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ETUCE
European Trade Union Committee for Education
EI European Region

Michael Ziegler
Kommunernes Landsforening- KL
2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark

Dear Mr Ziegler

Brussels 23 April 2013

Concerning the lock-out of the Danish Teachers

The European Trade Union Committee- the ETUCE has been following developments in the current conflict between KL and DLF with increasing concern.

Since the 1 of April KL has introduced a massive lock-out of teachers with the purpose to pressure the DLF to agree on terms and conditions for a new collective agreement without regulations on working time.

We have understood from statements made by you and the executive team of KL that the demand presented by KL should "normalise" the working time for teachers, however we would like to emphasise that you probably not will find anywhere in the world a working time agreement without regulations. Working time agreements in the public sector and in the area of teaching can be different from country to country, but they all represent a result of negotiations taking into account special circumstances in the sector. It should not be necessary to remind you that the work of the teaching profession is not comparable with a routine or automated work function in e.g. a chocolate factory. The work of the teachers is the one of a constant change and of highly complex nature. The expectations from students, parents and authorities for teachers to deliver a high quality teaching are very high and the respect for real negotiations on their working time should be just as high.

The demand presented by KL including a working time agreement without regulations is highly unusual seen in an international perspective. The decision to present a de facto ultimatum has been poisoning the negotiations from the very start. So has the apparent alliance with the Government stating that a new working time agreement should partly finance more lessons to the students and therefore perceived as a precondition for a new law on school education. Seen from a Social Dialogue view the situation with the ultimate demand from KL looks extremely rigid and completely out of line with the nature of negotiations which should be a matter of give and take, not only take! The art of compromising may take time and it may be difficult to reposition oneself digging out of the hole.

Never the less we urge you to quickly return to the negotiating table, establish a time-out and enter into real negotiations that can be concluded by both parties.

To continue the lock-out instead of reinstating the dialogue has no perspective. According to OECD the most successful education systems can be found where there are good relations between teacher's trade unions and the employers. The development of quality education systems has never been proved to work successfully in any country by force and a working time agreement without regulations is purely a KL- invention that is intimidating teachers and their organisation. The code to modernising relations is not force but cooperation.

The best result for all parties involved can only be reached at the negotiating table and a result usually doesn't satisfy the parties 100 per cent, but it is the only responsible and sustainable way of acting.

Kind regards,

Christine Blower
President

Martin Rømer
European Director

The ETUCE is the European Social Partner for teachers and represents 135 national teachers' trade unions in 45 countries all over Europe with 12.8 million individual members.