

EDUCATION TRADE UNIONS ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH SOCIAL DIALOGUE

RESEARCH REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender equality is a fundamental right enshrined in the EU Treaties and legislation, providing for gender equality particularly in treatment at work and equal pay. Despite these principles being enshrined in legislation for decades, **the reality remains very different**, with vertical and horizontal labour market segmentation, as well as the gender pay gap remaining. Gender stereotypes continue to persist in relation to perceptions of women's and men's roles in the household, caring responsibilities, the labour market and public life. These influence women's and men's choices regarding their lives and careers and continue to shape perceptions despite some significant advances that have been made. As demonstrated by EIGE's Gender Equality Index, over the past decade, progress towards gender equality in the European Union has been taking place **'at a snail's pace'**.

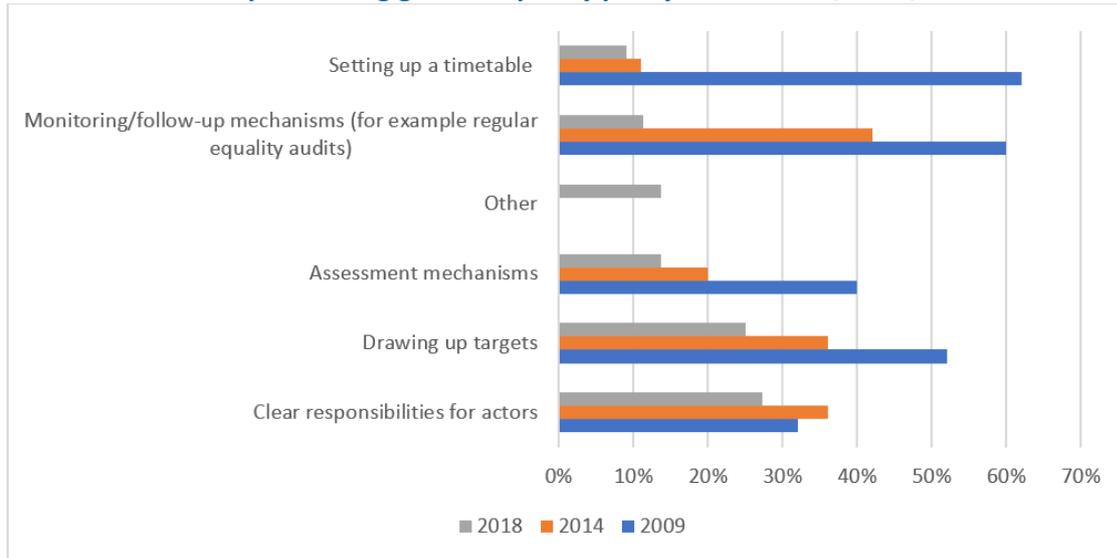
Education trade unions and education personnel have a vital role to play in helping to address gender stereotypes, influencing (further) education and career choices. However, this project has shown that as well as their role in promoting gender equality in wider society, education trade unions in particular need to continue their efforts to address gender disparities within the teaching profession and indeed in education trade unions themselves. Although there has been some progress over time, and this project has demonstrated that significant actions have been taken by education trade unions in promoting gender equality, research and discussions undertaken as part of this project also revealed some disappointing findings, highlighting again the need for more action to address a number of topics, especially bringing gender equality issues to the social dialogue and collective bargaining.

Firstly, while membership of trade unions in the education sector is predominately female, mirroring the share of female teaching staff in the labour market (71%), **leadership in education trade unions** is not representative of union membership and the education workforce:

- Since 2014, the share of female General Secretaries of education sector trade unions has increased and now stands at 50%. In the highest decision-making bodies, the share of women is also up from 48% to 56%.
- However, at the same time the number of female presidents and deputy general secretaries of education trade unions declined (to around 35%).

Although the under-representation of women in decision-making structures of education trade unions is considered to be a significant issue by nearly 70% of respondents to a survey of education trade unions, **only 40% of trade unions indicate that internal gender equality policies are in place**. It is particularly concerning that the share of education trade unions indicating that measures have been taken to address the under-representation of women in the unions' decision-making bodies decreased from two thirds in 2014 to under 45% in 2018. Departments dedicated to equality issues can play an important role in furthering the cause of gender equality within trade union structures, to address gender disparities in the sector and in

Mechanisms for implementing gender equality policy in the union, 2009, 2014 and 2018.



Source: ETUCE surveys, 2018, 2014, 2009. The figure shows the proportion of responding trade unions indicating such mechanisms.

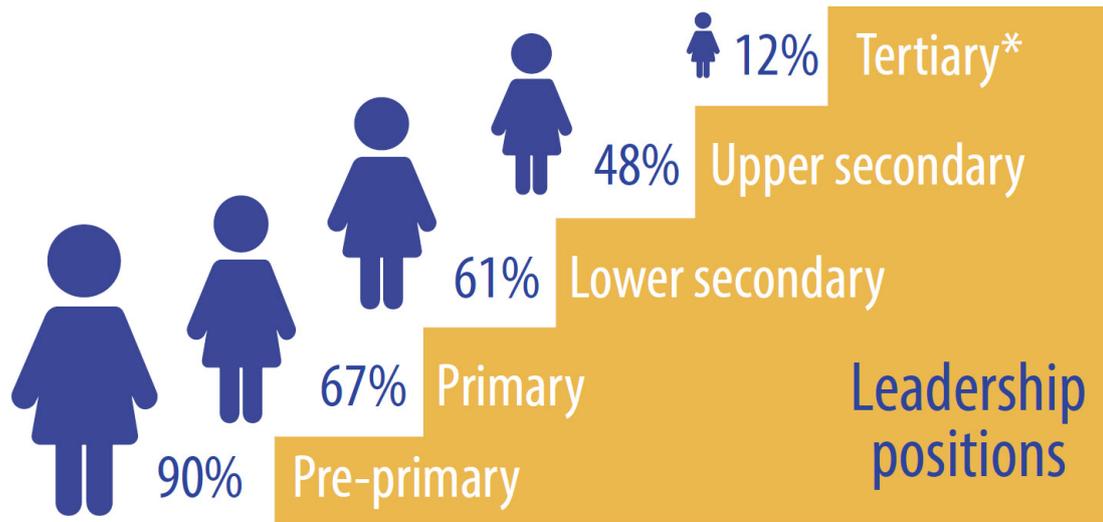
wider society. However, only 60% of education trade unions have a department or individuals dealing specifically with gender equality issues. In most cases, this responsibility is shared with other tasks. On average unions reported spending **20% of their time on gender equality issues**, demonstrating the need for further dedicated resources in this area.

Quotas remain controversial among efforts to target more representative leadership structures. A number of education trade unions have successfully launched campaigns to encourage more women to come forward for leadership positions and mentoring for aspiring leaders.

Difficulties in reconciling work and family life were considered to be key issues both in relation to the under-representation of women in leadership functions in education trade unions and in leadership roles in education workplaces.

The latter is the second issue where further action is required. Despite making up a high share of the workforce in the sector, **women are under-represented in leadership and decision-making positions in education institutions**. Across the EU, in pre-primary education, an average of 90% of school leaders in the EU are women. In lower secondary education, this decreases to 61% and to 48% in upper secondary education. Only 12% of university deans in Europe are women. Despite the high importance of addressing the under-representation of women in leadership functions in the sector (80% of survey respondents consider this to be a priority), only 40% of trade unions indicated actions had been taken to address this issue.

As demonstrated by examples presented during the regional workshops and presented by survey respondents, **collective bargaining plays a significant role** in tackling issues linked to work-life balance conflict, with measures to enhance working time flexibility, specific measures for carers, the right to disconnect and the treatment of travel time for teachers travelling between schools for their teaching duties all having been considered in various collective agreements.



* Eurostat. Education statistics, 2016
European University Association. Data on female university leadership in Europe, 2017

The third area where gender issues remain to be addressed in the education sector is the under-representation of male teachers in pre-primary and primary education and the under-representation of women in tertiary education in particular. Across the EU, while 98% of teachers in pre-primary education are women, the percentage declines to 44% in tertiary education (2017 data).

Actions to address such gender disparities tend to be akin to measures aimed at addressing broader gender stereotypes in society, as well as measures to address pay disparities between different sectors of education. Further efforts are needed in this regard, since only 50% of education trade unions indicated that measures had been taken to address these issues.

Fourthly, **gender-based violence and violence and harassment in the workplace** more generally was considered to be a significant and growing problem by just over half of education trade unions, particularly in relation to the greater use of social media for the purposes of harassment and cyber-bullying. Activities implemented by trade union range of influencing national legislation to awareness raising of this issue within schools, with parents in particular and in wider society.

Finally, the role of educators in **addressing gender stereotypes in society** was widely recognised and indeed it is in this area that education trade unions are among the most active, working with NGOs, governments and education employers to tackle such stereotypes including in the teaching curricula and textbooks, as well as in education and career choices.

Social dialogue (either in the form of collective bargaining or other bipartite or indeed tripartite action) was shown to be **an under-utilised tool** among the approaches taken to address gender (in)equality in the teaching profession and wider society and trade unions participating in the project workshops agreed that it is important to exploit the potential of social dialogue further to enhance gender equality in the education sector. The potential of social dialogue to achieve this and supporting measures required very much depend on the capacities of social partners and the traditions of such dialogue already in place. Additional financial and organisational resources are therefore crucial to enhance the role of social dialogue, as well as the strong understanding of all social partners that gender equality is an issue to be discussed and negotiated on by trade

unions. Learning from the experience of other trade unions was particularly emphasised as an important part of the project, which can be further enhanced with the creation of the database of good practices which is one of the outputs from the project. However, it can only be a first step and direct contacts between education trade unions (and their partners) are required to learn more about the organisational and contextual factors contributing to the success of different activities.

[ETUCE's Action Plan on gender equality within education trade unions' structures and in the teaching profession](#) contains commitments to address many of the issues mentioned above, but should be reviewed in light of the findings of the project, with regular monitoring of the activities undertaken to make these commitments a reality at national and local level a priority. BOX 4: Trade unions enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession

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work on gender equality issues is still quite a new field of work for the trade union. Many consider it is not so important - that priority should be given to fighting for higher salaries and working conditions of our members."

Quote from the responses to ETUCE Survey, 2018

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Our vision is for an education system in which gender stereotypes, sexism and sexual harassment no longer harm and limit the lives and opportunities of girls and boys. We have campaigned for a whole school approach for advancing gender equality. All our departments work closely together so we are tackling gender inequality in a range of different ways and on different issues, looking at both the staff and student side in schools".

Quote from the responses to ETUCE Survey, 2018

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the most important development is that it was recognized that our trade unions need a group which would work on equality issues and that the Equality Committee was established"

Quote from the responses to ETUCE Survey, 2018

