

Declaration of Intent for a transnational trade union education in Europe

Trade unions and their educational facilities from eight countries have joined together in the EU project Quali2Move over the period 2011-2012, with trade union education taking on a European dimension. The partners have been supported by the Education department of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) that plays an essential role in strengthening knowledge, competences and identity of the European Trade Union movement.

Based on the Declaration on Vocational Education and Training of the Newton Project¹, the project partners in Quali2Move² have elaborated common foundations and aims for trade union political education. The undersigned call upon European trade unions and institutions funding trade union education to support and implement this educational strategy in their educational work within the framework of their possibilities and while taking into account their cultural, historical and socio-political context.

Democratisation of Europe through the promotion of participation and involvement

Trade union education is an important pillar of youth and adult education. In almost all European countries it has a strong tradition of self-organised and interest-oriented supplementation of the general educational system. Trade union education has the objective of fostering participation by employees by encouraging their involvement in their companies and societies. It is to this end that trade unions and their educational partners develop educational programmes going above and beyond those offered by the formal educational system. It aims at encouraging people's powers of critical scrutiny as well as learners' courage and self-confidence so that they can help shape company and social developments in a manner marked by solidarity.

→General education is an indispensable prerequisite for social and political involvement as well as participation in companies, the labour market, society, politics and educational systems. That is why trade union educational work builds on this, fostering involvement in these areas. With their educational programmes and efforts to develop skills, trade union education seeks to fight social injustice and ensure participation and co-determination. It thus opens up opportunities for transnational democratisation processes in Europe.

Solidarity: a key principle in education

The development of educational systems in Europe is suffering from cut-backs in financial resources and constraints on access to educational programmes. Privatisation and political regulation in the field of education are at the same time producing growing inequalities in education. Competition between learners is on the rise, preventing the learning of cooperative behaviour based on the principle of solidarity as the foundation of a democracy.

At the same time, competition which excludes people in the occupational and social context also poses a threat to democracy and impedes solidarity. These processes have to be stopped

¹ www.newton-project.eu

² www.quali2move.eu

and radically changed if we are to bring about a democratic society. Education and civil commitment is about more than just making people employable. We view economics and social affairs to be intertwined, with participation and involvement first of all promoting the political community, and secondly fostering people's personal-cultural development on the basis of a social consciousness. Trade union education has been practicing cooperation instead of competition in education for years, thus encouraging democratic action in social areas which are expanding at the transnational level at present. This is why the current crisis in Europe underscores the important role of trade union education as an element of non-school education and lifelong learning in Europe.

→ Trade union educational work is based on the principle of cooperation and promotes solidarity as a fundamental value reflected in the theory and practice of learning processes. Awareness of common economic and social interests is promoted in a practical process of common learning. This forms the foundations for action based on solidarity. In conceptual and methodological terms, trade union educational work follows a subject-orientated approach that differs from practice in the area of pure conveyance of knowledge and conceives participants to be active, socially learning subjects. Methods enable independent learning processes through common discussion and discovery processes.

Critical educational approach

Political-institutional Europe as well as multinational corporations make decisions that have a major impact on the working and living conditions of Europeans in their various countries. In order to preclude dramatic negative consequences for people such as are being experienced at present in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy, for example, we need a critical public which is not limited to political struggles at the national level, but rather also opens up a transnational discussion. Hence the multifaceted crisis gripping Europe is revealing a need for employee-orientated education. A common critical awareness for political and economic development both at the national and the European levels needs to be promoted through education.

→ Trade union educational work is therefore based on a critical approach. Mechanisms of rule are examined from a critical perspective while enabling participants to analyse social developments and prevailing patterns of interpretation from a critical angle and then put their conclusions into practice. Respect for different ways of thinking by the same token provides the basis for human interaction. The critical approach to education thrives on ideas and values as expressed in the notions of solidarity, democracy, equality, social justice and fairness. Contents and methods employed in educational processes are based on these values.

Political and social development in Europe by fostering a European identity

Trade unions in Europe have to shape transnational processes of democratisation in order to develop the political and social union in addition to its fiscal and economic base. With their



respective educational activities they are bringing about a change in course in the direction of a Europe based on the notion of solidarity. Quali2Move is taking a major step in this direction with its call for a common understanding of trade union educational work and the initial development of common contents, strategies and methods.

→ Upon the foundations of this common understanding of education, the undersigned herewith assume the obligation of developing a European social consciousness on the part of employees and their interest representatives as well as corresponding action-related skills within the framework of their capabilities. The objective in this social process of education is to bring about a practice effective European identity among employees with respect to working and living realities - an identity which is based on an understanding and recognition of common economic, social, occupational and personal cultural interests.

The undersigned trade unions shall initiate projects fostering exchange, discussion and the further dissemination of these principles underlying trade union educational work to bring about a change in policy and a Europe based on solidarity, fairness and social justice.

Berlin, 29th November 2012

The undersigned:

Berufsbildungswerk (bfw)

Germany

Birleşik Metal İş

Turkey

CNS "Cartel ALFA"

Romania

IndustriAll (European Trade Union)

EU

European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

EU

IG Metall

Germany



***Institute for the Development of Employees
Advancement Services (IDEAS)***
Ireland

***Instituto de Formación y Estudios Sociales
(IFES) Spain***

***Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsverband
(ÖGB) Austria***

***Unification of Lithuanian Metalworkers'
Trade Unions (Litmetal)***
Lithuania

Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP)
Poland