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

## Report of the ETUCE Seminar

*'Promoting gender  
equality within teacher  
trade unions and in the  
teaching profession in  
times of austerity'*

Utrecht, 7 May 2014



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## 1 Introduction

This seminar has been organised in the frame of the [ETUCE gender equality project 2013-2014](#). Within this project, ETUCE addresses the issue of participation and leadership of women and men in teacher unions and in the teaching profession. The project's official title *Promoting gender equality within teacher trade unions and in the teaching profession II – Implementing and reinforcing teacher trade union actions on gender equality in times of austerity* indicates the project's two-parted motivation. On the one hand, the project builds on the findings of a previous ETUCE project on gender equality, which was conducted in 2008 - 2009. On the other hand, the project seeks to describe and discuss how the economic crisis and austerity politics have influenced gender equality in the teaching profession since then. The seminar is one of

several activities that the ETUCE Secretariat has organised in the project period from November 2013 – October 2014. Apart from this seminar, ETUCE carried out an online survey and established an online information platform (sharepoint group). A final project conference is foreseen on 25-26 September 2014 in Sofia. . The seminar's aim has been to present and discuss the preliminary results of the online survey and to examine different teacher union approaches regarding the promotion of gender equality. Based on the findings collected from the ETUCE member organisations and the seminar/conference discussions, a set of practical guidelines for teacher unions and their affiliates on how to promote gender equality in times of austerity is going to be developed at the end of the project.



### Project Objectives

- promote teacher union action on gender equality
- continue the work that ETUCE and its member organisations have achieved in this field
- raise awareness on gender equality issues and on major EU priorities, policies and instruments
- analyse the actual gender equality situation and the impact of the crisis thereon in the education sector and within teacher unions' structures especially in the economic crisis
- support teacher unions in further implementing existing policy papers

## 2 The Project Advisory Group



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Sweden



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

## 3 Gender Equality in the Teaching Profession

Education has a twofold impact on gender relations in society. On the one hand, it is a sector of the labour market where women and men develop careers. At present, the great majority of employees working in education are women, but the number of women decreases dramatically the higher one goes up the hierarchical scale of the education system. This is to say that there are relatively more women teachers in primary education than in lower and upper secondary education. With regard to leadership positions in education, women are underrepresented at all levels.

On the other hand, the education sector has a particular role and a major impact on other sectors and on society as a whole. School systems have the capacity to reproduce or

transform gender relations. The interactions between girls and boys, female and male teachers shape gender relations and gender roles every day. This is why gender equality matters particularly in the education sector.

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

## 4 Gender Equality in Times of Economic Crisis

### Key Note Speaker

**Rosanna Ruscito**, National Secretary of CISL (Italy) and member to the ETUC Women's Committee Presidium, explained how the economic crisis affected gender equality.



Rosanna has worked as a flight attendant in Alitalia for 26 years. When Alitalia went bankrupt, Rosanna continued her union activity in CISL Transport Federation. After seven years as Chair of the Women's Committee, and eight years as Technical Director of the union's magazine, Rosanna became a National Secretary of CISL Transport Federation and head of the Social Policies Department.

In her 23 years of union activities, Rosanna supported women workers to bring more women into unions and into active roles. She believes that building women's leadership is crucial for the strength of global unions.

The economic crisis and austerity politics have a major negative impact on gender equality in Europe. Although the first sectors that were affected by the financial and economic crisis were male-dominated sectors, such as construction and manufacturing, the situation shaped by austerity politics nowadays severely affects female employment and sectors where women are most occupied.

Cuts in the public sector affect women in particular as women constitute on average 69.2% of public sector workers in the EU (European Women's Lobby 2012). The public

sector – including education – seems to have lost its protective role for women as its lay-offs push women towards precarious employment with limited income security, work-life balance options and pension benefits, and worsen the overall quality of women's working conditions. This is to say the economic crisis continues to have a negative impact on gender equality and on women rights.

Especially the long-term aftermath of the crisis, and austerity politics in particular, have a great impact on women. Not only do women suffer from the effects of the crisis on employment resulting in unemployment and the deterioration of working conditions, but also do they replace austerity-driven cut-backs in public services (e.g. in care for children/the elderly) with more household labour. Households struggle with the crisis by using unpaid labour to replace paid services.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence that the governments, the European Commission and the European Council are taking into account the gender dimension of the crisis in their policy response. Some of these policies are worsening the situation (participation rates, working hours, precariousness, etc.).

Some solid trends were not affected by the crisis. Women's participation in the labour market, as well as their level of education, continues to rise. Part-time work, parental leave and domestic work continue to remain "female" phenomena. The gender segregation in higher education and business is very high and the glass ceiling remains in place.

ETUC demands that the implementation of gender equality policy be adequately supported in the European Union. Among other sectors, investments are required in education and training, research and development to improve the work-life balance, to tackle the 'glass ceiling' and the 'maternal wall', to improve the efficiency of the education systems, to tackle gender segregation in higher education and to sustain and increase the EU's research capacity.

Work needs to be done also within the unions' internal structures. At present, one can ask why women do not vote for women leaders even if they are in the majority within

the union. Behind the change in politics a change in attitude is also necessary. If women do not demand and support women leaders, it is very difficult to bargain for more gender equality and balancing of work and family life in collective agreements.

*"ETUC firmly believes in the role of education, research and training. Teachers have the capacity to change society: they are in contact with young people and can inspire the younger generation for change."*

Rosanna Ruscito  
Member of the ETUC Women's  
Committee Presidium

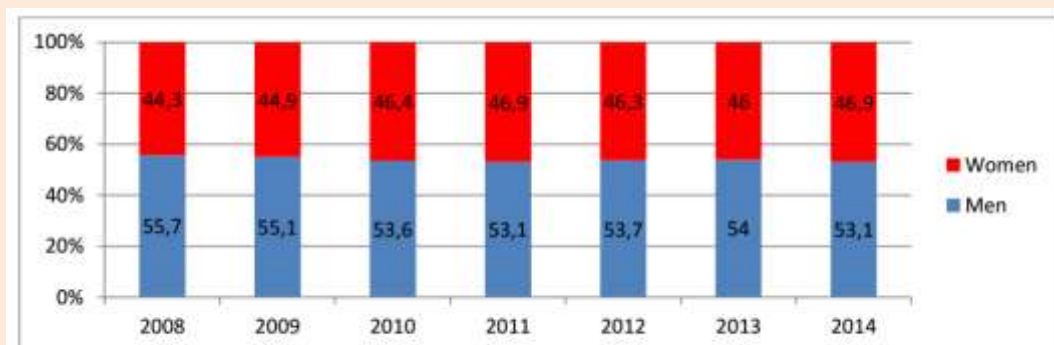
## 5 Results of the ETUC 8 March Survey 2014

Since 2008, the ETUC 8 March Survey analyses each year the gender distribution in the decision making structures of the ETUC and its affiliated organisations. The survey is a tool that is intended to improve gender equality in all level of decision-making, especially in the highest levels. It is conducted among national confederations, trade union federations at European level, and sectoral national unions.

The ETUC 8 March Survey 2014 showed that women constitute almost half of the ETUC membership (44.5 %). Women have slowed down over the last years the process of decline faced by unions in a majority of European countries. Nevertheless, women are in

minority for all positions of power in internal trade union structures. Only three union presidents are women compared to 32 men, and 4 General Secretaries out of 15 are women.

Among ETUC's sectoral trade unions, ETUCE is the trade union federation with the highest percentage of women members. Although overall union membership is decreasing, an increase in young women members can be noted. However, women are still not in high level decision making positions in general and no great change can be noted in this regard among ETUC federations.



Source: 8th of March Surveys 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014



## 6 Preliminary Survey Results: Gender Equality in Teacher Unions and in the Teaching Profession

### Project Expert

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

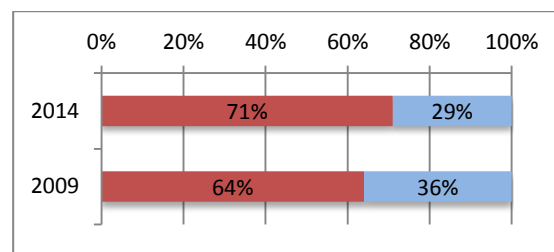


Angie's research centers on organisation sociology, academic careers, and gender. She has worked on issues related to gender inequality and organisations, both in the framework of her academic education and research, and in the context of student representation, for over a decade. Through her work in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

The [online survey](#) is a tool for ETUCE and its member organisations to compare the data collected in 2009 to the present situation and to observe (crisis-related) developments in teacher unions. In order to ensure comparability, the survey was made with view to the design of the 2009 survey. The survey shows that women are underrepresented in all positions of leadership in ETUCE member organisations. They are underrepresented especially with regards to the highest

decision-making bodies. With regard to congress delegates, the survey shows that women are not represented in correlation to their membership. The percentage of women decreased among congress delegates, even though women membership generally increased. This is to say the gender gap widened among congress delegates in the past years.

Chart: Membership (Women: red; Men:blue)

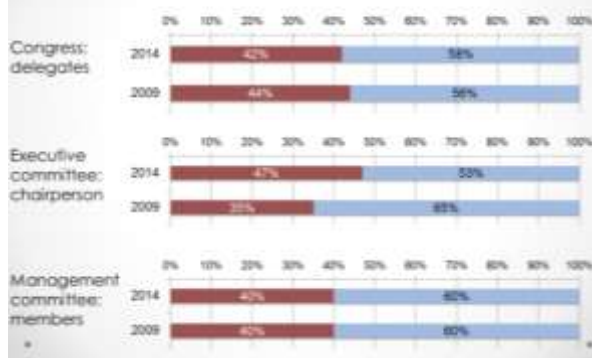


The comparison to the 2009 data further shows that, with regard to the executive and management committees, women are better represented in 2014. Their percentage increased among chairpersons and deputy chairpersons and stayed the same among the management committee members. A massive increase can be noted with regard to deputy general secretaries and presidents. However, on the whole, the gender gap still remains.

Looking at equality structures, policies and activities, today more unions have equality departments than in 2009 (almost 60%). The majority of equality staff has been and still is female. In most unions the equality structures are financed through the trade union budget.

In comparison to 2009, more unions have a written policy dealing explicitly with gender equality in the union's own structures (42% compared to 37% in 2009). Almost two-third

## 1.1 Decision-making Structures



takes measures to improve gender equality in the union's decision-making structures. Most unions value proportional representation of women in decision-making structures higher than a gender parity of 50:50.

### The effect of the economic crisis and austerity

The great majority of teacher unions responded that the economic crisis and austerity measures have gendered effects (70 %). The main problem areas identified are the reconciliation of work and family duties and the increase of violence against women. Improvements can be seen mostly with regard to overcoming female gender stereotypes and the provision of childcare facilities.

Most unions indicated that male and female education staff were equally affected by the budget cuts, but female staff was more affected by job loss and reduction to part-time than male staff. The majority of unions stated that the gender pay gap stayed the same or even increased.

Teacher unions answered that it has become more difficult to reconcile work and family life for employees in education, while at the same

time they also noted improvements in the provision of childcare facilities.

Concerning action on overcoming gender stereotypes in education (curricula, gender training for staff, school policies), many improvements were listed, especially for overcoming female gender stereotypes. Still, girls are more likely to be introduced to work in STEM-related areas than boys are to become acquainted to social and care work.

On the subject of violence against women, over 80 percent of teacher unions said that incidences of violence against women increased.

Although unions say that the crisis and austerity measures have gendered effects only a fraction of the unions specifically focus in their crisis-related activities on the gender dimension. Also in specific crisis-related policies, the gender dimension is rarely considered (in 10 % of cases). However, one third of unions include a gender dimension in their crisis-related lobbying activities and campaigns.

#### The Online Survey

- 140 questions were divided into two parts
- Part 1 on representation of women in teacher unions
- Part 2 on effects of the economic crisis and crisis-related developments in the field of gender equality
- 41 of the 129 ETUCE member organisations responded
- 21 unions had responded to the survey in 2009 and allow for direct comparison
- In 2014, women continue to represent the majority of union members with 71 %

## 7 Good Experiences in Promoting Gender Equality in Teacher Unions

### AOb, The Netherlands

- General Union of Education Personnel
- open to teachers, administrative and ancillary staff, ranging from primary education to colleges of higher education
- approximately 86,000 members
- one of the oldest teacher unions worldwide

 **AOb**-Algemene Onderwijsbond

AOb established the AOb Academy, a very intensive 60 days training course for high potential (and preferably) young members. The course deals with collective agreements, working conditions, and legal issues but also with educational topics and personal skills. It is taught by trainers from AOb and external trainers.

In the past three years, the academy years had 36 participants. 32 took on more responsibility in the union or in boards of their education sector after completing the course. The majority of participants were women (70%), 75 % were under 40 years of age.

This year, AOb had 60 applicants of which they accepted 12 (10 women, 2 men). Applicants have to present their motivation, communication and reflection skills, and their vision on education and on the trade union. Working in small groups on personal development over a long time has

ZNP established a Committee for Equal Opportunities in 2009. With this initiative ZNP creates the link to its foundation years when the union was very active on women's rights and gender issues.

The committee promotes gender equality by organising training sessions at union level, promoting different terminology, publishing educational material about discrimination, and pointing towards existing reports on discrimination in education.

ZNP also cooperates with NGOs to promote gender equality. The union is a member of two networks containing 100 organisations involved in anti-discrimination education. At local level, ZNP organises workshops, courses and conferences together with NGOs, worker representations, lawyers and other stakeholders. These coalitions have a positive effect also because motivate further actions.

### ZNP, Poland

- oldest teacher union in Poland (from 1905)
- represents all sectors of education, also technical and administrative staff
- 250.000 members, of those are 180.000 women



### Eğitim Sen, Turkey

- education and science workers union
- 128 000 members
- 100 branches
- promotes secondary education for girls because their participation in elementary and secondary education is low



In all decision-making bodies, Eğitim Sen has a responsible for gender equality and a 30% quota for women. They have introduced a 40 % quota for women delegates at the union's congress.

Eğitim Sen connects gender equality to related inequalities in society, for example to racial discrimination or children's rights. The union stands up for mandatory preschool education which would contribute to a better education of girls.

Eğitim Sen has had good experiences with 'train-the-trainer activities'. The union organises seminars and conferences for members, teachers and parents on equality issues. 100 women members have participated in courses so far and continue to pass on their knowledge and training in the branches.

## 8 Conclusions

The discussion on the survey results in the working groups and in the plenary suggested several actions for teacher unions at national and European level.

Teacher unions should **support teachers** by using formal and informal networks. Many teacher unions today organise seminars and conferences on general gender equality issues in education as well as on specific expressions of inequality, such as violence against women. Teacher unions should continue their good work here and also publish arguments for gender equality that teachers can use in the classroom and when speaking with their colleagues.

Teachers should be encouraged to **fight against the replication of gender stereotypes**. This is particularly important at times when younger, female members do not seem to see the need to stand up for more gender equality anymore. One way to intervene is to build up students' self-esteem, especially the self-esteem and self-dignity of girls and women. It is therefore important that equality aspects and gender issues are part of **initial teacher training**. Student teachers need to learn how to reflect their own behavior and attitudes in the classroom using modern methods and technologies (e.g. peer learning activities, video analysis, etc.).

Many unions have made good experience on **collaborating** with other relevant stakeholders in this area and the broader community. Such collaborations should be fostered in the future. Teacher unions could join campaigns of non-governmental organisations that promote, for example, equal relations in the family. For example, in Turkey it has proven helpful to combine efforts on gender equality with children's rights. Eđitim Sen organises meetings on free

early childhood education. As few children attend kindergarten, women stay at home longer instead of returning to work. Generally, the provision of child care facilities differs regionally in Europe, also as a result of the economic crisis.

Trade union actions aiming at increasing the number of women members in decision-making bodies were discussed. In order to **raise the number of women in decision-making bodies**, teacher unions could organise preparatory courses with the goal to train and encourage young union leaders. On this topic, the participants also examined whether women find less support in elections because they sometimes have limited possibilities to present themselves in union activities before the elections. This might be true especially for women who could not take on assignment roles beforehand because of their care responsibilities in the family.

More generally, trade unions should **organise their activities in such a way that women can actively participate**, especially also during times when they have young children. Measures to enable women to participate include, among others, scheduling meetings at acceptable times for parents, providing babysitters during union meetings or handing out babysitting vouchers. A good practice from VBE in Germany is to organise special meetings with members on maternity leave. This has proven a good way to keep members in touch with the union and to make it easier for them to return to work. Teacher unions should generally convey a positive image of trade union work that motivates members to take action. For example, they could think about accrediting their members' trade union work.

The situation of women in teacher unions needs to be monitored within each union. If such structures do not exist, it makes sense to establish a permanent equality committee that has among its objectives monitoring the status of women in the union and proposing solutions. ETUCE should further see to the task of raising its member organisations' awareness on possible solutions to increase the participation of women in decision-making bodies.

At national and European level, teacher unions need to **monitor** the situation of women and report about it to their members and the wider public. They should demand for equality responsibilities in their governments and education institutions.

**Social dialogue** is the most important strategy for improving the situation of women. Bargaining for better working conditions is necessary because of the gender pay gap and because of the glass ceiling in women's careers. With regard to paternal leave, the time given should be the same for mothers and fathers in order to show that both parents have a shared responsibility in caring for their children.

Teacher unions should use the results from ETUCE studies and projects in their national Social Dialogues. Challenges and obstacles for unions connected to applying ETUCE policy need to be addressed.

Teacher unions need to be **aware of governments' actions** to worsen the working conditions of teachers in many European countries. They also need to keep track of the actions of groups from the extreme right that go against the notion of equality in schools. Especially at times of crisis, when budget cuts and cuts in maternity leave and holidays are on the agenda of governments, international solidarity between teacher unions is crucial to fight back.

In line with these efforts, teacher unions should promote a positive image of the teaching profession, as it is an important profession which requires substantial qualification and training.

In order to be efficient and achieve good results, it is important that unions focus on practical actions and solutions and work towards continuous progress.



## 9 Acronyms

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





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