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**Report on the joint Training Seminar  
of ETUCE and ETUI**

***Promoting Gender Equality through social  
dialogue in the teaching profession***

**Sliema, 09-11 March 2016**



**etui.**

Egalement disponible en français sous le titre:

Rapport sur le séminaire de formation conjoint du CSEE et de l'ETUI 'Promouvoir l'égalité des genres au travers du dialogue social dans la profession enseignante'.

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## 1. Introduction

The training seminar on ‘Promoting Gender Equality through social dialogue in the teaching profession’ took place in Sliema, Malta on 09-11 March 2016. Financially supported by the European Union, it was jointly organised by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), the independent research and training centre of the European trade unions.

Aiming to provide more information on how to promote gender equality in the teaching profession through social dialogue and collective bargaining instruments, the training seminar focused on women’s working conditions, gender and status in the teaching profession and on women and decision-making in teacher unions.



The first joint training seminar of ETUI and ETUCE on gender equality in the teaching profession gathered 25 delegates from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom and Malta. These delegates of teacher



*“Equality is only there where we are all equal”.*

In his welcome words, **Mike Jennings** reaffirmed the need for teacher unions to continue and strengthen their efforts to achieve gender equality.

unions from all over Europe came together to discuss the steps that need to be taken at different decision-making levels in order to achieve gender equality in the teaching profession. **The chair of the meeting, Mike Jennings**, ETUCE Bureau member, opened the training seminar by stating that teacher unions need to continue to strengthen their efforts to achieve gender equality.

In her presentation on the work of ETUI, **Andrea Husen-Bradley**, Education Officer ETUI, underlined the fact that education can be a key enabler for changing mindsets.

**Rita Catania**, Gender Equality Officer of MUT, welcomed the participants to Malta and wished everybody a successful seminar.

### Specific aims of the training seminar

- ☑ To better understand EU and international policies, e.g. the Beijing Platform and its programme, the European Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010 - 2015, the role of teachers and teacher unions in shaping the teaching profession to become better gender balanced by raising awareness and addressing the challenges in the sector;
- ☑ To recognise the different possibilities for implementing EU policies at sectoral level regarding gender mainstreaming, such as training to improve knowledge and negotiating skills to improve gender equality, better cooperation between collective bargaining and gender equality/women's committees, supporting women in leadership and decision-making, improving teachers' knowledge, skills and competences in this area;
- ☑ To compare different concrete implementation practices and developments at national, and regional level in the sector;
- ☑ To share and analyse good practices from trade unions;
- ☑ To share methods and materials produced at European and national level;
- ☑ To compare and evaluate those methods and materials

## 2. Gender equality in the teaching profession

Education has a dual task when it comes to gender equality. On the one hand, considering its pedagogical role, education has the capability to reproduce or transform gender relations, gender roles and gender stereotypes and thus has the potential of having a societal impact on achieving gender equality. Gender roles may lead to stereotypical education outcomes and career choices (e.g. career paths, working arrangements, family, fertility, etc.), as numerous studies have shown regarding the impact of gender roles on individual decisions of women and men. As gender stereotypes can limit the opportunities of both young girls and boys as well as women and men, education systems play a crucial role in prompting a change in students' lives. In the light of gender equality, education systems and teacher unions should work on the attractiveness of MINT subjects for girls and social and care subjects for boys.

On the other hand, the teaching profession is a profession wherein gender inequalities still continue to exist. At present, the majority of em-

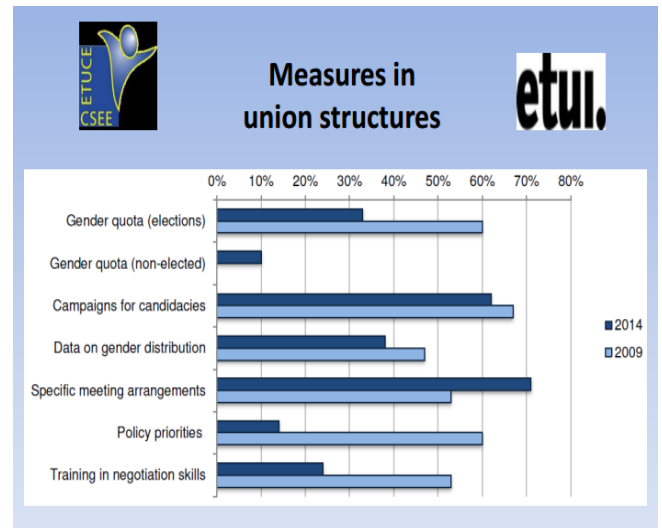
ployees working in education are women, however, the number of women decreases dramatically the higher the level of hierarchy in the education system. Whereas relatively more women teach in primary, lower and upper secondary education, women are underrepresented in teaching positions in higher education as well as in leadership positions in education in general and in teacher unions. Gender parity is not achieved when it comes to the share of women in union membership and their representation in decision-making structures. Moreover, women still have a more vulnerable position than men when it comes to employment. National and local authorities are often not doing enough to improve women's working conditions. Women still often interrupt or slow down their careers to take up caring responsibilities. Parental leave and part-time working arrangements are difficult to organise in many countries and lead to a loss in salary and pensions as well as to the casualisation of part-time work. Education systems and teacher unions should work together and are already organising initiatives to make the teaching

profession more attractive for men and to build the confidence of women to take up a leadership position. In the light of gender equality, it is also important to look at the persons that are 'next in line' of a higher decision-making position. Women and men should have equal opportunities to be a potential candidate.

Susan Flocken, Policy Coordinator, ETUCE, gave participants an overview of the gender ratio in ETUCE structures. Presenting the results from the latest ETUCE survey on gender equality 2014, she provided examples of what teacher unions can do on raising awareness and gaining knowledge on gender inequalities, providing arrangements to facilitate the reconciliation of union and care duties and building female members' confidence and assertiveness by leadership trainings and mentoring programmes. Participants discussed different mechanisms for implementing gender equality policies and the impact

of the economic crisis on gender equality in the education sector.

Considering the achievement of gender equality in teacher union structures, teacher unions are on a winding road. Topics teacher unions seek to address in the near future are: the absence of male teachers in primary education and violence against women.



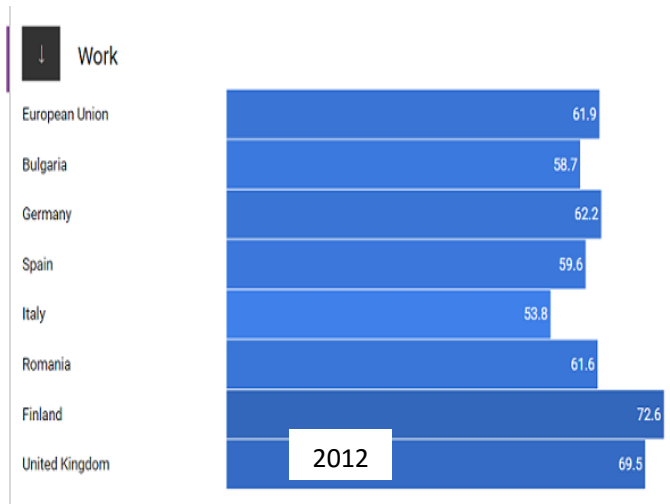
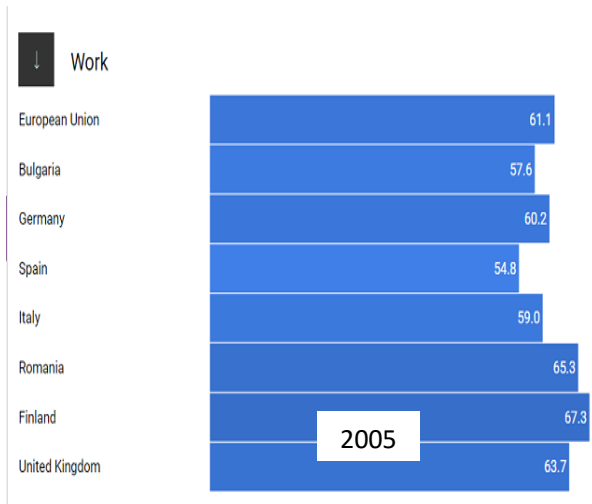
### 3. Gender equality: a European perspective



Rossella Benedetti, Chair of the Standing Committee for Equality, gave a presentation on the European initiatives and legislation on

gender equality issues. She pointed the participants to the dangerous shift in the European Union framework regarding gender equality issues, where gender equality is being approached from an economic perspective, replacing the social aspect and installing the principles of an economic Europe. However, in order to achieve gender equality, a transversal approach/ implementation of objectives is necessary. The Gender Equality Index of 2015, calculated by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), shows

that since 2005, the EU is still only half way towards achieving gender equality. Progress per EU member state or per domain is not that successful. While the Gender Equality Index of some member states improved, the index of other member states regressed. These significant differences between member states and domains reflect the different choices of priorities and approaches in implementing EU policies and objectives. Furthermore, the Report on equality between women and men 2014 from the European Commission states that, although gender gaps have narrowed in recent decades, inequalities within and between member states have overall grown and challenges still remain in critical areas. The United Nations furthermore calculated in 2014 that, at this rate of change, it would take another 70 years to achieve gender equality.



#### 4. A toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice



Cinzia Sechi, Policy Officer of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), presented the “Toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice”. Summarizing 100 practices from 25 EU countries, the toolkit addresses initiatives of

member organisations that concern gender equality priorities. In the spirit of gender equality, the bottom-up initiatives of the toolkit address both challenges women and men face.

ETUC focused on four gender equality priorities in their toolkit: addressing gender roles, promoting women in decision making, supporting work-life balance and tackling the gender pay gap. Tackling the gender pay gap is the most difficult to make agreements on, as reflected in the fact that it is the topic least addressed in the initiatives.

Freely available on its website, ETUC wishes to upgrade the toolkit at regular intervals to provide up-to-date information to all who are interested.

#### 5. Promoting Gender Equality in Education

Renee Laiviera, Commissioner and Acting Executive Director for the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) in Malta, presented NCPE’s work on promoting Gender Equality in Education. As education is an essential tool to combat stereotypes and to achieve the goals of equality, non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Schools and teachers are fundamental actors for the process towards a positive change. In order to tackle the intercon-

nected causes that generate unequal relationships between girls, women, boys and men in all areas of life, NCPE underlines the holistic approach that should be taken when gender mainstreaming. The NCPE ensures, through the Equality for Men and Women Act, that curricula and text-



books do not propagate discrimination. However, teachers have to be open to challenge students and discuss gender stereotypes with them as well. Only if teachers address and raise awareness on existing stereotypes they can be challenged and tackled. Teachers can be change agents and act as role models themselves. The

## 6. Equality structures, policies and activities

Given the knowledge and experience of teacher unions on the issue of gender equality, ETUCE invited three delegates from member organisations to share their insights regarding the promotion of gender equality in education through social dialogue.

### 6.1 Rita Catania, MUT, Malta



Actively engaging the participants in laying puzzles, Rita Catania, Gender Equality Officer, demonstrated that gender equality can only be tackled by working together. The puzzles underlined the fact that women are human beings, men and women thus should be treated equally in both legislation and in practice. She informed the participants about the

### 6.2 Yanka Takeva, SEB, Bulgaria



**Yanka Takeva**, President of SEB, presented the Bulgarian situation of gender equality in education. Discussing gender gaps and the share of women and men in the education sector, she gave the participants

promotion of gender equality in and through education is a prerequisite to the achievement of de facto equality between women and men in all spheres of life. Teachers are crucial in fulfilling society's aspirations to combat gender inequalities.

**Rita Catania** (Malta), **Yanka Takeva** (Bulgaria) and **Joaquim Santos** (Portugal) explained their union's strategies, policies and activities.

working conditions of female teachers in Malta and the collective bargaining activities of MUT in this regard. MUT would like to implement flexible hours to enable mothers to maintain their employment without reducing their hours and thus losing out on wages or pensions. In order to achieve gender equality in the teaching profession a change in mentality, teamwork, research on gender equality issues, perseverance and trust from members of teacher unions is necessary.

some insights in the Bulgarian legislation on gender issues. Additionally, Yanka also addressed what SEB has been doing to implement gender policies in the teaching profession. Hereby focusing on the enrichment of curricula with more and better topics relating to gender balance, the improvement of working conditions, the raise of salaries in order to make the teaching profession more attractive and the implementation of policies aimed at raising awareness on gender inequalities.



### 6.3 Joaquim Santos, FNE, Portugal

**Joaquim Santos**, member of the National Secretariat of FNE, started his presentation by underlining the distinction between sex and gender. Whereas the concept of 'sex' describes the biological and physiological differences between men and women, the 'gender'-concept underlines the cultural and social construction of male and female characteristics. Understanding these concepts and what they imply is a critical first step in tackling gender stereotypes and achieving gender equality. Gender equality is not only a matter of economical concern but also a matter of justice. To address gender inequalities, it is important to deepen the gender equality framework in the training of teachers.

At the negotiating table, FNE considers it essential to seek joint solutions in terms of non-discrimination and the conditions for reconciling



work and private life in order to combat gender stereotypes. Joaquim Santos concluded his presentation by stating that if we all want to contribute to the change of the gender paradigm, an association of men to the family sphere and the involvement of women in the public sphere is necessary.



## 7. Working Group Sessions and Plenary Discussion

The working groups reflected on how teacher competences and social dialogue on gender equality issues in the teaching profession can be improved, how practices and developments on gender equality on the national and regional level can be implemented in different countries and whether teacher unions have developed

practices or strategies to mainstream gender equalities in collective bargaining. During the plenary discussions, participants further debated their conclusions and ideas for the next steps in the process of achieving gender equality in the teaching profession. The outcomes are summarised thematically in the following chapters.

### 7.1 Improving teachers competences and social dialogue for the promotion of gender equality in the teaching profession

Participants stress that the concept of social dialogue does not imply a positive meaning in every ETUCE member organisation. **The absence of a social dialogue framework** is one of the challenges most mentioned by the participants when discussing the promotion of gender equality in the teaching profession. The presence of collective bargaining activities and social dialogue are a first requirement for the accomplishment of equality between men and women. In order for teacher unions to step up their efforts to sustainably promote and further implement gender equality in education, participants agreed that **seminars and trainings** that provide information and the opportunity to **exchange good practices** are needed. In the working groups, teacher unions shared interesting material of campaigns and activities with the goal to raise awareness on gender equality, demonstrating that exchanging good practices can be beneficial for all parties involved. To ensure that attention is paid to gender equality issues, teacher unions could furthermore invoke **gender equality committees** in



their own structures. The **training of teachers** as well as **continuous professional development** activities should include gender equality issues. Moreover, equality between women and men should be addressed, not in a specific subject, but during the whole curriculum of teacher training institutes. Participants also agreed that it is important for teacher unions to **address the specific needs of young female members**. This can be helpful as well for the attractiveness of their membership.

## 7.2 Implementing practices and developments at national and regional level

National, regional and sociocultural realities dictate the range of actions that are deemed either acceptable, reasonable or financially possible. Participants underlined that this one-size-fits-all approach is not desirable. Notwithstanding this, teacher unions do need to examine these realities in order to identify areas that require action and to develop strategies for those areas where there is an equality deficit.



**Establishing equality committees** can be a first useful initiative to tackle gender inequality, participants agreed. These committees help to ensure that equality issues are monitored by assessing and discussing internal policy initiatives, recommendations or resolutions and making sure gender equality is considered therein. A second initiative, designing and organising **effective training programmes**, addresses the gender imbalance in higher decision-making positions. Training programmes that can help women to be more confident of their own capabilities to take

up a higher position within an organisation can include for example assertiveness training, a training on leadership skills or a training that addresses presentation skills. For those women that are interested in taking up a higher positions, **mentoring programmes** can be useful as well. Ensuring that female representatives are visible role models, creates opportunities for young women and tackles gender stereotypes. Participants did not agree on the **use and success of quotas to establish a balance** of men and women in higher decision-making bodies of teacher unions. Where some participants were able to describe the positive impact of the use of quotas to examine gender balance in their own unions, other participants thought that the use of quotas not necessarily solves the bigger structural problem and could even be potentially damaging. Promotions of women in higher decision-making positions only due to quotas can be also perceived as ‘balancing the numbers’ instead of an acknowledgment of their knowledge, experience and capabilities.

To summarize the discussion, participants highlighted that the task of teacher unions is to be a **source of advice and information** regarding gender equality issues, ETUCE can support teacher unions in this role. Providing and sustaining interesting opportunities for (young) women is a crucial step in reaching gender balance.

### 7.3 Mainstreaming gender in collective bargaining: trade unions' practices/strategies

Because of the diversity of different contexts, participants agreed that **exploring and examining the situation** is necessary before teacher unions organise actions. Participants highlighted that actions are more successful when targeting the specific needs at national level and that teacher unions across Europe should work together to identify common targets. **Exchanging experiences and good practices** can be helpful for gender mainstreaming in collective bargaining.

The teaching profession is a female dominated profession. Yet men still hold the highest positions in teacher unions. Participants agreed that tackling this imbalance is beneficial for both women and the teacher unions; by including more women in collective bargaining, social dialogue activities and management positions, women's needs are better represented. To reduce the gender imbalance in higher decision-making bodies, participants furthermore suggested that **mentoring** should be more encouraged. Having women role models in higher decision-making bodies as mentors not only is inspiring for young female union members, it can also boost their confidence. **Professional upgrading** through training is also necessary to increase the number of women in leadership positions.

Finding the right balance between work and private life is not an easy task but women experience even more difficulties in achieving work-life balance when they do not have the social support they need. Participants agreed that, considering the fact that teachers and the teaching profession face increasing requirements and responsibilities from students, parents, education institutions, national and international actors, achieving this balance is becoming even more difficult in the future. Teacher unions should therefore **focus their actions on counteracting on the intensification of women's workload**.

Looking at the organisation of teacher unions, gender mainstreaming in collective bargaining requires the appropriate structures. Participants agreed that a **critical examination of union structures and actions** undertaken on gender equality issues is necessary to move forward. Teacher unions should assess their structures to identify areas that require action and should have a special focus on gender equality in all their work. Having specific committees within the structures of a teacher union that deal with gender equality can be helpful in this regard.



## 8. Panel Debate



**Marina Alugishvili**  
Vice-president ESTFUG (Georgia)  
Early Childhood Education perspective



**Rossella Benedetti**  
Chair of the ETUCE Standing Committee  
for Equality  
Vocational Education and Training perspective



**Mike Jennings,**  
Bureau Member ETUCE  
Higher Education and Research perspective



**Prof. Suzanne Gatt**  
Faculty of Education, Malta  
Teacher training institutes' perspective

Gitta Franke-Zöllmer, Chair of the ETUCE Status of Women, opened the debate and introduced the panellists. Marina Alugishvili, Rossella Benedetti, Mike Jennings and prof. Suzanne Gatt presented their evaluation of teacher unions methods and materials used to battle gender inequalities.

The panellists agreed that challenges in the education sector, such as decent salaries and decent working conditions, can be linked to gender equality issues and the feminisation of the profession. The quality of education clearly depends on the dedication and motivation of teachers and this should be better reflected in teachers' wages, status and working conditions. It is important to draw teacher unions' attention to the fact that by enhancing the working conditions of teachers through collective bargaining activities and social dialogue, teacher unions are helping women battle gender inequality as well (as women make up 71% of ETUCES membership).

To reduce the gender imbalance regarding teaching in higher education and leadership positions in education and teacher unions, panellists agree that role models play an important part. Women in higher education or in a higher position can mentor and support younger women in their 'way to the top'. It is also important for these role models to make space for other young female professionals. Women can help each other by offering opportunities and promoting their participation in higher decision-making bodies.

The panellists agreed that gender equality and equality in general should be considered and taken into account across different subjects. Issues in this regard should not be tackled in one single course but from a wider transversal perspective. They agreed that the topic of gender equality should be addressed at all levels of the education system – from early childhood education institutions to teacher training institutes.

## 9. Conclusion

The promotion of gender equality in the teaching profession through social dialogue was the focus of this joint ETUI-ETUCE training seminar. Recognising that education, although still confronted with gender inequalities in its own sector, is able to reproduce or transform gender roles and – stereotypes, delegates discussed women’s working conditions, gender and status in the teaching profession and women and decision-making in teacher unions.

In the light of the achievement of gender equality in the teaching profession, teacher unions are on a winding road. Progress has been made in recent years but challenges still remain. Equality structures, policies and activities that are necessary to step forward, were critically discussed and examined during this training seminar.

Participants agreed that **collective bargaining activities and social dialogue** are an important condition for the achievement of gender equality. ETUCE member organisations that cannot rely on a structural social dialogue framework, mention this as a challenge for the promotion of gender equality in the teaching profession. Teacher unions should have the appropriate structures in place for gender mainstreaming through collective bargaining and social dialogue. **Gender equality committees** can assess the structures of teacher unions and can examine the actions of teacher unions on gender equality issues.

As actions are more successful when they are addressing specific needs at the national or regional level, an **examination of the national, regional and sociocultural situation** is necessary when teacher unions are designing and organising actions to tackle gender inequalities.

Participants underlined that teacher unions are a source of advice and information regarding gender equality issues and therefore need to work together. **Trainings and seminars** that provide information and the opportunity to exchange good practices are needed in order for teacher unions to step up their effort to sustainably promote and further implement gender equality in education.

Regarding the gender imbalance in higher education and higher decision making positions, participants agreed that **mentoring programmes** should be more encouraged. Female role models play an important part in the support for younger women. Female mentors can tackle gender stereotypes, boost the confidence of younger women and create opportunities for them by making space.

Women still have a more vulnerable position than men when it comes to employment and experience more difficulties in achieving the work-life balance. Teacher unions should therefore focus their actions on counteracting the intensification of women’s workload. Participants highlighted that by **improving working conditions** and raising salaries, teacher unions are also helping women battle gender inequalities as 71% of ETUCE members are women.

As teachers and schools are fundamental actors in the process towards a positive change, the **training and continuous professional development** of teachers should include gender equality issues. The topic of gender equality (and social equality more in general) should be addressed at all levels of the education system – from early childhood education institutions to teacher training institutes – in a **transversal approach**. Non-discriminatory education is beneficial for girls, boys and society as a whole.

## 10. Abbreviations

ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
ETUI	European Trade Union Institute
MINT	Mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology
NCPE	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality for Men and Women
SEB	Bulgarian Teacher Union of teachers
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
FNE	Federation of Teacher Unions (Portugal)
ESTFUG	Educators and Scientists Free Trade Union of Georgia



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