



# ETUCE Newsletter

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## ETUCE urges to take action to restore the complete functioning of trade unions in Ukraine



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Last Sunday Kiev's Independence Square turned into a giant memorial complex. People gathered in thousands to honour the dozens of people who

have been killed in clashes between demonstrators and the police forces. What we all witnessed from the mass media during the last week and from the current situation in Ukraine is the most serious crisis since its independence in 1991. In the course of the last decade there have been political scandals, fraud and corruption in Ukraine, which has led the country into a devastating shape and increased the frustration among the public. This frustration culminated with the refusal of former President Viktor Yanukovich to sign an association agreement with the European Union. During the fights and clashes between demonstrators and police forces the Trade Union House in Kiev was completely destroyed by a fire. Today several hundred trade union workers remain without workplaces and all documents, furniture, office equipment etc. have been lost.

Our Member Organisation the Trade Union of Education and Science Employees of Ukraine is therefore asking for help to restore its activities in full. ETUCE has expressed its concern, support and compassion as well as condolences to our colleagues in Ukraine and to the concerned that have lost members of their family in the terrible incidents in the Independent Square. The country has been weakened and ETUCE can only hope that Ukrainian citizens will remain united and overcome the tragically events. ETUCE will continue to follow the developments and encourages its Member Organisations to support our Ukrainian colleagues by all means including financial assistance to rebuild their union capacity. A coordinated call for solidarity assistance with the Ukrainian colleagues is being issued to the ETUCE Member Organisations in due course.

## **Round table meeting in Bucharest on the potentials of social dialogue**

On 20 February 2014 ETUCE held its first out of six roundtable meetings within its new project “Promoting the potentials of the European sectoral social dialogue in education by addressing new challenges and exploring experience and knowledge”. The meeting was carried out in Bucharest together with ETUCE’s affiliate and project partner in Romania, the Free Trade Union Federation in Education (FSLE). It took place in the Palace of the Parliament and gathered a large number of participants from ETUCE’s Romanian member organisations as well as representatives from the government. Mr. Remus Pricopie, Minister of National Education, and other speakers, including Christian Welz from Eurofound and Stefaan Ceuppens from the European Commission, contributed to the success of the meeting.



As foreseen, the meeting gave participants the opportunity to highlight key messages, which ETUCE will integrate in its new project on promoting the potentials of the European sectoral social dialogue in education by addressing new challenges and exploring experience and knowledge. The topic of these six round table meetings will therefore concern social dialogue with a specific focus on how to strengthen and highlight the potentials of social dialogue in EU

member states and at EU level. The meeting in Bucharest revealed a deep concern of the status quo of social dialogue as well as on general developments within the education sector in Romania. The lively discussion among participants made clear that it is an important moment to raise attention towards this topic. It is expected that the upcoming meetings and the overall outcome of the project will generate solutions to the current challenges the social dialogue is facing all over Europe.

## **TTIP entering ‘heart of negotiations’**

On 17-18 February 2014, EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht and United States Trade Representative Ambassador Michael Froman met for a political stocktaking exercise in Washington, D.C. on the controversial Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Following the meeting, the EU Trade Commissioner said negotiations had made good progress and needed to step up a gear. The fourth round of talks will take place on 10–14 March 2014 in Brussels. The transatlantic negotiations will also be discussed when US President Obama visits Brussels for a summit on 26 March 2014. According to the EU Trade Commissioner the EU and the US are entering the ‘heart of negotiations’.



The TTIP is only peripherally about trade, as the tariff rates and quotas between the EU and the US are already very low. Instead, the main issue concerns regulatory convergence and so-called “non-tariff” barriers to trade. The aim is to establish new rules, standards and procedures in a number of areas that are not covered by other trade agreements. While it is too early to say if public education will be explicitly included in the TTIP, it is well known that education liberalisation is the goal of private companies looking to gain access to new “markets” and to maximize their profits. Even if education is not directly included in TTIP, still new rules being developed on domestic regulation could see educational requirements, professional accreditation standards and certification procedures challenged and threatened by US businesses.

In addition, the TTIP intends to include an Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism. ISDS provisions have been controversial as they enable foreign investors to directly sue states before arbitration panels that tend to interpret disputes narrowly in favour of investors. One explanation is that ISDS instruments involve a relatively small number of arbitrators, who tend to have a strong relation to businesses. As a result of ISDS instruments, foreign investors are given legal rights to challenge any regulatory or policy measure of the host-state it feels violates its rights to access a market. The extraordinary cost of defending ISDS cases may deter governments from pursuing policy goals or taking regulatory measures that may have an impact on foreign investors. Previous ISDS cases raise serious concerns both about the ability of states to maintain domestic regulatory space, but also about the accountability of foreign investors for damage caused by investment operations. After considerable criticisms, the European Commission has announced that a public consultation on provisions in EU-US trade deal on investment and investor-state dispute settlement will be published in early March 2014.

### **EU answers Switzerland: freezes research grants and Swiss involvement in Erasmus+**

The European Union has suspended negotiations with Switzerland on the participation in EU education exchange programmes, such as Erasmus+ and the Horizon 2020 research programme, because of the imminent introduction of quotas to community workers approved in a referendum last week.



Even though Switzerland is not an EU member state, it belongs to the Schengen zone, which enables citizens to cross European borders without custom controls. The Horizon 2020 research programme and Erasmus+ student exchanges are directly linked to freedom of movement inside Europe for communitarian citizens which is one of the fundamental pillars of the EU. The Swiss refusal to sign the protocol extending the free movement of persons to workers from Croatia, a country that joined the EU in July last year, has therefore lead the EU to freeze research grants in the context of the EU Horizon 2020 programme and to suspend the involvement of Switzerland in the Erasmus+ student exchange programme.

The European Commission is now waiting for a reaction from the Swiss government which has expressed its willingness to negotiate with the EU.

The Commission President, José Manuel Durão Barroso, said that he is aware of the Swiss intentions but he warned that the free movement of persons in Europe "is not negotiable".

Switzerland may experience an important loss in its education budget, should the country decide to continue with these restrictive migrant measures.

### **International Women's Day 2014**

Celebrated annually on 8 March, International Women's Day encourages advocacy for women's advancement and gender equality. With thousands of events worldwide, it calls for challenging the status quo for women's equality and for inspiring positive change.

This year, in parallel with the annual ETUC 8th of March survey, ETUCE is conducting an analysis of the impact of austerity politics on gender equality in the education sector, which will end on International Women's Day. All ETUCE member organisations are invited to contribute to this analysis. (<http://pages.ei-ie.org/limesurvey/-index.php/427553/lang-en>).



The topic of International Women's Day 2014, supported by ETUC, the European Parliament, and the Fundamental Rights Agency, is: "Preventing violence against women - a challenge for all". The persistent issue of violence against women shows that equality is not only an issue of social and economic justice but a fundamental human right.

Certainly, women's equality has made positive gains in the past century. In 2014, however, the world is still unequal and the recent austerity measures have had a negative impact on women's rights and gender equality in Europe. In many European countries, reversals of gender equality policies can be observed. As resources are withdrawn in the public service sector, women pay double the price of the crisis: as taxpayers but also as employees because of the deterioration of working conditions, and, finally, as mothers and daughters as they compensate with more family work for the lack of public services.

Gender equality is a particularly pressing issue in the field of education as most of the people working in education are women. Austerity has increased teaching hours for many teachers and education staff in Europe. In support of [Education International's statement](#), ETUCE wishes to underline that quality education for girls and women is progress for all.

ETUCE also encourages its affiliates to send representatives to the [second EI World Women's Conference](#) which will take place in Dublin, Ireland, from 7-9 April 2014. The conference theme is *Women in Trade Unions and in Education: from Words to Action*. The conference programme takes

up key topics regarding women's organising and leadership within education trade unions, and women's and girls' participation in, and successful completion of, quality education.

### **FETE UGT won the Spanish cinema award with the documentary film "Las Maestras de la República"**

"Las Maestras de la República" (women teachers in the Spanish Republic) film promoted by the Education Federation of Workers (FETE-UGT) and Transit Productions won the 2014 Goya Award for best documentary film. The film recreates, through archival footage and interviews with family members and history teachers, the crucial role of the women played in the modernisation of education that took place during the years of the Spanish Second Republic.



Republican women teachers symbolise better than anyone else the social and cultural transformation of the Spanish Second Republic. One of their main objectives was to ensure the social right to quality education for everyone. In this context, women teachers became citizens' models for female students and for the whole society. This documentary promoted by FETE-UGT seeks to recover the great work that these women played in the conquest of equality and democratic public education in the Spanish society.

Since it was released, "Las Maestras de la República" has garnered enormous acclaim. Besides exhibited in the Spanish Film Library, cultural houses or cinemas, the film was also screened at the houses of the people of UGT and in more than 400 theatres across the state, including cultural centres, associations, schools, universities, town halls and cinemas. Over 80,000 people have already attended one of its public screenings. It has also been released on DVD.

<http://www.lasmaestrasdelarepublica.com/>

Twitter: @MaestrasRep

### **Erasmus Mobility Grant Open for Application**

The Erasmus Mobility Grant is open for application. The grant is part of the KA1 action under the Erasmus+ programme. Organisations involved in adult or school education that are based in one of the twenty-eight Member States of the European Union or in any of the other pre-accession countries such as FYROM, Iceland,



Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey are invited to apply to further develop the skills of their staff and personnel.

These projects enable organisations to offer structured study, work experience, job shadowing, training and teaching opportunities to staff and learners. Beneficiaries are able to spend a period of time in another participating country gaining valuable experience of life, study and work with the aim of increasing the opportunities available to them in the future.

Key Action 1 covers the five fields of Higher Education, vocational education and training, schools, adult education and youth.

The deadline for applications is 17 March, 2014 12:00 CET (Brussels time).

For clarifications and queries, visit the Erasmus KA1 webpage:

<http://www.learn-it-easy.eu/>

### **Open Education Challenge**

The initiative Open Education Challenge, launched in partnership with the European Commission, is an invitation to all innovators to submit projects, and receive technical support through the European Incubator for Innovation in Education, and access funding for their future companies.

The Open Education Challenge is part of Startup Europe. This is the European Commission action plan aimed at strengthening the business environment for web and ICT entrepreneurs in Europe and contributing to innovation, growth and jobs. It is about bringing out the people who are have a passion for education and are convinced that technology will deeply transform the way we learn, teach and train, and who have created, or are about to create, a company that will innovate in education.

The logo for the Open Education Challenge. The words "OpenEducation" are in a dark blue serif font, and "Challenge" is in a lighter blue sans-serif font below it.

Applications from all over the world are accepted. All selected applicants will have to commit to participate full time in the incubation process that will take place in the EU. The 10 most promising startups will be selected to join the programme.

Projects can be submitted until 17 March 2014. The finalists will participate in a workshop in Barcelona in July 2014 to determine the 10 winners. After this, their projects will be presented to the Open Education Challenge Jury.

For more information on go to the website: <http://www.openeducationchallenge.eu/>