



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

IS/AB

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Mr Yusuf TEKIN
Minister for National Education of the Republic of Türkiye (MEB)

[Letter sent by e-mail]

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Urgent concerns about the repression of gender equality in education and the escalating criminalisation of trade unionists

Dear Minister,

The Women's Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation expresses its deep concern over the increasing violations of democratic norms, trade union rights and gender equality within the education system in Turkey. Dedicated to advocating for women's rights, gender equality, workers' rights and trade union rights, we stand in solidarity with teachers and trade unionists who are facing repression and are subject to criminalisation.

We are deeply concerned to learn about the widespread intimidation, investigations, arrests and detentions of teachers and trade union representatives, including members of Eğitim-Sen. The recent investigation into Eğitim-Sen's executive board members for their legitimate trade union actions is a particularly troubling development and signals a wider effort to silence dissent and undermine the right to organize, infringing on ILO Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining, namely "Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise" (No. 87, ratified by Turkey on 12 July 1993) and "Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining" (No. 98, ratified by Turkey on 23 January 1952), respectively.

We are particularly alarmed by what appears to be a deliberate and systematic effort to dismantle gender equality initiatives in education, targeting teachers who promote principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. The cancellation of the 'Project for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Education' further illustrates the ongoing attempts to erase gender-related issues from educational curricula.

Education should be a tool for empowerment, not an instrument of repression. The criminalisation of those who advocate for gender equality reinforces systemic oppression and discrimination of women and LGBTQI people. The dramatic increase in femicides in Türkiye should be reason enough to promote gender equality in educational curricula rather than suppress it. The ETUC Women's Committee therefore [reiterates its call to re-accede to the Istanbul Convention and to fully implement the Convention.](#)



We therefore urge the Ministry of National Education to take immediate steps to:

1. Immediately cease the harassment and criminalisation of lecturers and teachers who educate students about gender equality. Guarantee a safe and equitable working environment for educators, free from discrimination and repression.
2. Fulfil Türkiye's obligations under international conventions regarding gender equality and education.
3. Revise the national education curriculum in consultation with social partners to incorporate a gender equality perspective. Introduce gender equality education at all levels of education, including universities.
4. Establish institutional gender equality mechanisms to eliminate systemic gender inequalities in education.
5. Provide training on gender equality and non-discrimination to all civil servants.
6. Reinstate and effectively implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention to combat violence against women and gender-based discrimination.

The ETUC Women's Committee stands in solidarity with our colleagues from KESK, Eğitim-Sen and their campaign "*Gender Equality Education is Vital*". Further, we fully support the concerns shared previously by our Member organisation European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) in this regard.

The struggle for gender equality in education is inseparable from the broader fight for democracy, workers' rights, and human rights. Trade unionism is not a crime!

We look forward to your response and hope to see concrete steps taken to address these critical issues.

In solidarity,

Isabelle Schömann
ETUC Deputy General Secretary

Gloria Mills
President of the ETUC Women's Committee