further CPD qualifications” and “positive performance appraisal or good students results”.

The Congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in October 2015 discussed the need for establishing a **European-level minimum wage**. The idea is under discussion in the thematic committees of ETUC.

Figure 1 - EURYDICE (2015) - Minimum and maximum ANNUAL BASIC GROSS statutory salaries of teachers in EURO. ISCED1 = Primary education, ISCED 2 = Lower secondary education, ISCED 3 = Upper secondary education

		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES (a)	ES (b)	FR (a)	FR (b)	HR	
ISCED 1	Min	30 121	31 740	31 054	3 252	8 913	43 226	43 097	10 400	27 814	13 104	28 129		24 595		8 998	
	Max	51 903	50 850	53 642		11 314	51 195	56 811	10 756	59 359	24 756	39 673		44 254		13 301	
ISCED 2	Min	30 121	31 740	31 054	3 252	8 913	43 226	47 731	10 400	27 814	13 104	31 415	33 566	26 927		8 998	
	Max	51 903	50 850	53 642		11 314	51 195	63 013	10 756	59 359	24 756	44 250	46 513	46 739		15 182	
ISCED 3	Min	37 477	39 748	38 743	3 252	8 913	44 146	50 383	10 400	27 814	13 104	31 415	33 566	27 316	27 333	8 998	
	Max	65 674	64 491	67 864		11 314	57 378	70 277	10 756	59 359	24 756	44 250	46 513	47 167	47 185	15 182	
		IT (a)	IT (b)	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT (a)	AT (b)	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK
ISCED 1	Min	23 048		23 885	4 860	3 774	72 000	6 303	18 787	32 598	30 338		5 337	21 960	2 934	16 810	7 074
	Max	33 885		58 107		6 954	127 200	12 922	24 614	51 596	58 044		8 905	41 537	8 297	27 029	9 576
ISCED 2	Min	24 846		23 885	4 860	3 774	81 600	6 303	18 787	34 632	30 338	33 348	6 011	21 960	3 122	16 810	7 074
	Max	37 212		58 107		6 954	141 840	12 922	24 614	71 305	58 044	69 958	10 154	41 537	8 297	27 029	9 576
ISCED 3	Min	24 846	23 048	23 885	4 860	3 774	81 600	6 933	18 787	34 632		33 348	6 797	21 960	3 122	16 810	7 074
	Max	38 902	34 867	58 107		6 954	141 840	14 212	24 614	71 305		69 958	11 623	41 537	8 297	27 029	9 576
		FI	SE	UK-ENG/ WLS	UK- NIR	UK- SCT		BA	IS	LI (a)	LI (b)	ME	MK	NO (a)	NO (b)	RS	TR
ISCED 1	Min	31 978	30 533	28 274	28 273	33 682		7 083	29 085	70 137		6 433	5 417	45 432		4 498	12 875
	Max	41 590	44 459	48 140	48 138	44 790		7 806	39 612	113 822		10 213	7 761			6 734	14 826
ISCED 2	Min	34 536	30 533	28 274	28 273	33 682		8 428	29 085	82 835	76 490	6 433	5 417	45 432	48 717	4 498	12 875
	Max	44 917	44 459	48 140	48 138	44 790		9 442	39 612	134 439	124 127	10 213	7 761			6 734	14 826
ISCED 3	Min	36 623	34 366	28 274	28 273	33 682		8 938	34 130	82 835		6 433	5 654	48 717	52 831	4 498	11 934
	Max	48 487	47 780	48 140	48 138	44 790		11 927	51 908	134 439		10 213	8 120			6 734	13 885



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Empowering Education Trade Unions

In order to empower education trade unions, the conference will try to find solutions to the following questions.

- *In recent years have you experienced esteem for the teaching profession rising or declining in society?*
 - *What are the reasons for the rise/decline?*
 - *What kind of common actions could education trade unions in Europe take to improve the status of the profession?*
-

Sustainable financing for quality education

Challenge

Since the economic crisis broke out in Europe in 2008, governments and education authorities in many countries have questioned and put under severe pressure the principle of education as a public good and human right. Both access to free quality education for all and the quality of education and training systems themselves have been deteriorating, bringing about destructive effects on teachers' professional and personal wellbeing.

The ETUCE Resolution points out the need to recognise the direct impact of European-level policies on national policies on education, teachers' work and professional interests and the financial governance of education budgets. Among the latter, the European economic governance coordination (European Semester), the Investment plan for Europe and trade and investment agreements could have profound impact on education budgets and reforms.

Although, through the European Semester, Member States of the EU have been recommended to undertake growth-enhancing investment in education, due to the financial situation resulting from the economic crisis and budget constraints, many countries have **cut their education budget** and they have been **encouraged to look for other ways to finance their education system**, for example by enhancing public-private partnership and cooperation with business. The ETUCE Committee adopted in 2014 the "ETUCE Action Plan on the European Semester on education and training" to closely follow up on the process, and to increase education trade unions' participation, visibility and impact. Still, the *intrusive* nature of the European Semester on education budgets and reforms remains controversial.

In parallel, in order to overcome investment shortages in Europe, the European Commission has adopted the "**Investment Plan for Europe**". The ETUCE Committee took a critical stand towards the Plan, which



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

inflicts major challenges on the education sector with regard to the public nature of education investment, by potentially forcing governments into **public-private partnerships** in education.

Public-private partnerships have an impact on the quality of education, not at least because private investment also includes the demand for standardisation of education outcomes, thus of teaching and learning. **Standardisation** is detrimental to quality education because not only no one size-fits-all system exists that could be applied in each individual classroom and adequately address the needs of the widely differentiated pupil/studentship, it also negatively impacts on the recognition of professional assessments regarding the most appropriate pedagogical method to use in teaching. Seemingly, the only beneficiaries of standardisation are private for profit providers, who earn their enormous profits on standardised systems, based on massification and massive use of their instrument in hundreds of classrooms all over the world.

Additionally, **new trade and investment agreements**, including CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union), TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the US and the EU) and TiSA (Trade in Services Agreement), which clearly lack transparency and democracy, pose significant risks to educational policy, public schools and other education institutions, and for teachers, students and communities. The concluded CETA text demonstrates that public services are not protected from the scope of the agreement.

At national level, ETUCE member organisations reported increasing pressure coming from the inappropriate use of neo-liberal, market and business driven ideology and approaches in education at European and national level that lead to increasing privatisation trends in Europe, and challenges for education trade unions. According to the ETUCE Report on *State of funding in education, teachers' working conditions, social dialogue and trade union rights (CEE and Western European countries)* the share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) invested in education declined in many countries persistently since 2010. The continuous demand to bring down public debt have made it difficult for European countries to deploy financial resources for education investment.

As an alternative to these trends, ETUCE has called on the European governments and institutions to exclude education from the calculation of public deficit and debt within the European Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), affirming that education has a value to society which goes beyond issues relating to levels of expenditure and cannot be driven by austerity-driven budget policies. Moreover, ETUCE has called on the European institutions and governments to take all the necessary measures to ensure they have sufficient revenue to invest in education, this includes by combating corporate tax evasion and avoidance to raise additional and fair revenues from multinational companies.

With a view to successfully implementing the [EI Resolution on the Trade union actions to counteract neoliberal policies in education](#) (2015), and the [EI Enabling resolution 4: Financing of education](#) (2015)⁶ education trade unions need to work **further, at national and European level, on financing of education**

⁶ EI Enabling resolution states: "All education in a country should be a public responsibility; that is, education should be publicly funded and regulated. Governments and public authorities, in cooperation with education unions and other civil society groups, should oversee the design and impact of education budgets against key indicators of equity in order to ensure that spending is progressive and that resources reach the most marginalised".



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

in the framework of fiscal consolidation policies and on further actions to spread alternative ideas on sustainable and inclusive economic growth, also to the wider public.

Empowering Education Trade Unions

In order to empower education trade unions, the conference seeks to answer the following questions.

- *What constitutes an appropriate involvement of education trade unions in the assessment, design, agreement and implementation of education budgets?*
 - *Which alternative ideas should be deployed as alternatives to budgetary constraints?*
 - *How education trade unions could halt the ideological drive towards privatization encouraged by European policies?*
 - *Which internal resources (human, financial, know-how, etc.) should education trade unions deploy to deal with education financing issues?*
 - *How could the ETUCE better support education trade unions to build their capacity to deal with education financing issues and the use of European and International Fund and resources?*
-

Trends of European education policy

Challenge

Teachers experience a large variety of challenges related to teaching and teaching effectiveness and professional autonomy as well as increasing **societal demands** for educational effectiveness. This calls for systemic changes to the teaching profession, but also for increased emphasis on teacher education and training.

1.26 million asylum seekers arrived to the EU in 2015. The large and sudden **flow of migrants, refugees, asylum seeking** children, young people and adults claiming international protection in Europe has developed into the biggest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the second world war. A third of the refugees arriving in 2015 were minors and around 90,000 unaccompanied children sought asylum in Europe. Many education trade unions mobilised their members to provide education to adult and young refugees.

High youth **unemployment rates** in Europe and the blaming by businesses for a skills mismatch between education and the labour market increased demands upon teachers. The focus on apprenticeship and vocational education and training increased the **role of businesses** in education and training not only for workers but also for school students. ETUCE Policy paper on VET (2012) highlighted the need for providing continuous professional training for VET teachers on their sector in businesses.

Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

At the same time, there is an increasing trend for international organisations, mainly the European Commission, to envisage a more important role for businesses beyond vocational education. For example, in its initiative entitled the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) (June, 2016), the European Commission suggests **business-education partnership** in all sectors of education.

Recommendations of the EU on [Key Competence Reference Framework](#) have been under implementation since 2006. Out of the 8 key competences there are few which have been promoted because of employability purposes. **STEM⁷ and digital skills** have received enormous attention from businesses and from the perspective of innovation and research. **Entrepreneurship competence** was changed by the European Commission's [Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020](#): it is not seen any more as a general competence of innovation, creativity, team work, but from the perspective of having a kind of business-mindset and establishing enterprises. **Learning to learn and lifelong learning** is less mentioned in European politics because companies would like to get job-ready students from education as they are reluctant to upskill employees/workers themselves. Increased attention is paid to skills mismatch and labour market relevance of the education sector. Upskilling is frequently mentioned by the employers as a professional's personal responsibility for their own career development.

Language learning competence is hardly emphasised, as the EU institutions try to find solutions on long-term mobility of students and mobility of workers without focusing policy making on improving language learning. Competence in **communication in mother tongue** got some attention via PISA and PIAAC surveys, but only from the perspective of literacy skills. Soft skills, like dealing with clients is also emphasised as part of effective communication from an employability perspective.

From the other side, **terrorist attacks** of 2015-2016 (Paris, Brussels, Istanbul, Ankara, Tunis, Baghdad, etc) underlined the failure of forcing education towards the single purpose of fulfilling companies' needs while social values, democratic citizenship, and critical thinking are equally important to fight against fundamentalism and radicalism.

Social and civic competences had been ignored until these tragic events and until the European ministers for education adopted the Declaration on [Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education](#) (2015) which underlined the need for education in these competences, also related to the fight against radicalism and fundamentalism. At the same time, teachers report that the Paris Declaration's engagements have not been integrated into school curricula. The Referendum on **Brexit** also increased attention on teaching history, with special attention to EU integration, and the fight against EU-scepticism.

Competence in **cultural awareness and expression** is seemingly ignored by EU policies because it does not fit the political context of the high unemployment rate among the young people and finding solutions for them. Apprenticeship is the focus, manual work, but not arts. At the same time, the European Union institutions are echoing the need for innovativeness and creativity, which actually strongly link to the arts.

⁷ STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Still, teaching key competences and **focusing on learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills and competences) have contributed to many positive developments in the education systems. However, this focus has not been integrated into all the initial and continuous professional development of teachers at national levels.

The role of teachers received more attention in recent years in European-level education policies. The 5th priority of the VET targets of the European Union, entitled [Riga Conclusions for 2015-20](#) is on **improving professional development of VET teachers and trainers**. Furthermore, ETUCE has been participating in a working group of the European Commission on Professional Development of Trainers Competences in vocational education and training (VET) (2012-2014). The result of the work was a [policy handbook on Guiding principles on professional development of trainers in vocational education and training](#). At the same time, expectations upon teachers is increasing and they are considered, for example by OECD, as **service providers** to fulfill companies' needs.

Empowering Education Trade Unions

In order to empower the education trade unions, the conference will try to answer the following questions.

- *How to effectively respond to the lobby of businesses on education?*
 - *How to improve professional development of teachers in order to meet the needs of the constantly changing societal and economic environment?*
 - *What should be the response of education trade union to the increasing demands made upon teachers?*
 - *What kind of joint action should education trade union take to fight against fundamentalism and radicalism in education?*
 - *How to mobilise education unions in supporting integration of young and adult refugees in the education system and in the labour market?*
-



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Promoting equality

Challenge

In recent years ETUCE and its member organisations have persistently increased their activities in promoting equality and equal access to quality education for all. Recent ETUCE studies regarding social dialogue (see chapter below) and on [promoting gender equality in education trade unions and the teaching profession](#) show that, due to the weakening of social dialogue and to the economic crisis and austerity measures implemented by some governments in Europe, inequality between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students has risen in all sectors. Especially women and groups such as disabled, LGBTI and ethnic minorities continue to be left behind in terms of labour market participation, status and salaries. Discrimination persists in all dimensions of employment from recruitment procedures to remuneration and career progression. With regard to the recruitment and retention of women and young people in the education sector, the ETUCE survey report on *Gender Equality in Education Trade Unions in Times of Austerity*⁸ points out that unions, in their policy priorities, generally aim for representation of women and men in the decision-making structures and leadership positions that is proportional to their share in union membership, i.e. 71% women and 29% men. However, ETUCE's member organisations are far from achieving this goal. On average, women are underrepresented in all decision-making structures and leadership positions, compared to their share in the union membership: while more than two-thirds of union members are women, only between one-quarter and half the members of decision-making bodies and union leaders are female. Looking at the union members under 40 years of age, the survey shows that women represent an even bigger share among the membership (75%); young union leaders and young decision-makers, however, are predominantly male rather than female.

In addition, as mentioned in chapters above, the increase of migration due to wars, conflicts and persecution in some parts of the world has exacerbated phenomena like racial, religious, cultural and gender-related discrimination, and brought to the surface many more learning and inclusion difficulties that cause inequality among pupils and students. The education sector plays an essential role in protecting universal human rights and values against extremist and nationalist reactions. Education and education personnel are key for creating more equal environments and better living conditions that benefit learning and life chances in a diverse society, that is, a society that welcomes people of all ages, genders, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, cultural or ethnic origin or religion. This is where education trade unions can make a difference: when it comes to promoting and defending equality among education personnel and students, it is the responsibility of education trade unions to provide assistance, recognition and equal membership rights to all teachers, regardless their socio-economic background, their gender, age, belief, religion, including special needs, minority, migrant and refugee teachers with a view to enhancing diversity. They play a crucial role in promoting the development of initial teacher

⁸ Idem.



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

training and continuous professional development on mainstreaming diversity in education and in supporting education personnel in applying equality principles in their daily teaching activities

ETUCE and its member organisations have been repeatedly warning education authorities and governments in Europe about the growing risk of a shortage of qualified and experienced education personnel, indicated also by EURYDICE in [The Teaching Profession in Europe: Practices, Perceptions, and Policies](#) (2015) and in [Key Data on Education in Europe](#) (2012).

Effective social dialogue on equal opportunities in order to eliminate discrimination in the education sector and the introduction of measures that will advance women and all underrepresented groups at all levels should be a priority for education trade unions with a view to removing obstacles to teachers' career development. Particularly women are disadvantaged, mainly due to care responsibilities and the lack of support from national governments through legal provisions. Their career all too often ends at a glass-ceiling beyond which career advancement is unlikely. Education trade unions are of significant importance when it comes to advocating for the introduction of equality issues and the mainstreaming of equality measures in the framework of social dialogue and collective bargaining at all levels, and for the involvement of unions in the planning and implementation of measures and programmes. With a view to providing stronger support for teachers and pupils, more effective investment in the education sector is needed especially at national and regional level to allow for the recruitment of qualified teachers, training for early childhood education, special education needs and education for migrants and refugees, as well as for decent salaries and pensions.

Empowering Education Trade Unions

In order to empower the education trade unions, the conference seeks to find solutions for the following questions.

- *How can education trade unions contribute to closing the widening gap between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students with a view to ensuring quality education for all?*
 - *Which activities are education trade unions committed to undertake in support of the call for the sustainable future of the teaching profession and education staff despite the fact that many governments in Europe have reduced their education budget?*
 - *Which strategies can education trade unions set up on the retention and recruitment of women and young people in education in order to strengthen and further develop their capacity in addressing the issues that are of interest to the union membership?*
-



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Role of education trade unions

Challenge

ETUCE Committee members have been discussing recently the fact that European governments tend to ignore the role of the education trade unions in national reforms, including, among others, on the **professional interest of the teachers**, e.g. teachers' competence development and training. There are attempts to establish standards, code of ethics, recognition, quality assurance, and certification of teaching and teachers training, often without the involvement of the teachers' unions.

Over the years, ETUCE has tried to strike a balance between the material and professional approach.

The *EI Constitution* underlines the dual role of Member Organisations as trade unions working both for the material as well as the professional interests of teachers:

- (a) *“to enhance the conditions of work and terms of employment of teachers and education employees, and to promote their professional status in general,*
- (b) *to support and promote the professional freedoms of teachers and education employees and the right of their organisations to participate in the formulation and implementation of educational policies;”*

Up until now ETUCE has successfully convinced most EU institutions and the European Commission services that the education trade unions are the most appropriate social partners on the professional interests of teachers and development of education policies.

At the same time, there are growing numbers of professional associations and NGOs which claim competence on **teachers' professional development**. Many times the professional associations and NGOs claim to have a role in the European and/or national social dialogue on education and training in general, and on the competences of the teachers in particular. Therefore, several education trade unions face problems in negotiating with the governments, which prefer discussing with the NGOs and professional associations on teachers' competence development.

There is a growth of consultations and work between the policy makers at national and European levels and NGOs, private organisations in the area of professional development of teachers. At European level the European Commission outsources the intelligence on teachers' professional needs to private service providers , e.g. consultancy companies.

Member Organisations are challenged not only on their role as professional organisations of teachers, but also on **membership**. ETUCE member organisations have been facing declining membership in recent years, reported especially also from Central and Eastern European education trade unions. Over the years, more and new positions have been developed in the education systems. The use and integration of ICT and the increase of private education institutions have contributed to the increase in the number of new positions.



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

The ETUCE resolution suggests that unions could provide various means of **professional support to education personnel** and be a centre for teachers' professional development, e.g. by informing education personnel on training possibilities, providing them with a platform for self-development, networking, high quality induction and continuous professional development throughout their careers.

For the moment, it does not seem that we have a **common strategy on recruitment and affiliation** of members. However, it is evident that there is a link between the challenges we are facing within our work as professional organisations and whom we organise in the membership. Possibly our role on education and professional issues will shrink if our membership is not mirroring the education system.

This is why ETUCE's main conference resolution recommends strengthening **capacity building** of education trade unions through a renewed and innovative strategy on **organising education trade unions**, strengthening the effective sectoral social dialogue and cooperating with other unions and partner organisations in education.

The resolution also suggests that it is necessary to equip the unions with the **capacity of specialised permanent professional expertise and research** on teachers' professional needs and interests inside the education trade unions themselves;

Empowering Education Trade Unions

In order to empower the education trade unions, the conference will try to answer the following questions.

- *How do you think education trade union could/should improve their work on the professional interest/needs of teachers?*
 - *How to enhance the role of education trade unions in professional support for teachers?*
 - *Should a common European-level strategy for member organisations be set up on the recruitment and affiliation of members?*
-



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Effective social dialogue

Challenge

To build the capacity of education trade unions to strengthen the representation of teachers and to **conduct social dialogue** and to be involved in education policy and decision-making plays a major role in promoting and defending teachers' status, job security, salaries and working conditions, professional development and autonomy. The role of education trade unions to **advance such rights through social dialogue and collective bargaining** not only affects the living and working conditions of the employees in the sector, it also contributes to ensuring that all children, especially from the most disadvantaged background, have access to quality education, thus hindering the reproduction of inequalities and contributing to social justice.

Social Dialogue across Europe

Across Europe, the education social dialogue situation is facing a **variety of challenges**, due to internal and external factors. They are due to the effects of the global economic crisis and government attitudes, or to the increasing trends towards privatisation and commodification of education.

The ETUCE Resolution acknowledges that in the broader context of the harsh effects of the economic crisis on industrial relations, one of the most challenging effects has been an **increased trend towards unilateral decision-making by governments** at the expenses of the social partners' autonomy, especially in the public sector; there have also been strong anti-union campaigns by politicians and the media. All over Europe, countries have been urged to reduce public expenditure and to respect strict budgetary constraints and this has triggered unilateral adjustments in the education sector, leading to a deterioration in salaries, pensions, working conditions and job security of education personnel which has resulted in shortages for the teaching profession with severe challenges to recruitment and retention of teachers.

As a result, ETUCE member organisations have reported increasing strain in the area of social dialogue. The ETUCE Report on the *State of funding in education, teachers' working conditions social dialogue and trade union rights* in CEE⁹ and Western European¹⁰ countries (2015 – 2016) highlights the **lack of effective social dialogue** in several European countries. In particular, it deplores that discussions are no longer consistent with outcomes, or they are underrated, and that decisions affecting teachers and the school community are taken outside formal consultations with social partners, in particular when it comes to education and training reforms and professional issues. In many countries, the **scope of bargaining has**

⁹ https://csee-etu.org/images/attachments/CEE_Survey_Report_EN_Final.pdf.

¹⁰ <https://csee-etu.org/en/documents/publications/1453-etu-report-on-the-state-of-funding-in-education-teachers-working-conditions-social-dialogue-and-trade-union-rights-in-western-european-countries-2016>.

Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

narrowed at the very time that it should be expanding to deal with the many new challenges to the education community.

In the area of **higher education and research**, only one union across the 29 ETUCE member organisations who responded to a Survey on the *Social Dialogue and Collegial Governance in Higher Education and Research*¹¹ (April 2016) affirmed it was very satisfied with social dialogue in this sector. According to the results, out of 29 unions, 18 unions are satisfied and 14 unions are dissatisfied with social dialogue in these sectors. The responding 29 unions are active in social dialogue in *higher education* mainly at national and institutional levels. The social dialogue is led by the member organisation itself in the case of 20 unions. Social dialogue in *research* is led by the organisation itself in case of 15 unions.

In addition to the weakening of social dialogue in nearly all countries, there are other fundamental challenges. The lack of involvement of education trade unions in education and training reforms is even more challenging at a time, and at particular educational levels (e.g. tertiary or early-childhood education) when a drift towards a ‘business model’ or commodification of education is evident. One of the most pressing issues the education community is facing is **privatisation and commodification of education**. Especially in private education institutions (often religious-based schools), education trade unions are confronted with increasing **denial and/or obstruction of trade union rights**, or a limited involvement of trade unions in negotiating civil servants’ rights and working conditions.

At a time of major challenges, the ETUCE Resolution identifies as a priority that social dialogue should be restored, strengthened and effective, as one of the key practices conducive to growth, social cohesion and equality, also in cooperation with other unions and partner organisations in education. At the same time, the scope of collective bargaining should be expanded to include teachers’ professional issues alongside their material conditions. It is essential that education trade unions strengthen their capacity building through a renewed and innovative strategy on organising education workers and employees.

European Social Dialogue

When looking at the European Social Dialogue, it is also necessary to keep in mind that there is a direct correlation between the effectiveness of national social dialogue and effectiveness at European level. Although it is widely recognised that a successful social market economy is to be rooted in the European social model, of which social dialogue is a central pillar, in recent years social dialogue slipped down the policy agenda in the face of more immediate economic concerns.

It is only in 2015 that the new Juncker Commission made clear that one of its major tasks would be the **relaunch of social dialogue**. As a major follow-up, a [Quadripartite Statement on a New Start for Social Dialogue](#) was signed on 27 June 2016 by the European Commission, the Presidency of the Council and the cross-industry social partners. The Statement commits the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council to promote and to improve discussions and negotiations between the social partners and institutions, at national and European level on policy areas which go beyond the traditional scope of

¹¹ [Survey Report on Social Dialogue and Collegial Governance in Higher Education and Research](#), 2016.



Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education

Article 154 and to closely involve social partners, through social dialogue, in policy and decision making, especially through the European Semester. Finally, despite the European Commission's will to relaunch social dialogue, also at European level, by boosting national capacity building, representativeness of European social partners and ability and mandate to negotiate at European level, it is important to bear in mind the reduction of the annual European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) activities, in sharp contrast to the vision of a strengthened social dialogue.

To date, the European Social Dialogue in Education has mostly delivered joint opinions and tools. As a beneficial side effect, through the process, cooperation and informal contacts among parts were fostered, and the European Social Dialogue delegates affirmed that that the work undertaken at European level has facilitated national dialogue in several ways. Texts can be used to add pressure and/or increase awareness of the government on specific issues. Fully respecting the national competence on education, the benefit of the European Social Dialogue could scale up national social dialogue in education, foster cooperation and provide an opportunity to share results with other European countries outside the EU. To do this, equal commitment, involvement and agreement on mandate from both sides of the partnership should remain an ambition. However, it is difficult to illustrate the effects of the European Social Dialogue on teachers' and educators' everyday working life. Finally, in order for the outcomes to be more effective, the capacity of social partners to be consulted and to negotiate agreement at national and European should be addressed.

Empowering Education Trade Unions

In order to empower the education trade unions, the conference will try to answer the following questions:

- *Which kind of concrete actions could contribute to improving social dialogue and collective bargaining at European, national, regional and local level?*
 - *What conditions contribute to the success of industrial relations systems and of social dialogue in times of increasing pressure on social dialogue structures, social partners' autonomy and trends towards unilateral decision making by governments?*
 - *What is needed to strengthen social dialogue beyond wage bargaining and collective bargaining structures?*
 - *Which kind of resources (human, financial, strategic, etc.) do education trade unions need to strengthen social dialogue on national education and training reforms?*
 - *How to broaden the scope of subjects covered by collective bargaining to include education employees working in private education institutions?*
 - *How to effectively use the opportunities of the 'European re-launch of social dialogue' process to enhance the national social dialogue in the education sector?*
-