

Euro-demonstration: 50.000 people demanded new directions for Europe



50.000 people from 21 European countries took to the streets of Brussels to participate in the large European trade union demonstration organised by ETUC on 4th April 2014 in Brussels. Trade unions from many different sectors and from all over Europe raised their voice against further austerity measures and for investment, quality jobs and equality.

ETUCE joined the rally with its own strong delegation including colleagues from the ETUCE and EI secretariats and several national member organisations. The group marched side by side holding up their key messages to protect and to promote public education in times of rigid budgetary austerity. More ETUCE member organisations came to Brussels following their national confederations to support the manifestation.

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The demonstration started outside the International Trade Union House, passed by the Schuman square in the area of the EU institutions and culminated close to the Parc du Cinquantenaire where several European trade union leaders addressed the demonstrating people. More information can be found on ETUCE's website at <http://www.etuc.org/news>. ETUC has also published a special edition of their newsletter on "A New Path For Europe" <http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=432f45140d9f6f58d0cb10aa1&id=a75277da86>.

Icelandic social partners in education end labour dispute with successful result

On 4 April 2014, a new agreement ended the recent conflict between the Icelandic ETUC/EI member organisation Kennarasamband Íslands (KI) and the Icelandic government. In the background of the dispute which lasted for

three weeks and culminated in several days of strike of the upper secondary teachers, there was the unions' demand for a salary increase. Additionally, KI required further financial increases for the adaption to new procedures in work evaluation and to facilitate necessary adjustments in connection with a new high school law which will enter into force in 2015.

Last week, the increasing pressure exerted through demonstrations and walkout showed effects and brought the social partners back to the negotiating table. Now, the successfully concluded agreement covers the demands which were made. However, the additional financial means for the new procedures in higher education will depend on the outcome of a vote in early 2015. If KI's members will then refuse parts of the agreement connected to the new procedures, the current agreement will expire with immediate effect.

According to the new agreement teachers' work evaluation will include more areas such as the number and the workload of students and pupils, their background and combination in a group, teaching and learning methods, preparation and teaching hours, paper work, setting of assignments, examination, marking, feedback, competence level, and possibly more aspects.

The agreement is supplemented by statements of the Minister of Education and Culture and the Minister of Finance and Economy reaffirming their commitment. KI is satisfied with this result which also coincided with the end of KI's congress.

The European Commission declares that public consultation on is not a referendum



On 27 March 2014, the European Commission finally launched its public consultation on investment protection and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS). The deadline for submission will be three months following the date when the consultation is available in all official EU languages. The deadline will be indicated on the consultation webpage when available in all EU languages. The consultation is accompanied by a consultation notice, consultation document and privacy statement. ETUCE is welcoming the public consultation and will encourage all member organisations to contribute to the consultation. ETUCE will prepare a guideline for the public consultation in due time before the deadline.

The European Commission has declared that the public consultation is not a referendum on ISDS. Instead, the consultation is aimed at convincing critics that it is necessary to include ISDS in the TTIP by suggesting some modifications to the model. Subsequently, the European Commission announced on 1 April 2014 that it is planning to fund a new international transparency database for ISDS. The European Commission thereby made the case that such a database will increase transparency and accessibility to the public as part of the new UN transparency rules on ISDS.

Criticisms are not only coming from trade unions and civil society, but also from the member states. Both France and Germany have called for dropping the ISDS mechanism pointing out that there is no need for such a mechanism between the EU and US as national courts provide sufficient legal protection. ISDS provisions are controversial as they enable foreign investors to directly sue states before arbitration panels. As a result, 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. It will likely result in a policy chill because of the extraordinary cost of defending ISDS cases. 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.

The European Institute for Gender Equality meets Trade Union Representatives - Members of the ETUCE Equality Working Group share their experience with the institute



The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) invited trade union representatives for a cross-sectoral meeting on its premises in Vilnius on 25 March 2014. Among the ETUCE delegation were three members of the ETUCE Equality Working Group: Kounka Damianova, Chair of the Standing Committee for Equality, SEB, Bulgaria, Joan Donegan, IFUT, Ireland and Amaya Martínez de Viergol Lanzagorta, FECCOO, Spain.

The meeting provided both EIGE and the trade unions the opportunity to present their work on mainstreaming gender equality in employment and to exchange good practices with the aim to enhance the cooperation between EIGE and social partners in Europe. The event showcased to EIGE how much work trade unions are able to carry out on gender equality in particular as regards collective bargaining. Building on the challenges that European governments face in gender mainstreaming and the lack of implementation at national level, and the EIGE's [Gender Equality Index](#), the participants discussed different strategies and actions on tackling gender stereotypes, notably ETUCE's and its member organisations' work in in this field. The meeting also allowed the union representatives to exchange good practices in the area of women's entrepreneurship **and to debate on Women and the Economy**.

The success of this meeting has encouraged EIGE to envisage further meetings with the social partners and ETUC member organisations for 2014 and after, in connection with the priorities of each EU Presidency.

Further information on the institute is available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/about-eige>

New report underlines the fact that Europe is still suffering from the crisis



The Social Protection Committee released the 2013 annual report on the social situation in the European Union named "Social Europe – many ways, one objective" on 19 March 2014. The report stresses that the social situation in the European Union is not improving while in some countries the situation is even worsening. This clearly shows that the European Union is still not on the right path to a sustainable recovery and that its leaders have failed to

protect the European citizens from downturns in the living conditions in ways such as increased poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) adopted the conclusions at its meeting on 10 March 2014, stressing the fact that the key factor for achieving the Europe 2020 objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is working towards policy coherence between the economic and social objectives of the Union. This is something ETUCE welcomes, but has been calling for in a long time by supporting the ETUC campaign "A new path for Europe" and its plan for investment, sustainable growth and quality jobs.

The survey data (from 2012) indicate: that poverty has increased and that nearly 25% of the European population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion; that since 2010 there are 6,7 million more people who live in poverty or social exclusion (an increase in more than 1/3 of the European Member States); that income inequality is growing across and within Member States, particularly in the countries that witnessed the largest increases in unemployment. The data from the report are worrying, but it supports the message that ETUC and its members have been spreading on the need of more social investment for a more sustainable recovery from the crisis. ETUCE participated in the ETUC Euro-demonstration on 4 April 2014, where unions from all over Europe demanded a new and more social direction for Europe. The report highlights this, too, as an important step toward a more sustainable recovery for Europe.

The full version of the report can be found under the following link:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7695&type=2&furtherPubs=yes>

Social workers more likely to work while sick

Social workers are more likely to come to work while sick than the average worker in EU28, a recent Eurofound report shows. The report compares working conditions for social workers in kindergartens, schools, youth services, and social care with the EU28 as a whole.

The report presents a mixed picture for the small but steadily growing sector in the European Union. While the social work sector shows some gains in terms of preventing wage cuts during the crisis, a high level of skills and training of workers, and women in management positions, it underachieves in terms of offering less indefinite contracts, fewer full-time positions, and poor health of employees.

As 83% of workers in social work are women, the sector is clearly female-dominated. This is also reflected in leadership positions, as the sector has more female bosses than the EU 28 average. 74% of women and 51% of men report having a female boss, compared to 47% of women and only 12 % of men in EU 28.

The health of social workers has two strands: On the one hand, social workers tend to be less absent from work because of work accidents and report more often that they will be able to do the job at age 60. On the other hand, however, they report more often of poor health and that they work even when they are sick. If these insights are two sides of the same coin or entirely unrelated findings, the report leaves open.

With regard to employee representation at the workplace, the social sector follows the EU28 pattern according to which the probability to have worker representation increases with the number of employees. In comparison to EU28, however, the social sector presents a relatively high presence of worker representation also in the smallest workplaces with less than 10 employees (40%). This means that social workers in small workplaces are almost double as likely to have employee representation as the EU28 average.

The report gives an overview of working conditions, job quality, workers' health and job sustainability in the social work sector. The sector contains all social work activities, such as child day-care, social work in schools, child and youth services, care for the elderly and the disabled, and all other social work activities that do not involve accommodation. It is based mostly on the fifth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which gathers data on working conditions and the quality of work across 34 European countries.

The full report can be downloaded from the [Eurofound website](#).

