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EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
COMITE SYNDICAL EUROPEEN DE L'EDUCATION



Report

CLOSING CONFERENCE

on

**Teacher trade union actions
challenging gender stereotypes in
education and gender segregation
in the labour market**

Warsaw, 11-12 September 2012



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DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.



*Teacher trade union actions challenging gender stereotypes in education
and gender segregation in the labour market*

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*Teacher trade union actions challenging gender stereotypes in education
and gender segregation in the labour market*

1. Introduction

The closing conference of the ETUCE project *Teacher trade union actions challenging gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market* was held in Warsaw on the 11th and 12th September 2012, taking place at the headquarters of the Polish Teachers Union, ZNP. The conference constituted the concluding event in the project, gathering around 60 participants from teacher trade unions and other relevant stakeholders such as EFEE, EIGE & Council of Europe. The conference had two objectives. At an overall level to give the partakers opportunity to reflect on how teachers, education employees and teacher unions can contribute to the inclusion of the gender equality aspect in education, both at a national and European level. In a more concrete sense to invite the participants to discuss and suggest amendments for the draft *guidelines on how teacher unions can contribute to mitigating and tackling gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market*.

Key conference objectives

- Encourage participants to reflect on how teachers, education employees and teachers unions can contribute to the inclusion of the gender equality aspect in education
- Invite participants to discuss and suggest amendments for the guidelines on how teacher unions can mitigate and tackle gender stereotypes and gender segregation in the labour market

1.1. Project description

The conference summarises a year of concentrated work on the issue of gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market, including four advisory group meetings, a **peer learning**

activity for teacher trade unionists in charge of gender equality issues and a **training seminar**. The project continues the work of the former ETUCE project on promoting gender equality within teacher trade unions and in the teaching profession, which resulted in the *ETUCE*

“Gender sensitive education benefits members of both sexes. It helps determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations” (Unesco, 2004)

*Action Plan on Gender equality within teacher trade unions’ structures and in the teaching profession*¹ in which ETUCE committed itself to promote **gender sensitive education**. This notion refers to education that is anti-sexist, focused on equality and not passing on ideas about traditional roles for girls or boys, men or women. The project has sought to equip teachers, education employees and their unions with the necessary know-how to promote this sort of education, particularly with the goal of challenging gender

¹See http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/ETUCE_action%20plan_gender%20equality_EN_final.pdf

stereotypes and thereby seek to reduce gender segregation in the labour market. Gender stereotypes can have harmful consequences and should be addressed at the earliest possible stage in education in order to prevent them being developed. This renders it highly relevant for education employees, teachers and teacher trade unions to address the issue, because they play an important role in forming, directly as well as indirectly, children's and young people's attitudes. **Gender stereotypes** consist of generalisations about the typical male or female attitude, behavior etc. and oversimplify attributes of each sex. Gender stereotypes in relation to the work force categorise the sexes in a simplistic way as being particularly

Gender stereotypes: "preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Sex stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of boys and girls, women and men, as well as their educational experiences and life opportunities" (Council of Europe, 2011).

suitable for specific sectors or positions. This causes segregation, males and females being divided by artificial labels, created by simplistic ideas about innate and gender specific competences and qualifications. In seeking to

challenge such ideas teachers, education employees and teacher trade unions play an important role. Both in promoting and implementing gender sensitive education, raising awareness on the issue and in seeking to establish and share good practices, at European and national level. In line with the *EU2020 Strategy*,² the *Renewed Social Agenda*³ and the *New Skills for New Jobs Agenda*⁴, the project has sought to promote and share knowledge about education systems that challenge and diminish gender stereotypes, thereby striving to reduce their harmful long-term influence. Despite the fact that women are highly successful regarding education attainment and formal qualifications, gender segregation in the work force is still a reality. Women's careers are often interrupted or blocked by family responsibilities that are unequally distributed between women and men and the career patterns for both sexes are influenced by stereotypical ideas about which gender will be most suitable for specific positions or sectors

1.2. Words of welcome and highlights from the peer learning activity and the training seminar

Martin Rømer, European Director, welcomed the participants to the event and described the project priorities and activities. He highlighted the *ETUCE Action Plan on Gender equality* which suggests several

"ETUCE aims to challenge perceptions of traditional gender roles and stereotypes, thereby seeking to enhance equality between the sexes and to reduce gender segregation in the labour market"

lines of action for both ETUCE and national teacher trade unions. He drew the link

between the financial crisis and its wide and negative impact on the education systems in Europe and the impact the recession has got on policies that are directly and indirectly related to gender equality.



Martin Rømer,
European Director,
ETUCE

² See http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

³ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=547>

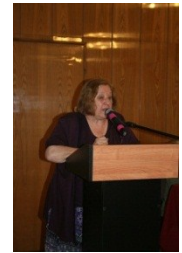
⁴ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=822&langId=en>

Slawomir Broniarz, President of ZNP, welcomed the participants to the conference and underlined ZNP's



Slawomir Broniarz,
president of ZNP

commitment to the issue of gender equality and to combating gender stereotypes in education. **Kounka Damianova, Chair of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality** and member of the Project Advisory Group, reported on the highlights from the training seminar and the peer learning activity, held in May 2012⁵. She explained that the events had provided valuable input and inspiration and that the presentations had been followed by interesting discussions on how to achieve the goals of the project.



Kounka Damianova,
Chair of the ETUCE
Standing Committee
for Equality

2. Key note speeches: Challenging gender stereotypes and gender segregation

2.1. Challenging gender stereotypes in education and in the labour market with a view to democratic citizenship



Anne Marie Faradji,
Gender Equality
Expert, Council of
Europe

Anne Marie Faradji, Gender Equality Expert, Council of Europe, underlined the commitment of the Council of Europe to work with gender equality, seeing this principle as a basic constituent part of human rights and **democratic citizenship**. Since the mid-1990s, the Council of Europe

has stressed the importance of education in implementing and achieving gender equality and has addressed the issue through many actions and measures. Mrs Faradji problematised that the success girls and young women have in education is not translated into post-education opportunities, evidenced by the pay gap that still exists when comparing men and women, (an average of 17% across Europe); women's level of domestic responsibilities and their under-representation in decision making and public life. She stressed that it is **not enough to avoid discriminating formally**; legislation itself does not guarantee de facto gender equality. She considered it important that schools and policy makers seek to incorporate training activities and materials aimed at **sensitising young people about gender equality** and at preparing them for democratic citizenship. The schools should see themselves as instruments of change, aware of their substantial influence on both the pupils and the surrounding society. In relation to this she expressed the **necessity of providing proper training** for teachers and education employees. As she expressed it, in Europe the education systems are often based on sexist prejudices and in many schools stereotype images of gender role are perpetuated. Mrs Faradji concluded by saying, that it is widely recognised that gender equality in the education sector is key to achieving gender equality in society in general and by emphasising the need for a global strategy to eliminate gender stereotypes.

"The future role of women is determined by what they learn at school and gender stereotypes constitute barriers in their career paths"

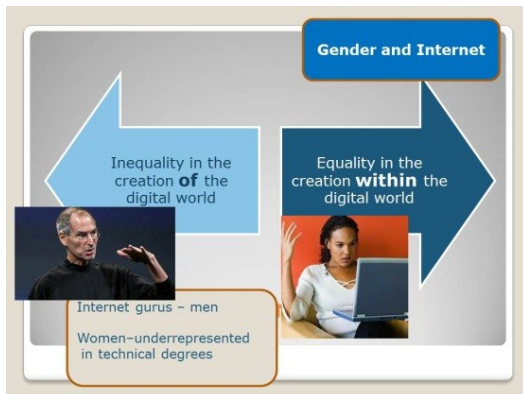
⁵ See full report on these activities at: http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_Publications.html

2.2. Gender stereotypes in education and the labour market

Anna Krasteva, Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Lille, gave a presentation on the issue of stereotypes and measures to overcome them, focusing on their function as cognitive tools and measures of simplification in a complex world. Paraphrasing her, it is very difficult to combat gender stereotypes. She suggested that the goal on the gender equality agenda should not be to



Anna Krasteva,
Doctor Honoris
Causa, University
Lille 3



achieve equal numbers of men and women in all professions, but to **break the invisible barriers** that exist in relation to gender stereotypes. As she stated, the primary challenge is to make it possible for boys and girls to make untraditional choices that are not biased by gender stereotypes. Mentioning *generation Y*, she pointed to **new generations creating new challenges**, entailing that creative solutions are needed when wishing to reduce

gender barriers and stereotypes. Mrs Krasteva linked this to the issue of inequalities regarding gender and the use of the internet, which is creating new challenges to be placed on the gender equality agenda. Talking in a symbolic sense, she used the **metaphors of a door and a bridge** to visualise the idea about gender integration in society. Whilst a door can be partly or fully open, enabling women to walk into the world of men, a bridge enables both sexes to go in both directions, resulting in a better integrated and more equal society. She further introduced the notion of **gender sensitive citizenship**, citizenship being a concept where humankind is united and not divided by, for example, race or gender. Concluding in a positive tone, Mrs Krasteva emphasised that even though it is difficult to combat gender stereotypes; gender equality is nevertheless a *“mission possible”*.

“A door can be partly or fully open, enabling women to walk into the world of men, while a bridge enables both sexes to go in both directions, resulting in a better integrated and more equal society”

3. Tackling gender stereotypes in national education systems

3.1. Panel discussion on tackling gender stereotypes in national education systems

Nicole Mosconi, Professor Emeritus, University Paris Ouest Nanterre, talked about sexism and gender stereotypes in schools and her own experiences with training teachers and education employees to become aware of and fight stereotyping attitudes and behaviour. When children enter social life in the school **social**



differentiation takes place, which leads to a lack of equality among the sexes. According to Mrs Mosconi, what is masculine is often valued higher than what is seen as feminine characteristics and boys’ and girls’

similar behaviour are interpreted in different ways. An important aspect of teacher training is to **create awareness** about this tendency and to challenge teachers' and education employees' habits of thinking and understanding of the masculine and the feminine. They should be encouraged to **work with their own attitudes and convictions**. This must be undertaken in a way that is not criticising their work, but professionally challenging their subconscious ideas and convictions about boys and girls and gender specific competences. **Anna Wołosik, President of the Toward the Girls Association**, argued that her association sees a Polish society where gender equality is an existing but not yet implemented value. The



school system plays a role in this by **perpetuating and reinforcing gender stereotypes**, for example, in the school materials provided to the students. This has the consequence that girls choose specific positions and leave school with low self-esteem, having a negative effect on their later position in the labour market. Mrs Wołosik underlined that the school system has potential for changing to the better by implementing gender sensitive education. This implies that

the equality issue must permeate all topics and be present in all types of subjects, both concerning formal and informal education. In line with Mrs Mosconi she emphasised that teachers and education employees shape the attitudes of learners. They must be aware that they might exhibit stereotyping behaviour and it is important that they work with their own world view and attitudes. Mrs Wołosik further explained the concept of feminist pedagogy and underlined the importance of using **gender sensitive language** in education.

3.2. Challenging stereotypes in education: Good practices presented by teacher trade unions

The different representatives from the national teacher trade unions each presented inspirational research, strategies and practices from their respective countries and unions. **Melanie Bittner, Ph.D. student, GEW**, described a research project examining gender stereotypes in school material⁶. The conclusions of this project were that **especially girls, women and families** are presented in a stereotypical way in the material. The only exception was in relation to technology use which was often described in a non-stereotypical way. Her message was that gender stereotypes in school books are highly problematic and she explained that GEW is planning to adopt a **policy paper on non-discriminatory school books** and improvement of material to avoid gender stereotypes in education. Another important priority is to promote dialogue between teachers and the education employees and governmental institutions, primarily at the regional level. **Nieves Martinez Ten** and **Laura Lopez Machin**, both in charge of **Gender**



Melanie Bittner,
Ph.D. student, GEW

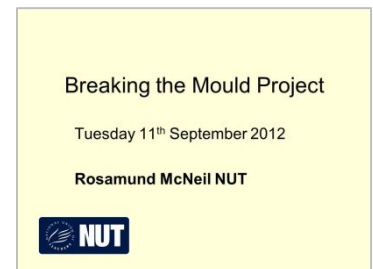
⁶ See http://www.gew.de/Binaries/Binary88533/120423_Schulbuchanalyse_web.pdf (in German).

Equality Issues, FETE-UGT, presented their union's strategy for *Education in Equality*⁷. FETE-UGT has launched campaigns on the subject and provided teachers with theoretical and practical tools, focusing on the use of inclusive language in educational situations, on incorporating the experiences and interests of women in the curriculum and on promoting anti-sexist behaviour in the family and among the education personnel. They mentioned the role of the financial crisis and its impact on the Spanish education system, having far-reaching negative consequences such as gender segregation in schools and rising school taxes.



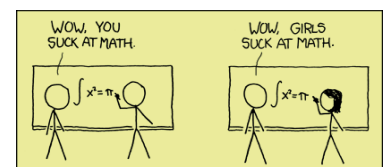
Barbara Kutrowska, Lower Silesia District Board Member, ZNP, underlined that promoting gender equality in education is a very important task that should preferably be introduced already in early childhood education. She presented the different strategies and tools in counteracting gender stereotypes such as seminars, workshops, support groups and educational projects. ZNP has further appointed an **Equality Team** within the union and is

supporting publications linked to gender equality issues. **Rosamund McNeil, NUT**, presented the *Breaking the Mould Project*, a small scale initiative starting with 5 primary schools that were interested in working with the issue of gender stereotypes and gender equality. These schools were provided a list of books with content and stories that can be inspirational in talking with the pupils about gender stereotypes. The schools were also granted financial support for the procurement of them. The objectives of the project were to empower teachers and education employees to **reflect on their practice in the classroom and beyond**; to challenge messages about gender and to support teachers and education employees to take risks and analyse interactions with pupils and parents.



3.3. Working group discussions about the possibility of transferring good practices to other countries

The participants in the three working groups were encouraged to discuss the good practices presented by the different unions and to consider which of these seemed suitable for transferring to their own national education systems. It was generally agreed upon in the groups that there is **no one-size-fits-all model** to be found and that the practices must be adapted to the specific national contexts. Nevertheless a



<http://womenspeak.tumblr.com/post/4957181257/gender-stereotyping>

few common preconditions were mentioned, these including the notion that **equality cannot be detached from other types of discrimination**, on the basis of for example race and age, the point that men are also victims of gender stereotyping and that the fight to reduce stereotyping must begin at an early stage in the education process. The participants emphasised that it is necessary to identify and share examples of

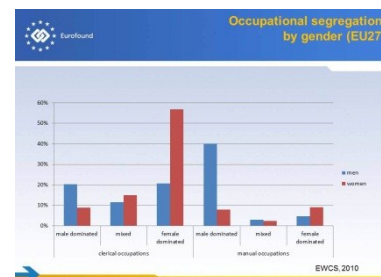
⁷ See http://prezi.com/yevlg_1trvgg/educando-en-igualdad/ (In Spanish)

good practices across unions and that ETUCE plays an important role in performing research on the issue and in knowledge and practice sharing.

4. Gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market

4.1. Panel discussion on gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labor market

During the panel discussion several themes and points were highlighted. According to **Isabella Billelta**, research manager at Eurofound, one can neither speak of a door nor a bridge (for the description of these concepts see Mrs Krasteva's presentation above) when evaluating the current status on the labour market. This is according to her characterized by gender segregation. She highlighted the need for rethinking research methods and approaches concerning gender issues and made a plea for better inclusion of women in decision making, also internally in the trade unions. **Jo Morris**, policy advisor, EIGE/ETUC, also brought up the issue of women in



The panelists

negotiations, emphasizing the importance of women's participation and of working towards reaching fair collective agreements on, for example, maternity leave. She also suggested undertaking confidence boosting exercise for pupils and to provide training in public speaking and debating to increase equal participation. She concluded by highlighting the importance of discussing with the pupils how everybody benefits when both female and male perspectives are included in policy

making. **Charles Nolda**, consultant to EFEE, recognised the need for more women in

leader positions in the education sector and expressed concern about the example set if this is not achieved. He underlined that teachers and education employees should remember to be proud of themselves; the current situation being that girls are no longer falling behind boys when it comes to school results. He stated that it is not the fault of the teachers and the education employees that the private sector is slow in promoting women to boardroom positions. **Kounka Damianova**, Chair of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality and member of the Project Advisory Group, also touched upon the role of the teacher and the education employees, underlining that their role should be acknowledged as important and that an improvement of their working conditions is necessary. This entails making the positions more attractive, for example by looking at the issue of work-life balance and by providing better possibilities for promotion. **Anne Marie Faradji**, Council of Europe, discussed the role of media as an important setting for challenging gender stereotypes and highlighted that fighting inequality forms an important part of education in human rights. **Anna Krasteva**, Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Lille, summed up the panel discussion and underlined that it is important to distinguish between two

models of equality policy: one that strives towards giving equal opportunities and one that seeks to create equal results.

4.2. Working group discussions on draft guidelines

The three working groups were chaired by the project advisory group members, giving the participants the opportunity to discuss and amend the **draft guidelines on how teacher unions can contribute to mitigating and tackling gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market**. In the



Working group B

plenary reports from the groups many constructive ideas and suggestions for amendments and additions were brought up. The valuable feedback will be included in the ongoing work on the guidelines, which will be presented to the ETUCE Committee for adoption in spring 2013.

5. Closing remarks and conclusion

Martin Rømer closed the conference by expressing gratitude to ZNP for hosting the conference, to the speakers for their inspiring presentations and to the participants for contributing to a lively debate, making the conference a successful and thought-stimulating event.

The conference provided a platform for debate and reflection amongst the participants on how teachers, education employees and teacher unions can contribute concretely to the inclusion of gender equality in education. Both the plenary sessions and the working groups provided constructive forums for speakers and participants to discuss both the good practices presented by the different unions and the draft guidelines. Concerning the good practices on challenging gender stereotypes presented by the union representatives, the findings in the working groups were that the strategies and examples must be adapted to fit with the national contexts. No single European model can be found. This is due to the diversity of cultures, the education systems, the political environment etc. The guidelines are one of the concrete results of the conference and the project, together with the conference report and the final project brochure. The aspiration is that the conference itself has created additional output by providing food for thought that will be shared in the participants' respective unions, encouraging both reflection and action on the issues of challenging gender stereotypes in education and promoting gender equality in the labour market.



Abbreviations

EFEE	European Federation of Employers in Education
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
EUROFOUND	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
FETE-UGT	UGT Federation of Education Employees (Spain)
GEW	The German Education Union
NUT	National Union of Teachers (United Kingdom)
SEB	Bulgarian Teachers Trade Union
ZNP	Polish Teachers Union



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