



# ETUCE Newsletter

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## European Ombudsman opens public consultation on TTIP transparency

The [public consultation on transparency of the TTIP negotiations](#) by the European Ombudsman runs until 31 October 2014. Submissions can be made in any of the 24 official EU languages and can be provided by email, letter or fax. The European Ombudsman will take into account the input received by the public consultation before presenting a set of further suggestions to the European Commission on how to proceed with the TTIP negotiations.



The public consultation revolves around three questions:

- Views on concrete measures the European Commission can take to make the TTIP negotiations more transparent
- Examples of best practices
- Explain how transparency affects the outcome of the negotiations

ETUCE welcomes the public consultation and encourages all member organisations to contribute to this consultation. ETUCE has continuously requested the European Commission to improve transparency in relation to the TTIP negotiations and to involve stakeholders in an active and meaningful way.

The European Ombudsman's public consultation follows the [inquiry of the European Ombudsman towards the European Commission concerning transparency and public participation in relation to the TTIP negotiations](#). Particularly, the European Ombudsman asks the Council and the Commission to publish the TTIP mandate as well as a number of practical measures to enable timely public access to TTIP documents, and to details of meetings with stakeholders.

The European Ombudsman explained: "The EU institutions have made a considerable effort to promote transparency and public participation concerning TTIP. I agree that not all negotiating documents can be published at this stage, there needs to be room to negotiate. However, concerns have been raised about key documents not being disclosed, about delays, and about the alleged granting of privileged access to TTIP documents to certain stakeholders. Given the significant public

interest and the potential impact of TTIP on the lives of citizens, I am urging the EU institutions to step up their proactive transparency policy."

### **Preparing for World Teacher's Day – EU leaders engage to enhance investments on education and carve-out education from TTIP at the ETUCE Unite for Quality Education culmination event**

On 22 September 2014, the EI initiative Unite for Quality Education Campaign reached its peak in the European Region. ETUCE affiliates, government and European Commission representatives, as well as various stakeholders in education took part in the ETUCE public hearing on the Future of Quality Education in Europe. The event was hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels to celebrate one year of campaign activities. "One thing is abundantly clear: You don't want to outsource quality. Education is a human right and a public good. It is the responsibility of governments to provide free quality public education for all" said EI President Susan Hopgood in her welcome speech to almost 100 participants. As the European region's culmination event of the EI initiative Unite for Quality Education, the message raised at the hearing was brought to the culmination event of the global campaign taking place in New York at the United Nation General Assembly on 26 September 2014.



ETUCE member organisations promoted and recalled to high level policy-makers the 10 ETUCE key messages on "What is needed to improve the Quality of Education in Europe?", adopted by the ETUCE Committee on 23-24 October 2013. Notable speakers included the Director General for Education and Culture from the European Commission, Xavier Prats Monné, who detailed the EC's vision about the future of Quality Education; Marcello Limina Chair of the Education Committee of the EU Council of Ministers, who explained the Italian Presidency's view for enhancing investments in education and welcomed further collaboration between ETUCE and the Education Committee of the EU Council; and Mirja Becker, First Secretary responsible for Trade issues at the German Permanent Representation to the EU, who strongly stated the German government's position on excluding education from TTIP. Eventually, Marco Düerkop, TTIP Services lead negotiator at the EC, took deeply into consideration the ETUCE comment on the risk that TTIP could restrict the space for governments' action on previously privatised education services.

Together with Members of the European Parliament from diverse political groups (EPP, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL) they engaged to find long-term solutions to enhance Quality of Education in Europe. They agreed that Quality Education is a vital prerequisite for a democratic Europe, and it is the sole way to enhance quality growth, to recover from the economic crisis, and to build a fair and equitable European society.

In the morning, at the final conference of the project 'Development of Teacher Union Expertise in Exiting the Crisis through Quality Education', the first screening of the ETUCE project film-documentary 'When Europe forgot its homework: Education in Crisis', gave participants the

opportunity to look in depth into the real impact that austerity measures and budget cuts in the education sector.

[Click here to read a summary of the ETUCE public hearing, watch the key interventions and see all the pictures of the event.](#)

### **Italian education workers unite in opposition to new government plan**

The 5 biggest Italian trade unions in education have joined forces to oppose a new plan set in motion by the Italian government. If carried out, the plan would extend the freeze of education workers' salaries, which have been frozen since 2009, until 2018 and alter the structure of salaries in 2019. The changed structure would remove all forms of salary increase connected to the length of service, and introduce a job-assessment system which does not rely on a clear assessment framework. Italian teachers are already among the lowest paid teachers in Europe, and without an increase of salaries, the real net income would decrease which would put teachers at risk of not being able to get by.

To counter this plan, the 5 biggest trade unions in education have come together and are asking all education staff to sign a national petition that opposes the government's new plan. On the day that the petition is handed over to the government, a joint rally with all public employees and civil servants is to be organised to call for a renewal of collective agreements.

ETUCE is deeply concerned about the Italian government's plans which are not in line with neither the EU2020 goals nor the Italian Presidency's priorities. ETUCE supports the Italian education staff in their struggle against worse working conditions and ultimately a decrease in the quality of education.

### **Maternity Leave Directive Back in European Parliament**

The EU maternity leave directive is back in the European Parliament. The newly-elected FEMM Committee in the European Parliament had a first discussion on amending the directive in their first meeting in September 2014.

Contrary to the European Commission's proposal to withdraw the proposed maternity leave directive earlier this year, the European Parliament has decided to take it up again in this legislature. Before the proposed withdrawal of the directive was discussed in Parliament in July, many MEPs, trade unions and the European Women's Lobby had demanded that the Commission and the Council of Ministers resume talks on the controversial directive.



The directive in question foresees to extend the minimum length of maternity leave from 14 to 20 weeks. At the moment, current legislation provides for a minimum of 14 continuous weeks' maternity leave in the European Economic Area, so the directive would make a positive difference to millions of women and their families. In addition, the directive seeks to strengthen the rights of pregnant workers concerning dismissal.

In the upcoming months, the European Parliament will now have to adopt a new position on the maternity leave directive which is more likely to find acceptance by the member states. While the directive passed Parliament in 2010 with a large majority of MEPs voting in favour, several member states blocked the directive in the Council of the European Union (Germany, UK, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden).

In the past, member states opposing the maternity leave directive were concerned about what they regard as the adoption of maximum - not minimum - EU standards, the lack of flexibility of the proposal to accommodate the various maternity leave systems that exist throughout the EU; as well as the financial consequences of providing a guarantee of 20 weeks on full pay.

The draft directive meets the standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which recommends 18 weeks of maternity leave with full payment and protection for women workers when returning from maternity leave.

ETUCE will closely follow the discussions in the European Parliament.

### **Eurydice launches new short overview on Annual Instruction Time**

This report shows the recommended annual instruction time in full-time compulsory education in public sector schools. The report covers 32 countries of the Eurydice network (reference year 2013-2014). National sheets are included. Diagrammes allow the reader to easily access data on instruction time in general education according to country and according to subject. The report also provides additional information on specificities within countries. Joint data collection was undertaken by the Eurydice network and the OECD. [Overview](#)

