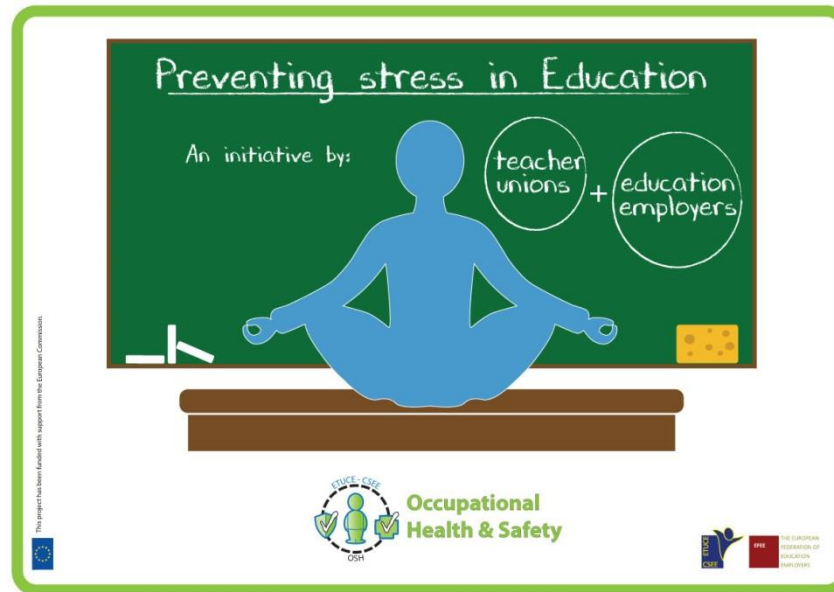# Social Partners Promoting Decent Workplaces in the Education Sector for a Healthier Working Life

CESI Symposium
Madrid
14 October 2016
Susan Flocken ETUCE Coordinator

Reflection

- How do you define "decent" ?

- What has to be essentially part of a decent workplace for you?

- The learning environment of students is the working environment of education staff.

Project Framework 2014 - 2016

- Joint Social Partner Project of:
  - ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education)
  - EFEE (European Federation for Education Employer's)
- Co-Funded by the European Commission
- The project is accompanied by:
  - Research team from FFAW (Freiburg research centre for occupational science) and ISTAS (*Union Institute of Work, Environment and Health*)
  - Film Team (Massink Media)

Project Background

- **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

- **EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work** 2014-2020

- **European Autonomous Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress 2004** signed by ETUC, CEEP & UNICE-UEAPME

- **Multi-Sectoral Guidelines on Third-Party Violence 2010** signed by ETUCE, EPSU, Uni-Europa, EFEE, HOSPEEM, EuroCommerce, COESS and CEMR

Previous ETUCE Projects/ Initiatives

Improving Expertise on Teacher's Work-Related Stress (2007)

- Survey
- **ETUCE Action Plan on Work-Related Stress**

Implementing the ETUCE Action Plan on Work-Related Stress (2009)

- Project Brochure and Conference Report

Assessment, Comparison and Evaluation of the Impact of Psychosocial Hazards on Teachers (2010 – 2011)

- Survey Report and Project Brochure
- **ETUCE Policy Paper on Work-Related Stress**

Memberships/ Other Initiatives

- **ENETOSH Network**
- **EU OSHA Campaign**

ENETOSH
European Network Education and Training
in Occupational Safety and Health

Healthy Workplaces
manage stress

Definition Psychosocial hazards

Psychosocial risks arise from **poor work design**, **organisation and management**, as well as a **poor social context of work**, and they may result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes such as **work-related stress, burnout or depression**. It is important not to confuse psychosocial risks such as excessive workload with conditions where, although stimulating and sometimes challenging, there is a supportive work environment in which school leaders, teachers and other education staff are well trained and motivated to perform to the best of their ability. **A good psychosocial environment enhances good performance and personal development, as well as school leaders', teachers' and other education staff's mental and physical well-being.**

School leaders, teachers and other education staff experience stress when the demands of their job are excessive and greater than their capacity to cope with them.

Definition Psychosocial hazards

For the organisation, the negative effects include **poor overall [work] performance, increased absenteeism** and **presenteeism** (school leaders, teachers and other education staff turning up for work when sick and unable to function effectively) and **increased accident and injury rates**. Absences tend to be longer than those arising from other causes and work-related stress may contribute to increased rates of early retirement. Estimates of the cost to workplaces and society are significant and run into billions of euros at national level.

Project Objectives

- Collect **evidence on occupational health and safety legislation, social partner agreements, measures, actions at school level**

- identify in case studies **practical and concrete ways to prevent and combat work-related stress** with a **focus on joint social partner initiatives**

- support **the inclusion of preventive measures against psychosocial hazards and work-related stress** in collective agreements

- **support teacher unions and employers' organisations** to become more pro-active in national social dialogue structures when dealing with and setting up health & safety strategies

- support the **debate on this topic in the European sectoral social dialogue committee in education**

Project Aim

- draft **concrete and joint practical guidelines** on how to promote joint social partner initiatives at national, regional, and local level to prevent and combat psychosocial hazards in education;

- prepare the **grounds for a joint declaration of ETUCE and EFEE** on the prevention of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress in the education sector

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Project Activities and Outcomes

Online Survey (April 2015)

Research Report

Four Case Studies (May to November 2015)

Romania, Finland, Belgium, Germany

Case Study Reports

Two Training Seminars (December 2015/ January 2016)

Madrid, London

Draft Social Partner Guidelines

Final Conference (June 2016)

Bucharest

Project Film

Final Research Report

Joint Social Partner Guidelines

Findings

- **Action fields most often used:** tackling violence, establishing health and safety institutions, improving leadership, opportunities for professional development, common educational visions at school
- **Most frequent actions in context of joint social partner initiatives:** same fields as above and improving work-life balance
- **Not most frequently mentioned actions, but considered successful**: data collection in surveys/risk assessment on work-related stress, reduction of job insecurity
- **Challenges and success factors:** sufficient financial and time resources clearly in first place;
a highly rated success factor: the cooperation between social partners

Case studies

Stress factors reflect countries' and/or schools' working conditions. Main fields: variety of demands, weak social support, high role conflicts, low role clarity, low degree of esteem of profession from society, high job insecurity

Many activities at different levels, some targeted at individual others at organisation of work and working environment, some job related, others work-place related:
- reorganisation of working-times and schedules
- relocation of tasks
- recreation of resources e.g. new rooms, space to relax
- recruitment of additional support personnel
- testing other forms of teaching (e.g. team-teaching)
- definition of common educational standards and rules of behaviour
- taking individual courses on time management
- activities to get along better and achieve more social support

Research conclusions

- **Many risk factors correspond to a loss of certitudes** that have defined teachers' role for many years (person of respect, sole responsible for quality of lessons, only responsible for teaching).

- **Adequate resources of control and social support are needed** to prevent stress and burnout symptoms. Many actions target on this, but relatively few are based on joint initiative.

- Teacher union and education employer **representatives often differ less in defining major challenges than in defining approaches to solving** them.

Research conclusions

- **Besides a lot of individual engagement, precise and truthful analysis of the general situation and single school is seen as important requirement for successful action**. Collection of data is seen as very successful prevention measure but also an infrequent one.

- It should be in the interest of all stakeholders to identify the challenges and which ones they want to address to invest target-oriented resources. **Systematic data collection could be starting point for cooperation between social partners and source for further joint initiatives (!)**

Joint Practical Guidelines extract

At European level it is important that the social partners in education

- **Raise awareness** amongst the social partners and education stakeholders at European and national level **that investing in the health and wellbeing of education staff has a direct return on quality in education and reduces the huge costs** otherwise caused through poor performance, absenteeism and long-term health impacts on staff;
- **Tackle the stigma of psychosocial hazards and work-related stress to inform those who remain sceptical** about the issue that these hazards are not a problem for individuals but are related to the working environment and the organisation of work;
- Recognise, **in the context of longer working lives, the need for a 'whole life approach',** e.g. in relation to tackling stress as how young teachers are supported can affect their later working life;
- Continue **advocating the implementation of the Strategic Framework for OSH at national level in the education sector and the uptake of these in the country specific recommendations**;

Joint Practical Guidelines extract

At national/regional level

- With a view to **increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession and to raising the status of education staff** (including school leaders and teachers), **establish clear guidelines on curriculum, teacher training and well-being** (including the prevention of psycho-social hazards) that are embedded in a comprehensive strategy for the recruitment and retention of education staff;

- Encourage and **promote regular risk assessments** as required by national law which address staff health and wellbeing at the workplace with a view to identifying the real needs of education staff, including the risks they face, and put in place appropriate measures that go beyond a paper strategy, e.g. involving staff in decisions about strategies to reduce work-related stress;

- **Make the case for labour inspections that include the prevention of psychosocial hazards and are carried out with the objective of supporting and encouraging education institutions** to put in place appropriate measures to tackle work-related stress and to create a decent work environment that prevents psychosocial hazards;
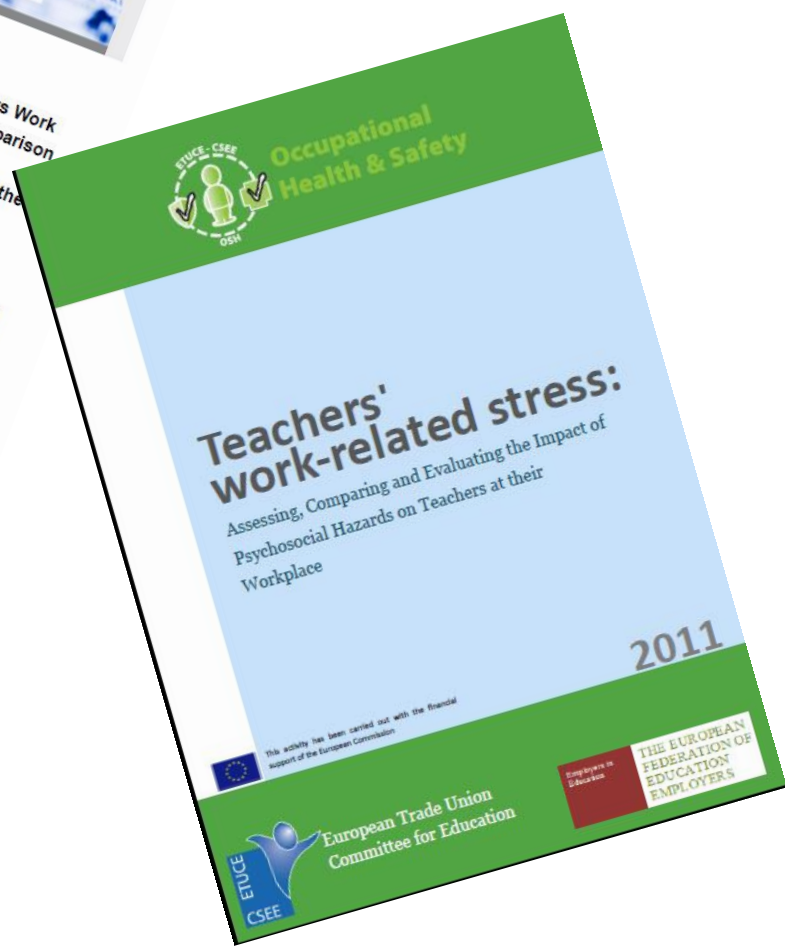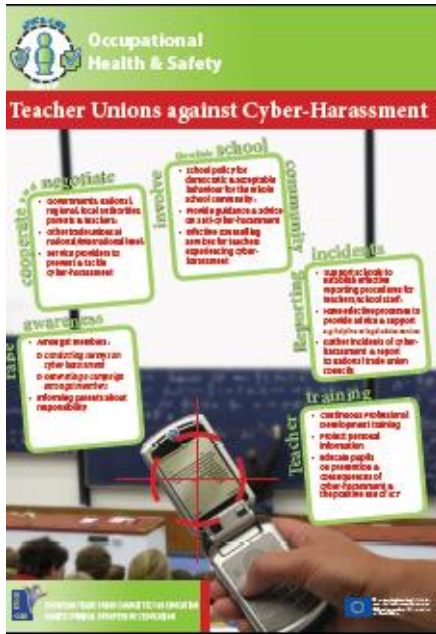
Joint Practical Guidelines extract

At local (education institution) level

- **Promote an open-minded and team spirit culture among colleagues** (e.g. through team teaching, cooperative learning and/or peer review) that allows signs of work-related stress and psychosocial hazards to be recognised and acknowledged at an early stage and seeks to positively respond to any concerns about well-being;
- **Allow for and make use of exchanges on staff health and well-being**, both **in a formal setting** (e.g. official health reporting procedures or a talk between school leader and staff) **and in an informal setting** (e.g. a chat among colleagues) with a view to promoting a positive culture of trust and fairness among and between staff and school leadership that allows for feedback and to trigger ownership of the prevention of psychosocial risks;
- Establish close cooperation with school trade union representatives/health and safety representatives and help them in undertaking their role by providing information and through consultation.

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Thank you for
your attention