

Practical recommendations on the promotion of healthy and safe working conditions in education in times of the economic crisis

Adopted by the ETUCE Committee on 14 - 15 April 2014

1. Introduction

These practical recommendations have been set up within the frame of the project *Teacher trade unions in solidarity for healthy and safe work places in the economic crisis*. They build on the project activities (teacher union interviews, online survey and two Regional Peer Learning Activities) to which the ETUCE member organisations actively contributed. The recommendations address in the first line teacher unions in Europe and their affiliated teachers and education employees, on how to promote healthy and safe working conditions in times of crisis.

The ETUCE Secretariat had developed this initiative in view of the ETUCE – EI European Region Conference, which clearly identified the need for further work on the impact of the crisis on teachers' working conditions. The project and recommendations also stand in the light of European Commission consultation for a new *EU OSH Policy Framework* for 2013 – 2020 and wish to contribute the specific education sector's point of view to the establishment of the new strategy. In addition, they support the global EI initiative *Unite for Quality Education – Better Education for a better world* in 2013/2014.

In continuation of the work achieved by ETUCE in the area of teachers' health and safety, these recommendations support the further implementation of the [ETUCE Action Plans and policy papers](#) on the prevention of teachers' work-related stress, violence and harassment, as well as the [European Social Partners' Framework Agreements](#) in this field, the [Directive 89/391/EEC](#) on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work and other relevant national, EU or international ruling¹. These pieces of legislation state clearly that it is the workers' right to stay healthy at work and to retire healthy. Health and safety issues are not only the individual's responsibility but are most importantly part of the organisation of work.

¹ This includes amongst others:

[Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000](#) implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

[Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000](#) establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation

[Directive 2002/73/EC of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC](#) on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.

[Improving quality and productivity at work: Community strategy 2007-2012 on health and safety at work' \[COM\(2007\) 62 final](#)

[Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#)

[Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 \(No. 161\)](#)

[Global strategy on occupational safety and health: Conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 91st Session, 2003](#)

[Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 \(No. 187\)](#)



The main objective has been to strengthen solidarity between teacher unions in Europe in support of maintaining and promoting healthy and safe working conditions, in particular as regards the prevention of psychosocial hazards and reconciliation of work and family life in times of rising pressure due to the economic crisis. The project focused on ways to increase the well-being and safety of teachers and other education employees as prerequisites for quality education. Above all, it examined the impact that the crisis and the changes implied by it have on education staffs' working conditions and on the health and safety of education personnel. For this purpose, two regional peer learning activities took place on [13 May 2013 in London](#) and on [3 June 2013 in Lisbon](#), where the outcome of the [teacher union interviews](#) in eight target countries² and of the [online survey](#) amongst ETUCE member organisations were presented³.

ETUCE believes a school⁴ should be a safe, healthy and propitious place for teaching and learning. Schools are the workplace of teachers, but first and foremost they are educational institutions for young students. The purpose therefore is to support the creation of an atmosphere where children can learn and teachers and other staff in education can perform their job in a positive, healthy and safe setting.

The document reflects the work of ETUCE and its member organisations on healthy and safe workplaces in education in times of austerity on which to develop further actions at European, national, regional and local level.

With a view to bringing about a sustainable change that has a lasting impact on the school environment, actions determining and strengthening the fundamental values in school (e.g. mutual respect, democratic citizenship) should start at an early age and involve all stakeholders in education, social partners, school leaders, teachers, students and parents alike. For this, continuous public investment in education is needed at all levels to ensure high quality education, including reconciliation of work and family life, as prerequisite for healthy and safe schools.

2. Aim

These practical recommendations wish to provide teacher unions in Europe and their affiliated teachers and education employees with concrete guidelines on how to promote healthy and safe working conditions, which proves to be especially a challenge in times of crisis. They aim to assist the teacher unions and their affiliated teachers in developing concrete strategies and actions to increase the awareness on the importance of the provision of healthy and safe working conditions in schools among the relevant stakeholders. Essentially, these recommendations seek to help teacher unions to enhance and maintain decent and quality working conditions in the education sector also in times of austerity, for the ultimate goal of high quality education.

² France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

³ Reports on these activities are available at: http://teachersosh.homestead.com/Health_and_Safety_in_Crisis/Health-and-Safety-in-Crisis.html.

⁴ This includes all education levels and covers both teaching and non-teaching staff working in the education sector ((pre)-primary, secondary, vocational education, Higher Education).



This document therefore does not provide a blueprint for every country. Instead these recommendations should be understood as a supporting tool to be assessed and adjusted to the national conditions concerning healthy and safe working conditions, including the reconciliation of work and family life, specifically taking into account the circumstances of each individual working place.

3. Recommendations

Following the ETUCE Action Plans on healthy and safe working conditions the recommendations address three main levels (European, national teacher union and education institutional level) for specific actions.

At European level it is important to

- ✓ Strengthen solidarity between teacher unions in Europe in order to create a common vision for quality workplaces for quality education and build a common health and safety strategy;
- ✓ Support the exchange of national good practices from the implementation of the Framework Agreements in the education sector and disseminate these amongst ETUCE member organisations via the ETUCE OSH website and the EI/ETUCE crisis campaign websites; have a systematic internal trade union debate on health and safety issues;
- ✓ Support ETUCE member organisations in their efforts to improve national policies and national legislations on occupational health and safety and particularly on stress at work;
- ✓ Support ETUCE member organisations in developing national trade union strategies on how to ensure a good working environment and well-being at school for teachers and pupils.
- ✓ Promote further social dialogue at EU level with education employer representatives (EFEE) to enhance further commitment for healthy and safe workplaces in education;
- ✓ By means of including all relevant stakeholders in education and from other sectors, continue supporting the implementation of the European Social Partners' Framework Agreements on the prevention of work-related stress and violence and harassment at national and teacher union level;
- ✓ Report to ETUC on how the national implementation of the Framework Agreements is carried out, according to the information sent by ETUCE member organisations;
- ✓ Press the European Commission to highlight in its communications, papers etc., the positive link between the improvement of healthy and safe working conditions in workplaces and worker representatives (union effect);
- ✓ Underline the importance of monitoring the implementation of EU legislation on health and safety at national/regional and local level and to involve social partners and trade unions in the process;
- ✓ Monitor and influence the EU decision-making processes, particularly the new European OSH Policy Framework (2013-2020) which is to replace the European Commission's Strategy on Health and Safety at Work) and related policies and legislative measures, so as to give greater prominence to psychosocial hazards in the European agenda;
- ✓ Continue lobbying the EU Commission's DG Education and Culture and the Education Council to mainstream education staff's health and safety into the EU2020 Strategy and the

“Education and Training 2020” Process and promoting healthy and safe workplaces in education in the economic crisis;

- ✓ Establish contacts with international organisations and stakeholders, such as social security or social insurance agencies, the ILO, etc.;
- ✓ Lobby for ending the budget cuts in education and encourage investment in education;

At national teacher trade union level it is important to

- ✓ Develop a common teacher union vision including a concrete strategy to advocate for healthy and safe workplaces in times of austerity;
- ✓ Promote the concept of quality education based on a healthy and safe workplace ‘school’ and continue informing and raising awareness about the issue among relevant stakeholders and broader society including parents but also media - and lobby regional, municipal and national governments, education authorities, local authorities and other employers in education on the need for action to work on healthy and safe workplaces;
- ✓ In view of the visible decrease in trust between employees and employers and amongst colleagues in general, foster solidarity amongst colleagues against the growing trend of individualisation in society and in workplaces;
- ✓ Initiate dialogue with other actors in society to raise awareness on the link between the healthy and safe working environment ‘school’ and quality education/learning conditions and build coalitions with other trade union sectors to counter the trend of individualisation;
- ✓ Inform the broader public about the demands faced by teachers and convince the public of the good work teachers are doing in society;
- ✓ Negotiate specific and joint guidelines with employers in education at national level on how to implement the European Social Partners’ Framework Agreements and EU legislation;
- ✓ Work on the adoption of specific collective agreements in countries where the national collective bargaining model allows, or work on the inclusion of the issue of healthy and safe workplaces and reconciliation of work and family life in general collective agreements when the latter ones are renewed;
- ✓ Mainstream the principle of a healthy and safe working environment ‘school’ as a prerequisite for quality education which is a human right and a public good into cross-sectoral social dialogue and/or collective agreements in view of the national transposition process of the EU 2020 strategy;
- ✓ Lobby governments and education authorities to encourage investment in education;
- ✓ Draw wider attention to the idea of the Framework Directive 89/391/EC and concentrate on its proper implementation and in particular the national legislation transposing this Directive;
- ✓ Underline the importance of trade union representatives at the workplace and request systematic occupational health and safety (OSH) training for pupils, education staff (including school leadership), Health & Safety Committees and union representatives in light of requirements associated with Directive 89/391/EEC;
- ✓ Inform the broader public about existing EU and national legislation and changes by e.g. organising information events and using different media resources to raise awareness on the

evidence collected in ETUCE's work referring to existing national health and safety standards and where appropriate develop common quality health and safety standards;

- ✓ Use scientific data on health and safety for lobbying and collective bargaining to provide positive examples of how health and safety preventative measures can be an economic way of maintaining and improving working conditions in education in times of economic crisis;
- ✓ Provide practical guidance on efficient measures and tools - for school management and school staff - on how to tackle and prevent efficiently the deterioration of working conditions in education, by giving priority to examples of preventative measures, e.g. risk assessment process, clear task description and where appropriate providing translation of relevant material;
- ✓ Disseminate this guidance to their regional, local and, if possible, school trade union structures;

At education institutional⁵ level it is important to

- ✓ Provide legal and technical advice to education staff and school leadership on the implementation of risk assessment in schools;
- ✓ Concentrate efforts on incentive measures to promote the implementation of risk assessment in institutions that include psychosocial hazards, reconciliation of work and family life; Emphasize the importance of involving school management in the process of creating/maintaining healthy and safe workplaces for teachers, always in consultation with the workforce and worker representatives; encourage institutions to make a commitment to health and safety;
- ✓ Promote the balance model - balance between demands and resources for teachers in schools - amongst school leadership and staff;
- ✓ Promote the use of work-oriented preventive and rehabilitative measures as an investment when dealing with psychosocial hazards and/ or to combine work- and worker-oriented measures in institutions;
- ✓ Promote the use of external expertise, e.g. trainings, mediations, surveys, psychologists, when needed;
- ✓ Ensure that education staff are involved in workplace risk assessment
- ✓ Highlight good practices and make sure that information on health and safety issues is disseminated appropriately to education staff;
- ✓ Include parents and students in order to make health and safety a matter for the whole institution and promote a culture of health and safety in the school community;
- ✓ Have a health and safety representative in each institution and train workers' representatives on health and safety issues;
- ✓ Include health and safety issues in initial teacher training and in in-house trainings.

⁵ This includes all education levels and covers both teaching and non-teaching staff working in the education sector.