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Report

ETUI-ETUCE Seminar:

Inclusive Vocational Education and Training during the crisis

08-10 March, 2012

Sesimbra, Portugal

EUROPEAN REGION-

ETUCE

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Ronnie Smith

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Odile Cordelier
Jörgen Lindholm

Monika Konczyk

Galina Merkoulouva

Ulrich Thöne

The seminar was organised with an excellent cooperation between ETUCE and ETUI. The aim of the seminar was to provide information to teachers' trade unions on how to maintain and improve quality in Vocational Education and Training (VET) when the economic and financial crisis contributes to increasing discrimination, social crisis. The 30 participants, VET teachers, trade unionists responsible for VET sector, international secretaries and presidents of trade unions, represented 13 EU and 6 non-EU countries.

Day 1

On behalf of the organizers Jean-Claude Le Douaron (Education Officer, ETUI) and Martin Romer (European director, ETUCE, EI European Region) welcomed the participants, addressing and celebrating the women participants on the International Women's Day.

Martin Romer underlined that countries are far from equality between women and men, the women are still in disadvantaged circumstances, and there is a need to show solidarity. The crisis also touched upon the women the most: they became more vulnerable. For both men and women, improvement of the VET sector is the most important to combat against young unemployment. There must be more measures to be taken by the teachers to combat against social and economic crisis.

On behalf of the Portuguese teacher trade unions Conceicao Nunes (SINDEP), Gabriel Jose Alfonso (FNE) and Anabela Sotaia (FENPROF) welcomed the participants highlighting the effect of the crisis on the education sector in Portugal.

The key speaker, Loukas Zahilas (CEDEFOP) gave a comprehensive overview about how the policies of **CEDEFOP** can contribute to fight against the crisis and about the role of the social partners in implementing the **EU quality assurance tools in VET**. He highlighted that teachers' trade unions have great role in modernising VET, for instance there is a tripartite representation in the governing board of CEDEFOP. The European tools (EQF, NQF, ECVET, Europass) and principles intend to bring together the systems, the labour market and the individuals together focusing on learning outcomes. All VET teachers and trainers should be involved to use these tools in order to improve the quality in VET.



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-etuce.org

<http://www.csee-etuce.org>

Next, Martin Romer gave a presentation about the recent **economic, financial, and social crisis**. He underlined that the EU governments do not have solidarity towards each other to save Europe and the Euro. The consequences of the crisis in education are cuts in perks and salary; increased workload; closure and merger of schools; reduction of the number of teachers and increasing the number of students per class; outsourcing; and privatisation. The ETUCE campaign framework goes beyond demonstrations and strike: it is based on raising awareness with the public. He highlighted that the social partners must be involved in creating effective educational initiatives, to tackle inequality, social tension, and xenophobia. Teachers can make a difference by discussing with the students on these issues.

Based on the two key speeches on quality and economic crisis in VET, the participants were invited to three working group sessions in the afternoon to answer a question: **What are trade union strategies to maintain quality in VET during the economic crisis at institutional, national, and European levels?** The working groups agreed in the following: at all levels, teachers' trade unions should fight via effective social dialogue for sustainable resources to raise the status of VET schools and teachers. Dissemination of the ETUCE and European Commission VET policy is essential at the national level. Teacher trade unions should continue to fight for higher salaries and they should implement the ETUCE policy via raising awareness and mass media campaign. Continuous up-skilling is crucial for the VET teachers in their crafts; participation in mobility programmes and good language teaching is imperative. Trade unions need guidance to implement the European tools to improve the curriculum and content in VET.

Day 2

The key speaker of the second day was Isabel Dias, who replaced Jorge Mesquita, Director of Training Centre Association and Professional Development (CEFOSAP), Portugal. **CEFOSAP is a trade union training centre**, which was set up by the general union of workers to provide trainings for the unemployed and the unskilled employees on ICT, technics, health and safety and administration. Their mission is lifelong vocational training. The centre had 80.000 trainees in 2011 and it contributed to better employment of the trade unionist.

Following, Agnes Roman (ETUCE) gave a summary on the draft **ETUCE VET policy paper** highlighting the main elements and recommendations of the paper, which will be adopted by the ETUCE conference in November 2012. The VET policy paper was a result of a 1-year active work of the ETUCE VET working group, wherein trade unions from 10 countries were represented. The presentation gave a ground for three working groups to discuss further on possible changes on the policy paper and on the first steps to be taken by teachers' trade unions to implement the policy paper.

The **working group on equality** discussed about the challenges in VET concerning inclusion of minorities, Roma, economically disadvantaged people. The group agreed that there should be a campaign to make VET an inherent part of the education. This is essential to change this sector to be more attractive for all and more inclusive. Gender equality is important in VET learning. Disadvantaged people need more counselling and guidance

concerning psychological and career development.

The **working group on social dialogue and funding** suggested that the first step to implement the policy paper is proper translation of it to all European languages. Trade unions will need more discussion within and among the trade unions to exchange experience. They will need to promote a round table with trade unions, employers and ministries to make short, medium and long term priorities, to collect good experience on good funding. Trade unions should request to be members of accreditation boards so that to monitor the funding, tuition fees, and quality in VET.

The **working group on recruitment and professional development of VET teachers** proposed that all teachers should get to know the policy paper via ETUCE leaflets. Furthermore, teachers' trade unions could initiate information campaigns at European, national and local levels also in connection with World Teachers' Day with a motto: "Europe needs VET teachers". The policy paper should be integrated in the own policy paper of the trade unions and it should be a living document. Trade unions outside the education sector should also be involved in the implementation of the ETUCE policy paper. Students, young and old, trainees, parents, employers all should be also engaged in implementing the policy paper.

Day 3

The third day was dedicated to presentations and discussions about **equality in VET**. Agnes Roman (ETUCE) screened a short **documentary movie** (Mundi Romani) of a Hungarian Roma journalist in order to get acquainted with the opinion of intellectual European Roma women about the Roma ethnicity and the possible solution to integrate the Roma through VET education. This was followed by a presentation about the **Council of Europe and European Union policy** on Roma integration highlighting the role of the teacher trade unions in implementing these policies. The role of ETUCE in Roma integration is significant via projects, statements, seminar discussions. There was a heated debate after the presentation on personal opinions of the participants about educating the Roma.

Next, three participants provided national examples about the role of the trade unions in fighting against inequality. Manola Rodriguez (FETE-UGT) explained that the second biggest European **Roma community is in Spain**. The country invests 36 million euros per year to the Roma; however, the state subsidies contributed to ghettoization of the Roma. 94% of the Roma children are enrolled in primary school but 80% of them drops out. Fewer Roma women access education than man, and generally the Roma has hardly have some presence in VET schooling. The problems can be identified such as: sufficient VET programmes are lacking; entry level of the VET programmes do not serve the Roma needs; and duration and starting time of the VET programmes are not appropriate for them. The strategy of the FETE-UGT is having responsibility to provide answers to social changes, which have greater impact in education. They are engaged in network development, in provision of intercultural education to teachers via their website and via training courses. They have been actively involved in programmes for Roma to promote equal access to job (ACCEDER Programme); to facilitate the transition between primary and compulsory

education (PROMOCIONA Programme) and to raise awareness among Roma children ("When I grow up I want to be" Programme campaign).

Adelina Daniai (ESTU) gave a presentation on **gender equality in VET in Moldova**. In Moldova, the women participation in VET schools is high: the female students represent 30% in vocational schools and 43% in vocational lyceums; 54% of the VET teachers is female. Due to high unemployment rate in the country and that yearly 8000 students remain unemployed after graduating from VET schools, the German dual VET system can hardly be implemented in Moldova. The trade union made a questionnaire between 32 regional trade union leaders and the 6 biggest universities in 2011 to measure the depth of inequality in education. The repliers said that attracting more man to the sector would be possible by raising the salary of the VET teachers, provision of subsidies and accommodation to teachers. The trade union had a campaign against closing a Roma village school.

The last presentation of the seminar was held by Tatiana Babrauskiene (FLESTU) on **inclusion of the disabled in the VET schools in Lithuania**. The disabled people can get pedagogical and psychological assistance only since 1998 in the country. In order to better integrate disabled people in the VET schools, teachers need to be prepared generally for teaching disabled students through special methods, didactics. Physically disabled students and teachers should have access to normal VET schools and schools must provide the best infrastructure to facilitate their attendance. Teachers' trade unions have a great role to achieve this via campaigns and social dialogue. Until the disability is visible, the problems can be faced with and solved. Last year, Lithuania participated in a project to improve the teachers training to prepare the teachers for inclusive teaching.

The seminar was closed by Martin Romer (ETUCE) underlining that focusing on equality is more important in the economic crisis when the crisis contributes to social inequality. Education and improving VET education by teachers' trade unions can make a change. Martin Romer expressed his gratitude to the members of the ETUCE VET working group in writing the VET policy paper. After the adoption of the policy paper by ETUCE conference in November 2012, there will be an opportunity to meet again in the framework of another VET seminar to brainstorm about the implementation of the policy paper at national levels.