

AGORA

Newsletter of the ETUI-REHS Education Department



Going 'on the offensive' requires the appropriate knowledge and skills

By Jeff Bridgford

As John Monks, the ETUC General Secretary, explains later in AGORA, 'The ETUC and its affiliated organisations are 'on the offensive' to promote the interests of their members throughout Europe, and they need a constant supply of effective and competent trade union officers and representatives to do this on their behalf. It is the role of ETUI-REHS Education to provide them with the appropriate knowledge and skills and to contribute to the development of a European trade union identity.'

Over the last four years, ETUI-REHS Education has organised 170 multilingual courses and provided training for over 3,250 trade union officers and representatives from across Europe.

Reinforcing social dialogue; coordinating approaches to collective bargaining in Europe; delivering the Lisbon agenda on jobs; recruiting new members; promoting workers' rights in multinational companies: the range of courses offered gives a taste of the ways in which ETUI-REHS Education is rising to the challenge facing trade union officers and representatives as they operate on the national and European stage.

Significant innovations

One significant innovation was the introduction of a Top Level Summer School, organised in 2005 and 2006 by ETUI-REHS Education in close cooperation with the ETUC secretariat. It provided an informal opportunity for General Secretaries from ETUC affiliated organisations to consider a series of issues in the run up to the ETUC Congress.

Another significant development was the expansion of ETUI-REHS Education's provision of courses for members of European Works Councils.

ETUC Congress, Seville 2007



Trainers also need support

In order to improve the quality of its European programmes and to enable trainers to add a European dimension to national trade union education activities, ETUI-REHS Education has provided over 600 Eurotrainers with basic training and/or an opportunity to update and develop their skills within the context of workshops, networks or projects.

In terms of major European projects ETUI-REHS Education has coordinated:

- *Dialog On*, in collaboration with 14 ETUC-affiliated organisations, which aimed to enable European trade

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unions to create the conditions which support the process of adaptation to the new economy

- *TRACE* (Trade Unions Anticipating Change in Europe), in collaboration with 17 ETUC-affiliated organisations, which aimed to improve the ability of European trade unions to respond to situations of economic and industrial change
- *Transatlantic Labour Dialogue*, in collaboration with the American confederation AFL-CIO, which aimed to reinforce relations between workplace representatives working for the same multinational companies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Finally, the European Union Information Service of the ETUI-REHS has provided trade union officers and trainers with information on existing EU programmes and expertise in managing European projects.

With the European social model increasingly under attack, the relevance of equipping European trade union officers and representatives with the knowledge and skills to do their jobs has never been greater. The work goes on.

Working at the sectoral level

By Jean Claude le Douaron

Since the last ETUC Congress ETUI-REHS Education has worked closely with all the European Industry Federations to design and develop training which aims to prepare trade union officers and representatives for active participation in sectoral Social Dialogue. The emphasis has been on gaining a better understanding of trade union organisations and issues throughout Europe and on supporting the coordination of European trade union positions.

The training has covered a variety of different issues, as follows:

- strengthening Social Dialogue in the new EU Member States – an issue for all sectors
- coordinating elements of collective bargaining – a notable example would be the EMF Summer School
- anticipating and managing industrial change – an issue for all sectors faced with restructuring and involving representatives at European and national sectoral level
- freedom of movement of workers, notably in the construction and transport sectors.

A common objective for these training activities is to improve the knowledge and skills of trade union representatives so that they can cooperate beyond their national borders.

Developing European Works Councils

ETUI-REHS Education also aims to bring effective support to trade unions and their affiliates within European Works Councils or supervisory bodies within multinational companies. Representation within these bodies represents a new opportunity and a new challenge for trade union organisations. Thousands of representatives participate in more than 1,000 meetings per year in multinational companies. ETUI-REHS Education aims to enable them to participate fully in transnational information, consultation and participation procedures.

In this case ETUI-REHS Education has concentrated on:

- improving understanding of different workplace representation systems



- overcoming linguistic and cultural differences
- identifying opportunities for communication and cooperation
- developing communication strategies.

ETUI-REHS Education has provided training for European Works Councils from a variety of different multinational companies, including Air France KLM, Akzo Nobel, Albany, Axa, Borealis, Carrefour, Club Med, Electricité de France, Fortis, Fresenius, Freudenberg, Heinz, Kodak, Lafarge, Lhoist, LSG Skycheffs, Pernod Ricard, Securitas, Suez, Sun Alliance, Syngenta, Thales, Telia, Thames Water, Vinci, Vivendi.

Overcoming cultural and linguistic differences

Given that understanding the reality on the ground is strongly influenced by experiences at the national level or the cultural context, care is required to avoid misunderstandings at the European level. This is the reason why training mixes presentations made by experts with participatory methods

such as case studies, simulations, so that participants can share and understand their different national experiences.

Solidarity between European workers

ETUI-REHS Education contributes to the development of a European trade union identity. Within the context of freedom of movement of workers and capital and services, the trade union movement's strength remains what it has always been: solidarity between workers.



Jean Claude le Douaron, Education Officer

Training to respond to change

By Valerica Dumitrescu

Responding to change is a constant preoccupation for European trade unionists. Over the last four years ETUI-REHS Education has organised dozens of multilingual courses in collaboration with education departments of confederations that are members of the ETUC. The emphasis has been on reinforcing Social Dialogue, delivering the Lisbon agenda on more and better jobs, dealing with freedom of movement of labour and recruiting and organising.

Social Dialogue – an essential instrument in the construction of a more Social Europe

ETUI-REHS Education has provided a series of courses on reinforcing Social Dialogue. Initially the emphasis was on developing a common understanding of the instruments of Social Dialogue, and playing a more effective role in Social Dialogue at the European level.

Latterly the emphasis has switched to gaining a better understanding of ways of implementing existing autonomous European agreements, for example telework and work-related stress. Indeed the Europe-wide impact of ETUI-REHS Education activities can be measured by the fact that trade union officers from 24 different national confederations, many from new EU Member States, have taken part in these courses.

Dealing with free movement of labour

EU Enlargement has had a significant impact on European labour market, with a threat to wages and conditions in some Western European countries and labour shortages in key sectors in some parts of Eastern Europe.

ETUI-REHS Education has launched a series of East-West courses designed to influence the national legislation process on regulating issues concerning the free movement of workers, to exchange practical experiences and best practices on dealing with open labour markets and to develop a national action plan on implementing the recommendations of the European Commission and the ETUC.

Recruiting and organising

Trade unions need to address the question of falling membership, and ETUI-REHS Education has coordinated a series of courses to evaluate union recruitment and organising strategies.

The aim has clearly been to improve overall practice in terms of recruiting and organising and to analyse steps towards overcoming resistance to organisational change within trade unions.

Training future trade union leaders

Over the last four years ETUI-REHS Education has trained around 100 key young trade union officers, coming from 31 national confederations and 22 countries. Training sessions have covered the following key areas: the structures, policies and roles of national trade unions, the ETUC, European Industry Federations; European Union structures and policies, in particular the single European market, the Social Charter, the Lisbon Strategy and the Treaty on European Union; European industrial relations issues such as the representation of workers, collective bargaining, equal opportunities, and pay and working conditions.

The courses have also helped participants acquire a range of operational skills; notably, improving foreign language communication and working in European teams.

Course participants have also been able to examine a series of European policy issues which are important for their daily trade union work.

The overall aim of this course is to provide these young trade union officers with an in depth knowledge of European trade union issues and the skills to be able to coordinate their activities at the European level.



Valerica Dumitrescu, Education Officer

'On the offensive' - Interview with John Monks



John Monks with Jeff Bridgford, Director of ETUI-REHS Education

1/ John, you have been General Secretary for four years now. What has been the contribution of ETUI-REHS Education to the strategic development of European trade unions?

There are many examples, but let's start at the top. In 2005 ETUI-REHS Education, in close cooperation with the ETUC, organised a Top Level Summer School in the CISL School in Florence, which was designed specifically for General Secretaries of ETUC affiliated organisations. It gave them a unique opportunity to discuss in an informal way the latest challenges facing European trade unions and the best ways to respond to these challenges. This experience was repeated again in 2006 in the LO School in Åkersberga Sweden, and the discussions paved the

way for the preparations for this year's Congress.

This year the Congress will take up much of our attention, and so we will not hold a Top Level Summer School but we are planning to launch another in 2008.

2/ What about other groups of trade unionists?

Workplace representatives are a top priority. We now have nearly 800 European Works Councils, and approximately 16,000 European Works Council members who represent a large and clearly defined target group. They need the knowledge and skills to participate more actively in the European information and consultation procedures of multinational companies. Trade unionists from a variety of dif-

ferent multinational companies have benefited from ETUI-REHS Education services, and in this way they have learnt how to improve their understanding of workplace representation systems and latest company developments, and to build up opportunities for networking at the European level.

But let's not forget the many trade union officers who are responsible for a variety of different issues, collective bargaining, restructuring, recruiting and organising, labour market policy, to name a few. They increasingly need to learn what is going on in other European countries and at the European level so that they can defend their members' interests more effectively.

3/ ETUI-REHS Education has worked extensively with trade unionists from all the countries of the European Union. What other countries need support?

We clearly need to reinforce trade union capacity in the candidate countries of the EU, Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey, and I am particularly pleased to see that ETUI-REHS Education has been able to call on members of one of its network of trainers to support an ETUC project designed to improve Social Dialogue in Turkey.

The newly established International Trade Union Confederation has set up a European regional organisation, the PERC, and ETUI-REHS Education could provide assistance for some its members, notably in the Balkans and in the EU neighbourhood countries.

4/ European issues are being included more and more in national trade union education courses – how can ETUI-REHS Education help?

It is clear that ETUI-REHS Education cannot provide all the direct face-to-face training on European issues – this will be done in national, sectoral and regional courses, probably as extensions of existing work. However it can support the European trade union education community by providing initial and ongoing training for trade union trainers. In this way they can bring the knowledge and experience acquired at the European level back into their own national trade union education activities. ETUI-REHS Education can work increasingly with ETUI-REHS Research to produce a range of European training resources.

Finally, ETUI-REHS Education can reinforce networks of trainers to enable them to sustain and develop these European contacts.

5/ How do you assess the impact that ETUI-REHS has made on the European trade union movement?

An independent organization, Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund, ABF, Sweden's oldest and largest public educational organisation, has recently carried out an impact assessment exercise and shown that ETUI-REHS Education contributes significantly to the following: improving knowledge of European trade unions and European trade union issues; improving contacts between European trade unionists and developing greater cooperation; raising awareness of the common challenges faced by trade unions in Europe; increasing understanding of the role and value of trade union organisation at the European level.

All these elements are important in building up a European trade union movement.

6/ At its 11th Congress the European Trade Union Confederation is 'on the offensive' – for what?

Social Europe – Europe is unique in aspiring to a Social Model that combines sustainable economic growth with ever-improving living and working conditions. The ETUC wants to see EU decision-makers make this a reality by giving higher priority to full employment, good quality jobs, equal opportunities, social protection for all, social inclusion and fundamental rights as laid down in the EU Charter. Social Dialogue, involving workers in decisions that affect them, and strong collective bargaining arrangements are essential to promoting European innovation, productivity and competitiveness.

Sustainability – Sustainable development and environmental protection must have equal importance to social and economic policies, at the heart of

the EU's Lisbon Strategy. These are not conflicting demands but complementary elements. Sustainable growth and development are crucial to addressing global problems like poverty and climate change, and securing a better life for future generations.

Solidarity – Social cohesion must be a top priority for Europe, and the ETUC is fighting to end all forms of discrimination and disadvantage.

The ETUC's current campaign for high quality, accessible public services aims to ensure that all EU citizens can live in dignity. We have a positive vision of a fair society that guarantees fundamental rights and cares for the welfare of its weakest members.

7/ How can trade union education support the ETUC in achieving these objectives?

ETUI-REHS Education needs to continue to offer courses highlighting social issues and ways of defending and promoting these issues via Social Dialogue and collective bargaining. It needs to continue to work with Eurotrainers on the issues relating to sustainable development and globalisation. It needs to continue to work on issues such as improving social cohesion and fighting to end all forms of discrimination.

The ETUC and its affiliated organisations are 'on the offensive' to promote the interests of their members throughout Europe, and they need a constant supply of effective and competent trade union officers and representatives to do this on their behalf. It is the role of ETUI-REHS Education to provide them with the appropriate knowledge and skills and to contribute to the development of a European trade union identity.

John Monks is the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Language matters: strategic developments in language training

By Jacky Barry

The ability to communicate confidently in another language is a vital skill much encouraged by ETUI-REHS Education. Through its training courses a strong emphasis is placed on a practical approach to language teaching in a trade union context at European level. Over the last four years the ETUI-REHS has succeeded in widening its scope and developing its methodology for communicative language training.

ETUI-REHS Education has continued to offer the courses *English/French for European Trade Unionists*, as well as *English for Central and Eastern Europeans* and *English for European Works Councils*, which have continued to be popular and well attended.

In addition ETUI-REHS Education has delivered tailor-made English courses on request for the European Works Councils of particular companies – for example, Freudenberg and Lhoist, as well as for particular confederations, such as the FGTB/ABVV and CC.OO.

New approaches to developing language training

There have been some important strategic developments in language training since the last ETUC Congress. This work has seen the delivery of courses in collaboration with a wider range of organisations, especially in the new EU Member States where the demand for language training is particularly high.

One key element has been to expand the core of language trainers involved in teaching. By involving more trainers from different countries, the expertise developed over the years by an initial core group at Northumbria University (UK) has been extended to a growing number of trainers across the European Union.

The increase has meant that organisations are better equipped to run courses for their own members at national level, thus improving language skills for a number of students beyond those able to attend the traditional ETUI-REHS Education courses.

ETUI-REHS Education support has been provided in the form of national-level workshops for experienced language trainers who have little experience working with trade union learners.

These trainers are introduced to the methodology that ETUI-REHS Education has developed over the years for working with this target group, as well as to the materials that have been produced to underpin this kind of language training.

This process has been successfully initiated with LDF in Lithuania and with ZSSS in Slovenia. It is underway with colleagues from Cartel Alfa in Romania.

The annual Language Trainers Workshop offers a valuable opportunity for language trainers involved in this work to come together and exchange information about courses, methodology and materials, and to plan new projects. They are in a better position to initiate and organise language learning activities within their own trade union environments.

Using authentic materials

An important element of the process of supporting organisations that run successful language courses for themselves is the availability of suitable materials which reflect the interests of trade union learners, with authentic texts and activities based on authentic work situations.

A new *Language Trainers Guide* is now available, as well as a series of training materials aimed at the upper intermediate and advanced learners of English which complement those produced earlier for the lower language learning levels. For more details see <http://www.etui-rehs.org/education/resources>



Jacky Barry, Languages Adviser

Your Information Service on European Programmes for trade union development

By Silvana Pennella

Finding information about EU programmes and funding opportunities can be a lengthy and complicated business. To assist European trade unions in this, ETUI-REHS Education has developed a European Union Information Service (EUIS). The long-term objectives of the service is to heighten awareness among trade unionists about the use of European projects as a strategic tool for trade union development and to increase the potential for transnational cooperation in trade union education and training.

Information, advice, training: the EUIS continues to provide affiliates with a combination of on-line and off-line information and advice on EU Programmes that could be used to support trade union education.

The service provides a one-stop shop composed of:

- a **Library**, with updated information on European funding related to areas of interest for trade unions. The Library also provides access to key EU and ETUC documents, along with updated information on open calls for project proposals
- a **newsletter**, 'Trainers' Digest', which provides details on developments in EU education and training Programmes
- a **Help Desk**, with answers to frequently asked questions concerning the management of EU funded activities
- a **Handbook**, which is regularly updated and available in a variety of different European languages and which equips trade union officers with the know-how required to bring a European project to a successful conclusion. The Handbook also offers information on the latest EU initiatives and trade union policies in the area of education and training.



The EU Information Service also provides:

- **Transnational courses** for trade union officers to enable them improve their skills in the management of European projects
- **Information Days**, organised with national confederations, devoted to relevant funding possibilities for trade unions and transnational projects
- **Day Schools** on specific EU Programmes, such as the new integrated Life-long Learning Programme, budget lines on Social Dialogue, the new Seventh Research Framework Programme, the Programme Progress and the Structural Funds 2007-2013.

For more information about this service, contact Silvana Pennella at spennell@etui-rehs.org or visit http://www.etui-rehs.org/education/eu_information_service



Silvana Pennella, Education Officer

Recasting Training for Eurotrainers

By Georges Schnell

ETUI-REHS Education aims to train trade union trainers to offer quality courses at the European level and to enable them to add a European dimension to national trade union education activities. It has put in place a Eurotrainer system which, over the last four years, has provided more than 600 basic and ongoing training opportunities. The future challenge is to improve the existing system of training and provision of training resources.

The system offers basic training, at two different levels:

- the first aims to support trainers to become Eurotrainers within their own organisations at the national level
- the second aims to train Eurotrainers to be able to take on responsibilities within the context of the ETUI-REHS Education programme at the European level.

It also offers Eurotrainers ongoing training opportunities to develop their skills, participating in:

- workshops on a variety of different topics (Europe and globalisation, sustainable development, collective bargaining in Europe, social protection in Europe)
- European projects, as for example DIALOG ON, TRACE and Transatlantic Labour Dialogue
- networks, most notably for Eurotrainers coming from Central and Eastern Europe
- initiatives to design and prepare European training materials.

Training Eurotrainers – the next steps

The ETUI-REHS Education approach is always evolving. What are the next steps? What can be done to improve the system?

The first task is to reinforce the links to ETUC affiliated organisations to ensure that ETUI-REHS Education continues to correspond to their evolving needs. Moving to a contractual approach between ETUI-REHS Education and each organisation would clarify each other's expectations and responsibilities. The appointment of an active contact person within each organisation would improve the link between training activities within ETUC affiliates and within ETUI-REHS Education.

Practical real-life situations provide for the improvement of learning for each Eurotrainer, and simulation workshops could be integrated into the training process. Moreover, those with greater experience could play a mentoring role for trainers within national organisations.

Finally, assessment of the training process for each Eurotrainer needs to be introduced. This would strengthen Eurotrainers' skills base and enable them to present a portfolio of skills and experience. A system for formally recognising these skills should also be put in place.

Providing training resources

The revision of the ETUI-REHS Education web site has led to a review of the type of training resources that can be made available to Eurotrainers and of the ways they can be disseminated. Resources that have been prepared by ETUI-REHS Education Officers for their own courses will be uploaded on to the site and will be made freely available.

This should produce a considerable multiplier effect and allow for greater dissemination of the priority issues of the ETUC. In addition it should help to improve the overall quality of European trade union education materials and also to develop trainers' skills.

In this way it should be possible to reinforce the European dimension of trade union education activities carried out at the national level and improve the quality of ETUI-REHS Education activities carried out at the European level.



Georges Schnell, Education Officer