

The functioning of the troika in crisis-hit countries: A new report from ETUC



New [ETUC Report on Troika activities](#) confirms destructive effects in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Based on ETUC investigation into the activities of the Troika of international leaders (EC-ECB-IMF) in selected countries, the Report condemns the takeover operated by the Troika over national elected governments, forcing the implementation of massive fiscal austerity policies on one side, and the deregulation of wage formation and collective bargaining on the other,

disrespectful of social partners agreements. The Report demands a revision of the Troika programmes, to be based on the respect for the fundamental principles of the European Treaty.

The economic and social consequences of the Troika policies are breaching fundamental social rights, the Report says: a strong decline in social expenditure is alarmingly going in parallel with an appalling increase in poverty, unemployment and inequalities. Despite strong trade union protests in the programme countries, the pillars of the welfare state are being dismantling: Education, Health and Social Security. As the Report points out, the expenditure in education in Portugal has decreased from 2010, reaching the bottom line of 3.9 % of GDP in 2014. Alike, rates of youth unemployment and of young people not in employment or education or training (NEET) raised significantly.

Contingent market and time pressures cannot justify the sacrifice of social principles laid down in the Treaty. *“Fundamental principles of the European Treaty are to be respected at all times. The fact that programmes are elaborated under market and time pressure does not change this, on the contrary”*, Veronica Nilsson, Confederal Secretary at the ETUC, said at the European Parliament enquiry on the Troika on 27 January 2014.

Defend Public Education: From cradle to grave

Defend Public Education Conference - Saturday 1 February 2014

UCU held a one day conference open to all members on Saturday 1 February 2014. This important conference was about the defence of public education in the so-called age of austerity. It brought together speakers and participants from across education to discuss the key policy currents and to focus upon what we can do to defend the principle of education from cradle to grave.



This conference perfectly complements the aims of the Unite for Quality Education Campaign.

More information here: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/defendpubed14>

European elections 2014: a turning point for the European democracy built on quality education



A new initiative has been launched by the ETUCE to give candidates to European elections the opportunity to pledge to the [ETUCE 10 key messages](#) on “What is needed to improve the Quality of Education in Europe”. The 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections are fast approaching, and ETUCE would like to encourage candidates’ commitment to support the EI/ETUCE Initiative [Unite for Quality Education](#) – Better Quality Education for a Better World – through two

specific actions: a simple electronic pledge ([by clicking on this link](#)) and their participation to upcoming events.

The ETUCE will not stop to denounce the dramatic effects of the on-going financial and economic crisis, severely harming the education sector. Nevertheless, the ETUCE is confident that the 2014 European Parliament elections are the greatest democratic opportunity to change the course of European austerity policies and to say “no” to its dramatic dismantling effects on social rights.

Through this initiative the ETUCE asks candidates to the European elections to support high quality education for all as one of the fundamental pillars of a just and equitable European society. EP candidates’ [pledge to ETUCE 10 key messages](#) on quality of education in Europe will have an impact in raising the awareness on the fundamental right to access quality public education for every citizen, as a vital prerequisite for democratic participation at national as well at European level.

Help ETUCE to reach support: visit the [dedicated section](#) on ETUCE website to see the list of pledges and to ask national EP candidates to pledge to quality of education in Europe.

The European Parliament calls for EU roadmap to protect fundamental rights of LGBTI people

On 4 February 2014, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) to safeguard the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. The resolution calls upon the EU to make a roadmap to make fundamental rights a reality of LGBTI people.



The need for such a roadmap is confirmed by the 2013 [EU LGBT survey](#). It found that 47% of LGBTI people felt discriminated against or harassed and 26% were physically attacked or threatened with violence in the previous five years.

The resolution stresses that the roadmap should ensure a comprehensive policy including areas such as employment, education, health, goods and services, families and freedom of movement, freedom of expression and hate crime.

Supporting Victims of Data Abuse

The latest report from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), [‘Access to data protection remedies in EU Member States’](#), shows that victims of data abuse often lack the understanding about data protection and the authorities that serve to help them. FRA Director Morten Kjaerum warned *“Today it is too easy to simply collect and abuse the personal data of Europe’s citizens.”* The Report from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency shows that *“many citizens don’t know where to go to if their data has been misused.”*

This is why the European Commission proposes a data protection reform which is aimed at making data protection easier. The European Commission wants to install a one stop shop for citizens through which they can always address their local data protection supervisor.



Interviews with victims of data abuse have shown that most victims of violations turn to data protection authorities. They often do this to ensure similar violations do not reoccur rather than to seek financial compensation. Only in exceptional cases do they go through courts.

The FRA suggests in the report to raise public awareness of complaint mechanisms, offer data protection training for legal professionals, and to strengthen the independence of data protection authorities. The report also contains an overview of the legal framework and the procedures people can use in cases of data protection violations.

The FRA has further published a [handbook on European data protection case law](#). The handbook, developed together with the Council of Europe, is aimed at legal professionals and non-governmental organisations who are not specialists in data protection.

Seminar Wrap Up: Gender and Occupational Health



The presentations held at the ETUI seminar in Porto on 23 and 24 January are online now. The seminar had the title "His and hers: justice and health in employment and the workplace" and was conducted in collaboration with Porto University.

Around 130 attendees from academia, trade unions the labour inspectorate and health services discussed policies to improve working conditions and issues around "gender and the labour market" and "gender and occupational health".

The seminar highlighted how the gender division of labour plays into the production of social inequalities: the labour market tends to concentrate women into a small number of job types; part-time work is low-paid and often involves poor working conditions; most domestic chores are done by women, etc.

In March 2015, ETUI will devote a major European conference to these issues.

Link: <http://www.etui.org/Topics/Health-Safety/News/Health-at-work-his-and-hers-!-ETUI-seminar-in-Porto>