

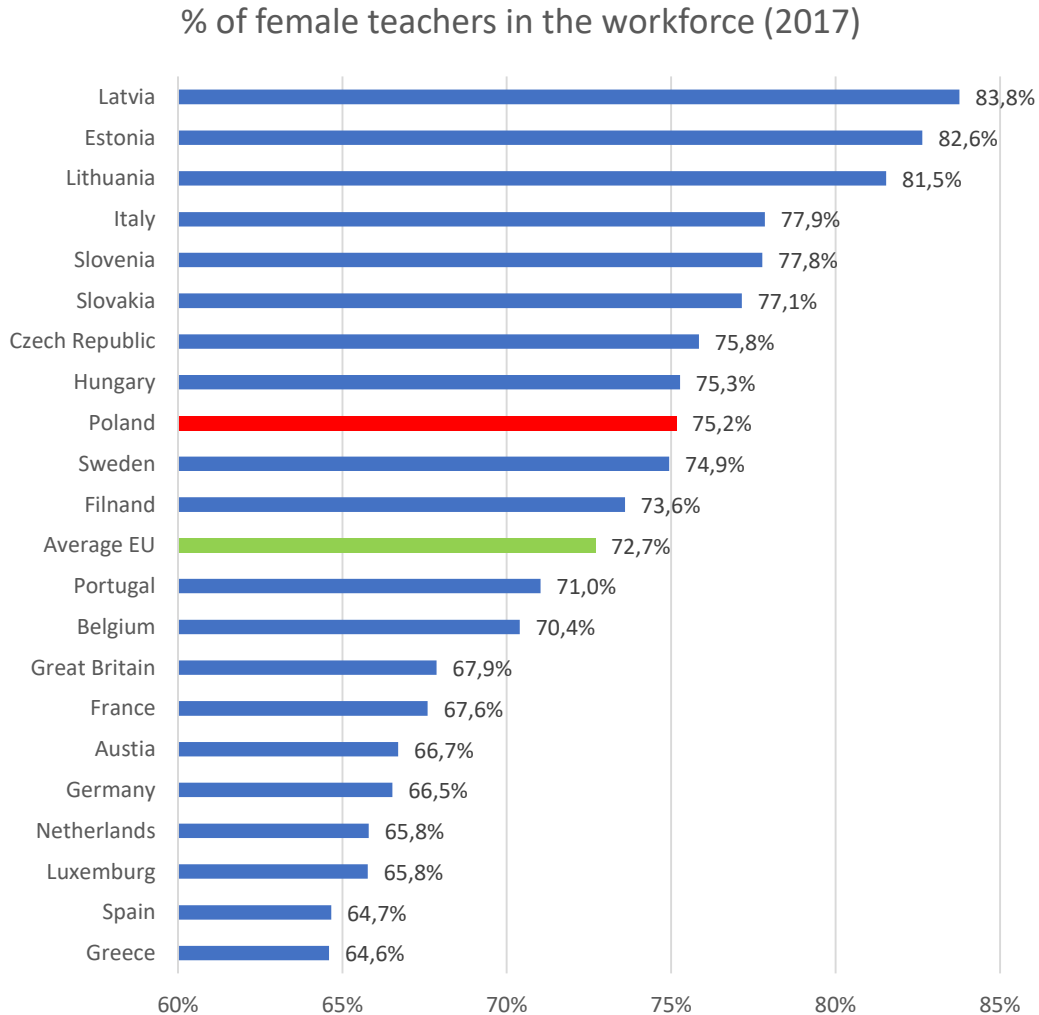
Teachers in their fight for a pay increase

dr Tomasz Gajderowicz

Agenda

- How employment in educational sector looks in Poland
- Trade unions of teachers
- **Teachers' strike 2019**
- Protests results
- Lesson learnt

The main characteristics of the sector



Source: OECD database

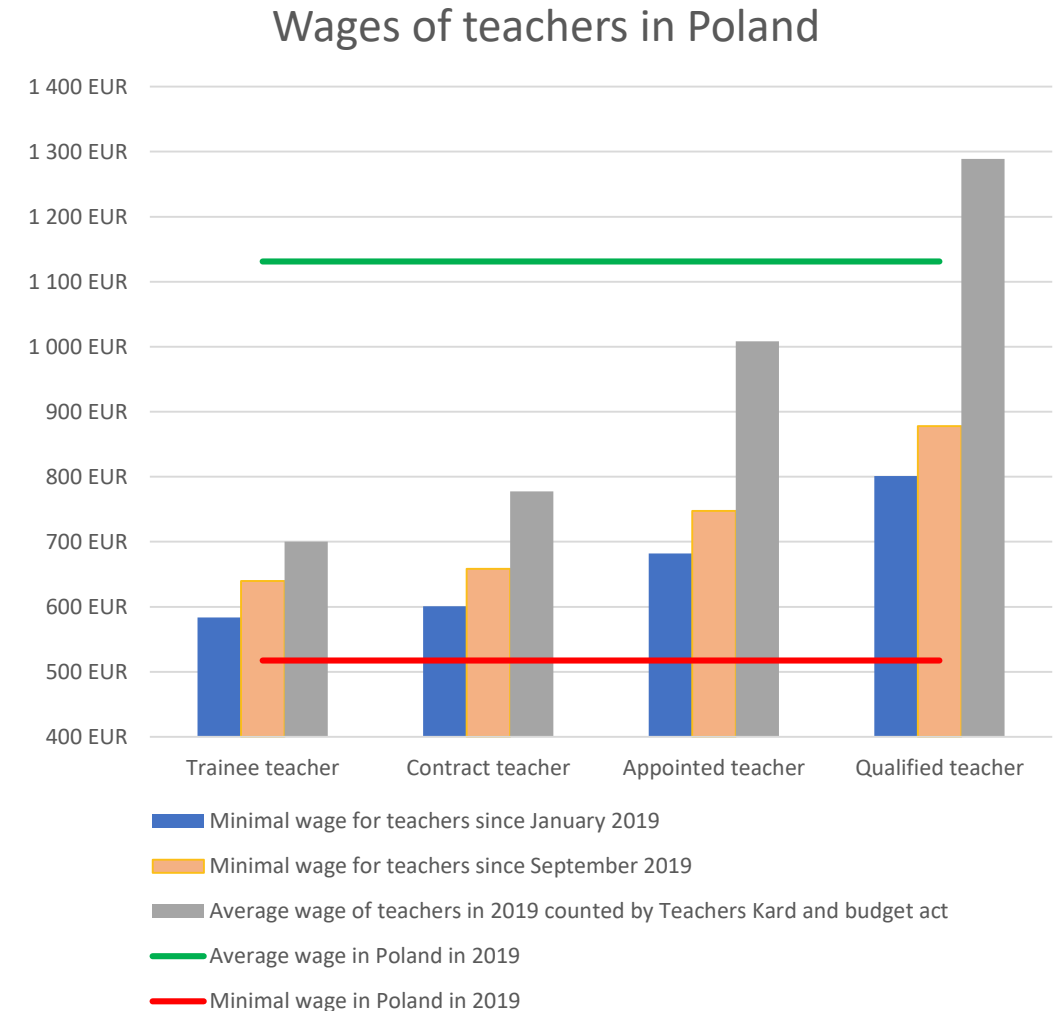
- 75,2% of women in teachers' labour force in Poland
- Men in education are on management positions
- Mostly public schools

There are four teacher's professional advancement levels

- Trainee teacher
- Contract teacher
- Appointed teacher
- Qualified teacher

Polish teachers earn significantly less than average earnings

The main characteristics of the sector

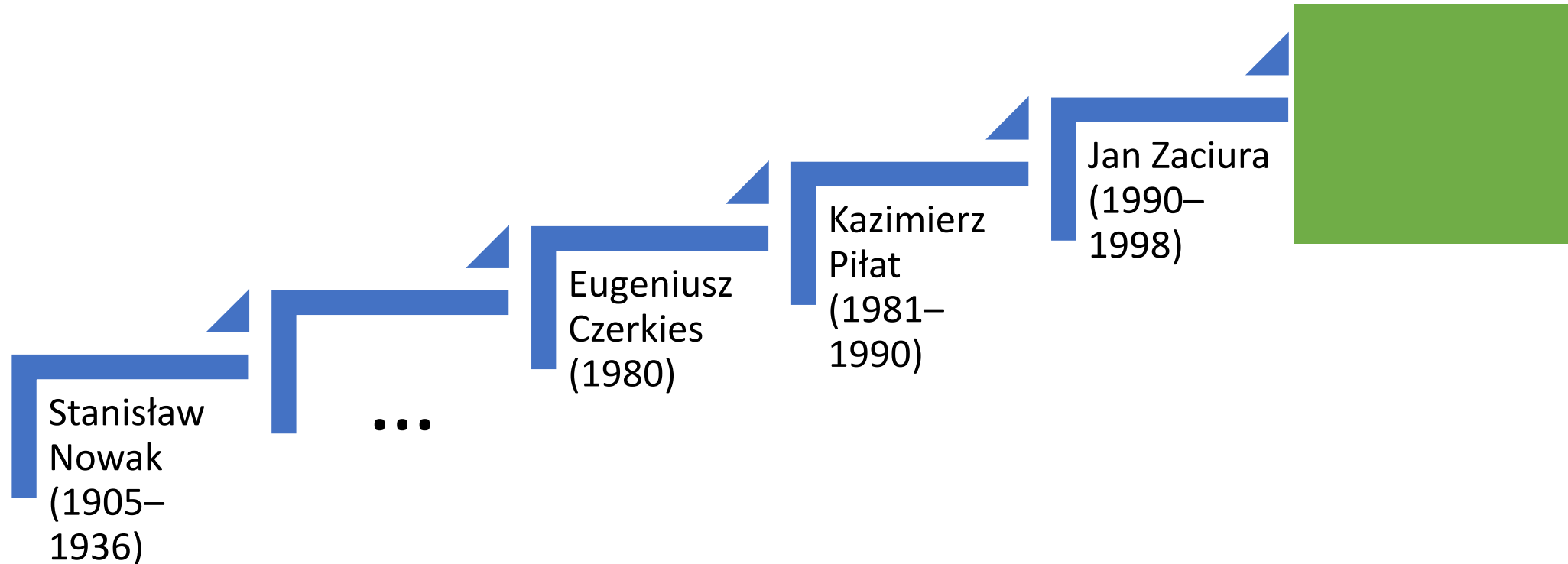


Teachers' trade unions in Poland

Polish Teachers' Union

ZNP – the biggest TU

The highest authority of the ZNP is the National Congress of Delegates, while the highest executive body is the Main Board headed by the president.



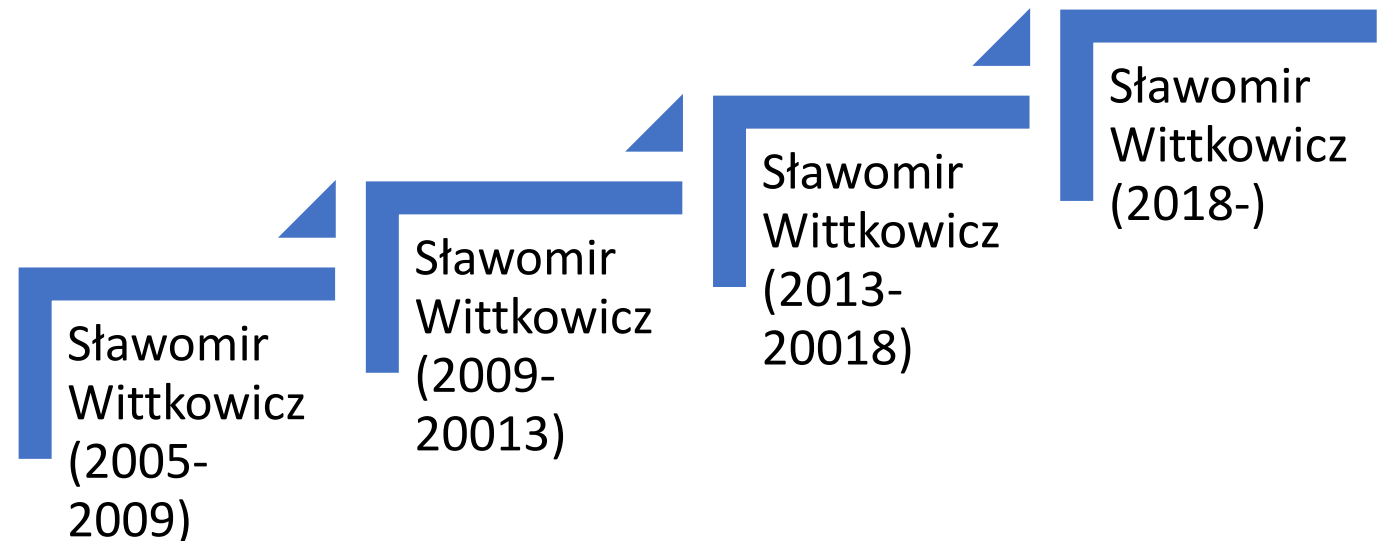
Polish Teachers' Union aims

- active participation in **shaping the democratic face of Polish education**
- striving for **universal access to education** and higher education in all stages of education
- striving to provide organizational and material conditions **for improving the qualifications** of employees of education
- **counteracting the unemployment among ZNP members**
- influencing the **shape of legal acts** regarding the legal status of employees of education

Free Trade Union „Solidarność-Oświata”

Structure:

- Part of NSZZ „Solidarność”
- Basic organizational unit of the association is the inter-company organization on the level of powiat



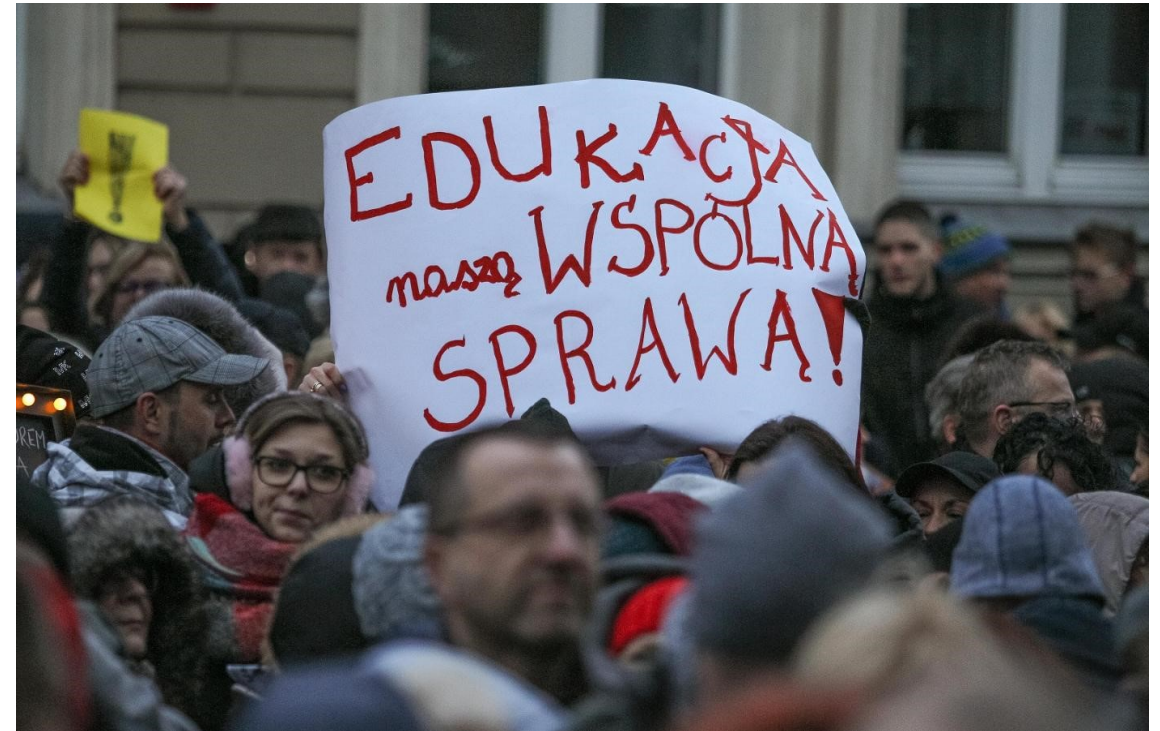
Free Trade Union „Solidarność-Oświata” aims

- securing **employee rights** in the field of professional work, remuneration, social and living conditions as well as health and safety at work,
- **counteracting the unemployment** and providing assistance to Union members who are unemployed
- taking action to **harmonize the interests of the employer with the interests of employees**, with particular regard to the principles of social dialogue,
- developing **democratic principles** and strengthening the principles of friendly solidarity in mutual relations and defending universal humanitarian values,
- cooperation with **non-governmental organizations** dealing with human rights defense and combating discrimination and mobbing.

Teachers' strike 2019

What led to the strike?

- Education system reform was implemented in Poland in 2017 in extreme hurry.
- **Failure of negotiations regarding the increase in remuneration**, after the mediation stage,
- Polish Teachers' Union **announced a referendum** among its members in educational institutions asking if they are in favour of starting a strike



Decision to strike and demands

Referendum:

- conducted in nearly 20 thousand schools, school complexes and kindergartens
- 15 549 schools (around 78 percent) voted in favor of joining the strike



What was the aim of protests:

- an increase of 1,000 PLN (around 225 EUR) for teaching staff
- greater expenditure on education from the budget
- change of teacher's work assessment
- change of promotion path
- resignation of Minister Anna Zalewska



Start of the strike

- The strike started on the 8th of April in 15,179 schools (**74.4% of all**) with Polish Teachers' Union as a leader of the strike.
- Exams in primary school and gimnazjum were in danger of not happening, but they were carried out in schools largely due to **the involvement of out-of-field workers**.
- **Most of parents and pupils were supportive of teachers,**
- **Massive anti-campaign was also rolled-out**

Matura exams?

- **Students did not have their grades**, they could not finish high school and do not now what with the exams, which are a passage to go to the University.
- Parents and pupils **became less and less supportive...**
- The government agreed and special law was introduced, that **other occupations can work as examiners**. So some of other occupations, some administration workers could work as examiners. So teachers were simply **rolled out from examinations**.



Outcomes

End of the strike

- The authorities of the **Polish Teachers' Union** decided that they would ***suspend*** a nationwide teacher strike from **27th of April**.
 - Was it a win or loss...?
- The strike ends with no agreements and Polish Teachers' Union claim that the **strike would start again in September**.

What striking gave teachers?

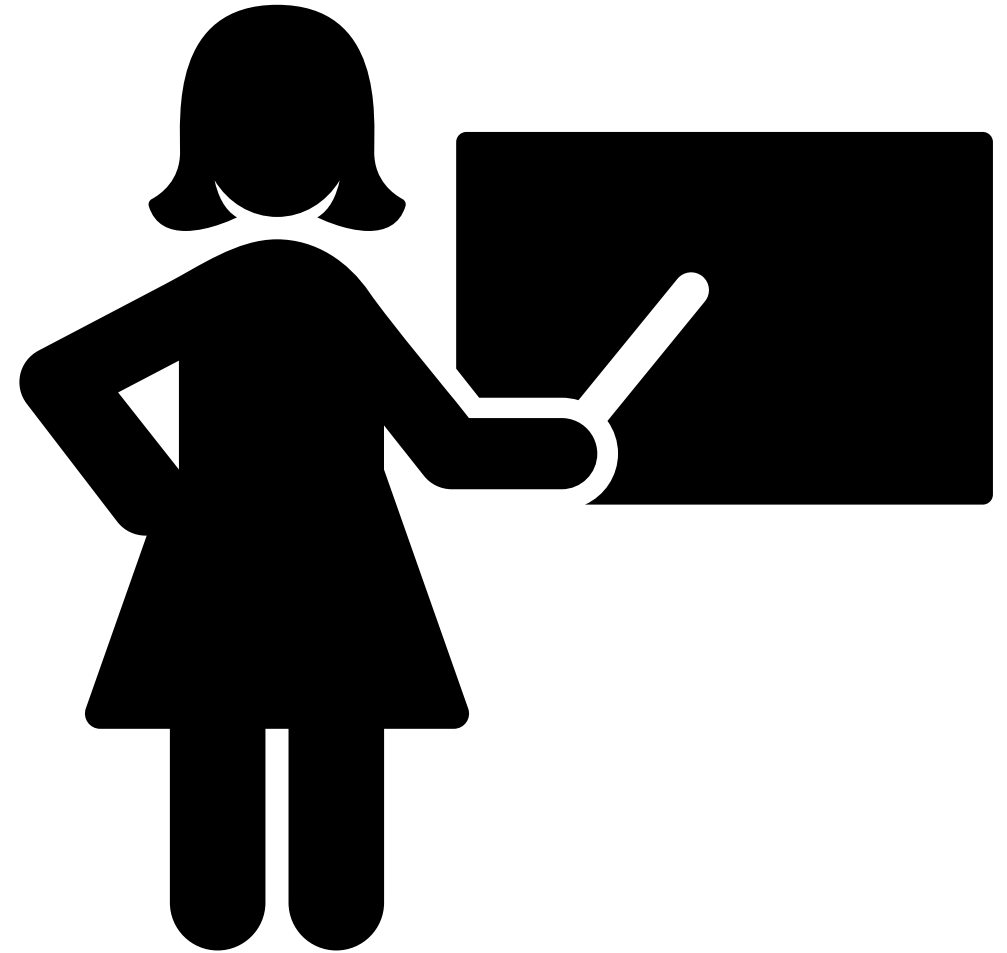
- The strike hit mostly women, as they are more than 70% of all teachers.
- After one month of strike, **teachers were not paid for that month, that they were striking**. So they ended up with no salary, lack of increasing of their earnings and feeling, that they failed.
- Due to negative campaign, parents were to believe that *„innocent children have suffered the most in the games between teachers and the government”*.



What striking gave teachers?

- **Strike destroyed teachers' job satisfaction and believe in their role in society.** They stopped engaging in what they usually did after hours and which nobody appreciated. They were **lacking motivation** and did nothing more than the minimum required.
- **That was the new form of strike.** Teachers would only work for 40 hours and perform the tasks described in the provisions of educational law.
- They **had not do what has become an unwritten norm**, e.g. providing care during school trips or green schools, during which the teacher is responsible for the student for 24 hours.

...but in reality...



What government did?



- Government gave some **minor increase in wages to teachers, but they gave much less money to the system to increase wages.**
- Schools are decentralised, so **transfers of money go through local government.**
- So general central government increased teachers' wages a bit, as they promised, but they did not allocate money to local governments to increase wages, which means, that **there were more than 60 (local) governments close to bankrupt.**



Lesson learnt

Weaknesses of the strike

- **After the crisis**, the economy has been developing fast and resulted in a **relative decrease in teachers wages** and consequently in their social status, which leads to dissatisfaction
- Teaching was seen as some kind of social mission but now, there is huge **polarization of society in Poland between right-wing and left-wing** and left-wing supported teachers during this strike and right-wing was against them
- Trade unions led from peaceful protests through a referendum and massive strike and a broad dissatisfaction.
- Massive strikes of teachers relied on the public support, which failed
- **Anti-campaign from the government**

- Strongly feminized education sector in terms of teachers
 - who was affected the most?
- Men mostly in management positions of the school system
- **Massive quitting from employment**
- **Stigmatisation** of teachers' profession
- **Demotivation** and lack of faith in any change
- **Local governments difficulties**

Thank you!