

AGORA

Newsletter of the ETUI-REHS Education Department



Taking a stand: the ETUI-REHS supports ETUC 'on the offensive'



Taking a stand: the ETUI-REHS in Seville

The Congress of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is a major event for the European trade union movement. Its latest edition, held in May in Seville, saw the presence of some 1,000 union delegates, representing 81 organisations in 36 European countries, with a combined membership of more than 60 million workers. The ETUI-REHS was present to give its support and provide information and expertise in its three key areas of research, education and health and safety.

The Congress slogan was, this time, for trade unions across Europe to go 'on the offensive – for more Social Europe, more Solidarity, more Sustainable Development'. *"We intend to take a highly proactive approach in promoting workers' interests. Deregulation, neo-liberalism and high unemployment has pushed unions back onto the defensive in recent years. It is now time to move onto the offensive,"* explained ETUC General Secretary John Monks.

"This Congress marks a new stage in the development of the European trade union movement, as it becomes stronger, more cohesive and more influential in guiding European policy to reflect the interests of workers and their families, in the EU and worldwide."

ETUI-REHS: three institutes are now one

This was the first ETUC Congress that had the three areas, namely research, education and health and safety, under one umbrella.

On site, the stand provided a base from which to present the ETUI-REHS's latest activities and

information. In addition to attracting delegates and visitors, it also hosted a book launch, a series of thematic film clips and filmed interviews* with key members of the European trade union movement, researchers, and also the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir Špidla.

The role of European trade union education

New and also experienced European trade union officers and representatives need continuing training in order to help them carry out their job successfully. Congress identified a number of issues for ETUI-REHS activities – training for trade union representatives in European Works Councils and European Companies and training to increase the number of women in decision-making positions within European trade unions, to name but two.

"We feel that this year's Congress has been a great success for both ourselves within the ETUI-REHS and the European trade union movement", added Jeff Bridgford, Director of the ETUI-REHS Education Department.

"The challenge is now to support the ETUC in carrying out its action programme".

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Comments from Congress

Maria Helena André – Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC

"We welcome the support for our work from the ETUI-REHS in terms of research, education and health and safety. This is especially the case for our activities within the field of the social dialogue and on the framework agreements on stress and harassment and violence at work. The ETUI-REHS Education Department training courses have also helped our members understand the issues covering the social dialogue and social partnership".

Carola Fischbach-Pyttel – General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Service Unions

"We have had a very positive experience working with the Education Department of ETUI-REHS. They helped us develop the EPSU toolkit which contains twenty fact sheets about Europe. ETUI-REHS has been useful in explaining how we can influence European decision-making and Social Dialogue. It has also provided training on the issues of recruitment and organisation particularly in the countries of central and eastern Europe".

Zdenek Málek – President of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions

"The ETUI-REHS is unique. It combines research, education and health and safety issues. These areas need to be monitored for new trends. ETUI-REHS has also provided us with valuable publications, training and advice for our work".

* ETUI-REHS clips can be viewed from:
http://www.etui-rehs.org/en/about_etui_rehs/audiovisual_clips

Training future European trade union leaders

By Valerica Dumitrescu

Leadership, communicating a message, ability to mobilize: the list of skills and abilities that are needed in a leader of a trade union is long.

Sesimbra, Portugal, provided the backdrop for the final residential week of the year-long ETUI-REHS training course "Training future European trade union leaders". Twenty-three young trade union leaders from eleven European countries attended the course that was instrumental in preparing them for the challenges of operating within the European arena.

The participants have, during this period, acquired an in-depth knowledge of European trade union issues along with the necessary practical and knowledge skills needed for the job for coordinating their own activities not only at national but also at European level.

Key topics: recruitment and mainstreaming

The final week of the course concentrated on one key issue: the recruitment and organising of new members, which is one of the most important issues for the development of influential trade unions at national and European level.

The situation in which trade unions find themselves is in constant flux and the pace of change continues to accelerate. Thus another vital issue that came up for consideration was mobility and relocation of workers within Europe. For trade unions this poses a series of challenges, one of the most important being the need to ensure proper representation of the different ethnic and cultural groups that are present within the European workplace today. Participants argued that the issues of representation and policy that are thrown up by these issues should be tackled via the mainstreaming of such considerations within trade unions rather than opting for a rigid structural approach.



Power steering for training European trade union leaders

The course participants are now better equipped to work within a European trade union environment – practising an approach to strategic thinking on European Social Dialogue; tackling the various forms of discrimination within the workplace; facing the challenge of the economic and social impact of EU enlargement; fighting for better levels of pay, dealing with globalisation.

Minding your language!

The ability to communicate across borders and cultures is a vital part of being an active European trade union leader and the course fully acknowledges this. Throughout the course participants

received practical training in one of two key European languages (English or French) set in a specific trade union context. This approach encourages not only the acquisition of practical linguistic skills but additionally facilitates understanding of the issues and challenges that different trade unions face in their day-to-day work.

The exercise brought out the fact that despite cultural and linguistic differences, the challenges facing nationally-based trade unions are quite similar. This in turn helps create the sense of different trade unions being part of a larger European team that ultimately has the same objective: namely defending workers' rights.

European level training for board-level employee representatives

By Jean-Claude Le Douaron

Analysing the role and function of company board-level employee representatives (BLRs) while ensuring a European perspective; comparing training possibilities; creating networks between institutes that provide training: three important aims providing the backdrop to a workshop organised by the Education Department of the ETUI-REHS in June. The overriding concern: how to ensure a European dimension to the training of employee BLRs.

The workshop gathered trade union representatives and trainers from Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Slovakia and Sweden, as well as a number of experts from across the European Union.

Michael Stollt and Norbert Kluge, ETUI-REHS researchers provided a brief overview of the issue of board-level representation in Europe. Representatives from each of the countries then gave a presentation on specific trade union programmes, changing needs and demands made upon trade unions at national level.

Some key issues came out of the workshop:

- in Austria, trade unions are successful in attracting participants for their specific training courses on employee board-level participation. Courses tend to be fully booked up and trainers are used to their full capacity;
- there is a high demand for training in this area in Ireland. However European BLRs were often not always aware of European issues;

- in Denmark, training in this field is generally offered with a specific focus on business, economic and legal advice. In Sweden, courses are provided: however, the cost is high while in Finland the key issue remained how to foster a greater degree of interest in training on employee BLRs.

The course identified a series of future needs:

- clarifying the role of national representatives and that of BLRs in European companies;
- obtaining more raw data on the number of BLRs and the numbers that received training;
- establishing a clear funding basis for training;
- deciding which languages should be used for training.

European training

European training issues were also addressed, as follows:

- the role of BLRs on European companies;



Jean-Claude Le Douaron

- national preparation for European courses;
- appropriate target groups i.e. representatives who have a cross-border background and experience of national training on the subject;
- development of European materials on the following subjects: evolution of legislation (corporate governance law), confidentiality issues, the link between different levels of representation, overview of different national systems, private equity finance and pension fund issues.

Useful links: www.worker-participation.eu

New trade union officer recruited

The Education Department of the ETUI-REHS announced in July the recruitment of a new member of staff. Bruno Demaître has taken up the post of Education Officer for European Works Councils (EWCs), building upon the work of Jean-Claude Le Douaron.

EWCs need well-equipped representatives, and the Education Department of the ETUI-REHS has already organised a series of made-to-measure courses and workshops for the EWCs of a variety of different multinational companies such as Air France/KLM, Akzo Nobel, Axa, Club Med, Fortis, Kodak, Pernod Ricard and Suez.



Bruno Demaître, the new Education Officer for European Works Councils (EWCs)

Courses have covered topics, such as:

- comparing different national systems of worker representation;

- overcoming communication difficulties;
- identifying fields of cooperation;
- developing a strategy for communication;
- evaluating EWC activities;
- identifying future strategies.

If you would like to set up training activities for EWC representatives, please contact Bruno on: tel.: +32 (0)2 224 04 91; fax: +32 (0)2 224 05 20; e-mail: bdemaître@etui-rehs.org. He speaks Dutch, English and French, and some German and Spanish.

The impact of European trade union education

European trade union education is a key resource for shaping a European trade union identity and by extension for strengthening the European trade union movement.

There are many individual reports of the usefulness of European trade union education activities, but this is the first time that ETUI-REHS Education has commissioned an independent survey to investigate the impact of its work within the European trade union movement.

The emphasis of the survey was placed on the opinions of trade union officers and representatives who had attended ETUI-REHS courses over the last three years.

The survey results are encouraging. Course participants from all over Europe are of the opinion that ETUI-REHS courses have contributed, *inter alia*, to

- improving their knowledge of and contact with other trade unions in Europe and of trade union issues at the European level;
- raising awareness of the fact that trade unions in Europe face common challenges;
- developing greater cooperation between trade unions in Europe;
- improving an understanding of the role and value of trade union organisations at the European level;
- raising awareness of the European projects as strategic tools for trade unions;
- improving skills in communicating with trade unionists from other cultures.

In addition, ETUI-REHS training trainers activities have a significant 'multiplier effect' and help to add a European dimension to national trade union education activities.

This was just a first step. Any further steps need to examine the question from an organisational perspective.

Jeff Bridgford

Director, Education Department

ETUI-REHS

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Director: Jeff Bridgford

Bld du Roi Albert II, 5, bte 7, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 224 0530, Fax: +32 (0)2 224 0520

E-mail: education@etui-rehs.org

Website: <http://www.etui-rehs.org/education>

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.

Assessing the impact of European trade union education

By Jeff Bridgford

ETUI-REHS training has clearly helped to improve participants' knowledge of other trade unions in Europe and of trade union issues at the European level. It has also increased understanding of the role and value of trade union organisations at the European level and raised awareness of the common values shared by trade unionists from ETUC-affiliated organisations. That is the conclusion of the impact assessment of its courses that has just been carried out.

The aim of the impact assessment exercise was to establish the impact of ETUI-REHS training activities within a broader European trade union environment.

Some key results

There was overall unanimity that ETUI-REHS training improves participants' knowledge of other trade unions in Europe and of trade union issues at the European level. Ninety percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ETUI-REHS training helped to raise awareness of the fact that trade unions in Europe face common challenges; however a smaller percentage agrees that this training helps them to raise awareness of these issues within their own organisations.

A third of the respondents strongly agreed that ETUI-REHS training helps develop greater cooperation between trade unions in Europe. A higher proportion strongly agreed that the training improves con-

the impact on trade education

INTERVIEW



The impact assessment, a tool for future challenges. Kent Kling, ABF (Sweden)

tacts between European trade unionists. Over ninety percent agreed that the training improves understanding of the role and value of trade union organisations at the European level.

As for specific issues, a significant majority of participants on project management courses agreed that they had increased their awareness of the use of European projects as strategic tools for the trade unions. Another interesting outcome was the fact that an overwhelming majority of participants on foreign language courses agreed that the training had enabled them to represent their trade union more effectively at European meetings.

As a significant 'multiplier effect', 83% of trainers trained by ETUI-REHS had gone on to deliver courses at the national level; many had also gone on to design training materials with a European dimension (manuals, presentations, activity sheets) for use at the national level.

Said Kent Kling, Project Manager, Europahuset Västra Götaland, Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund: "ETUI-REHS stakeholders and trade union representatives can now use the impact assessment as a tool and support for regional and national evaluation and for the planning of their own training activities. The impact assessment is, in this way, a tool for future challenges."

The full report is available from the ETUI-REHS website (www.etui-rehs.org).

The Impact Assessment

Methodology

The main data for the assessment was collected through an on-line survey aimed at trade union officers and representatives that, in the last three years, had attended ETUI-REHS courses and seminars. The questionnaire was available in eighteen European languages. The main part of the on-line questionnaire contained sixteen questions – 15 'closed', and one 'open' which enabled participants to add comments not covered by other questions. In addition, there was an additional set of questions for trade unionists that had followed courses for trainers, foreign language learning and project management.

Respondants came from all over Europe. Sixty-four percent were men, 36% women. A variety of different age

groups were represented in the sample with 40% of the total number of respondents being over 51 years of age. Respondants were predominantly well educated – 70% had a university education. There was a majority of trade union officers, and they were experienced – 75% had been active trade unionists for more than seven years.

The data collected by the online survey was complemented by semi-structured interviews with twenty-five ETUI-REHS stakeholders and course participants, coming from KNSB Bulgaria, CGTP-IN Portugal, CC.OO. Spain, DGB Germany, CNSLR Fratia Romania, TUC United Kingdom, LO Sweden and CGIL Italy. The aim of the interviews was to go deeper into the impact assessment questions.

Follow up

The Advisory Committee of ETUI-REHS Education Department met in September and, *inter alia*, discussed this report. On the whole the members were satisfied with this first step but saw the need for further work on this subject.

Any future initiative should be accompanied by an advisory group drawn from ETUI-REHS Education stakeholders – specialists from ETUC-affiliates' education departments.

Trade Unions and Transnational Projects – Manual

By **Silvana Pennella**

The sixth edition of the “Trade Unions and Transnational Projects” handbook is now available. This edition takes into account the major changes within the EU, the new European funding opportunities for trade unions, and the financial rules for the years 2007-2013. It looks, in particular, at the role of the European Trade Union Confederation, its activities and policy priorities mainly in the fields of education and training.

The handbook sets out to:

- explore the benefits of collaborating on projects with partners in other European countries;
- introduce some of the basic skills involved in managing European projects;
- consider both the organisational and the wider European contexts of this work;

- explain the role of the European Commission in supporting transnational initiatives in education and training;
- provide information on a range of EU funding programmes of interest to trade union trainers and project officers – as this latter point is subject to constant change, the EU Information Service on-line offers updated information at: http://www.etui-rehs.org/education/eu_information_service



Silvana Pennella, Education Officer

The handbook is part of a continuing line of the work of the ETUI-REHS that is aimed at increasing the potential for transnational collaboration, through providing services on-line, seminars, school days, materials and assistance with project development.

The handbook can be downloaded in English and French at http://www.etui-rehs.org/education/resources/trade_unions_and_transnational_projects_sixth_edition__1

The previous edition has been translated into most of the EU languages with the collaboration of national confederations, and ETUI-REHS is willing to help financially with the translation of this updated version.

New ETUI-REHS Website launched

As part of a process of introducing an integrated identity, the ETUI-REHS has launched its new website!

“Communicating our key information is a top priority”, said Jeff Bridgford, Director of the ETUI-REHS Education Department.

“The new structure and presentation responds to our need to get our key information out to European trade unionists. The site also provides ease of access for those interested in our work”, he added.

The combination of a new graphic design, clear colour codes for each of the ETUI-REHS's three departments, certain innovative features (such as direct access to Labourline, the EWCs database and a new website on worker participation), inter-departmental navigation and the enhanced integrated

nature of the site, have all increased the website's effectiveness.

The Education Department has a web-page for its courses which are easy to search by category or date. Course reports, materials and photos are all available, and courses have a web page of their own.

The European Union Information Service will continue to provide information about European programmes and funding opportunities, whilst providing more scope for interaction.

The news section and departmental newsletters, **Agora** and

Trainers' Digest, will continue to be available online.

So more than ever, trade union education in Europe is only a click away.

www.etui-rehs.org

www.etui-rehs.org/education



Social protection in European training – Manual

By Georges Schnell

To face up to the challenges posed by the evolution of social protection systems in Europe, but also to provide a mobilising response to sporadic reform proposals, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has decided to update the trade union training guide on social protection that was originally published in 2005.

The guide is designed for trade union officers and trainers alike and was put together by a team which included Jozef Niemiec, Henry Lourdelle (for the ETUC) and Georges Schnell (for ETUI-REHS) and enjoyed the support of a team composed of Eurotrainers and experts in the field of social protection at European level.

The publication is, first and foremost, a tool for activists that aims to:

- promote understanding of the rationale upon which European social protection systems are based;
- study the mechanisms and the stakes that are behind reforms that have been undertaken;



- enhance understanding of the objectives pursued at European trade union level that need to be transposed to national level ;
- encourage mobilisation around these aims which notably find their foundations within the context of solidarity and social cohesion.

The subjects covered are illustrated from two angles:

- **A first general approach**, in the form of information sheets that provide for an understanding of the general social protection issues, notably at European level.
- **A second more specific approach**, which covers training activities that aim to transfer knowledge about underlying issues concerning social protection systems. These information sheets are 'stand-alone'.

This guide is now available for trade union organisations that are affiliated to the ETUC. It has been made available for download in French and English on the ETUI-REHS website (www.etui-rehs.org) and also exists in printed format. Further linguistic versions will be made available over the following twelve months.

HK Denmark initiative: quality in work

The EU's Lisbon process identified "Quality in Work" as one of the paths for creating more and better jobs in Europe.

The Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees in Denmark (HK) took up this notion of quality in work and, based on the Commission's indicators, drew up a longer list of operational indicators that can be applied in individual workplaces.

HK then arranged these indicators in a "dialogue tool" which can be used in individual workplaces to focus on the quality of work there. At the same time HK was keen to strengthen employee involvement and participation at the workplace.

Judging from the experiences of more than 500 HK members in more than 20 workplaces, who have so far tried it out, it will indeed help strengthen employee involvement and influence, and contribute to increasing creativeness and innovation in companies. In other words, this practical tool can be used by trade unions to create more quality in work.

The Danish (original) and English versions of this resource can be downloaded here:

http://www.etui-rehs.org/education/resources/hk_dialogue_tool_on_quality_in_work

For more information please contact:

Preben Foldberg
LO-D Brussels Office
Tel: +32 (0)2 204 0690
Mobile +32 (0)478 490010
E-mail: pfo@lo.dk

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English for European trade unionists (intermediate/advanced) II

<i>Aims</i>	To enable trade union officers with at least an Intermediate level of English to operate more effectively for professional purposes in a trans-national environment
<i>Participants</i>	Trade union officers or representatives with at least an intermediate knowledge of English
<i>Working language</i>	English
<i>Dates</i>	13 – 19 January 2008
<i>Course Ref. N°</i>	752.05

February 2008

Free movement of workers

<i>Aims</i>	<p>To gain a better understanding of the role in which European trade unions can achieve minimum standards at the European level whilst respecting working conditions in host countries</p> <p>To get to know how to influence the national legislation process on regulating issues concerning the free movement of workers</p> <p>To exchange practical experiences and best practices on dealing with open labour markets</p> <p>To build up trade unions capacity to deal with the issue of migration(migrants workers)</p> <p>To develop trade union activities for joint action and mutual support on free movement of labour</p>
<i>Participants</i>	National trade union officers responsible for integration and migration
<i>Working languages</i>	Danish, English, Finnish
<i>Dates</i>	6 – 10 February 2008
<i>Course Ref. N°</i>	752.11

Consolidating a European trade union network for health and safety on migrant labour

<i>Aims</i>	<p>To reinforce a European network of trade union experts on health and safety for migrants workers</p> <p>To raise awareness of the health and safety of the migrants workers</p> <p>To develop the trade unions' capacity to deal with the problems of health and safety for migrants in their countries</p>
<i>Participants</i>	National trade union officers responsible for health and safety; Members of ETUI-HESA network and members of tripartite national body for Health and Safety
<i>Working languages</i>	English, Hungarian, French
<i>Dates</i>	14 – 17 February 2008
<i>Course Ref. N°</i>	752.40

English for European Works Councils (intermediate) II

<i>Aims</i>	To enable European Works Council representatives with an intermediate level of English to improve their confidence and ability to communicate in a trans-national English-speaking environment
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To provide representatives with the opportunity to exchange information and views in English about current key issues of relevance to European Works Councils, (such as worker's rights in multinational companies, the impact of mergers and acquisitions, social dumping), in order to deepen participants' knowledge and widen their perspectives and understanding of these topics.

To develop skills of social interaction and raise awareness of intercultural issues and to break down cultural barriers in order to improve communication within European Works Councils

<i>Participants</i>	Members of EWC and trade union officers dealing with EWCs with at least a basic knowledge of English
<i>Working language</i>	English
<i>Dates</i>	17 – 23 February 2008
<i>Course Ref. N°</i>	752.28

French for European trade unionists (intermediate)

<i>Aims</i>	To enable trade union officers with at least an Intermediate level of French to operate more effectively for professional purposes in a trans-national environment
<i>Participants</i>	Trade union officers or representatives with at least an intermediate knowledge of French
<i>Working language</i>	French
<i>Dates</i>	18 – 28 February 2008
<i>Course Ref. N°</i>	752.06

March 2008

Language training development in European trade unions

<i>Aims</i>	<p>To consider the organisational and pedagogical challenges of language training for European trade unions</p> <p>To share examples of good practice in language training activities</p> <p>To exchange practical information about setting up language training programmes at the national level in order to increase participation in European cooperation projects</p> <p>To present a practical guide for language trainers working with trade unions and EWCs</p> <p>To build a support network of language trainers across Europe working in this specialised field of language training for European trade unionists</p>
<i>Participants</i>	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
<i>Working languages</i>	English, French
<i>Dates</i>	13 – 16 March 2008
<i>Course Ref. N°</i>	752.34