

EFEE

THE EUROPEAN
FEDERATION OF
EDUCATION
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EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR
EDUCATION – COMITE SYNDICAL
EUROPEEN DE L'EDUCATION



Joint ETUCE/EFEE Declaration on

Preventing and Combating Psychosocial Hazards in the Education Sector

From 2014 to 2016, the European Social Partners in Education EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) and ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education), have jointly carried out the project *Social Partners Promoting Decent Workplaces in the Education Sector for a Healthier Working Life*. The project is supported by the European Commission.

Committed to improving quality of education by promoting success in teaching and learning, EFEE and ETUCE wish to emphasise the importance of a decent working environment and the significant impact of healthy and safe workplaces on the mental well-being and health of people working and studying in education institutions at all education levels and covering both teaching and non-teaching staff working in the education sector ((pre)-primary, secondary, vocational education and training, adult learning and higher education and research). EFEE and ETUCE support the creation of an atmosphere where students can learn and teachers and other staff in education can carry out their work in a positive, healthy and safe setting.

With a view to bringing about a sustainable change that has a lasting impact on the education institution environment, steps to determine and strengthen the fundamental values in school (e.g. mutual respect, democratic citizenship) should start from early childhood education and involve all stakeholders in education, social partners, school leaders, teachers, students and parents alike. Therefore, sustainable and targeted investment in quality education and training is needed at all levels to ensure healthy and safe education institutions as providers of quality education.

In the two-year initiative and its activities, the European Social Partners in education recognised that psychosocial hazards and work-related stress cause significant risks in the education sector and addressing these issues therefore is a priority for their members at national, regional and local level.

According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), psychosocial risks arise from poor work design, organisation and management, as well as a poor social context of work, and they may result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes such as work-related stress, burnout or

depression. It is important not to confuse psychosocial risks such as excessive workload with conditions where, although stimulating and sometimes challenging, there is a supportive work environment in which school leaders, teachers and other education staff are well trained and motivated to perform to the best of their ability. A good psychosocial environment enhances good performance and personal development, as well as school leaders', teachers' and other education staff's mental and physical well-being.

School leaders, teachers and other education staff experience stress when the demands of their job are excessive and greater than their capacity to cope with them. In addition to mental health problems, school leaders, teachers and other education staff suffering from prolonged stress can go on to develop serious physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease or musculoskeletal problems.

For the organisation, the negative effects include poor overall [work] performance, increased absenteeism and presenteeism (school leaders, teachers and other education staff turning up for work when sick and unable to function effectively) and increased accident and injury rates. Absences tend to be longer than those arising from other causes and work-related stress may contribute to increased rates of early retirement. Estimates of the cost to workplaces and society are significant and run into billions of euros at national level.

Acknowledging the immense negative impact of psychosocial risks on the individual, organisations, education institutions and societies at large, this declaration builds further upon the joint practical guidelines on *How to promote joint social partner initiatives at European, national, regional and local level to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in the education sector* that EFEE and ETUCE agreed upon. National social partners in education amended and discussed the guidelines and its implementation during two regional training seminars and the closing conference of the project.

The focus of the online survey on *promoting decent workplaces in the education sector for a healthier working life* and of the case studies in Belgium, Germany, Finland and Romania was to examine and reflect upon good practice examples of how social partners, education institutions, school leaders and teachers prevent psychosocial risks and work-related stress and cope with these issues.

Aiming to assist social partners in education and their affiliated members in developing specific actions and strategies to increase awareness on the importance of the provision of healthy and safe working conditions among the relevant education stakeholders, this declaration addresses social partners in education and their national, regional and local members, education personnel, school leaders and other interested stakeholders at European, national and local level (Ministries of Education, municipalities, schools, trade unions, students, associations, parents associations, local representatives, etc.).

By inviting their members to contribute and encourage healthy and safe working environments, EFEE and ETUCE wish to conclude their work of this two-year project. The European Social Partners in education particularly invite their member organisations to:

- Implement the joint practical guidelines on *How to promote joint social partner initiatives at European, national, regional and local level to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in the education sector.*

- Encourage national, regional and local activities, measures and actions that raise awareness on the importance of the provision of decent working conditions and safe and healthy working environments for the quality of education and wellbeing of education staff.
- Discuss and reflect upon decent working conditions and workplaces and the prevention of psychosocial hazards, such as work related stress, in social dialogue and collective agreements.
- Identify and apply for appropriate European, national and regional funding opportunities to sustainably support the work in this field at education institution level.

Moreover, the European Social Partners in education commit to

- Explore the possibilities of jointly developing an online risk assessment (OiRA) tool for the education sector with the support of the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU-OSHA)
- Jointly monitor and follow up on the implementation of the joint practical guidelines with a joint implementation assessment and report to be presented at the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Education meeting in 2018.

Conclusion

EFEE and ETUCE, the European Social Partners in Education commit themselves to actively promote this declaration at European level and through their member organisations at national, regional and local level.

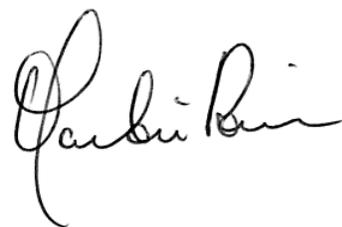
We would like to encourage national social partners to step up their efforts and build further on their joint work to promote healthy and safe working places in the education sector.

This declaration has been adopted by the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) Plenary Meeting on 8 November 2016.

Brussels, 8 November 2016



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