



Promoting Public Sector Education in an Age of Austerity

ETUCE Policy Paper on Work-Related Stress

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Psychosocial hazards, such as work-related stress, increasingly affect teachers' health and wellbeing. Growing workload, bad work organisation longer working hours, lack of control and autonomy at work, poor relationships with colleagues, a rising level of violence from pupils, parents and other third parties and the lack of job stability and security are the main reasons for a rise in stress-related illnesses.

At international, European and national level work-related stress has been recognised as a concern for both employers and workers. Teachers are among those most affected by work-related stress. Education faces the consequences of the economic crisis and at the same time has to put up with the lack of vision and courage of policymakers. Education as a core investment for the future of Europe therefore has to become a key part again of the solution to the economic crisis.

Schools as the workplace of teachers and educational institutions for young students should be safe, healthy and propitious places for teaching and learning. Stress can be harmful not only for the teaching staff, but can harm pupils and put at risk the quality and efficiency of the education provided.

Based on the European social partners' framework agreement on work-related stress¹, the European Framework Directive on Health and Safety² and related European³ and national legislation, the ETUCE emphasises the legal obligation for employers to take action on preventing and reducing work-related stress, and in particular on the necessary steps for a suitable risk assessment at the

¹ European Social Partners' Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress, ETUC-UNICE-CEEP/UEAPME, 2004, http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_Framework_agreement_on_work-related_stress_EN.pdf.

² Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, Official Journal L 183 , 29/06/1989 P. 0001 – 0008, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31989L0391:EN:HTML>.

³ Council Directive 93/104/EC of 23 November 1993 concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time, Official Journal L 307 , 13/12/1993 P. 0018 – 0024, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31993L0104:EN:HTML>;

Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, Official Journal L 299, 18/11/2003 P. 0009 – 0019, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32003L0088:EN:HTML>;

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament , the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the committee of the Regions, Improving quality and productivity at work: Community strategy 2007-2012 on health and safety at work , COM(2007) 62 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0062:FIN:en:PDF>.



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workplace. Employers should consult staff and/ or their representatives and involve them to participate in all questions relating to safety and health at work. Risk assessment that involves staff is the most appropriate process to identify the hazards at the workplace of all teaching staff. Consequently, appropriate joint actions of education employers and teaching staff and/or their representatives will succeed in preventing, reducing and eliminating stress amongst teachers.

Against the background of the results of its European-wide assessment and evaluation of the impact of psychosocial hazards on teachers at their workplace, the ETUCE and its member organisations will continue to support the implementation of the ETUCE Action Plan⁴ and the European Social Partners' Framework Agreement on work-related stress by promoting the exchange of good practices in the education sector and by disseminating these amongst the member organisations/affiliates.

To ensure a good working environment and well-being at school for teachers and pupils, the ETUCE and its member organisations seek to improve national policies and national legislations on occupational health and safety and particularly on stress at work. This includes informing and raising awareness about teachers' work-related stress risks, especially about the implications of the failure to act. It also involves reminding national governments, local authorities and other employers in education on their duties on the need for action to tackle stress at work.

Aiming at giving greater prominence to work-related stress in the European and national agendas, the ETUCE and its member organisations will continue to monitor and influence the outcome of the decision-making processes at European and national level, such as the European Commission's Strategy on Health and Safety at Work and related policies and legislative measures. This involves negotiating specific and joint guidelines with the employers in education at European and national level on the implementation of the European Social Partners' Framework Agreement and the prevention of work-related stress in education and to further promote work-related stress as a priority issue in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education.

Committing to implement this policy document in accordance with the procedures and practices in their countries, the ETUCE member organisations will give a progress report to the ETUCE Committee in 2013.

⁴ Updated ETUCE Action Plan on teachers' work-related stress, 2010,
http://teachersosh.homestead.com/Publications/Action_Plan_stress_2009_EN.pdf.