



**“European Sectoral Social Partners in Education striving for sustainable influence on European education policy building through successful social dialogue. The ESSDE capacity building project III”.**

**Roundtable Porto Portugal, 08 May 2017**

**Minutes**

**Chair:** Paola Cammilli, ETUCE Policy Coordinator

**Opening session: Welcome and current situation**

**Paola Cammilli, ETUCE Policy Coordinator**, cordially welcomes the participants to the Roundtable, stating she is very pleased for this opportunity to learn from each other and to exchange views on Social Dialogue at European and national level. She presents the project and its aims, one of them being to strengthen the links between the national and European social dialogue, to enhance the discussion on the ESSDE Work Programme themes and to disseminate the results of the ESSDE. She envisages fruitful exchanges between the European and Portugal social partners on how to improve the support to educators, including through their continuous professional development.

**Daniel Wisniewski, EFEE General Secretary**, gives an overview of the history and goals of EFEE, as well as on the outcomes of the ESSDE, precisising that one of the goals is to influence the EU policy making to support education personnel and education employers achieving their goals.

**João Dias da Silva, FNE General Secretary**, welcomes all participants. He greets the work of ETUCE, and adds that while the space of intervention on education policies at national level is strong, international and supranational organisations can have an important influence, which social partners in education should be aware of. Social dialogue happens in a society that is more complex and fragmented than ever before. The global dimension of today’s societies is creating new dependencies, as any decision taken has results on many actors. He asserts the necessity to put forward new mechanisms of participation and control, in order to enhance the possibilities of political participation. These shouldn’t be symbolic or occasional, but rather, effective and continuous mechanisms.

The participants proceed to present the current social dialogue in the education sector in Portugal: key opportunities and challenges.

**Anabela Sotaia, FENPROF**, states that in the previous governments, the austerity measures brought by the Troika have resulted in cuts in budgets and wages. The election of the current government brought a new political climate, with a will to step away from austerity. While FENPROF greets this, the organisation is worried about the government’s ability to deliver in regards to the dialogue with unions, as some urgent measures haven’t be tackled yet (the number of students per class, for instance). FENPROF expects commitments to enhanced dialogue and collective bargaining in order to recover from the deterioration of teachers’ working conditions during the years of the crisis.

**Rodrigo Queirós e Melo, AEEP**, affirms that there has been a continuous fruitful dialogue for many years in the past with representatives of teachers, in a context of economic growth. However, the context has changed, with the economic crisis and the strenuous restrictions to budgets. This new bargaining context is more difficult. He expresses his hope that this day brings new ideas to tackle these challenges.



*The project is carried out with the financial support of the European Commission*



**José Luís Presa, ANESPO**, underlines the specific context of social dialogue in Portugal regarding VET. Although there is no specific collective bargaining in this sector, VET schools have successfully developed social dialogue. He reports the possible upcoming signature of a joint agreement with FNE on VET, adding that this agreement should be set in a realistic framework. He emphasizes the need to work jointly with trade unions on much needed priorities such as the integration of opportunities for career development.

### **Session 1: Cross sectoral and sectoral social dialogue at the EU level : achievements and future developments**

**Tina Weber, project expert, ICF**, presents a state of play of social dialogue in education at the European level. She indicates that while social dialogue operates at different levels in all countries, it needs proper political commitment, as well as institutional support and capacity. She details the milestones of European Social Dialogue, which was initiated by the Delors Commission. She discloses that, at first, the European social dialogue concerned a limited number of issues. However, it evolved to broader policies and new mechanisms. She presents the possible outputs of the European social dialogue, such as agreements, process oriented texts, or joint opinions. She also points out a significant increase in the number of non-binding texts agreed upon, which she translates into a sign of increasing maturity of the European social dialogue and level of trust between European social partners. She adds that 2015 marked the relaunch of social dialogue, led by the Juncker Commission, with political acts such as the signature of the Quadripartite statement on the new start for social dialogue. She mentions that the challenges of legitimacy and capacity are at the heart of the problematics that social partners face.

**Daniel Wisniewski** presents the specificities of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education. He highlights that the social partners in education's views are to be taken into account by the European Commission. He presents the ESSDE setting (Plenary, Steering Group and Working groups) as well as the Work Programme for 2016-2017. He adds that social dialogue is the gateway towards the European Union' policy making, and shows some examples of the ESSDE outcomes, such as the joint declarations.

**Discussions:** The complexity for European social partners to coordinate the work of their national members, due to widely varied national contexts and realities in education is raised. The agreements in the framework of the ESSDE can be tripartite or bipartite. The need to ensure a balanced representation of both sides within the social dialogue setting at the European level, in all fields of education, is assessed. The ESSDE represents a chance to carry on discussions that are already set at national level at the EU level. One of the goals of the Capacity Building project III is to also tackle representativeness issues.

### **Session 2: Active implementation and promotion of the ESSDE work program on the theme: supporting teachers, trainers and school leaders**

**Tina Weber** introduces the topic. She emphasizes that while education mainly remains a national prerogative, there is a lot of work achieved in the field at the European level, hence the need for social partners to develop common understanding and knowledge, and the importance of peer learning in the efforts to contribute to enhancing the professional profile of teachers, trainers and school leaders by improving effective initial education, early career support and focus on continuous professional learning and development. She gives examples of EU key initiatives on the subject of teachers, trainers and school leaders, such as the Commission's Communication on improving the quality of teacher education of 2007, and provides an overview of the work of EU Institutions and Agencies active in this field (the European Commission, CEDEFOP, the European Parliament).





**Albaro Almeida Santos, Director of the Secondary School of Valadares**, explains that as a school director, he has always been close to the school community. Since 2002, the self-assessment of schools has become mandatory. Career opportunities for education workers in Portugal is a problem. He also highlights the issue of the renewal of positions, and adds that an induction system should be put in place for younger teachers to learn from older ones.

**Antonio Leite, IEFP**, assesses that the common goal here is quality schools for everyone. At some point, the dialogue between the social partners deteriorated, and this resulted in a decreased access to training, and devaluation and loss of attractiveness of the teaching profession. He is confident, however, that an effective social dialogue is to be restored.

**Julia Silva, CEFOSAP**, presents briefly her organisation, which pursues union training and professional development. She informs the resources available for funding of professional training, mainly through the European Social Funds. She presents the situation of professional training opportunities in Portugal, as well as the main challenges, namely the strict rules for the constitution of groups for professional training.

### **Session 3: Best practice and experiences from other countries: supporting teachers, trainers and school leaders**

The ESSDE delegates from Finland, **Pekka Pankkonen, OAJ**, and **Petteri Kauppinen, AFIEE**, present their national contexts and traditions of social dialogue. The teaching profession is a valued and it is a popular profession in Finland. The education system is publicly funded, with no tuition fees allowed. Finnish social dialogue is based on the principle of collective agreements determining labour legislation. Social partners are also involved in education policy making by Ministries and the National Board of Education. Recently, Finland also experienced education budget cuts, particularly in the VET sector, leading to redundancies and staff reductions. The level of negotiations went from tripartite, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to bipartite, at sectoral level, to tripartite again during the economic crisis, because of the need for government to link negotiations to a broader political agenda. They give an overview of education policies in Finland, stressing that the objective of the involvement of education social partners is to consolidate the status of education and training in society and to ensure sufficient funding for education. Tripartite partnership among Government, trade unions and employer organisations is an integrated part of policy-making.

**Discussions:** Enquired about initial training of teachers, and the link between the education sector and the companies, the ESSDE delegates from Finland affirmed that there are few examples of companies trainers working within schools, but the realities are now changing realities. It is expected that more and more education will be happening within companies, but trainers in companies are not experts in education and pedagogy. The link between teachers, VET institutes and companies should be stronger. One of the main problems is the insufficient financing of VET. As the teaching profession is an attractive one, there are a lot of young people training to become teachers but not in VET schools. Despite tough agreements needed in the face of economic concerns, the tripartite social dialogue structure in education contributes to stability, as governments change, but social partners remain.

### **Session 4: Strengthening the links and improving communication flows between the social dialogue at national and European level**

**Tina Weber** introduces the topic outlining the main opportunities and challenges to improve the communication and links between the national and European social dialogue. The factors influencing a good communication at all levels lie in the level of awareness, participation, and the capacities of organisations. She presents the data from the ETUCE Report *'Promoting the potentials of the ESSDE*



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*by addressing new challenges and exploring experience and knowledge'* on the involvement and awareness of national social partners on the ESSDE. She finds that 75% of ETUCE member organisations had a person in charge of EU affairs. The crucial question of capacity is raised, as it is often reported to be limited in many countries, with the situation having worsened with the economic crisis. The member organisations with the higher capacity are found to be the ones more active on the European social dialogue.

The floor is now given to Portuguese social partners to give suggestions to strengthen the links between European and national social dialogue.

**Luis Lopes, SINDEP**, puts forward two suggestions to strengthen the links between the European and national social dialogue: Information should be disseminated by ESSDE country delegates to national members. Also, there needs to be a horizontal flow of communication, between trade unions and employers organisations representatives, as they could meet at the national level to discuss ESSDE and find common ground. The awareness of the importance of the European social dialogue needs to be raised among affiliates, too. The language barrier can be an issue, as the capacity at the national level can be limited in that regard. He expresses his optimism about the development of an effective social dialogue both at European and at national levels. He stresses that one of the objectives is to defend and progress on the European social model, and he highlights the importance of education in this regard. He considers this meeting to have been a very fruitful starting point, and asserts that SINDEP looks forward to keep on working on this.

**Lucinda Manuela, Vice-General Secretary of FNE**, comments that social dialogue is a vital factor for democracies. Portugal has known 43 years of democracy, and social dialogue has been built in these years. The current situation doesn't always get to results, but steps are made. She expresses that the best way to go forward with social dialogue is to advocate for more social dialogue. It will bring a better Europe, and this process makes society richer and leads to social justice.

**Paola Cammilli** thanks the project partner FNE for the organisation of the round table, and thanks all participants for their fruitful contributions to the debate.

