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ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

Practical Guidelines for Teacher Unions for the

EUROPEAN REGION- ETUCE

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Further Implementation and Reinforcement of Teacher Union Actions on Gender Equality in Times of Austerity

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1. Introduction

These practical guidelines have been developed within the project *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*. They build on the project activities (teacher union online survey and a seminar) to which the ETUCE member organisations actively contributed. The guidelines address primarily teacher unions in Europe and their affiliated teachers and education employees on how to implement and reinforce teacher union actions on gender equality in times of economic recession.

This initiative was developed by the ETUCE Secretariat following up on the ETUCE – EI European Region Conference, which clearly identified the need for further work on the impact of the crisis on teachers' working conditions. The project and guidelines also stand in the light of the EI/ETUCE campaign [Unite for Quality Education – Better Education for a better world](#) in 2013/2014. In addition, they support the [EU Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010-2015](#) which also highlights the under-representativity of women in decision-making bodies, and wish to contribute the specific education sector's point of view to the implementation of the strategy

In continuation of the work achieved by ETUCE in the area of equal opportunities and gender equality in particular, these guidelines support the further implementation of the [EI and ETUCE Action Plans on Gender Equality](#), the [ETUCE Guidelines on how teacher unions can contribute to mitigating and tackling gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market](#) as well as the [recommendations of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality](#) through the ETUCE member organisations. They also take account of the various European Social Partner Agreements¹ in this field.

The main objective has been to implement and reinforce teacher union actions on gender equality in particular in times of austerity with the aim of continuing to improve national teacher trade unions' understanding of gender equality issues and to promote teacher

¹ Social dialogue and gender equality in the European Union, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/publication/wcms_213793.pdf;

CEMR/EPSU Guidelines to drawing up gender equality action plans in local and regional government, <http://www.epsu.org/a/3541>;
Framework of Actions on Gender Equality (2005), <http://www.epsu.org/a/1813>

Framework Agreement on Inclusive Labour Markets (2010),

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/2010againstpoverty/export/sites/default/downloads/Events/event_123_Framework_agreement_ILM_25.03.10.pdf;

union action on ensuring gender equality within teacher union structures and in the teaching profession especially in the economic crisis.

The document reflects the work of ETUCE and its member organisations on gender equality in times of economic recession on which to develop further actions at European, national, regional and local level.

With a view to bringing about a sustainable change that has a lasting impact on the school environment, actions determining and strengthening the fundamental values in school (e.g. mutual respect, democratic citizenship) should start at an early age and involve all stakeholders in education, social partners, school leaders, teachers, students and parents alike. For this, continuous public investment in education is needed at all levels to ensure high quality education, including reconciliation of work and family life, as prerequisite for gender equality in education institutions, the teaching profession and teacher unions.

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 compare the data collected in 2009 to the present situation and to observe (crisis-related) developments in teacher unions. The study report featuring the results in detail is available on the ETUCE website² and the SharePoint group of this project.

Some of the most prominent results are listed here in comparison to 2009:

- Women continue to be under-represented in all positions of leadership in ETUCE member organisations, especially with regard to the highest decision-making bodies.
- The percentage of women decreased among the delegates to the highest decision-making bodies of ETUCE member organisations, even though the percentage of women among union members generally increased.
- In executive and management committees, women are better represented in 2014
- The unions are more active in the field of gender equality: More unions have equality departments that look at equality structures, policies and activities, and more unions have a written policy dealing explicitly with gender equality in the union's own structures.
- The majority of staff assigned to the promotion of equal opportunities has been and still is female.
- Almost two-third take measures to improve gender equality in the union's decision-making structures.
- The great majority of teacher unions replied that the economic crisis and austerity measures have gendered effects.
- 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.
- The majority of unions stated that the gender pay gap stayed the same or even increased.
- It has become more difficult to reconcile work and private life for employees in education.
- Many improvements on actions to overcome gender stereotypes in education (curricula, gender training for staff, school policies) were brought forward in the survey.

² www.csee-etu.org



- Activities in schools to overcome gender stereotypes are focused more on female than on male stereotypes: Girls are more likely to be introduced to work in STEM³-related areas than boys are to become acquainted with social and care work.
- 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 and the gender dimension is rarely considered in specific crisis-related policies.
- One third of unions include a gender dimension in their crisis-related lobbying activities and campaigns.

3. Aim

These practical guidelines provide teacher unions in Europe and their affiliated teachers and education employees with concrete recommendations on how to promote gender equality within teacher trade unions and in the teaching profession which is particularly a challenge in times of economic recession. They wish to continue to call teacher unions' attention to gender equality issues within the unions and in the teaching profession itself as well as to raise further awareness on major EU priorities, policies and instruments in the field. They aim to assist teacher unions and their affiliated teachers and education employees in developing concrete strategies to implement and reinforce teacher union actions on gender equality. Striving for quality education, these guidelines essentially seek to help teacher unions to enhance and maintain decent and quality working conditions in the education sector also in times of crisis, and a good learning environment for all pupils and students.

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 gender equality within the union and in the teaching profession.

4. Guidelines

Following the discussions in the project seminar, the guidelines address the competences needed to tackle the challenges of gender equality in the teaching profession as well as ways to promote gender equality in teacher unions and in the education sector, which is particularly demanding in times of austerity. Two main levels for specific teacher union action have been identified (European and national teacher union level).

At European level it is important to

- ✓ **Further raise** ETUCE member organisations' **awareness** on possible solutions to increase the participation of women in decision-making bodies;
- ✓ **Monitor** the representation of women in the ETUCE statutory and advisory bodies and report to the member organisations and promote gender balance in delegations to all ETUCE conferences;
- ✓ **Address the challenges and obstacles** for member organisations in applying ETUCE policy and enhance the awareness amongst ETUCE member organisations on the promotion of gender equality in teacher unions and in the teaching profession, e.g. through a platform for sharing good practices and/or EU – funded initiatives in operation in schools and in unions. In this regard, for example, translating

³ The academic disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.



documents and campaign material and circulating statistical data to all affiliates has proven to be a successful strategy in the past.

- ✓ **Promote international solidarity** between teacher unions especially at times of crisis, to reprimand in unison actions taken by various governments that worsen directly and indirectly the working conditions of teachers in many European countries;
- ✓ **Explicitly discuss the gendered dimension of the economic crisis and governments' austerity measures, spread information and provide campaign material.**
- ✓ **Fight against budget cuts, cuts in maternity leave, holidays and pensions** and advocate for the increased implementation of parental leave schemes in support of shared responsibility of both parents when it comes to caring for children and other family members;
- ✓ **Foster further collaboration** with other relevant stakeholders in the area of gender equality and education with the aim to further **support teachers** by making use of both formal and informal networks;
- ✓ **Continue lobbying for teachers' interests towards the European institutions advocating a positive and more attractive image** of the teaching profession. It is an important profession which requires extensive study, substantial qualification and training and professional development;
- ✓ **Ensure** that the topic of gender equality remains on the agenda for the **European Sectoral Social Dialogue** in order to improve the situation of education workers, e.g. as regards bargaining for better working conditions with a view to eliminate the gender pay gap, and as regards equal pay for work of equal value, and to address issues such as the so-called glass ceiling in women's careers.

At national and regional teacher union level it is important to

- ✓ Make teachers aware and encourage teachers to **fight and maintain the fight against the replication of gender stereotypes, e.g.** build up students' self-esteem, especially the self-esteem and self-dignity of girls and women; and show that gender equality is a common goal for both women and men;
- ✓ Restore and increase the provision of guidance counsellors to schools and ensure that they are trained in the promotion of gender equality
- ✓ Ensure that aspects of equal opportunities and gender issues are part of **initial teacher training, continuous professional development and of the national curriculum**, so that gender equality is mainstreamed and forms part of accreditation of teachers and students:
- ✓ Establish a rule in the Rules and Constitution of each union which obliges the union to promote gender equality, to create a plan for its promotion and to report on a regular basis as to progress or lack of progress on same;
- ✓ **Identify and address in particular the needs and interests of young (female) education staff** to bring about a sustainable change in the organisation culture of teacher unions in future, e.g. via training and engaging young women in leadership positions.
- ✓ **Continue the work on equal opportunities** and publish arguments for gender equality that teachers can use in the classroom and when speaking with colleagues making gender equality an issue for all and addressing the specific needs of women and men as well as of boys and girls;
- ✓ **Focus on practical actions and solutions** and work towards continuous progress, e.g. set up a union teacher training scheme that includes training on equal opportunities or train-the-trainer activities; organise union work in such a way that women with caring tasks can participate in union activities, e.g. funded child care facilities at union meetings;
- ✓ **Monitor the situation of women in the union** and report the findings to the affiliated members and the wider public. This data can serve, e.g. to issue a demand for equality officers in the national/regional governments and education institutions.



- ✓ **Establish a permanent equality committee** at national and local level that reports on a regular basis to the union board, i.e. through a board staff member in charge of equal opportunities. This committee should have among its objectives monitoring the status of women in the union, ensuring comprehensive gender-disaggregated data collection, for example surveys that profile the salary of members by gender, proposing solutions and sharing good practices;
- ✓ **Disseminate studies on equal opportunities** and provide input to reports on education to make the data available to affiliates and other stakeholders working on this topic;
- ✓ **Use the results from ETUCE studies** and projects in the national social dialogue systems;
- ✓ **Ensure** that the topic of gender equality is part of the agenda for the **national social dialogue** in order to improve the situation of education workers, e.g. as regards bargaining for better working conditions with a view to eliminating the gender pay gap and to address issues such as the so-called glass ceiling in women's careers and making gender equality an issue for all, both women and men;
- ✓ Propose and negotiate for measures which will increase the number of permanent full-time positions;
- ✓ Identify other relevant stakeholders in the area of gender equality and education and foster **further collaboration** with, e.g. join campaigns of non-governmental organisations that promote, for example, equal relations in the family;
- ✓ **Be alert of different governments' actions** that directly and/ or indirectly deteriorate the working conditions of teachers in many European countries and promote further solidarity with other ETUCE member organisations to combat the cuts in education. This includes amongst others, cuts in maternity leave, holidays, pensions and parental leave schemes;
- ✓ **Stay informed about** the actions of groups promoting all forms of extremism and intolerance that undermine the notion of equality in schools in order to be able to take preventative actions on time;
- ✓ **Continue advocating broadly a positive and worthwhile image** of the teaching profession.

