



Education International
Internationale de l'Education
Internacional de la Educaci3n

<http://www.ei-ie.org>

ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

Draft Minutes

EUROPEAN REGION- ETUCE

President

Christine BLOWER

Vice-Presidents

Odile CORDELIER
Walter DRESSCHER
Paula ENGWALL
Andreas KELLER
Galina MERKULOVA
Branimir STRUKELJ



5, Bd du Roi Albert II, 9th
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92
Fax +32 2 224 06 94
secretariat@csee-etuice.org
<http://www.csee-etuice.org>

European Director

Martin RØMER

Treasurer

Mike JENNINGS

ETUCE Training Seminar on

Investing in Education: Strengthening the involvement of teacher trade unions in the European Semester on education and training

20-21 October 2016

Rome, Italy

Chair:	Paola Cammilli (ETUCE)
Participants:	Rossella Benedetti (UIL-Scuola, Italy), Gerhard Brand (VBE, Germany), Manfred Brinkmann (GEW, Germany), Leonardo Croatto (FLC-CGIL, Italy), Philippe Dolhen (CSC-Enseignement, Belgium), Gitta Franke-Zöllmer (VBE, Germany), Diletta Gasparo (FLC-CGIL, Italy), Salvatore Giarratana (FLC-CGIL, Italy), Paul Hellings (AOB, Netherlands), Sandi Mondrijan (ESTUS, Slovenia), Pino Patroncini (FLC-CGIL, Italy), Daniela Piazza (FLC-CGIL, Italy), Paola Serafin (CISL-Scuola, Italy), Jan Soons (COC, Belgium), Lies Van Rompaey (COV, Belgium)
Speakers and project coordinators:	Francesco Sinopoli (FLC CGIL, Italy), Claudio Franchi (FLC CGIL, Italy), Howard Stevenson (University of Nottingham), Åse Bonde (DLF, Denmark), Thomas Hoelgaard (DLF, Denmark), Dorte Lange (DLF, Denmark), Judith Patan (ETUCE), Marianne Skriver (DLF, Denmark)

1. Opening and Welcome

Paola Cammilli, ETUCE, Francesco Sinopoli, FLC-CGIL

Paola Cammilli welcomed the participants and illustrated the work and structure of ETUCE. She explained that this project aims at building the capacity and at establishing national teacher unions' strategies to be more involved in the European Semester, since new governance strategies and the financial crisis have made it difficult to influence national education policy making and related public investment.

Francesco Sinopoli stressed the ongoing decrease of investment in education, especially in Southern Europe. He reminded that trade unions play an important role in demanding policies based on solidary and public investment investments across Europe

2. What is the European Semester?

Prof. Howard Stevenson, University of Nottingham (external expert)

Prof. Stevenson explained the economic background of the European Semester. As the annual cycle for EU and national interactions, created in order to prevent EU countries from financial disasters in the future, it aims at achieving the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy for economic growth. Since two targets and one area of this strategy is dedicated to education (Strategic framework for Education and Training, “ET2020”), and knowledge and qualified workers are crucial for a country’s economic development, education policies are increasingly affected by the European Semester process. What remains problematic is that stakeholders of education, such as education ministers and trade unions, have a weak say in this political cycle.

However, in the course of his research, Professor Stevenson explained, it became clear that also other actors can influence the decision making processes. The yearly fact finding missions, taking place in the EU member states usually in December, and bilateral meetings between the European Commission and member states, taking place in Brussels in February, are opportunity for social partners to be consulted.

3. Why is the European Semester important for education trade unions?

Paola Cammilli, ETUCE

Following Mr Stevenson’s speech, Ms Cammilli identified the need for education trade unions to get involved in the European Semester. She analysed the impact of the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) on education reforms. The 2016 education-related CSRs were from three different types:

- CSRs related to improving the labour market relevance of education
- CSRs related to enhancing private investment in education (especially in higher education and research)
- CSRs related to improving the quality of education and inclusive education

Ms Cammilli reminded that yearly ETUCE informs and makes calls for action to its member organisations on the draft CSRs, as well as other documents within the European Semester cycle. Ms Cammilli highlighted that the major competence on CSRs and the European Semester lies within the Economy and Finance Ministers Council Configuration (ECOFIN). The Council of Education Ministers as well as others have only an advisory role. Moreover, she presented the ETUCE Action Plan on the European Semester and the ETUE Platform on the European Semester.

4. Training activity 1

How the European Semester works at European and national level: timeline and actors :

The participants developed their understanding of the structure and functioning of the European Semester during a session of group activity. They reconstructed the timeline and identified the different events and players of this cycle and their links. The results were presented and discussed in the plenary afterwards. Opportunities and problems of getting involved as education social partners were discussed. Paola Cammilli underlined that the European Semester Officers are due to consult national social partners for the drafting of the Country Reports.

5. Best practices and experiences from other countries

a. The case of Italy:

Paola Serafin, CISL Scuola

Ms Serafin highlighted the challenges education unions face in Italy. Because the CSRs had already been implemented in the new school reform, Italy did not receive CSRs for 2016. However, the lack of consultation with social partners on the school reform (*la Buona Scuola*) is a cause of concern. Although the reform foresaw teachers' recruitment and an improvement in their working conditions, no improvement was recognisable. Organisation and financial resources were lacking as well as transparency, especially concerning the hearing of social partners. Technical committees are now to be built, enhancing teacher unions' involvement, but the real effect remains to be seen.

b. The case of Denmark:

Thomas Hoelgaard, DLF

Mr Hoelgaard presented the Danish union's way of getting involved in the European Semester jointly with other Danish education unions and the trade union confederation. After a "learning and identifying-period" and first meetings with the Danish Ministry of Education and the European Semester Officer, a concrete strategy of getting involved in the European Semester was set up. He underlined the links of education with employment policies and European growth strategies that have to be regarded when a union wants to take part and find its place in such procedures.

DLF pursues three main objectives through its strategy, namely: to respond to the reports and documents, to select issues from the Semester documents that underline DLF's position and can be used for lobbying, and to mainstream the knowledge about the European Semester into all policies and actions of DLF.

He furthermore described challenges, such as limited human resources, and lessons learnt, such as the awareness that the Commission is interested in hearing different sides, but usually business stakeholders have a more prominent role in the Semester process.

6. Training Activity 2

Impact of the Semester on national Education and Training policy and reforms: from Country Reports to Country Specific Recommendations

The latest CSRs concerning education were discussed in working groups. Participants discussed their content and influence on national reform policies. Common problems and trends deriving from these reforms were recognised across different countries, such as the importance of education for employment.

7. Impact of the Semester on public spending. A pathway to privatisation?

Prof. Howard Stevenson, University of Nottingham (external expert)

Mr. Stevenson pointed out at the links of new, business-like management techniques in the education sector with changed funding structures and privatisation in different types. Cross-border trends of private funding replacing public expenditure are clearly visible.

By describing the extreme case of England, he illustrated the increasing marketization of education and downgrade of teacher qualifications. These developments are internationally recognisable and mainly caused by performance based funding and focusing on cost-effectiveness in the governance structures. He moreover diagnosed that trade unions have always been the main opponents to privatisation in/of education, and that collective bargaining in education has been weakened.

8. Plenary debate

Impact of the Semester on national Education and Training investment and reforms - Plenary discussion and Questions & Answers

The participants shared their experience on similar developments in their countries. Stronger involvement of businesses in the education structures was underlined, which was recognised to endanger the independence of education institutions. Equal funding among the institutions and access to education are furthermore jeopardised since there are crucial differences between private and public schools.

9. Actions and challenges for trade unions

Rossella Benedetti, UIL, on behalf of the confederations CGIL, CISL, UIL

Ms Benedetti reported on the Italian trade union confederations' activity related to lobbying and feedback on the Semester key documents, also within the European Trade Union Confederation structures. She reported about meetings with the national Ministry of education, the European Semester Officer and social dialogue in Italy.

Problems derive from the situation that the main focus in the aftermath of the crisis has been employment and economy, rather than education and the national Education Ministry has no say in the European Semester process. Since consultations and social dialogue at national level is under strain in Italy, reforms are adopted without any involvement of trade unions. However, the European Commission perceives trade unions' involvement and social dialogue in Italy as advanced and successful. Ms Benedetti furthermore criticised that many problems, such as poverty among teachers, are ignored in the European Semester documents.

10. Training activity 3

Teacher union actions, the way ahead

In the third workshop, participants discussed objectives, activities, resources and tools, alliances and opponents within the European Semester process for education trade unions. Ideas for setting up strategies were collected and presented in the subsequent plenary session.

11. Evaluation and Conclusion

Paola Cammilli, thanked the participants for their participation and contributions in the Training Seminar and in particular FLC-CGIL and DLF, as project partners and organiser of the event.