

# AGORA

TRADE UNION EDUCATION IN EUROPE



Quarterly Newsletter of the Education Institution of the European Trade Union Confederation

## Summer School launches preparations for ETUC Congress 2007

Following on from the success of last year, the ETUI-REHS Education Department organised another High Level Summer School in 2006, on behalf of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

It was held at Runö Folk Highschool in Åkersberga – a centre provided by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation LO-S, (Landsorganisationen i Sverige) and was attended by 50 General Secretaries and Deputy General Secretaries of ETUC-affiliated organisations coming from 21 different countries.

The aim of the Summer School was to examine in an informal setting a series of issues facing trade unions in Europe, and thereby to take the first steps in preparing for the ETUC Congress, to be held in Sevilla in May 2007.

The first session, chaired by Reiner Hoffmann (ETUC), examined *The future of the European Social Model in a global economy*, with presentations from Cándido Mendez (UGT, Spain), Wanja Lundby-Wedin (LO, Sweden), Lauri Ihalainen (SAK, Finland) and Harald Wiedenhofer (EFFAT, European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions). The discussions emphasised the need to develop a European trade union agenda as an alternative to the deregulation of workers' rights and in support of the European Social Model.

The second session, chaired by Maria Helena André (ETUC), examined *Europe – a space for workers' participation*, with presentations from Reinhard Reibsch (EMCEF, European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation), François Chérèque (CFDT, France), Patrick Itschert (ETUF-TCL, European Trade Union Federation – Textiles, Clothing and Leather) and Milan Štech (ČMKOS, Czech Republic). This session examined ways in which transnational instruments, for example, European Works Councils and European collective bargaining, could be strengthened and developed to defend workers' interests in a rapidly changing European labour market.

### Recruitment and organisation

The final session, chaired by the ETUC General Secretary John Monks, examined *Trade unions – 2007 and beyond*, with presentations from Claude Rollin (CSC, Belgium), Janusz Sniadek (Solidarność, Poland), Bernadette Ségol (Uni-Europa – the services union) and Raffaele Bonanni (CISL, Italy). Here, the emphasis was on the need to improve recruitment and organisation practices to reach out to vulnerable workers, particularly young people, immigrants, and those working on temporary contracts, so as to defend their interests whilst at the same time strengthening trade union organisations.

In his conclusions John Monks made an initial list of the priorities that the ETUC Congress will need to address, and announced a timetable for Congress preparations.

Trade union leaders at the Summer School



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# A plan of action for European road transport workers

*By Jean-Claude Le Douaron, Education Officer*

Trade unionists dealing with the road transport sector in nine European countries got together in Prague to agree on ways to cooperate on recruiting, organising and improving conditions for workers.

Among the participants, six came from new Member States: Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Béatrice Hertogs from the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) outlined trends and conditions in the road transport industry, including both freight and passengers. Analysing the labour force, Per-David Wennberg from the Swedish Transport Workers' Federation pointed out that the majority of employees are male, and tend to come from older age groups.



*Béatrice Hertogs: trends in freight and passenger transport*

On recruiting and organising, it proposed sharing information about cross-border routes and the main 'hubs', where lorries are loaded and unloaded, in order to identify the companies involved in international road transport. National organisations should make an inventory of their members' and representatives' language skills in preparation for joint action. The ETF should distribute data about European Works Councils in the sector, and affiliates should make a formal commitment to help each other's members when working away from home.

To improve drivers' working conditions, the seminar participants wanted national union organisations to press their governments to tighten controls on working time, and the improvement of rest facilities and technical standards to be raised in the context of the European Social Dialogue. Participants also drew attention to the problem of bogus self-employment, and the long-term need to establish common minimum standards in wages and working conditions.



*Per-David Wennberg: profiling the workforce*

## Position of strength

Roger Sealey from the UK Transport and General Workers' Union focused on the expanding logistics sector, which covers the whole chain of transport, processing and storage of goods. He pointed out that "transport workers now occupy a new strategic position in the global economy", and urged trade unions to use this strength to their advantage.

Seminar participants divided into working groups to thrash out the main priorities for cross-border trade union cooperation. They identified two main issues:

- Recruitment and organising: how can cross-border cooperation facilitate the recruitment of international drivers?
- Working conditions, especially poor rest facilities and long periods away from home, represent a serious health and safety risk

A draft action plan set down proposals for tackling the challenges trade unions face.



*Roger Sealey: highlighting the logistics sector*



# Building stronger Social Dialogue across Europe

By Valerica Dumitrescu, Education Officer

**H**ow to reinforce Social Dialogue in the new Member States was the title of a recent course run by the Education Department of the ETUI-REHS. It was held in partnership with NSZZ Solidarność in Gdańsk, Poland, in September, and brought together 19 participants from seven of the new EU Member States, including 11 women trade union officers.

The course focused on ETUC strategy and was geared to enabling trade unionists to play a more effective role in discussions on European Social Dialogue. The participants gained an understanding of how to implement existing European agreements and became more familiar with the development of National Action Plans on Social Dialogue.

## Initial discussion

From the first day on, the participants learned about the role of the ETUC and the ETUI-REHS in promoting European Social Dialogue, together with the European social partners' work programme and associated projects.

For two days there were discussions on the practical results of measures by the European social partners to implement the autonomous agreement on telework and the framework of action on gender.

The European social partners concluded the agreement on telework in July 2002, and the role of the national social partners is to implement the provisions of this agreement within their own countries. Participants recognised that the interests of teleworkers need to be protected through legislation. They should not be treated as a separate group, but should be organised in trade unions.

The main debates took place on the last day of the course, when the participants considered steps that could be taken to transpose into their national legislation the various tools for implementation of European Social Dialogue (agreements and the framework of action). These steps include:

- Building the capacity of the social partners at the national level and equipping them with the skills needed to implement the tools of Social Dialogue
- Reinforcing Social Dialogue at the sectoral level (the participants recognised that the sectoral Social Dialogue was weak in their countries and needed to be improved)
- Improving, at the national and organisational levels, access to information on Social Dialogue whilst improving internal communication with trade union members
- Listing the main priorities for trade union and employers' organisations with a view to facilitating negotiations
- Exchanging more information between the trade unions in the new Member States, sharing their respective experience and developing new cooperation

## Need for more training

Social Dialogue is one of the most important issues for European trade unions, and the course showed that there remains an urgent need for more training in this area. That is why the ETUI-REHS will hold a second course on this topic next year in Budapest.



# Education is key to strategic development

European trade union organisations are facing new challenges, as well as the old ones, and their officers and representatives need to have the skills to face them.

As can be seen from the accompanying article by Liz Smith, the newly appointed Director of *unionlearn*, the British TUC has responded by rationalising its learning services and by bringing them into one coherent framework, which has in turn highlighted the overall importance of education and training within trade unions and contributed to shoring up the financial support of the public authorities for this area of work. This has made it possible to stabilise the service and offer a variety of learning opportunities for British trade union officers and representatives.

At the European level, the merger of ETUCO with the other ETUC institutes has led to the signing of a four-year partnership agreement with the European Commission, which has also contributed to stabilising the education service provided by the newly established ETUI-REHS.

During this first year, the Education Department of the ETUI-REHS has continued to provide a broad European training programme for union officers and representatives, and more specifically European Works Councillors, drawn from 53 national confederations and 10 European Industry Federations. This service has also been extended to General Secretaries, as can be seen from page 1 of this edition of *Agora*.

It has also provided basic and ongoing European training for trainers from 36 ETUC-affiliated organisations, and has continued to offer information and advice on launching and running European education projects.

The aim in all this is to use education and training provision to support European trade union strategic development.

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*Agora* welcomes comments or contributions from readers. Please e-mail or send them to the address above. Contact us if you wish to receive more copies of the newsletter.



Liz Smith: trade unions are important players in the business of learning and skills

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber and British Labour government ministers took part in the launch of a groundbreaking new TUC initiative in 2006, entitled *unionlearn*.

The new organisation aims to provide a coherent framework for trade union education and learning as a whole. The majority of *unionlearn's* 140 staff are based in the regions, supporting unions in locating learning opportunities for their members and organising training and support programmes for representatives and professional officers.

## Building on a trade union tradition

Since 1997, unions have become important players in the business of learning and skills, revisiting their roots as the early pioneers of workers' education. Although the system is still very much dominated by employers' interests, unions have recently received unprecedented backing in offering learning opportunities to their members and representatives. For example:

- The Union Learning Fund (ULF), established in 1998, now puts over €21 million a year into union-led projects. In 2005, they helped over 105,000 union members to access learning. Education covered basic skills, information, communication and technology, vocational qualifications and continuing professional development. Projects have supported the training of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) and the establishment of union learning centres in colleges, workplaces and union offices. There are over 80 *unionlearn* centres with 'Learndirect' provision. *unionlearn* will run the ULF from April 2007.

# New TUC venture lays a firm foundation for trade union education in the UK

*By Liz Smith, Director of the UK Trades Union Congress (TUC) unionlearn*

- In 2002, ULRs gained statutory recognition. There are now over 14,000 of them, with the right to paid time off to train and to advise members on how to access courses.
- The TUC's expanding trade union education programme for union representatives and officers is embedded more firmly in the further education sector. This formula, agreed with the government's Learning and Skills Council in 2002, provides high-quality resources for unions.
- There are now union representatives on a wide range of public bodies dealing with learning and skills. *unionlearn* is working with unions, sector skills bodies and others to ensure that the union voice is strong and coherent, and that unions maximise vocational and other training opportunities.

## Demand at an all-time high

TUC Education has merged with TUC Learning Services into *unionlearn* at a time when participation in the programme for union representatives and professionals is at its highest since records began. Whilst *unionlearn* covers England, *unionlearn*/TUC Education will continue to cover the UK. It runs a fully accredited programme, offering training to more than one in five of the UK's 220,000 union workplace representatives each year. As many as 46,500 of them took part in the programmes in 2005 alone. The quality of courses is consistently high, as ten consecutive outstanding inspection reports demonstrate. *unionlearn*/TUC Education now works with 76 colleges of further education and with the Workers' Educational Association across the UK, and *unionlearn* will strengthen its links with such providers.

TUC education for union officers has also developed. During 2005, more than 350 officers attended training programmes, almost half of them women. Its core programme includes handling casework, communications and campaigning, pensions and UK unions, and the European Union.

*unionlearn*/TUC Education aims to offer all trade union representatives an opportunity for online learning. It has spent the last 18 months successfully piloting and developing a number of courses. With the establishment of *unionlearn*, TUC Education Online will deliver training to ULRs as well as project workers, through affiliated unions.

Transnational work is a high priority for TUC Education – particularly work with ETUI-REHS. *unionlearn*/TUC Education will continue to provide tutors for courses and projects, to participate actively in transnational projects, and to contribute to increasing European trade unions' capacity to respond to economic and industrial change.

The aim of *unionlearn* is to place learning and skills at the heart of trade unionism and put unions at the heart of the UK's skills strategy.

*unionlearn* is a new venture building on the strengths of tried and tested TUC programmes. It enjoys a high public profile and is set to be the widely recognised voice of both the trade union movement and the individual worker on learning and skills.



# European citizens and workers act together in the accession process

*By Georges Schnell, Education Officer*

**A**n ETUC project that got off the ground in Brussels in September is designed to create bridges between trade unionists in existing and incoming European Union Member States and their counterparts in candidate countries Turkey and Croatia.

The project, which is being carried out in partnership with the Turkish national confederations (TURK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, DISK) and a number of other affiliated organisations (CGT-P IN, GSEE, NSZZ Solidarność, KNSB and CNSLR Fratia), is aimed at involving citizens more closely in the construction of the EU and encouraging initiatives to promote active citizenship through developing discussion and consultation forums hosted by national trade union organisations.

The first objective is to build an active partnership between the participating organisations. Initially, the national confederations in Turkey will work on establishing a shared European trade union identity based on developing Social Dialogue. This will be reinforced at European level, through the affiliated organisations' dissemination of good practices and the sharing of a series of information and training tools that they develop.

The second aim is to produce a training trainers programme for the Turkish confederations that will include participants from Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia, on the theme of Social Dialogue and the European social model. The trainers involved in that work will be expected to develop a set of training materials (consisting of pedagogical methods, tools and documents) and information materials.



*Towards a shared trade union identity*

## Preparation stage

The first training workshop organised by the ETUC was held in Brussels in early September. A team of Euro-trainers coordinated by ETUI-REHS Education brought together various experts to prepare tools for use by the partners for the pilot activities they will be running in their national organisations.

A second workshop will be held in February 2007 and will focus on developing trade union activities geared towards civil society. It will also provide an opportunity to evaluate and validate the various information and training tools used by the project partners and their organisations. The products will be disseminated to the broader European trade union movement in the form of a guide on methodology.

This example of cooperation based on the priorities of the ETUC and projects run by affiliated organisations and ETUI-REHS departments can be seen as a forerunner of future collaboration between experts and trainers, which aims to develop and strengthen a European trade union culture amongst the ETUC's affiliates and to confirm its central position within European civil society.

## Take a study trip

ETUI-REHS has decided to discontinue its exchange programme, but assistance can be found elsewhere – at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, CEDEFOP.

The scheme encourages exchanges between people responsible for vocational training, which could be considered as training for union officers and representatives, at European level.

The intensive 3-5 day visits enable small groups of participants to exchange information and experience and set up practical cooperation. CEDEFOP offers a grant and covers programme overheads.

Potential applicants should contact the national liaison officer in their own country. For information:

<http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?cid=2&artid=129&scid=3&artlang=EN>

## EWCs database

*ETUI-REHS Research, 2006*

The recently updated European Works Councils database includes details of existing EWCs and the companies that still need to set them up. It lists company headquarters, numbers of employees per country, subsidiaries, and past mergers or takeovers. The user-friendly search function gives access, in English, to some 960 out of the total 1,155 registered EWC agreements. More than 200 agreements from the European social dialogue complete this comprehensive package, together with national legislation, data on the forthcoming revision of the EWC directive and European case law.

For more information and purchase details:

<http://www.ewcdb.org/> or

[http://www.etui-rehs.org/workers\\_participation/projects/european\\_works\\_councils\\_database](http://www.etui-rehs.org/workers_participation/projects/european_works_councils_database)

## Education Reflection Action – An IMF manual for union educators and activists

*International Metalworkers' Federation, 2004*

IMF educators produced this downloadable manual on trade union training and 'training trainers' activities. It aims to help trainers to reflect on what union education is for and their role as educators, to use active learning methods that encourage involvement and action, and to improve their education programmes by looking at best practice models from other unions. One activity focuses on the specific characteristics of adult learners that need to be borne in mind when running courses. The manual and tutors' notes are downloadable (in PDF version) from the IMF website:

Manual: [http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/educators\\_manual2004\\_english.pdf](http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/educators_manual2004_english.pdf)

Tutors' notes: [http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/educators\\_tutornotescolour.pdf](http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/educators_tutornotescolour.pdf)

For more information: [info@imfmetal.org](mailto:info@imfmetal.org)

## Challenging the IFIs

*ICFTU, 2006*

This guide highlights the opportunities for trade union intervention in important policy areas: poverty reduction strategy papers, World Bank country strategies, IMF country reports, and investment projects sponsored by the World Bank and its private sector arm the IFC.

With step-by-step instructions for preparing consultations with the IFIs (international financial institutions), the guide dispels the myth that challenging the World Bank and IMF is impossible, and prepares trade unions for the difficulties they will face. The IFC decision to include labour standards in their criteria for deciding on loans is a good example of what can be achieved. The guide can be downloaded directly from the website:

<http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/IFIEN.pdf> (English)

<http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/IFIFR.pdf> (French)

<http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/IFISP.pdf> (Spanish)

It is also available in booklet form, from the ICFTU:

[internetpo@icftu.org](mailto:internetpo@icftu.org)

## A Curriculum for Responsible European Management

*Eurocadres, 2006*

Responsible management is a vague concept since it is used to express different, often contradictory interests. Basically, however, responsible management should lead to a kind of trade-off between economic efficiency, social justice and environmental protection. This brochure contains case studies on three companies.

The first is a Belgian company that decided to carry out an audit, following repeated requests from the trade union, into the extent to which the company was complying with the SA8000 regulation in its foreign plants. The second is Groupe AgroAlimentaire, a French company that decided to adopt a social approach towards globalisation and profitability. And the third examines industrial relations at a German car manufacturer, STARCAR, including at international level. The brochure can be downloaded in three language versions from:

<http://www.eurocadres.org/content/download/2363/10598/file/Brochure%20Curriculum%20DE.pdf> (German)

<http://www.eurocadres.org/content/download/2366/10607/file/Brochure%20Curriculum%20EN.pdf> (English)

<http://www.eurocadres.org/content/download/2358/10579/file/Brochure%20Curriculum%20FR.pdf> (French)

## Votre fin de carrière/Uw Eindeloopbaan (bilingual brochure)

*ABVV-FGTB, 2006*

This brochure, which is part of a series explaining key aspects of current Belgian legislation of interest to workers and their unions, describes some of the main changes to pensions, pre-pensions, working time and redundancy provisions introduced by the Generations Pact of October 2005. The brochure can be downloaded, along with the others in this series, from the ABVV-FGTB website:

<http://www.fgtb.be/code/fr/fram015.htm> (French)

<http://www.fgtb.be/CODE/nl/fram015.htm> (Dutch)

PDF versions:

<http://www.fgtb.be/PDF/fr/documents/2006/Fin%20de%20carriere.pdf> (French)

<http://www.fgtb.be/PDF/nl/documents/2006/Eindeloopbaan.pdf> (Dutch)

For more information: [infos@fgtb.be](mailto:infos@fgtb.be)

## January 2007

### More and better jobs

AIMS	To equip train trade union officers from the national and regional level to implement the European Employment Strategy more effectively
PARTICIPANTS	National trade union officers responsible for integration and labour market issues
WORKING LANGUAGES	French, German, Polish, English (passive)
DATES	24 – 27 January 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.47.

### Training Eurotrainers level 2

AIMS	To prepare Eurotrainers for implementing a teaching strategy in line with their organisation's approaches and the policy of the ETUC, so that they can participate effectively in the trainers' network
PARTICIPANTS	Trade union trainers with experience in European-level training and who have successfully completed Training Eurotrainers level 1
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, French
DATES	24 – 28 January 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.32.

### Recruiting and organising in the CEECs

AIMS	To evaluate union recruitment and organising strategies and practices for union growth To analyse organisational change and steps towards overcoming resistance to organisational change
PARTICIPANTS	Trade union officers responsible for recruitment and organisation in the public sector
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian
DATES	26 – 28 January 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.29.

## February 2007

### Consolidating a European trade union network for health and safety

AIMS	To reinforce a European network of trade union experts by defining a trade union strategy on health and safety for the period 2007-2012
PARTICIPANTS	Trade union officers responsible for health and safety
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, Danish, Italian
DATES	2 – 5 February 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.43.

### Free movement of workers

AIMS	To examine ways in which European trade unions can achieve minimum standards at the European level whilst respecting working conditions in host countries and develop activities for joint action and mutual support
PARTICIPANTS	National trade union officers responsible for integration and labour market issues
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, Swedish, Spanish
DATES	7 – 10 February 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.12.

### Trainers' workshop – How to implement a training strategy on social protection in Europe

AIMS	To prepare education officers and trainers to implement a training strategy that will successfully meet their organisation's objectives and at the same time follow ETUC guidelines
PARTICIPANTS	Trade union officers, education officers and trainers
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, French
DATES	9 – 11 February 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.37.

### French for European trade unionists (intermediate)

AIMS	To enable trade union officers with at least a basic level of French to operate effectively for professional purposes in a French-speaking environment
PARTICIPANTS	Trade union officers or representatives with at least a basic knowledge of French
WORKING LANGUAGE	French
DATES	12 – 22 February 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.06.

### How to reinforce social dialogue in new Member States

AIMS	To enable European trade union officers to participate more effectively in European Social Dialogue discussions and to implement existing European agreements
PARTICIPANTS	National trade union officers responsible for relations with employers' organisations
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, Hungarian
DATES	21 – 24 February 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.10.

## March 2007

### English for European Works Councils (intermediate) II

AIMS	To enable European Works Council members with a basic or intermediate level of English to operate for professional purposes by improving their ability to communicate in an English-speaking environment
PARTICIPANTS	Members of European Works Councils and trade union officers dealing with EWCs with at least a basic knowledge of English
WORKING LANGUAGE	English
DATES	5 – 9 March 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.28.

### Workshop – Developing language training in European trade unions

AIMS	To consider the organisational and pedagogical challenges of language training for European trade unions
PARTICIPANTS	Language trainers and trade union trainers with experience of language training in a trade union context; trade union officers responsible for language training within their organisations
WORKING LANGUAGES	English, French
DATES	15 – 18 March 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.35.

### Information/consultation in multinational companies (3 days)

AIMS	To raise awareness of how to make better use of economic expertise in EWCs To give a positive dimension to company-level social dialogue by promoting initiatives such as the European joint declarations or European framework agreements
PARTICIPANTS	Coordinators from EMF-affiliated organisations who are responsible for European Works Councils
WORKING LANGUAGES	3
DATES	22 – 25 March 2007
COURSE REF. N°	652.26.