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European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

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Vice-Presidents

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Walter DRESSCHER
Paula ENGWALL
Andreas KELLER
Galina MERKULOVA
Branimir STRUKELJ



5, Bd du Roi Albert II, 9th
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 91/92
Fax +32 2 224 06 94
secretariat@csee-etuice.org
<http://www.csee-etuice.org>

European Director

Martin RØMER

Treasurer

Mike JENNINGS

2015 ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality

Recommendations on

Social Dialogue and Equal opportunities

Adopted by the ETUCE Committee on 18 - 19 March 2015

1. Women's Working Conditions in the Teaching Profession

The Standing Committee recognises that the data on women in the teaching profession collected and published by the Ministries and Research Institutes, shows that women progress slower in their career than men mainly due to the fact that women continue to carry the burden of reconciling work and family life. In many countries parental leave and part-time working arrangements are difficult to organise and lead to a loss in salary and pensions as well as to the casualisation of part-time work. National and local authorities are often not doing enough to improve women's working conditions. Even in some countries with a functioning social dialogue system, investments are still insufficient to redress the situation.

Suggested Actions

Member organisations are encouraged to:

- establish training seminars at national level for all members in trade unions in order to raise their awareness on the challenges in the teaching profession, possibly initiated by a joint ETUCE/ETUI seminar;
- lobby for regulations to improve women's working conditions and teachers' status, in order to address in particular women in leadership positions;
- improve women's working conditions through an effective social dialogue at European and national level.

2. Gender and Status in the Teaching Profession

The Standing Committee notes that the teaching profession remains a female dominated profession, especially in primary and secondary education. Linked to the often negative image and lack of respect that society retains of teachers and other education staff, the attractiveness for young professionals to take up a career in teaching continues to be low. Moreover, the neoliberal tendencies of privatising and commercialising education further undermine academic freedom and are counterproductive for the promotion of equal opportunities in education and for those working in the profession.

Suggested Actions

Member organisations are encouraged to:

- use all communication channels to inform their affiliates and other relevant stakeholders in education about the consequences of neoliberal education

policies and their impact of increased inequality, segregation in the labour market and discrimination in society and to actively participate in the EI/ETUCE campaign on privatisation;

- act towards maintaining the issues related to gender equality and initial/continuous professional training on the social dialogue agenda with a view to continue raising awareness on the topic towards national, regional and local education authorities;
- further promote the career progress of women in the teaching profession by stimulating the continuous professional development focused on equal opportunity issues at national and regional level;
- develop a strategy on how to use media and communication channels to promote a positive image of the teaching profession at cross-sectoral level and in society in general based on respect for teachers and education staff with a view to attract young people, men and women to the profession.

3. Women & Decision-making in Teacher Unions

The Standing Committee for Equality notes that women are still underrepresented in European teacher unions' decision-making positions - especially at regional level fewer young union members and women are involved in trade union work. The Standing Committee identified several main challenges for women to reach decision-making positions linked to the image of trade union work, which do not encourage women to engage themselves in unions: the lack of confidence some young union members and women have to apply for decision-making positions and the union structure which often does not support young women in reconciling work and family life.

Suggested Actions

Member organisations are encouraged to:

- enhance their communication to avoid sexist and any other form of discriminatory or inappropriate language and trade union jargon as well as to improve their work with social media;
- support young women to build their self-confidence by introducing empowerment training, mentoring and networking programmes and use teacher training seminars to attract members, both women and men;
- change the organisational structure of trade unions and trade union work in order to improve work life balance and support women in decision-making positions;
- introduce job sharing possibilities in high-level positions and limit times in elected positions. A way forward could also be to introduce quotas in elected and non-elected boards and to establish more horizontal influence processes. With a view to promote the active participation of all union members, including in decision-making bodies, simplified and more transparent structures and procedures should be put in place. At conferences, European trade unions should introduce limited speaking times and balance male and female speakers.