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2013 ETUCE Standing Committee Equality Guidelines for Implementing 2011/12 Equality Recommendations

The 2013 meeting of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality puts forward the following guidelines for adoption by the ETUCE Committee. The guidelines are to assist ETUCE member organisations in the continued successful implementation of the 2011/12 Standing Committee for Equality Recommendations in the areas of: women teachers' economic empowerment, overcoming gender stereotypes in and through education, and the reconciliation of work and family life. The Standing Committee for Equality recognises that the three issues operate differently and have different dimensions and impact in the lives of women teachers who are often face discrimination on the basis of their race, disability, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, culture or class position.

Member organisations are encouraged to regularly communicate with the ETUCE Secretariat and to share their strategies and concrete action plans and activities that they have developed to implement the 2011/12 Standing Committee for Equality Recommendations.

These guidelines are intended for teachers and education staff in general.

1. Women Teachers' Economic Empowerment

The Standing Committee for Equality notes that the downgrading of the teaching profession in many countries has led to casualisation of the workforce, a phenomenon that affects mostly women; that in addition, widespread cuts to public service provisions have a dramatic impact on women teachers' daily life; and that the gender-bias within education systems sometimes push women to low paid and part-time jobs.

Suggested Actions

Member organisations are encouraged to:

- Use better communication strategies to change public opinion about the teaching profession
- Use all possible means to disseminate (to other unions) useful information and experiences that can lead to successful negotiating processes
- Work hard to maintain a coherent and respectful process of consultation with national governments, enable their capacity to influence policy development and to more easily negotiate working terms and conditions that do not increase the economic inequalities between male and female teachers

2. Reconciliation of work and family life

The Standing Committee for Equality notes that in many countries, women teachers increasingly have to engage in additional unpaid work because of caring responsibilities; that some employers are imposing part-time maternity leave, leaving women teachers with no free choice regarding maternity leave; and that many women teachers face high levels of stress, which affects both their work and home lives.

Suggested Actions

Member organisations are encouraged to:

- Work towards strengthening national social dialogue mechanisms and collective agreements to address work/life balance issues, and ensure these issues are high on the election agenda of the European Parliament
- Conduct survey research to gather more information about women teachers' professional and domestic workload to increase public awareness of the issue
- Review existing legislative protection of teachers' right to engage in part-time work and to return to full time work when circumstances dictate, without the threat of penalties

3. Overcoming gender stereotypes in and through education

Member organisations note that current power structures create inequalities between the genders and act as a barrier to girls' participation in education, and to women's participation in public life; that in addition, the stereotyping of male and female social roles entrenches the violence faced by women and girls, because it is based on rigid and confrontational models of masculinity; and that cultural practices sometimes linked to faith may perpetuate gender stereotypes, as do many textbooks and other teaching materials.

Suggested Actions

Member organisations are encouraged to:

- Lobby for initial teacher training and professional development programmes to include a focus on educating newly qualified teachers how to be stereotype-free in their own teaching practice, and how to recognise and avoid stereotyping and the sexualisation of women and girls within curricula and in teaching tools and materials
- Take the lead on researching men and women teachers' attitudes to female and male pupils and students in the classroom, and on developing new teaching methodologies and pedagogies that are free of stereotyping
- Use resources to train teacher unionists on how to negotiate and lobby on this type of equality issue at local, national and regional levels