

*The Future of the Teaching Profession*

# Background Document

## Workshop Equal Opportunities

25 November 2014, 16:30 – 18:00

*How and why do equal opportunities matter for the future of the teaching profession?*



## Introduction

Quality education for all as a human right and a public good remains at the top of the agenda for teacher unions to ensure a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future in Europe. This brings manifold challenges for teacher unions.

### Social Inequalities

With governments seeking to reduce debts, public expenditure has been cut in all areas, without giving much consideration to the objectives of most countries before the crisis, i.e. to ensure regional and social cohesion. Growing unemployment and social problems have led again to increased nationalism, social exclusion, gender stereotyping<sup>1</sup> and the stigmatisation of some groups<sup>2</sup>, such as the Roma. Poverty and exclusion rates have soared alarmingly and extended to a larger proportion of the middle class<sup>3</sup>. Government policies to boost employment rates have shown little effect and achievements in youth employment are overall disappointing. Cuts in education and social provisions are not alleviating this long-term trend and the problem of the increased proportion of low paid and working poor gives rise to more vulnerability for those in employment.

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<sup>1</sup> ETUCE Guidelines on Gender Stereotypes: <http://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/GuidelinesstereotypesgenderssegregationEN.pdf> and ETUCE Gender Action Plan: <http://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/actionplangenderequalityEN.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> EI Gender Equality Action Plan: [http://www.ei-ie.org/en/websections/content\\_detail/6896](http://www.ei-ie.org/en/websections/content_detail/6896).

<sup>3</sup> The European Social Model in times of economic crisis and austerity policies, ILO: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-brussels/documents/publication/wcms\\_236720.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-brussels/documents/publication/wcms_236720.pdf).



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PIAAC data shows that immigrants with a foreign-language background have significantly lower proficiency in literacy and numeracy than native-born adults. The problem is aggravated for foreign-language immigrants who come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. When low educational attainment is combined with poor proficiency in the language of the host country, integration into society becomes difficult<sup>4</sup>.

Latest research reports of recent mergers and school closures, reduction of budgets for educational infrastructure and for specific programmes of educational support, downward trends in funding and changes to national policies for the financial support of students are emerging<sup>5</sup>. This is happening despite the fact that the budget allocated to this support is a key element for ensuring high levels of participation in education, especially for disadvantaged groups of students<sup>6</sup>. With a view to providing a teacher union response to this issue, the 2014 ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality focused on skills and competences that education staff require for [mainstreaming diversity and tackling inequalities in education](#) and developed recommendations for education staff on this topic.

### Gender Equality in the Teaching Profession

One of the topics regarding equal opportunities, that ETUCE and its member organisation wish to give special attention to, is **gender equality** in the teaching profession. Women are underrepresented at all levels of management and decision-making in Europe. This can be observed within the private and the public sector, in politics, and also in internal trade union structures. The [ETUC 8 March Survey 2014](#) showed that women constitute almost half of the ETUC membership. Nevertheless, women are in the minority for all positions of power in internal trade union structures. Austerity has a major negative impact on gender equality in Europe. Cuts in the public sector affect women in particular as women constitute on average 69.2% of public sector workers in the EU<sup>7</sup>. The public sector – including education – seems to have lost its protective role for women as its lay-offs push women towards precarious employment with limited income security, work-life balance and maternity leave options and pension benefits. This also worsens the overall quality of women's working conditions.

In addition, the **gender pay gap between women and men** in Europe remains extremely wide, i.e., across the entire economy, women are still paid on average around 16% less than men per hour of work. Women tend to work more unpaid hours than men at home<sup>8</sup>. Among others, these findings indicate that women do not enjoy equal rights and chances, but that gender inequalities persist in Europe.

### Teacher Union Actions

Although women are the majority of members in teacher unions in most regions, they are underrepresented in union leadership. Education International acknowledges this fact in the 2011 [Resolution on Gender Equality](#) and the [EI Gender Equality Action Plan](#) which state that unions are responsible for ensuring the full participation of women in union structures at all levels.

At European level, ETUCE conducted several projects and developed various sets of recommendations to promote gender equality within teacher trade unions and in the teaching profession. An [Action Plan on gender equality within teacher union structures and in the teaching profession](#) was developed in 2009, a set of [guidelines on how teacher unions can contribute to mitigating and tackling gender stereotypes in education](#) and [gender segregation in the labour market](#)

<sup>4</sup> OECD, PIAAC, <http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/surveyofadultskills.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> *Funding of Education in Europe 2000-2012: The impact of the economic crisis* (2013): [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/147EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/147EN.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO: *Teaching and Learning : Achieving Education for All*, [http://unesco.nl/sites/default/files/dossier/gmr\\_2013-4.pdf?download=1](http://unesco.nl/sites/default/files/dossier/gmr_2013-4.pdf?download=1).

<sup>7</sup> European Women's Lobby 2012.

<sup>8</sup> OECD 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/>.

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in 2012 and [Practical Guidelines for Teacher Unions for the Further Implementation and Reinforcement of Teacher Union Actions on Gender Equality in Times of Austerity](#) in 2014.

The ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality, developed [recommendations in the areas of women teachers' economic empowerment, overcoming gender stereotypes in and through education, and the reconciliation of work and family life](#) in 2011-2012. In 2013, the recommendations were followed by [guidelines which recommend concrete actions to ETUCE member organisations](#).

In this workshop, participants have the opportunity to review the progress made in equal opportunities in the context of the ETUCE work programme 2013-2016 (*Kounka Damianova*) and learn about the latest recommendations of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality (*Jennifer Moses*). These reports provide the platform for the open discussion on: *How and why do equal opportunities matter for the future of the teaching profession?*

## Speakers



### **Kounka Damianova**

Chair of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality

Kounka, who is international Secretary of SEB (Syndicat des Enseignants Bulgares), has a longstanding experience of international trade unionism in general, and equality issues in particular. From 1995-1998 she was the Chair of the former Education International Women's Committee. She has been a member of the ETUCE Committee for 15 years, including a 4 year

mandate as ETUCE Vice-President. Kounka is currently the Chair of the ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality and the ETUCE representative in the cross-sectoral ETUC Women's Committee.

After first teaching French in a Francophone school for information and communication technologies, Kounka served the Bulgarian Education Ministry as an inspector for foreign language teaching and teaching materials for four years. She has also taught French literature at an Anglophone university for 15 years.

### **Jennifer Moses**

Member of the Equality Working Group

Jennifer Moses is currently National Official for the Equality and Training Team at NASUWT, the largest union representing teachers and head teachers throughout the UK. Jennifer has worked at NASUWT in the fields of equality and education policy development for the past 15 years and is head of the team that supports the Union's national trade union education and training programme and equalities policy. Jennifer also leads the Union's anti-bullying work at national and international levels. Jennifer supports the Union's international solidarity programme of work and regularly represents the NASUWT at international events on equality, social justice, human and trade union rights.

Previously Jennifer worked as an education policy officer for the Birmingham Local Authority within the UK, and is also a community activist campaigning for women's rights and race equality.

Jennifer has longstanding experience in the fields of education and equality policy, within both the trade union movement and local authorities and has a degree in public sector management.



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**ETUCE bodies dealing with equal opportunities**

The **ETUCE Standing Committee** for Equality is a consultative body to the ETUCE Committee. It aims at moving forward the priorities and recommendations on equal opportunities set out in the ETUCE Work Programme. It also formulates recommendations about priority themes and working methods. Each member organisation can nominate one representative to the ETUCE Committee, which meets once a year.

The ETUCE Standing Committee for Equality meeting is prepared by the **Equality Working Group**. The members of this advisory body are nominated by the ETUCE Bureau. The Working Group drafts the agenda and an activity programme on equality issues for each year.

Further constitutional groups working on equality issues in ETUCE are the Status of Women Committee and the **Regional Women's Caucus**. The **Status of Women Committee** is composed of the female members of the ETUCE Committee. It comes together twice a year to advise the ETUCE Committee on equality issues. The ETUCE Regional Women's Caucus comes together every four years to advise the ETUCE Conference on equality issues.

