



Guidelines on how teacher unions can contribute to mitigating and tackling gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market

Adopted by the ETUCE Committee on 24 – 25 April 2013

Background

In November 2011, ETUCE initiated its project on *Teacher trade union actions challenging gender stereotypes and gender segregation in the labour market*. This project will end in October 2012.

The principal objective of this initiative has been to fully exploit the potential of the education sector to overcome gendered discrimination in the labour market with a view to promote not only more gender equality within the teaching profession itself but also to trigger a change in student's future career choices by providing teachers, education employees and teacher unions with the know-how and tools that are necessary to promote a gender sensitive approach in education and consequently in society as a whole.

Concretely, the project had the objectives¹ to:

1. **Identify and examine the link between gender inequality in the labour market and education:** Reproduction of gender stereotypes in the learning environment, teaching methods and materials and interaction in the classroom - all leading to gender stereotypical education outcomes and career choices.
2. **Raise awareness amongst teachers and education employees, teacher unions, students and pupils** on the issue of gender equality (roles, labour market participation, legislation, pay gap, women in decision-making) and on how to improve gender sensitiveness in teaching with a view to mitigate gender stereotypes in students' (future employees) choice of career paths;
3. **Provide teachers and education employees knowledge and information on gender sensitive working environments**, as regards European and national legislation on equality issues and working conditions in general, such as parental leave, maternity leave, equal payment, sexual harassment and the work achieved by trade unions in these fields so far with a view to enable students to choose a career path irrespective of gender stereotypes.
4. **Change teaching approaches** (subject and content-wise) by improving teachers' and education employees' attitude on gender stereotypes² and their personal competences, in particular as regards gender sensitiveness and pedagogy; hereby reaching all young people in education/training in view of entering all levels and sectors of the labour market;
5. **Promote gender sensitive education at European and national level** for a gender sensitive work environment based on new education approaches.

¹ These are the project objectives enumerated in the contract with the European Commission, VS/2011/08181.

² In her presentation at the ETUCE Training Seminar held in the frame of this project in May 2012, Carolyn Hannan from Lund University, explained that 'gender stereotyping' is used to refer to the assigning of attributes, characteristics, traits and endowments to women respectively men in an uncritical and oversimplified manner, and expecting and/or allowing certain attitudes and behaviours from women and men (and girls and boys) as 'appropriate' or 'desirable' on the basis of this 'typing' or categorising.



6. **Encourage national teacher trade unions** to cooperate with national education employers on including gender sensitive education in national social dialogue systems and collective agreements by feeding the project outcomes into the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Education. The results achieved here are also expected to have a cross-sectoral impact at national and European level.

In May 2012, the ETUCE secretariat organised a Peer Learning Activity where the participants identified and examined different national contexts in Europe regarding the link between gender inequality in the labour market and education and sought ways to introduce gender sensitiveness in national education systems. In the subsequent Training Seminar the participants exchanged their ideas on how to improve gender sensitiveness in teaching with a view to mitigate gender stereotypes in students' (future employees) choice of career paths.

The guidelines presented here have been compiled based on the discussions amongst teacher trade unionists in the Peer Learning Activity, the Training Seminar and the final conference.



Context

Gender equality out of and in the labour market has risen up on the agenda over the past 50 years.

Female employment rose from 51% in 1997 to 62% in 2011, and was highest in the predominantly female public sector, but in part-time jobs, standing at 75%³. Only 65.6% of women with children under 12 work, compared to 90.3% of men. The average gender pay gap is 17%, ranging from extremes of 5% to 31%. In Europe, more than 70% of low-paid jobs are held by women. Girls are more successful in schools than boys, women account for nearly 60% of graduates, the gender segregation in the labour market still remains **and men are still better paid on the average**. The top level financial and business posts are still male-dominated – women account for only 12% of company directorships and only 3% of board chairpersons.

Many possible initiatives to address these issues lie with the unions in Europe, given that 38 million – 45% - of all union members are women. Therefore gender equality is an issue not only for society as a whole, but in particular for unions. Much of the change in European legislation over recent years has therefore been in response to trade union pressure.



³ The data referenced here is from the ETUC Action Programme on Gender Equality, adopted at the Executive Committee on 6-7 March 2012, http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/Resolution_Gender_Equality_Action_Programme_EN_-FINAL.pdf.



European framework and legislation

The guidelines for teacher trade unions developed here are embedded in the EU legislation, in particular Art. 23 of the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), Art. 157 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU) and [Directive 2006/54/EC](#)⁴ as well as various European policy documents starting with the [Lisbon Strategy](#) in the year 2000 and continuing with the [Europe 2020 Strategy](#)⁵ to the [EU Women's Charter](#) which strengthens EU efforts to build a gender perspective into all its policies for the next five years while taking specific measures.

Education is a human right. Gender stereotypes limit opportunities in girls' and boys' life. Access to and participation in education should therefore be free of charge and free of barriers. Children and adolescents should have the same educational opportunities regardless of their socio-economic and cultural background, their families' educational levels and their genders.

In light of the [European Strategy for Equality between Women and Men](#) which represents the European Commission's work programme on gender equality for the period 2010-2015 on the basis of six thematic priorities (equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; gender equality in external actions; horizontal issues: gender roles, legislation and governance)⁶ these guidelines also seek to shore up the work of the Council of Europe as regards the implementation of the Recommendation [CM/REC\(2007\)13](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education. They furthermore aim to support the [ILO Policy on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming](#) and underline the work of the [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#).



Activities of European Trade Unions

Affiliated to ETUC, ETUCE with its member organisations is committed to take action on the suggested measures linked to the education sector within the frame of the European Social Partners' Framework of Action from 2005 and the [ETUC Action Programme on Gender Equality](#) from 2012.

The main areas of trade union work on gender equality in Europe are:

- equal pay for equal work or work of equal value
- eliminating the gender representation gap
- work-life balance including paid family-related leaves (e.g. maternity/paternity/parental/filial carer)
- addressing the link between domestic violence and workplace rights

⁴ Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)

⁵ The Europe 2020 Strategy sets the ambitious goal for employment - 75% of men and women in work by 2020 - along with other goals for innovations, education, social inclusion and the climate.

⁶ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6568&langId=en>.



All these areas are highly relevant to achieve gender equality in practice. Only with the commitment from all relevant stakeholders can this cross-cutting societal issue be addressed.

It is therefore indeed of utmost relevance to challenge gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market, especially in times of economic and financial crisis when government austerity plans have a negative impact on teachers' and education employees' working conditions. To overcome the downturn and to reach the targets set in the EU 2020 Strategy it is necessary to both strengthen the gender dimension in growth and employment as well as to take into account the impact of the crisis on women and men. It is important to combat in solidarity any additional gender disadvantages brought about by the economic and financial recession in particular as regards salary, working conditions and job security of teaching staff.

It is in this context that gender equality in education through cooperation between unions and government institutions is becoming increasingly important.

These guidelines on how teacher unions can mitigate and tackle gender stereotypes and gender segregation in the labour market are to be understood as the continuation of the ETUCE's work in the field of gender equality and the achievements such as the ETUCE Action Plan on Gender Equality which was adopted by the ETUCE Executive Board in Brussels on 15 & 16 March 2010. With this document, ETUCE not only contributes actively to the EU strategy but also to the EI's gender equality policy⁷.

The new By-laws provide ETUCE with two committees (Standing Committee for Equality and the Status of Women Committee) that address gender equality and especially gender stereotypes, among other issues. The approach to education adopted in the ETUCE's project on mitigating and tackling gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market has been holistic. This approach focused on a society where people learn how to shape society and their lives, to act in solidarity with one another, instead of simply fulfilling the demands of the labour market and to promote equal economic independence for men and women.



Guidelines for ETUCE and national teacher unions

The guidelines provide a set of recommendations for teacher unions at both national and European level on possible social dialogue and collective bargaining actions to challenge gender stereotypes in the education sector with the wider objective of having a significant impact on gender segregation in the labour market. There is no doubt that teacher unions can play an active part in making use of the potential of education to overcome gendered discrimination in the labour market. What boys and girls can do in their future professional lives is still very much shaped by traditional concepts of gender roles. Teacher unions can use and develop appropriate tools in line with coherent policies and strategies at all levels of education to prevent gender stereotypes from immersing students'

⁷ The need to strengthen this policy globally was articulated at the EI's Bangkok 2011 World Women's Conference and for the upcoming World Conference in 2014.



minds. The ultimate aim is to enable students to choose a career path irrespective of gender stereotypes.

The recommendations focus on the five following priorities:

- 1. Raising awareness amongst teachers, education employees and social partners in education on the issue of gender stereotypes with the aim to tackle them in the education sector**
- 2. Developing tools to contribute to gender sensitive education**
- 3. Mitigating gender stereotypes in students' choice of career paths**
- 4. Taking concrete measures to engage in a national social dialogue about how to include gender sensitive education to aim for equal economic independence for men and women**
- 5. At European level, exchanging best practices of successful institutional and / or legislative changes in national education systems**

1. Raising awareness amongst teachers, education employees and social partners in education on the issue of gender stereotypes with the aim to tackle them in the education sector

- Create working conditions conducive to teachers' and education employees' knowledge acquisition on gender equality and the issue of gender stereotypes
- Provide teachers and education employees with quality initial training as groundwork for teaching gender equality and for using pedagogies that support diversity
- Provide professional in-service training, and create an environment that helps to put the training into practice
- Address the importance of challenging gender stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination to school leadership and management in relation to national and/or local policies, e.g. concerning the curriculum. In this context, find ways of actively engaging teachers and education employees in decision-making to further strengthen this approach.
- Facilitate cooperation on reducing gender stereotypes and on promoting gender equality between teachers and education employees, schools and teacher unions
- Provide teaching material, textbooks, and curricula that are appropriate for education in gender equality and that include a perspective free of gender stereotypes
- Use good practice examples in order to mitigate and challenge gender stereotypes in education
- Implement gender equality and reduce gender segregation in teacher unions, mainstreaming this approach across all trade union activities
- Run campaigns with teacher unions, employers in education, parents' organisations, youth organisations and NGOs supported by the media to promote gender equality with a view to reduce gender stereotypes

2. Developing tools to contribute to gender sensitive education

- Create a gender sensitive environment in each school that replies to the specific needs of both boys and girls with the aim to overcome traditional gender roles.
- Advocate for gender sensitive teaching materials which portray women and men in non-stereotypical roles
- With a view to sustain high quality teaching, develop new teaching approaches in initial teacher training and continuous professional development that allow and positively motivate teachers and education employees to form an attitude free of gender stereotypes in teaching. Male and



female teachers and education employees alike need to be able to reflect upon their gender roles.

- Ensure that these approaches are reflected in the curriculum with a view to promote human rights in education and to mainstream the tenets of democracy across the education system
- Include gender competences as an integral part of any education at university level and professional trainings for educators, university teachers and instructors in vocational training
- Seek to ensure that boys and girls are not discriminated against by certain gender constructions in schools
- Counteract a lack of role models for women in universities and in vocational training.

3. Mitigating gender stereotypes in students' choice of career paths

- Provide better career guidance by emphasising the role of career advisers who enable students to choose a career path irrespective of gender stereotypes
- Promote gender equality in education across the entire learning experience
- Link education to all aspects of societal development as concerns gender equality in general and the reduction of gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market in particular
- Steer a gender-sensitive transition from school to work which involves the pupils' parents and guardians
- Promote in education a climate of justice, respect and consideration for human rights in work and private life relations with a view to provide pupils the basic understanding to become fully democratic citizens

4. Taking concrete measures to engage in a national social dialogue about how to include gender sensitive education to aim for equal economic independence for men and women

- Improve relations between trade unions and government institutions in charge of education with a view to bring all political and social partners together to work for gender equality and the promotion of gender sensitive education at all levels
- Make use of the existing legislation, regulations and guidelines to promote gender equality and challenge gender stereotyping through the curriculum and in the workplace⁸
- Support the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all areas of school life, i.e. in curriculum and extra-curricular activities, and through all school policies and procedures as a method to obtain gender equality in educational and social politics
- Support equality in education by strategically lobbying governments to change institutional attitudes to gender equality, gender stereotypes in education and gender segregation in the labour market
- Capitalise on the European Social Dialogue in the education sector as a resource to help bring about gender equality and reduce gender stereotyping in education at European level

⁸ See paragraph on European Framework and legislation.



5. At European level, exchanging best practices of successful institutional and / or legislative changes in national education systems

- Apply the principles of gender equality to the labour market for the development of full personal potential and self-fulfilment ensuring a good work life balance. Classrooms can provide good examples for the practical application hereof.
- Promote gender sensitive education and gender equality in general throughout the whole education system and at strategic level using various means, such as quotas, non-discriminatory staffing policy and other incentives, to enhance the application of gender equality principles and to cut gender segregation in the labour market
- Collect and share teacher union practices about how they have mainstreamed their work on promoting gender equality/gender sensitive approaches
- Provide opportunities at European and national level to disseminate research on effective policies and good practices of how gender sensitive education is promoted at national, regional and local level in Europe. This can also include sharing information about the barriers to effective practice and outline further steps of action to take.
- Use European gender equality law and promote harmonisation of national laws towards gender sensitive education and the prevention of gender segregation albeit preserving the rights of boys and girls, and women and men, based on commonalities and differences
- Create a coherent system within education that combines the strengths of gender equality to achieve societal advancement at national, European and world level as regards the reduction of gender stereotyping in education and gender segregation in the labour market.
- Promote a social and political climate favourable to gender sensitive education and gender equality in general, taking also into account the new European socio-cultural context and its diversity.