

**Project outline: Supporting early career researchers in higher education in Europe –
and the role of employers and trade unions**

Budget: call for proposals DG EMPL Social Dialogue

Deadline: deadline project proposal 20 June 2013

Project partners:

- Leading applicant is: Universities and Colleges' Employers Association (UCEA) of the UK;
- Co-applicants are: European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) and European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE);
- Affiliated entities are: Swedish Agency for Government Employers, Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers, Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus.

Introduction

The Working Group Higher Education and Research (HE&R) of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education focused in 2012 on three areas: gender equality; the environment for early career researchers; and the mobility of academic staff within Europe. National social partners of both employers and trade unions had selected these subjects during previous working group sessions in 2011. In 2012, these members of the Working Group shared national, mainly institutional, examples of practice and policy on these topics.

On behalf of the members of the ESSDE WG 3 on Higher Education & Research, UCEA would therefore like to propose this research project to focus on how we as European Social Partners in education could better support early career researchers in Higher Education.

Objectives of the project

The aim of our project is to improve expertise in industrial relations in the higher education sector and to promote the exchange of information and experience among EFEE and ETUCE members.

More specifically, we would like:

- To reach a shared understanding, and possibly a ESSDE outcome, about the specific challenges facing early career researchers in Europe incorporating the perspectives and roles of trade unions and employers and the available options for responding to these challenges.
- To provide insight to the European Social Partners in Education on what we can do to improve social dialogue on industrial relations and employment relations issues pertaining to early career researchers.
- To explore where dialogue between national social partners improves support for early career researchers.
- To improve awareness of the existing work in the area of early career researchers (among others European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005), the HR Strategy on Researchers (2008) and the "HR Excellence in Research logo of the EC", The UNESCO Recommendation (1997), the

ETUCE report (2011)) their implementation and benefits in improving research quality through the provision of high quality support for early career researchers.

- To understand the trends in the career progression of female researchers, including areas of progress, and identify initiatives that have been successful in improving equality in career progression, particularly those initiatives that provide support to early career researchers.
- To produce a set of resources including case studies and practitioner-oriented research and policy guidance to complement the existing international work in this area.
- To facilitate peer learning between national social partners in the education sector, especially in the higher education sector; to exchange best practices and learning experiences.
- To contribute to the European social dialogue between employers' organisations and trade unions in the education sector, more specifically to continue the current work of the Working Group 3 on Higher Education & Research and to improve the coordination, functioning and effectiveness of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Education.

Methodology

The exercise will be led by the research team at UCEA in collaboration with EFEE members and ETUCE members. The EFEE secretariat will provide administrative support to the project. The project Steering Committee, consisting of both EFEE and ETUCE members will guide the project.

We propose the following project activities:

- Literature review
- Stakeholder interviews in six different EU countries
- Collection of case studies/ good practices
- Final conference to share project outcomes and findings and a possible ESSDE result

The research will look in-depth at six countries drawn from EFEE and ETUCE member countries with representation in the Higher Education and Research Working Group.

Overall design of the work program

The work program is divided into three phases:

- Preparatory first phase, which includes a review of the relevant literature and agreement and an initial setup meeting in London by the Project Steering Committee (where the Annual Work Programme and the division of tasks among EFEE and ETUCE is agreed);
- Second phase in which six stakeholder interview visits take place, a second Project Steering Committee is organised and Case Studies/ Best practices are collected;
- Third phase in which the final conference is held, a final research report is written and, if possible, a ESSDE outcome is developed.

Proposed Steering Committee:

UCEA: Helen Fairfoul, Chief Executive & Geoff White, Research Director & Laurence Hopkins, Lead Researcher

EFEE: Bianka Stege, General Secretary & Sarah Kik, Assistant General Secretary / Project Manager

Cyprus: Stelios Christophides, Senior Education Officer of the Ministry of Education and Culture

Finland: Nina Pärssinen, Executive Director of the Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers (AFIEE)

Sweden: Elisabet Sundén Ingeström, Senior Advisor Swedish Agency of Government Employers (Arbetsgivarverket)

ETUCE: Martin Romer, European Director & Alexandra Reudig, Policy Coordinator