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**Report on the closing conference
of the ETUCE and EFEE Project**

***Social Partners Promoting Decent Workplaces in
the Education Sector
for a Healthier Working Life***

Bucharest, 09-10 June 2016



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DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.*





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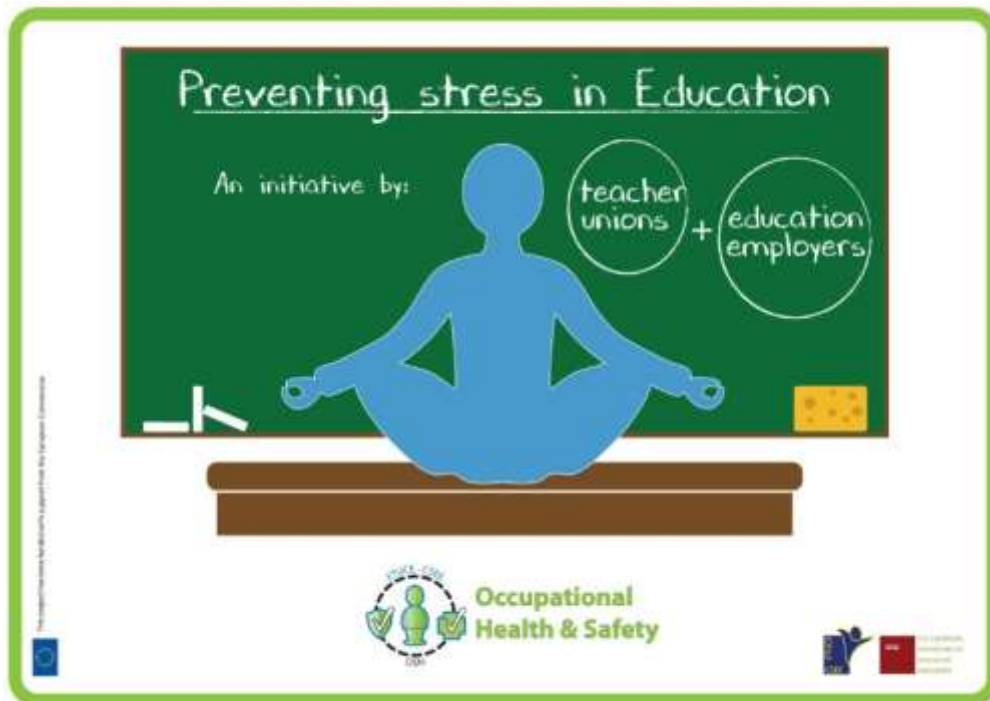




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1. Introduction

Work-related stress and psychosocial hazards jeopardise quality education because they affect the working environment of teachers which is, first and foremost, the learning environment for students. The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation for Education Employers (EFEE) worked together on a two year project to support teachers, school leaders and other education staff on the prevention of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress and to support the provision of decent workplaces for quality education. *'Social Partners promoting Decent Workplaces in the Education Sector for a Healthier Working Life'* acknowledges the special challenges and burdens that are faced by teachers, school leaders and other education staff regarding psychosocial hazards, such as conflicts with third-parties and high emotional demands and recognises the fact that work-related stress and psychosocial hazards have a negative impact on health and impose a significant financial burden on individuals, organisations and society. The project sought to identify concrete and practical ways to prevent work-related stress and psychosocial hazards and to promote social partner initiatives at European, national, regional and local level. It links to the EU priorities set out in the *EU Strategic Framework of Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020* and the work EFEE and ETUCE have been doing in light of their joint work programme within the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE). This initiative was undertaken with the financial support of the European Commission.

The Closing Conference of this project took place on 09-10 June 2016 in Bucharest, Romania. Participants reflected upon the draft joint practical guidelines to prevent psychosocial hazards and work-related stress, suggested amendments and discussed ways to effectively and efficiently implement the guidelines at European, national, regional and local level.

2. Project Overview



3. Project description

ETUCE and EFEE carried out this project with the aim of supporting teachers, school leaders and education staff in the prevention of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress. Work-related stress and psychosocial hazards are amongst the most damaging hazards, which affect the health of both teachers and school leaders, as the social partners in the education sector have recognised in previous projects.

This initiative was supported by a research team, which analysed the results of an online survey among ETUCE and EFEE member organisations about steps taken to prevent psychosocial hazards. The team accompanied the study delegations during the case studies to Romania, Finland, Belgium and Germany. The aim of the case studies was to identify concrete measures to prevent psychosocial hazards and work-related stress. In the case studies, the study delegation visited several secondary schools, which were known for their good practice in psychosocial risk prevention. The teachers and school leaders had the opportunity to present the measures they have implemented. Furthermore, the study delegations interviewed experts and representatives from education unions, employer organisations, health and safety inspectors and representatives of local authorities and ministries. The outcome of the case studies is summarised in the case study reports, which are available in several languages. The project film was presented at the closing conference.

The project's concrete objectives were to draft joint social partner guidelines on how to promote joint partner initiatives at national, regional and local level to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in education. Ultimately, the aim was to prepare the ground for a joint social partner declaration by ETUCE and EFEE on the prevention of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress in the education sector.

4. Advisory Group

The project was steered by an advisory group, which was responsible for carrying out the planning, organisation and evaluation of the project. They provided their expertise and knowledge throughout the project.



The Advisory Group (Alexandra Cornea, FSLE, Romania; Ute Foit, VBE, Germany; Stéphane Vanoirbeck, SEGEC, Belgium; Sarah Lyons, NUT, UK; Patrizio Perez, FECCOO, Spain; Tari Aho, AFIEE, Finland)

The Advisory group consisted of four members from national educational unions and two members from national employers' federations. Members of the Advisory Group were chosen from a geographical spread to ensure an exchange of expertise on the different scenarios of occupational health and

safety in the European education sector. Together with the support of the ETUCE Secretariat and research team, they drafted the joint practical guidelines.

5. Aim of the Closing conference

At the closing conference, the results of the online survey and case studies in Belgium, Germany, Finland and Romania were presented, as well as the project film. Special focus was given to the draft guidelines on *“how to promote joint social partner initiatives at European, regional and local level to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in education”*. In two working groups the participants had the opportunity to comment on and amend the draft guidelines as well as to discuss their practical implementation at national, regional and local level.

Addressing experts on social dialogue and occupational health and safety, ETUCE and EFEE member organisations from across Europe participated in the closing conference.

6. Presentations

Stéphane Vanoirbeck, member of the EFEE Executive Committee and the Advisory Group, opened the meeting and highlighted the importance of the prevention of psychosocial hazards for the education sector. **Odile Cordelier**, ETUCE Bureau member, welcomed the participants to Bucharest and gave an overview of the events taking place during the closing conference. She called on participants to discuss the guidelines and the results of the project, and more importantly, to implement them at all education levels and in all institutions and in the long term to assess the project results..

Adrian Curaj, Minister of Education (Romania), welcomed the participants to Bucharest and told them about how the project has been an inspiration for his own work. Mr. Curaj used the results of the Romanian case study and the accompanying recommendations as a basis to implement some changes in Romanian education policies. The number of obligatory school committees (such as a Health and Safety Committee), an aspect of school life that was clearly put forward in the Romanian case study visit as contributing to work-related stress, had been reduced by the Romanian government.

Simion Hancescu, President of FSLE (Romania) **Anton Hadăr**, President of Alma Mater (Romania) and **Marius Ovidiu Nistor**, President of Spiru Haret (Romania) welcomed the participants to Bucharest. In their opening speeches they emphasised the need for decent workplaces as a prerequisite for a healthy



working life. The three presidents of the Romanian education trade unions unanimously agreed that psychosocial hazards in the education sector and work related stress affect not only the health and lives of teachers but also the quality of education and thus students.

6.1. *Healthy working life – The basis for Quality Education*



Prof. (em.) Dr. Bernhard Sieland from the Leuphana Universität Lüneburg in Germany, started his presentation by giving some more explanation as to why a healthy working life is so important for teachers as well as students and what psycho-social risks exactly entail. Defined as “*conditions that overstrain the self-regulation competencies to regulate levels of stress and to regulate your own mood and emotions*”, psychosocial risks cannot result in quality education as they affect the school and private life of teachers and students.

Prof. Sieland gave the participants an overview of the short-term, medium-term and long-term consequences of work-related stress for teachers and students and made use of Badura’s Iceberg Model¹ to explain there are many more consequences (e.g. reduced motivation, presenteeism) than those we may notice at first sight (such as absenteeism and early retirement). To prevent and counter work-related stress, organisations should focus more on health promotion. Prof. Sieland furthermore presented good examples and data on national, local and personal preventative measures of psychosocial risks in education.

“Let the Closing Conference not be the end but a kick-off of more activities and awareness raising”.

Prof. (em.) Dr. Bernhard Sieland

6.2. *The EU Strategic Framework on Occupational Health and Safety*

Tim Tregenza, Network Manager of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) presented information on psychosocial hazards and work-related stress in Europe, with a special focus on the education sector. The EU Strategic Framework gives structure to preventive measures and identifies three challenges: the implementation of occupational health and safety management, the issues of work-related diseases (such as cancers due to occupational exposure) and the impact of a growing working population between 55-64 years old. Mr



“The more complex a regulation is, the less it is being used”.

Tim Tregenza

Tregenza gave some information on the 2014-2020 objectives that have been set by the Strategic Framework and presented the results of the European Survey of Enterprises on Emerging Risks (ESENER) that was carried out for

¹ Badura, B., Greiner, W., Rixgens, P., Ueberle, M., & Behr, M. (2013). Sozialkapital: Grundlagen von Gesundheit und Unternehmenserfolg (2nd ed.). Berlin: Springer.

- Ten fundamental consequences for research and policy**
1. Health management is essential for every person (even pupils) in every school!
 2. It is the basis for well-being and productivity in professional and private life!
 3. It is to be granted by activities and resources of employers and employees
 4. Teachers need a powerful health to be good role models for their students
 5. They should have time and cooperative tools to train work-related self-care & care for others through all phases of teacher career
 6. The measures should be evaluated for their health and economic effects
 7. Web-based platforms, counselling and training can promote health management in all phases of teacher career.
 8. Local reminders of chances and risks of teachers' health are necessary
 9. Managerial staff should be trained specifically for OHM and health promotion
 10. Strengthen the European collaboration and the cooperation of social partners on OHM in schools

the second time in 2014. Results of the risk factors in work establishments indicate that education employees and employers have to deal with difficult third-parties (pupils and parents), time pressure and loud noise. Although every workplace in Europe is legally required to carry out a risk assessment, in the survey only 75% of the education workplace environments registered that they undertook one. As a reason for

not carrying out a risk-assessment, the education sector mentions 'a lack of the necessary expertise' more often than the other work sectors. Mr. Tregenza concluded his presentation by stating that there is a need for more expertise regarding occupational safety and health management to reach small workplaces (such as education institutions) as well as strengthening leadership on a local level.

6.3. Promoting Decent Workplaces in the Education Sector – Project Outcome

Dr. Hans-Joachim Lincke, researcher at the institute FFAW (Freiburg Research Center for Occupational Sciences) that accompanied the project, began his presentation by giving participants more information on the project setting and methodology used. Dr. Lincke explained that 55 member organisations from 28 countries participated in the survey: 36 respondents on behalf of ETUCE organisations and 19 respondents of EFEE member organisations. This in total corresponds to a general response rate of 34% of all ETUCE and EFEE member organisations. Results of the online survey demonstrate that the allocation of sufficient time and (lack of) sufficient financial resources is regarded by ETUCE and EFEE



member organisations as both a contributing factor and barrier to the success of initiatives or actions aimed at preventing work-related stress. Looking further into actions or initiatives of joint social partnership, the survey suggests that the most frequent action fields are focusing on opportunities for professional development, the reduction of violence and work-private life balance. The most successful joint initiatives mentioned concern improvements in job security and the collection of data on work-related stress through surveys or risk analysis.

During the case studies, eight schools in Romania, Finland, Belgium and Germany were visited. In total, 85 teachers, school leaders, representatives of educational unions and education employers' organisations, education and labour

“Many OSH risk factors correspond to a loss of certitudes that have defined a teacher’s role for many years.

Dr. Hans-Joachim Lincke

ministries and education authorities were interviewed, using semi-structured individual and group interviews. The group and individual interviews encouraged the interviewees to speak openly about the measures they have implemented to prevent psychosocial hazards. Stress factors that were detected via the case studies can be linked to countries' and/or schools' working conditions, however, some main stress factors could also be identified, e.g. high job insecurity and weak social support.

Concluding the results of the project, Dr. Lincke highlighted that adequate resources of control and social support are needed to prevent work-related stress. Furthermore there is a need for systematic data collection as this is seen by ETUCE and EFEE affiliates as a successful, but infrequent, prevention measure for psychosocial hazards, if acted upon. More frequent data collection could also be a source for further joint initiatives.

6.4. *The role of European Social Dialogue in Promoting Decent Workplaces*

Stefaan Ceuppens, Policy officer Social Dialogue of the European Commission DG Employment, informed the participants about the importance of social dialogue when promoting safe and healthy workplaces. European Social Dialogue (ESD) is a pillar of Europe's social model and can be organised in a bipartite dialogue, including trade unions and employers' organisations, or in a tripartite dialogue, including trade unions, employers' organisations as well as the public authorities. Mr. Ceuppens



presented a typology of the possible outcomes of ESD and gave an overview of the themes that have been addressed by ESD in recent years. He furthermore displayed some good practice examples of

"Social partners have a part to play in the promotion of decent workplaces."

Stefaan Ceuppens

European social dialogue outcomes. Mr. Ceuppens underlined the key role of European and national social partners and social dialogue in promoting decent workplaces. A commitment from management as well as participation from employees is necessary in order to effectively manage psychosocial risks and work-related stress.

6.5. *Project Film: Promoting Decent Workplaces in Education*

Participants at the closing conference attended the first showing of the project's short film. The film allowed participants to take a closer look into the specific contexts of the countries (Romania, Germany, Finland and Belgium) that were examined during the project. Summarising the project results, the film can be seen as a platform by which local teachers and school leaders, who took part in the four case study visits, inform education stakeholders about their own experiences of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress in the education sector. Showcasing examples of good practice in the

psychosocial well-being of teachers and school leaders, the film moreover offers good practice examples of how schools cope with psychosocial hazards and work-related stress as well as prevent them. The film will be distributed via the ETUCE website². Subtitles will be available in English, French, German, Spanish, Romanian, Finnish and Russian.



7. Working group sessions

In three smaller groups, the 70 participants, discussed the draft guidelines during two working group sessions. In the first session, the participants had the opportunity to propose changes to the draft joint guidelines and to suggest further recommendations for education trade unions, education employers, teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders in education. The second working group focused on the practical implementation of the guidelines.

7.1 Discussing the Draft Guidelines – Amendments, Comments, Changes

In the first working group, affiliates of ETUCE and EFEE member organisations critically discussed the draft joint guidelines on ‘*how to promote joint social partner initiatives at European, national, regional and local level to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in education*’. Some suggestions were made on the wording of the guidelines. The participants underlined that being a teacher and being part of an education institution should be sustainable throughout the working life of education personnel. The guidelines should recommend a **whole life approach** and focus on the entire career of education personnel, not only on the beginning- or end-phase. In this light, **risk assessments and impact assessments** of reforms were mentioned. Risk assessments need to take into account previous reforms while reforms should be embedded in good practice and assessed so as to understand their effects.



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Participants agreed that, regarding psychosocial hazards in the education sector, a stigma persists. In order to break the taboo, there is an urgent need to encourage the **acknowledgement of psychosocial hazards** and work-related stress at a national and/or regional level. One of the working groups discussed **support** for education personnel **by occupational health professionals**, including the possibility of **self-referral** for those workers who are having a difficult time at the workplace. Decisions about how to tackle work-related stress should be made by the **entire school team**. At a local level, education personnel should have **easier access to occupational health professionals**. Concerning the importance of positive feedback, which was underlined by all working groups, participants proposed to

² <https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/news/archive/1525-preventing-psychosocial-risks-at-work-project-film>



emphasise a **positive environment** in which both collective and individual feedback is accessible for education personnel. Summarizing the results, remaining healthy throughout one's working life requires good working conditions and retirement options for all education personnel.

7.2. *Practical implementation of the guidelines at national, regional and local level*

In the second working group session, participants discussed the role of education unions and education employers in implementing the guidelines, challenges faced herewith and how education unions and education employers can contribute to raising awareness about the importance of healthy and safe working environments to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in the education sector among relevant stakeholders.

During the discussions, the importance of **joint social partner initiatives** were underlined. Education unions and education employers need to work together on these issues. A good social dialogue and coordinated approach is necessary in order to define and agree what a safe and healthy working environment entails in the education sector. In this respect , some good practices were mentioned by education



unions and education employers who discuss psychosocial hazards and how to prevent and combat them at a national and regional level. Furthermore, teacher training institutes also need to be included in these discussions. **Training** organised by education unions and education employers for education personnel, teachers and school leaders can contribute to the prevention of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress and build further upon their daily experiences. For those people who suffer from work-related stress, **special arrangements** should be put into place. Participants thought about early retirement options but also smaller classes and reducing red-tape. Education unions, education employers and education institutions should also consider a **redeployment** of education personnel to other roles whenever they come back to their profession, after a period of sick leave, where this is appropriate..

Risk-assessments in the education sector should include targeted questions that address all relevant risks. The importance of conducting a risk assessment should be made more clear in order to increase the motivation and number of risk assessments that are carried out. Moreover, risk-assessments have to be monitored and discussed on an ongoing basis. Labour inspections should be in place that ensure that the conclusions are reported back from national or regional level to the local level. Participants furthermore suggested that the European Forum of Labour Inspection should meet to consider and discuss psychosocial hazards in the education sector as well. Participants proposed that education institutions should consider setting up **'care'- or support programmes** for the prevention of stress and installing 'relaxation-rooms'.

Challenges that were identified regarding the implementation of the guidelines are the **stigma** that still persists when it comes to talking about psychosocial hazards and work-related stress and the lack

of knowledge on these issues. Education trade unions and education employers can contribute to raising awareness about the importance of safe and healthy workplaces by collecting data, organising specific training, working with other sectors that have good examples and by disseminating information on these issues.

The amended guidelines and results of the discussions are of importance for the work of the social partners (ETUCE and EFEE) in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE).

8. Panel Discussion

During the panel discussion, members of the Advisory Group had the opportunity to share their experiences with the audience. The members of the Advisory Group agreed that the psychosocial situation in education has been neglected for many years. Whilst there is much focus on the pedagogical side of teaching, the issue of psychosocial health and safety in the education sector should also be discussed.

Sharing good practice and thereby learning from each other can help to expand the array of available options. However, this does not mean a one-size-fits-all-approach is feasible or desirable. The Advisory Group learned that the case study schools had a positive and optimistic approach for addressing psychosocial hazards in the education sector. When teachers, school leaders and other education personnel work together, much can be achieved. The study visits also highlighted some examples of schools that managed to find innovative new ways of working, such as changing the timetable or hiring a social worker instead of another teacher.

As risk-assessments are legally required, the problem lies not with the legal framework but with its implementation and follow-up actions. More work can be done and is needed to examine and assess the effects of a risk assessment. The Advisory Group concluded the panel discussion by stating that, although educational contexts differ from one country to another, they found out that many schools are dealing with the same problems.



9. Plenary debate

Odile Cordelier, Bureau member ETUCE, and **Stéphane Vanoirbeck**, Member of the EFEE Executive Committee closed the two-day conference. During the conference it became clear that social partners need to raise awareness on psychosocial hazards and work-related stress in the education sector, as for now it remains a taboo topic. Teachers, school leaders and other education personnel should be able to talk openly about these issues and their problems, without being viewed as ‘weak’. Initial as well as continuous professional development training that addresses these issues should be available to all teachers, school leaders and other education personnel in all phases of their working career. Building further on preventive measures, social partners also need to consider measures for people who want to return to their profession once they are back to good health. Support programmes /adjustments should be put into place for those people who have suffered from work-related stress and wish to continue their professional career. In light of this, Stéphane Vanoirbeck commented: *“When someone leaves the school, we have already failed. When we don’t prepare people that are coming back into the profession, we will fail a second time.”*. Odile Cordelier cautioned the participants and reminded them of their responsibilities. European social partners can help and assist but in order for progress to flourish local, regional and national affiliates need to be on board and supportive.



10. Abbreviations

AFIEE	Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers (Finland)
EFEE	European Federation of Education Employers
ESD	European Social Dialogue
ESENER	European Survey of Enterprises on Emerging Risks
ESSDE	European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
F.E.CC.OO	Federación de Enseñanza Comisiones Obreras
FFAW	Freiburg Research Center for Occupational Sciences
FSLE	Fédération des Syndicats Libres de l'Enseignement
NUT	National Union of Teachers
SEGEC	Secrétariat Général de l'Enseignement Catholique
VBE	Verbund Bildung und Erziehung







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