



ETUCE Action Plan on

Gender equality within teacher trade unions' structures and in the teaching profession

adopted by the ETUCE Executive Board meeting in Brussels on 15 & 16 March 2010



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1. Background information on the Action Plan

The ETUCE project on gender equality within teacher trade unions' structures and in the teaching profession was launched in September 2008 and will reach its closure on December 31st 2009. The overarching aim of the project has been to improve the awareness of national teachers unions on major EU policies and legal instruments for action in the field, while helping them with the implementation of the European Social Partners' instruments on gender equality in the education sector. Furthermore, the project also aimed at assessing the actual status of gender equality in the education sector and within teacher unions. Thus, the project follows a dual approach in that it focuses on occupational segregation and gender roles in general, and gender representation gaps in teacher trade unions and their governing and decision-making bodies in particular. These project objectives serve to meet today's challenge of a lowered status of gender equality in the EU because of the realignment of EU policies towards the economy rather than towards the social agenda, as well as to facilitate a cross-national exchange of information and best practices on how teacher trade unions could contribute to ensure gender equality in education.

In December 2008, ETUCE launched its survey on gender equality in the education sector, the teaching profession and within teacher unions. The scope of the survey covers pre-school and school education, including VET, although higher education is left out of the analysis, because its specificities as a sector does not allow being treated together with the school education sector. The results of the survey testimony of the weak representation of women at the high levels of decision-making in teacher unions, data particularly alarming when compared with the number of women present in teacher unions' membership in general. Another trend observed via the results of the survey is the lack of adopted written trade union policies on gender equality in most of the survey respondents. Teacher trade unions also seem both insufficiently informed about and little involved in activities taking place at national or school level by their national authorities aimed at challenging gendered inequalities in schools today.

It is in the light of the results of the ETUCE survey, as well as of the discussions amongst teacher trade unions held during the ETUCE Seminar on gender equality in Brussels in May 2009 that the current draft Action Plan has been designed.

2. EU legislation and European social partners agreement on gender equality

The background for carrying out this Action Plan also subscribes to and is in line with EU legislation, in particular Art. 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Art. 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Directive 2006/54/EC¹ as well as various European policy documents starting with the overall Lisbon Strategy from 2000 and continuing onwards with the 'Education and Training 2010' and '2020' programmes. One of the main policy guidelines on gender equality in the EU is the Commission's 2006-2010 gender equality Roadmap. The key priorities specified in the Roadmap are all considered as background to the recommendations included in the ETUCE action plan. Within these Roadmap key priorities, to be underlined are the promotion of equal participation of women and men in decision-making and the elimination of gender stereotypes in society. In addition, as member organisations of ETUC national teacher trade unions but also the ETUCE are committed to take action on the suggested measures linked to the education sector within the frame of the European Social Partners' Framework of Action from 2005.

The Council of Europe has also been thoroughly working on the issue of gender equality and adopted two recent recommendations having an impact on the education sector. These should also be considered when the issue is dealt with at European level: the Recommendation CM/Rec (2007) 13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education and Recommendation CM/Rec (2003) 3 of the Committee of Ministers Balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.

In addition, the current situation of the labour market and welfare across the EU is extremely worrying, as recent reforms by national authorities have led to and could continue resulting in cuts in public funding, including in education. Precariousness and job insecurity are two prerequisites for expanding gender inequalities in the society as a whole. It is therefore more that essential to act towards the making gender equality a real rather than a rhetorical priority and to make the education sector contribute at its most in that endeavour.

¹ Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)

3. Recommendations for ETUCE and national teacher Unions' action

The Action Plan revolves around the following four policy themes: addressing gender roles, promoting women in decision-making, supporting work-life balance, and tackling the gender pay gap. These four priority areas follow the structure decided by the European Social Partners (ETUC, CEEP and UNICE/UEAPME) for their Framework of Actions on Gender Equality. Following extensive research and negotiations, these themes have been identified as of particular importance for further action by both employers and employees at national level.

The recommendations under each theme are divided into two subcategories where action is required: European and national level. Building on this frame, ETUCE aims at providing practical advices to national member organisations on how to engage in a pro-active manner towards gender equality, while committing itself to take the relevant accompanying action at European levels.

Action on the promotion of gender equality by national unions is not very extensive, according to the results of the ETUCE survey. This is particularly valid when it comes to women presence within trade union structures, the combating of gender stereotypes in the education sector or the raising of the status of teachers' profession. It is therefore crucial that action is taken to develop and implement measures that can improve the current situation. The ETUCE Action Plan is suggesting potential, very practical and a limited number of measures that could be implemented by both the ETUCE and national teacher unions. These recommendations were submitted for comments and input from teacher unions at the ETUCE Conference on gender equality in Rome on 29-30 October 2009.

i. Addressing gender roles

At European level, the ETUCE commits itself to:

- To promote a new attitude towards gender equality as a shared women/men issue
- Gather a collection of national teacher unions' good practices and experiences, i.e. those presented by teacher unions' representatives during the meetings organised in the frame of the ETUCE project "Promoting gender equality within teacher trade unions and in the teaching profession" and make them available online

- Act towards the inclusion of gender equality in the education sector in the discussions within the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Education
- Collect information on how gender sensitive education is included in teacher education across Europe and disseminate it among its member organisations

At national level, the ETUCE advises its member organisations to:

- Seek influence over their national (or competent regional) Governments on the need for review of school curricula, textbooks, administrative practices and leisure time activities at all levels of education, in order to make them gender sensitive¹
- Work towards the organisation of in-service training for teachers on how to organise gender sensitive classrooms and teaching which supports co-education and to develop checklists (guidelines) for teachers, aimed at facilitating their work in the same field
- Include gender equality in discussions within national Social Dialogue
- Cooperate with other national Trade Unions and NGOs in order to fight gender stereotypes and raise-awareness among its affiliates on gender roles and differences
- Lobby their national (or competent regional) Governments in favour of a better involvement of families and their associations in gender equality promotion in education

ii. Promoting women in decision-making

At European level, the ETUCE commits itself to:

- Provide opportunities for discussion on the issue of quotas, threshold, parity, proportionality and other structural and/or statutory measures and incentives, aimed at ensuring women representation at decision-making level in the unions
- Create a set of guidelines/checklist addressed to national teacher unions on how to develop their internal equality action plans/written policies on gender equality
- Collect data on factors preventing women to apply for high-level positions in the education sector as well as on how promotional positions could be gender improved to become more accessible for women

At national level, the ETUCE advises its member organisations to:

- Train their affiliates on gender mainstreaming and ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed in all Committees or other types of bodies within the Union, i.e. on collective agreement, on education policies, etc.
- Strengthen the visibility of women in their Union structure and work towards facilitating their engagement at Union high-level positions via various incentives, i.e. flexible working hours, adaptable time schedule of meetings, childcare facilities, etc.
- Encourage the creation of bodies (departments, committees, sectors, etc.) dedicated to gender equality without abandoning the transversal approach to the issue, as well as the allocation of proper budget to these bodies/actions

iii. Supporting work-life balance

At European level, the ETUCE commits itself to:

- Continue to monitor developments in the EU in the field of work-life balance and early childhood education and care (ECEC) and disseminate the information to its member organisations
- Seek an opportunity to develop a study on the impact on teachers' work-life balance (for both male and women) of the inclusion of ICT tools in education and in teaching, such as e-mail contacts with parents and students, blended learning, etc.
- Seek an opportunity to develop a study on the availability and impact of part-time work and other flexible working arrangements on women's career progression and pay and how to avoid any discriminatory effect
- Seek an opportunity to develop a study on the availability and impact of part-time work on women careers in the education sector

At national level, the ETUCE advises its member organisations to:

- Promote 'work-life balance' as an issue for important consideration by any school management and pay attention to the inclusion of women workers in the planning of any action by management
- Use collective bargaining for mainstreaming gender equality in all policies and in education sector collective agreements, in particular issues such as reconciliation of work-life balance

iv. Tackling the gender pay gap

At European level, the ETUCE commits itself to:

- Promote equal pay and follow and assess EU developments and ETUC actions on the reasons and links between labour market segregation and gender pay gap across Europe and inform its member organisations
- Seek an opportunity to develop a study on the implementation of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in the education sector
- Gather statistics on percentages of men and women in senior positions at all levels of education across Europe
- Create a collection of good experiences and actions at school level such as career counselling and guidance for sex-atypical occupations for both genders, raising-awareness on labour market needs for both genders in schools, etc.
- Continue lobbying the European institutions in favour of a Master level of education for all teachers in all education sectors, giving them access to PhD studies.

At national level, the ETUCE advises its member organisations to:

- Develop practical guidelines for schools on how subjects such as technology, science and mathematics could be promoted amongst young girls and how to promote subjects as humanities and social sciences amongst young boys
- Promote activities of career guidance encouraging girls and boys to further their education in areas where they are traditionally under-represented
- Act towards the emphasizing and enriching the skills content of the teaching profession as well as ensuring that all teacher education leads to a full Masters degree in order to offer better career and salary paths and opportunities for women in the education sector
- Raise the status of the teaching profession in order to make it more attractive for both women and men

ⁱ Equal learning opportunities to all students regardless of their sex