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# ETUCE

## European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

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## Practical Guidelines for Education Trade Unions on

### How to represent effectively teachers' professional needs within the unions' capacity and social dialogue structures

#### 1. Introduction

Global economic and financial crisis and austerity measures implemented by governments in response to it, have detrimental consequences on the social dialogue in education sector. Education trade unions face an increasing reluctance of education authorities and governments to consult them on national education reforms on professional needs and development of teachers. In some countries, teachers' professional needs and teacher training are not even recognized by education employers and government as a legitimate field of education trade unions' work.

Teacher training and teachers' professional needs are a priority for ETUCE work. The ETUCE [Resolution on Empowering Education Trade Unions: The Key to Promoting Quality Education](#) recognises the dual role of education trade unions in both providing support to teachers in relation to their terms and conditions of employment and in relation to professional matters, and stresses that education trade unions are highly competent in both roles. The Resolution also asserts the commitment of ETUCE member organisations to ensure that the unions have the capacity of specialised permanent professional expertise and research on teachers' professional needs and interests inside the education trade unions. The resolution links professional support to teachers to empowering education trade unions in social dialogue and in organizing members.

In a knowledge-based society and economy, education trade unions shall represent in all aspects the interests and concerns of the employees in the education sector, ranging from their material needs such as salary, to their professional needs such as their initial training, continuous professional development<sup>1</sup> and upskilling at all levels of education. These practical guidelines have been developed as the outcome of the ETUCE [project](#) 'Education Trade Unions for the Teaching Profession. Strengthening the capacity of education trade unions to represent teachers' professional needs in social dialogue'. Throughout the project activities, which included an online survey among ETUCE member organisations and three training workshops, there were identified concrete and practical strategies for education trade unions to effectively

<sup>1</sup> "Continuing professional development: Formal and non-formal professional development activities which may for example include subject-based and pedagogical training. In certain cases, these activities may lead to supplementary qualifications." Eurydice:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/184EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/184EN.pdf)

represent teachers' professional needs in a social dialogue on European and national level.

The guidelines intend to prepare and to strengthen the capacity of education trade unions to address challenges, at EU and transnational level, related to changes in employment, work and social dialogue, such as changes in the teaching profession and in the representation of teachers' needs in the context of enhanced social dialogue, also within the European Semester framework. They continue the work that ETUCE and its member organisations have achieved in identifying challenges in the teaching profession in times of crisis and in strengthening their involvement in the European Semester. The practical guidelines also prepare the social partners in education to enforce implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and effectively meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the EU2020 strategy targets on education (COM(2010)2020), as well as address the post-2020 priorities in education (COM(2017) 673). Finally, the guidelines contribute to the priorities and activities of the ESSDE (European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education) Work Programme 2018-2019, by preparing education trade unions to discuss successfully with education employers on how to support teachers, educators and school leaders by improving their effective initial education, early career support, and continuous professional learning.

## **2. Situation in the ETUCE member organisations**

The online survey carried out in the frame of the project helped ETUCE and its member organisations to identify national findings related to teachers' professional needs and their representation, and whether they are a matter of social dialogue, as well as to analyse the role of national and European sectoral social partners in education to negotiate on professional issues of teachers.

The survey results indicate that education trade unions play an important role in providing professional development opportunities to union members, and that this provision covers a range of issues in a diverse range of forms, often in partnership with other bodies. Nearly two-thirds of education unions indicated they provide professional training directly to members (62.1%). However, regarding involvement in social dialogue, the responses suggest that education trade unions are less likely to participate in social dialogue on professional issues than more traditional industrial issues. The data also points to a centralised model in which social dialogue is more likely to take place at national level (determining policy and national frameworks), but less likely to take place at institutional level, which is often where education employees are most likely to engage in professional development and where key decisions are made. Social dialogue on professional issues is most likely to take the form of information exchange, consultation and joint actions with employers. Social dialogue in this area is less likely to take the form of formal negotiations through collective bargaining. However, collective agreements are often the best way to guarantee education employees access to high quality professional development.

### 3. Aim

These practical guidelines provide education trade unions in Europe with concrete recommendations on how to represent teachers' professional needs and to enhance teachers' professional issues as a crucial matter of social dialogue in the education sector. Striving for quality education, the guidelines aim to assist education trade unions in developing concrete strategies to implement and reinforce education trade unions actions regarding teacher initial training and continuous professional development.

**This document does not provide a master plan for every country.** Instead these guidelines should be understood as a supporting tool to be assessed and adjusted to meet the conditions at national/union level as regards teachers' professional needs and professional development.

### 4. Guidelines

Following the results of the online survey among ETUCE member organisations and the discussion in three training workshops (in Poland, Germany, and Italy), these practical guidelines suggest specific actions for education unions at a national and European level to effectively represent teachers' professional needs in social dialogue.

**At national and regional education trade union level it is important to**

- continue advocating the need of **professional support to teachers**, to principals, and broader education staff by the **provision of a wide offer** of high quality initial education, early career support, and continuous professional learning supported by high quality teacher educators, in order to contribute to **increase teachers' status**;
- fight against **teacher shortage** by making the profession **attractive** and ensuring that all teachers are **qualified to teach**, and advocate for **appropriate replacement** of teachers who participate in further training;
- ensure that professional development of teachers (initial and continuous development) supports **professional autonomy of teachers and freedom of pedagogy and didactics** while knowledge, skills and competence development take place;
- ensure shared **governance** on teachers' training and that education trade unions have a role on the decisions on legislative frameworks regarding initial and continuous training, and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation through **effective social dialogue**;
- prepare and strengthen the capacity of education trade unions to address challenges of the teaching profession and teachers' needs in the context of enhanced social dialogue and within the **European Semester** framework;
- ensure that the education unions have the capacity of specialised **permanent professional expertise** on teachers' professional needs and interests **inside the education trade unions**.

- exploit opportunities to provide **accredited professional training** and **inform teachers about possibilities** of professional development and its link to potential career development, and **conduct research and surveys** on teachers' professional needs;
- advocate a balance between theoretical and practical learning in **initial teacher training** and ensure effective and high quality induction phase<sup>2</sup> for teacher students;
- ensure that continuous professional development of teachers is one of the leverages for introducing **career progression** through social dialogue and collective agreements;
- take further actions that **employers support** the participation of teachers in continuous professional development of teachers, which should be of **high quality and provided and funded via public resources**;
- advocate that **continuous professional development** of teachers is a **lifelong process** designed according to the needs of the teachers at different stages of their career, schools, the local environment and the education system;
- advocate that initial and continuous professional development is based on detailed **high quality research** and available in different forms, eg. school-based training, online and blended learning, team training and individual training;
- ensure via social dialogue and collective agreements that continuous professional development of teachers takes place **during teachers' working hours ensuring work-life balance** without creating additional burden or increase of working hours;
- raise awareness about the necessary **link between schools and initial and continuous training provision of higher education institutions** and other training providers in order to contribute to content improvements and updates in trainings to teachers;
- ensure **equal access** to initial and continuous professional development to teachers regardless of gender, sexual orientation, abilities and educational needs, economic status, ethnic origin, language, religion, and migratory and citizenship status, and the geographical location of the training, and challenge those practices which are discriminatory;
- support the **recognition of professional trainings** including informal and non-formal learning and training experience abroad (mobility period);

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<sup>2</sup> "Induction: A structured support phase provided for newly fully qualified teachers. Induction as a part of professional training during the formal initial teacher education programme is not considered, even if remunerated. During induction, new entrants carry out wholly or partially the tasks incumbent on experienced teachers, and are remunerated for their activity. Normally, induction includes training and evaluation, and a mentor providing personal, social and professional support is appointed to help new teachers within a structured system. The phase lasts at least several months, and can occur during the probationary period." Eurydice:  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/184EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/184EN.pdf)

- promote the **inclusion of working conditions, health and safety and professional ethics**<sup>3</sup> in initial and continuous professional development programmes for teachers;
- **cooperate at national and international levels** with other education trade unions and exchange of good practices regarding their actions and social dialogue on teachers' professional needs;
- make the full use of **communication strategies** in order to promote teachers' professional needs in the media, in the society and among policy makers.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ei-ie.org/en/detail\\_page/4655/professional-ethics](https://www.ei-ie.org/en/detail_page/4655/professional-ethics)