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EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
COMITE SYNDICAL EUROPEEN DE L'EDUCATION

**Report on the First Regional Peer Learning
Activity of the ETUCE Project**

*“Teacher trade unions in solidarity for healthy and safe
workplaces in the economic crisis”*

London, 13 May 2013



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DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.*



Egalement disponible en français sous le titre :

« Première activité d'apprentissage entre pairs :

« Les syndicats d'enseignants solidaires pour des environnements de travail sains et sécurisés dans les temps de crise économique » »

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Teacher trade unions in solidarity for healthy and safe workplaces in the economic crisis
First regional Peer Learning Activity

1. Introduction

Representatives from Teacher Trade Unions from North Eastern European countries met in London on 13 May 2013 for the first of two Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) organised within the frame of the ETUCE Project "Teacher trade unions in solidarity for healthy and safe workplaces in the economic crisis." This first PLA was chaired by Christine Blower, the ETUCE President.



C. Blower

On 3 June 2013, a second Peer Learning Activity took place in Lisbon, Portugal.

The objective of the two Peer Learning Activities for representatives from ETUCE member organisations is to examine different national approaches regarding the prevention of psychosocial hazards and reconciliation of work and family life in times of the economic crisis and to discuss and develop concrete policy recommendations.

This report seeks to give a description of the events as well as the presented data and the project in total.

2. Project description

In November 2012 the ETUCE – EI European Region Conference had clearly identified the need for further work on the impact of the crisis on teachers' working conditions, which is why the secretariat developed the initiative described here.

This one year EU funded project has the main objective to strengthen solidarity between teacher unions in Europe in support of maintaining and promoting healthy and safe working conditions, in particular as regards the prevention of psychosocial hazards and reconciliation of work and family life in times of rising pressure due to the economic crisis. The aim is to increase the well-being and safety of teachers and other education employees as prerequisites for quality education. Above all, the project seeks to identify whether the crisis and the changes implied by it on education staff's working conditions, have an impact on the health and safety of education personnel and to develop a set of concrete and practical recommendations for teacher unions in Europe and the affiliated teachers and education employees, on how to promote healthy and safe working conditions in times of crisis.

The main activities carried out in this project are:

1. Online Survey
2. Teacher union interviews
3. Two Regional Peer Learning Activities for representatives from teacher unions
4. Closing Conference to discuss practical recommendations on how to promote healthy and safe working conditions in times of rising work pressure due to the economic crisis.

3. Project Overview

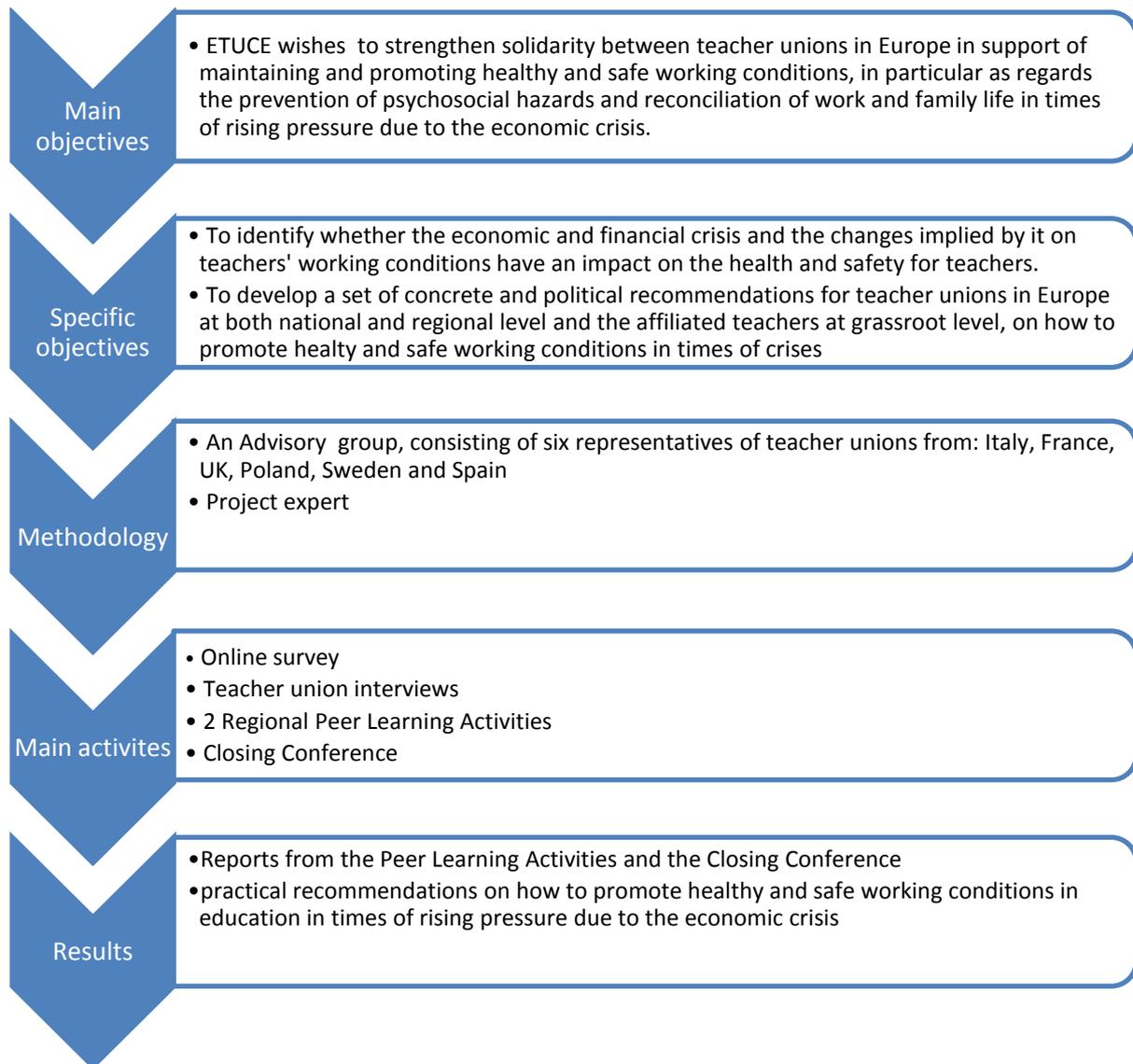


fig. 1 Project Overview

4. Advisory Group

The project is led by an advisory group consisting of representatives from six teacher unions from six different countries (Rossella Benedetti, UIL Scuola – Italy, H el ene H emet, UNSA – France, Darren Northcott, NASUWT – UK, Monika Konczyk, Solidarnosc – Poland, Anders Eklund, L ararf orbundet – Sweden, Patricio Perez, FECCOO – Spain) providing a geographical spread of teacher unions across the EU. The advisory group meets with regular intervals to provide their knowledge and direct the implementation.



M. Konczyk



P. Perez



H. Hémet



A. Eklund



R. Benedetti



D. Northcott

5. Online Survey

To find out whether teachers' well-being is more or differently affected during the economic crisis, in particular in regards to the psychosocial impact of the crisis on teachers' health, and the reconciliation of work and family life in times of rising pressure, ETUCE launched an online survey. The ETUCE Secretariat invited all its member organisations to participate in the survey, stretching from 4 March to 30 April 2013. The survey was developed in close cooperation with the project expert Salvador Moncada from ISTAS, the Union Institute of Work, Environment and Health, Spain. The survey consisted of 31 multiple choice questions. ETUCE



S. Moncada selected ISTAS through a call for tender in December 2012. Together the online survey and teacher union interviews created the basis for practical recommendations that was developed at the two regional Peer Learning Activities in May and June 2013.

40 % of all ETUCE member organisations¹ replied to the online survey.

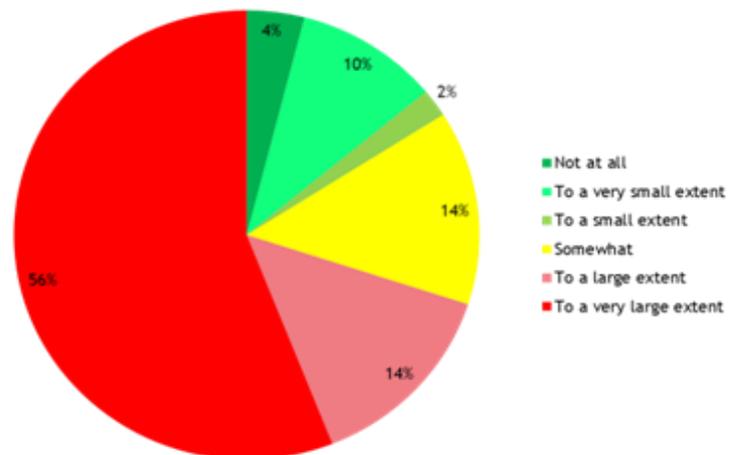


fig.2 Budget cuts in Education

As indicated in fig. 2 budget cuts in education are a common phenomenon in the respective countries according to the unions. 56 % of countries covered in this survey indicated that they have experienced budget cuts to a very large extent and 28 % have experienced budget cuts to a 'larger extent' or 'somewhat' leaving a clear picture showing that more than half of the responding unions have experienced budget cuts to some extent.

¹ Member organisations that answered the online survey: GOD-Lehrer; HESUEBH; SEB; DLF; EEP; FERC CGT; SNES/FSU; Sgen-CFDT; SNUipp; UNSA; OLME; FDSZ; KPSZT; SEHUN (PSZ); KI; ASTI; INTO; NKOS; VBE; SER; CGSP ENSEIGNEMENT; CSC-Enseignement; KSN; SKOIW; ZNP; FECCOO; FETE-UGT, STES-I; Fuurt; CISL SCUOLA; FLC; UIL Scuola; CGIL; OZPSAV, ESTUS; DAU-SEN; KTOEOS; KTOS; Lärarförbundet; MUT; UEN;NASUWT ; UTU-UK;NUT; SSTA; ATL; FENPROF; FNE; SINDEP; UCU; AOB; LIZDA; FLESTU

On the contrary, only 4 % of member organisations indicated, not to have had experienced any budget cuts in education².

6. Interviews

The interviews were led by the project expert Salvador Moncada from ISTAS, Spain.

The interviews conducted with 23 member organisations³ from 8 target countries⁴ showed special attention to the trade union strategies and actions of teacher trade unions in facing austerity measures, as well as the experiences that the teacher unions have had concerning their actions (Reflection in media/ Support in society, possible obstacles, counter-reactions etc.). The interviews showed that all the interviewees agreed that the budget cuts in education in the countries do affect both the working conditions of teaching and non-teaching staff, and the quality of the education that pupils and students receive.

6.1 Impact of union action

The interviews as well as the survey tell of an increase in mobilisations (demonstrations, strikes, media campaigns) which in some cases led to negotiation processes. The increase in mobilisation actions can be seen in fig. 3 that shows a high increase in areas such as lobbying (58%), media campaigns (56%) and demonstrations (60%).

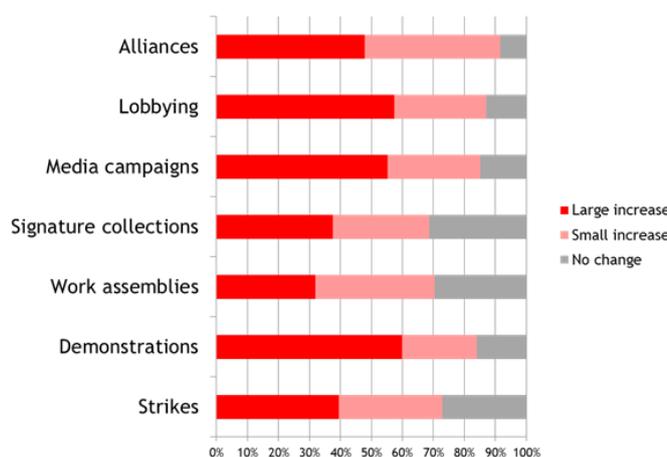


fig.3 Mobilisation actions

The interviews also indicated that trade union actions have not been able to reverse the budget cutbacks, but that union actions have achieved some limitations to measures like workforce reductions or increase of teaching hours. In fig. 4 it appears that direct layoffs in public education is not the most common method to undertake cost savings in times of austerity whereas 'Lack of replacement of retired workers' and 'Lowering capital of retired workers' is far more common.

All in all the interviewees agree that the challenge unions are facing nowadays, are the ultra-liberal policies and that it is extremely difficult to change these.

² A separate report will be made available at ETUCE's OSH site: www.edu-osh.eu to provide the detailed survey and interview results.

³ Organisations interviewed:

ATL; EIS; FLC-CGIL; FECCOO; FENPROF; FERC-CGT; FETE-UGT; FNE; KSN; Lärarförbundet; NASUWT; NSZZ Solidarność; NUT; OLME; SINDEP; SGEN-CFDT; SNES-FSU; SNUipp-FSU;; STEs-i; UCU; UIL-Scuola Solidarność; UNSA-Education

⁴ Target countries: Poland, Spain, UK, Sweden, Portugal, Italy, Greece and France.

6.2 Impact on media

Most trade unions see the action impact on the media as positive, especially the interviewed unions from Italy and UK where interviewed unions in the UK experience a fair treatment in media as well as a very positive support in major newspapers, TV-stations etc. of course with some exceptions. The interviewed unions in Italy also experience very positive media attention and here media actually participate in a social alliance against budget cuts in education. Unfortunately, this is

not the case with the interviewed unions in Poland where media has led massive campaigns against teachers by promoting an image of lazy and poorly qualified workers. Furthermore, the experience for the interviewed unions in Poland is that the media also stresses the negative consequences of protest actions organised by trade unions.

Lack of replacement of retired workers	31
Closure & merger of schools	30
Lowering capital expenditures (repairs...)	30
Not renewal of temporary Workers	30
Less support to deal with pupils' special needs	28
Increasing class size - pupils ratio	26
More working hours, working overtime	24
Firing workers, layoffs	22
Shortening professional training	20
Lack of replacement of sick workers	17
Lowering mentoring of new teachers	14
Fewer holidays	5

fig. 4 How budget cuts in public education

In both Spain and Portugal the unions interviewed tell of much coverage in the media but the image presented still depends on the political bias of media channels, which are government supporters.

In Greece the interviewed unions experience with the media is good on a local level but at national level media tend to be supporting government. The unions therefore face a challenge since the TV-network is government-run and seeks to generate a conflict between public and private sector workers.

All unions, even though they experience good relations with the national media face challenges in relation to their situation when dealing with local media. Teachers tend to be in a difficult position between the union action and the personal fear of job-insecurity as well as teachers' strong commitment to their students and their right to education.

6.3 Future perspectives

Unions from Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and UK predict worsening conditions for workers, whereas France and Sweden expect improvements with in a foreseeable future. It is expected that all the analysed countries will experience an escalation in mobilisations on education. In Spain, the government intends to adopt a new law (LOMCE) that favours privatisation of education and provide less equal opportunity. By reversing citizens' rights this proposal will act as a hard blow to the education sector, but at the same time lead to an increase in mobilisation and campaigns in the future.

All in all the interviewed unions underline the importance of mobilisation and deems it necessary.

7. Presentations



M. Nübling

ETUCE had invited two speakers to the first PLA. **Dr. Matthias Nübling** from FFAS: Freiburg Research Centre on occupational and Social Medicine spoke on “the impact of psychosocial hazards on education workers’ health: Does Europe need a different approach in the context of the crisis?”

Mr. Nübling, who had carried out the analysis of the ETUCE project

“European-wide Survey – Assessment, Comparison and Evaluation of the Impact of Psychosocial Hazards on Teachers at their Workplace in the EU” from 2011 concentrated on work-related stress and teachers’ work situation compared to other professions. He pointed out that in some European member states teachers

have a high job-security and that

teachers in those respective countries do not feel that their jobs are in danger compared to other occupation (fig. 5).

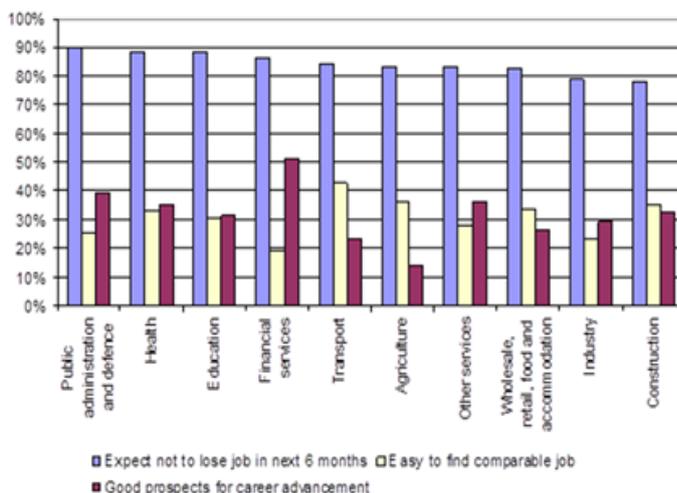


fig. 5 Job insecurity (5th EWCS)

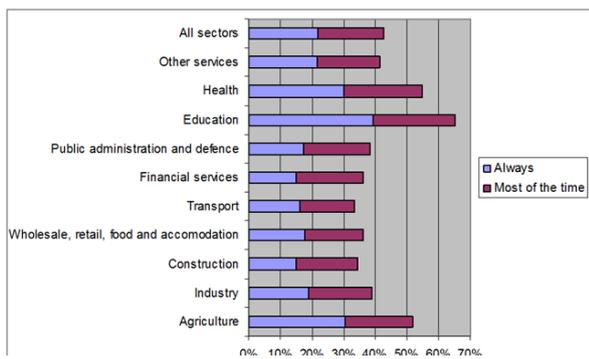


fig. 6 Emotional involvement (5th EWCS)

Mr. Nübling pointed out that, in general European teachers have a relative high influence as well as a high degree of freedom on their work. European teachers do not shift work too often and they feel a relative high job-satisfaction.

On the other hand European teachers experience a high work pace, substantial emotional demands (fig. 6) and work-life balance is not always uncomplicated to achieve. At the same time emotions should be kept in the background.

When discussing the challenges for the European teachers, Mr. Nübling underlined that, it is important to keep in mind that there are big differences between countries reflecting national conditions of teachers’ employment status.



D. Walters

The second speaker, **David Walters** from Cardiff University, Wales focused on the “Trade union impact on health, safety and well-being at work in the 21st century”.

He emphasized that worker representation has been a success for more than three decades. Hundreds of thousands of health and safety

representatives are active within the field and it is possible to track an increased demand for participative approaches at regulatory and workplace levels. There is also growth in worker activism and a clear politicisation of occupational health and safety (OSH). Walters highlighted that an improved OSH performance is notable in areas where trade union safety representatives are involved.

There are two kinds of evidence that tell of a positive association between the presence of trade union supported health and safety representatives and improved OSH outcomes. 1) Leading indicators and 2) Trailing indicators. Research points to positive results in both indicators.

Worker representation is more common in larger organisations and in the public sector; also it is more likely where management prioritises OSH, and the views of their workers. In workplaces with worker representation and high management commitment to OSH a formal management of health and safety is more likely. In such workplaces psychosocial risk management is more frequently seen. Workplaces focused on psychosocial risk management are often more effective.

This confirms that better management of both traditional and psychosocial health and safety risks and its effectiveness is more likely in workplaces in which workers’ representatives are supported by trades unions and have sufficient resources.

But many challenges remain, in particular as trade unions experience a decline in memberships and decreasing influence in the political sphere.

In conclusion, Mr Walters pointed out that trade unions supporting OSH representation succeed in preventing work-related harm and that there is no reason why this should not also be the case for predominant risks in education too. Mr. Walters highlighted that both the challenges of restructuring and shifts in power balance between capital and labour as well as growing individualisation of responsibility for health should be addressed.

8. Working Groups and Plenary Discussion



In two working groups, the participants had the opportunity to discuss the results of the survey, the interviews and exchange good practices on healthy and safe workplaces in crises. The overall focus was to develop concrete policy recommendations and to present the recommendations in the plenary discussion session. The results from the two

working groups (fig. 7) should not be understood as the finalised policy recommendations, but as 'working recommendations'. The debate was framed by the need of a clear definition of key terms and challenges. Clear definitions are of utmost importance to improve cooperation between unions in the national context but also across borders with unions from other countries. The discussion also touched upon the necessity, not only to create the frames for cooperation but also to remember to make use of the frames.

EU-level	National level	General level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for solidarity • Common vision • Definition of quality in education • Awareness campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact new stakeholders • Media campaigns – also on survey results • Social Dialog – Collective agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of internal work • Translation of EU-documents • Training of union representations • Dissemination of survey results

fig. 7 Collection of topics for policy recommendations

9. Summing up

The First Regional Peer Learning Activity of the ETUCE Project "Teacher trade unions in solidarity for healthy and safe workplaces in the economic crisis" successfully provided the opportunity for the union representatives to go over the results from the online survey as well as the teacher union interviews and to discuss these in the context of two presentations made by Mr. Nübling from FFAS and Mr. Walters from Cardiff University. The representatives formulated a first draft of the policy recommendations on promoting healthy and safe working conditions, in particular as regards the prevention of psychosocial hazards and reconciliation of work and family life in times of rising pressure due to the economic crisis. The policy recommendations are to be discussed at the Closing Conference in Madrid on 10 October 2013.





10. Abbreviations

ETUCE – European Trade Union Committee for Education

EU – European Union

FECCOO – Federación Enseñanza CCOO

FFAS - Freiburg Research Centre on Occupational and Social Medicine

ISTAS - Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Ambiente y Salud (Union Institute of Work, Environment and Health)

LOMCE – Spanish education law

NASUWT - National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

OSH – Occupational Safety and Health

PLA – Peer Learning Activity

UIL-Scuola - Unione Italiana del Lavoro Scuola

UK – United Kingdom

UNSA - Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes

For a comprehensive list of ETUCE member organisations, please follow the link:
http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_MO.html







**European Trade Union Committee for Education
Comité syndical européen de l'éducation**

Bd du Roi Albert II, 5 – 9th Floor
B-1210 Bruxelles, Belgique

T + 32 2 224 06 91/2
F + 32 2 224 06 94

secretariat@csee-etuice.org
www.csee-etuice.org