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Training programmes for European works councillors in Germany, in Ireland and at EU level: Transnational trade union action through education?

Bianca Föhrer

University College Dublin, Ireland

Roland Erne

University College Dublin, Ireland

Corresponding author

Bianca Föhrer, UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, HRM and Employment Relations Group, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland

Email: bianca.foehrer@ucdconnect.ie

Abstract

In this article, we compare trade union training for European Works Council members in Ireland, in Germany and at EU level. The programmes have only limited success in fostering transnational union action. We conclude that the limited transformative impact of unions' training programmes is not for the most part due to lack of resources. Rather, their narrow pedagogical focus on technical knowledge and skills crowds out the development of knowledge about social mobilization and the construction of attitudes of solidarity between unions.

Keywords

Cross-border collaboration, EWC, Germany, Ireland, revitalization, solidarity, trade union education, transnational collective action

Introduction

Twenty years ago, Turner (1996) argued that the creation of European Works Councils (EWCs) would provide an important 'opportunity structure' that could facilitate transnational protest action. So far, however, EWCs have rarely transformed international competition from a factor that hampers transnational action into one that fosters it. A few EWCs have coordinated transnational action with social and political repercussions, as at Renault Vilvoorde or ABB Alstom Power (Erne, 2008); but most EWC members are far from satisfied with their achievements (Jagodziński, 2011; Kotthoff, 2006; Waddington, 2011). Nevertheless, such cases of successful transnational labour mobilizations also show that international economic competition *per se* does not explain why labour's capacity for transnational collective action has remained limited (Bieler et al., 2015; Erne et al., 2015; Stan et al., 2015; Stevis and Boswell, 2008).

In the cases of Volkswagen (Bernaciak, 2010) and BMW/Rover (Whittall, 2000), educational seminars preceded the establishment of active EWCs. In ABB Alstom Power, an educational seminar was also a trigger for successful cross-border action (Erne, 2008: 140). Knudsen (2004) is convinced that through education, EWCs can overcome the obstacles that limit their impact on managerial decisions. Other authors have also highlighted union education as a cornerstone for successful cross-border action (Bicknell, 2007; Croucher and Cotton, 2009; Novelli, 2011).

We analyse educational programmes for EWCs in order to understand how union education may help transform them into effective organizers of transnational action. We focus in particular on the formal training programmes of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), and of the German and Irish union confederations and their most important affiliates in the manufacturing and services sectors. This comparison across levels, borders and sectors allows us to show that uneven financial resources cannot explain the limited impact of EWC education programmes. Conversely, however, we

discover that the tension between technical and transformative approaches to EWC education is present in all union programmes, regardless of the very different geographic and sectoral contexts in which they are located.

Formal worker education programmes represent ‘an appropriate entry point for drawing out the similarities and differences that exist about the goals, structure, and political values of different unions’, because the distinction between labour education as a service to labour representatives and education as a strategic union function ‘parallels some of the traditional debates about business-service versus social movement unionism’ (Tarlau, 2011: 363, 368). Thus, our analysis seeks to provide added insights about EWC practice as accommodative mechanisms for incorporating labour in business as ‘co-managers’ (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2008; Hürtgen, 2008) or as vehicles of transformative European labour action (Erne, 2008; Turner, 1996). Although many of the EWC tutors interviewed indicated that they supported social movement unionism, the shortage of relevant components in the curriculum of the EWC training programmes is a good indicator of the priorities of European unions.

The research is based on a 6-month stay at the education department of the ETUI and fieldwork in Germany and Ireland. In Germany, this covered EWC training activities of services union *ver.di* and the metalworkers’ union *IG Metall* (IGM). In Ireland, we assessed the programmes of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and some of its major affiliates: the general union Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), the public sector union IMPACT, the retail sector union Mandate and the British-Irish general union UNITE. Data were collected through interviews, documentary analysis, questionnaires and non-participant observation. In order to evaluate the EWC training programmes, we needed to explore the concepts and tensions that shape union education in more detail. Below, we therefore draw on the literature on union education and collective action provided by labour scholars (Ball, 2003; Freire, 2002; Miller and Stirling, 1998; Negt, 1974; Spencer, 1998; Stirling, 2007). We also draw on the insights of scholars of international management education, such as Koehn and Rosenau (2010), who coined the concept of ‘transnational competence’ and highlighted the particular importance of *emotional* competence in fostering strategic transnational action.

Transnational trade union education: a contested field

Spencer (1998: 166) suggests three purposes of union education: equipping members and representatives with the *tools* they need to act, educating them about labour-related *events and issues*, and evolving their constructive *ideas and values* about unionism and class consciousness. In other words, the aim is to develop *skills* that enable and support union action, *knowledge* about specific and wider issues and *attitudes* that provide motivations to act (Forrester, 2010; Stirling, 2002; Taylor, 2007). Similarly, Kurzer et al. (2006) distinguish three functions of union education, mediating between different interests (*Vermittlungsfunktion*), generating insights (*Servicefunktion*) and creating meaning for action (*sinnstiftende Funktion*). Union education ‘helps to sustain and build a “labour culture” – an alternative perception of events and society’ (Spencer, 1998: 166).

This approach, also called ‘action orientation’, is central to labour education (Bürgin, 2014; Dera, 2006). Action can change reality: ‘there is no transformation without action’ (Freire, 2002: 87). Critical-emancipatory education is rooted in radical educational philosophy and owes much to Freire (2002) and Negt (1974). Both see emancipation as a learning process for liberation from dependencies and subordination while increasing social justice, autonomy and freedom. Indeed, ‘there is an urgent need for education to be critical and emancipatory’ in order to challenge the neoliberal proposition that There Is No Alternative (TINA) to capitalism, its exploitation and alienation of labour power and other natural resources. Critical pedagogy builds on human sufferings, fears, hopes, dreams and utopian visions (Apple et al., 2009; Scherr, 2005); it thus seeks fundamental structural change.

Predominant in trade union education are, however, less radical, more reform-seeking philosophies (Sarbo and Wang, 2004), which support labour representatives in accommodating to

existing social, economic and political structures rather than challenging them (Forrester, 2010; Novelli and Ferus-Comelo, 2010; Salt et al., 2000). Thus, a field of tension exists between 'education for compliance' and 'education for transformation' (Cole, 2005).

We know from mobilization theory that the perception and politicization of injustice are essential for people to stand up and fight for their rights (Gamson, 1995; Kelly, 1999; McAdam et al., 2004). Behind these forms of 'emotional reason' (Sayer, 2011) are feelings of self-efficacy, confidence, urgency, equity, pride and dignity. These feelings are the motor for acting upon the knowledge and skills which workers acquire through critical awareness and evaluation. This inner drive is crucial, since knowledge about events and issues and having the skills to act upon them do not necessarily guarantee action. Union education must therefore also address workers' *attitudes*, because these provide the impetus to build 'critical consciousness' and engage in transformative action (Freire, 2002: 47).

Partly because of limited time and resources, partly also because of unions' strategic priorities and legal constraints regarding content and target group, union education has tended towards knowledge and competency training (Kirtton and Gatta, 2013; Kurzer et al., 2006; Stirling, 2002; Thomas, 2013). Educational activities are often designed to serve the 'core business' of collective bargaining and interest representation, whilst investment in wider political and social education has decreased (Bürgin, 2006; Dörre, 2002; Stirling, 2002). Given this increasingly utilitarian approach, union education loses its transformative potential (Salt, 2000).

One way to broaden the educational perspective consists in deepening the understanding of 'competences'. The idea of transnational competence (Koehn and Rosenau, 2010) combines a wide range of competencies needed to form transnational actors. Almost all these capabilities also feature in the literature on EWCs and transnational action. First, as in the ABB Alstom case, transnational action is not possible without representatives' capacity to build activist networks (Erne, 2008). Networking is an example of *functional* competence. Also, important is mastery of information and communication technology, crucial for common identity building in EWCs (Whittall et al., 2009). Second, solidarity requires empathy towards others (Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2003). Klemm et al. (2011) found that close and trusting connections inhibit EWC members from 'biting' one another. Empathy, closeness and trust are a matter of *emotional* competence. In addition, Bicknell (2007: 113) argues that 'talk' may help labour resist management attempts to engage in 'whipsawing'. Cross-cultural *communicative* competence is also vital for EWC delegates to overcome national barriers (Miller et al., 2000; Stirling and Tully, 2004). These delegates must be familiar with the legal framework at European and national level in order to know their rights. Another case of *analytic* competence concerns EWC members' understanding of leadership strategies of businesses and unions (Thomas, 2013). With such knowledge in mind, transnational labour representatives can identify opportunities for EWCs to intervene (Martínez Lucio and Weston, 2000). Finally, transnational action also requires *creative/imaginative* competence, for instance, regarding working with the media (Matos, 2015) and social movements (Novelli, 2011), as well as in relation to the organization of education and training activities (Stroud, 2011).

The five competencies identified by Koehn and Rosenau, however, appear insufficient for union education that aims at liberating labour from oppression and exploitation. Föhrer (2015a) therefore suggests including a *transformative* competence that develops workers' ideology, emancipation, wisdom, vision and spirit. Lévesque et al. (2013) suggest that the labour movement is in need of such transformative capabilities; these are vital for solidarity building, as solidarity originates from a 'generosity of spirit' (Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2003: 161), since it is not only common interests, mutual dependency and other forms of rational reasoning that spur solidarity. Collaboration that evolves from the mind results in what Klemm et al. (2011) define as 'interest coalition' and Fetzner (2008) calls 'risk community'. Rational considerations may be part of solidarity, but they are not its source.

EWC training at European level

The ETUI, an autonomous branch of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), is the main provider of union education at EU level. In 2014–15, it offered 60 educational activities and organized about 30 additional ad-hoc in-house EWC training courses in particular multinationals. Approximately 2,000 participants pass through ETUI's educational activities every year, including around 600 EWC members. A survey of 76 national union representatives participating in the ETUI Education Conference 2013 found that the quality of its educational activities is high (Föhrer, 2015a).

Given the diversity of educational requirements, the overall mission to 'support, strengthen and stimulate' the European labour movement (ETUI, 2013: 5) is a challenging task. To progress the EU social dimension, the ETUI aims to develop a European trade union identity, which should reflect the EU motto 'united in diversity'. The ETUI also promotes education as a strategic tool that is essential for unions to achieve their goals from local to supranational level (Demaître, 2013; ITC-ILO and ETUI, 2013). Its mission statement thus addresses both labour ideology and labour interests, thereby seeming to point to the notion of 'emotional reason' (Sayer, 2011). How well do the actual training programmes fit this mission statement?

Knowledge, attitudes and skills in the ETUI education programmes

In March 2013, ETUI launched three learning pathways, one of which is reserved for EWC members and other worker representatives in European Companies (SEs). The EWC pathway outlines a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes intended to make EWC representatives fit for their work. It also distinguishes different stages based on experience – beginner (EWC 1), intermediate (EWC 2) and advanced (EWC 3+) – with specified teaching and learning contents (Table 1).

[Table 1 about here]

The unequal emphasis on knowledge, skills and attitudes is striking. The acquisition of knowledge takes up almost half the space, and nearly as much is allocated to skills. In contrast, attitudes play only a minor role (eight subjects). Hence, there appears to be a hierarchy of facts, functions and feelings. Learning facts seems to be considered the most important and developing feelings the least. Hence the 'heart and soul' elements are sidelined and the 'mind' is put at the centre of ETUI educational activities: knowledge is followed by skills and attitudes. This is not in line with Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives to which the ETUI (2013) itself refers. However, the kind of education required is a matter not only of quantity and structure, but also of quality. Therefore, the skills and attitudes offered may be sufficient to make effective and efficient transnational labour representatives, whereas knowledge may not.

The EWC pathway does not entail knowledge on mobilization theory. Thus, company-level representatives are not made aware that the key to transformative collective action is the perception of injustice, power and pace. Training begins with knowledge of the legal framework, whereas knowledge on how to be proactive, to innovate and to drive change is left for more advanced stages (3+). New EWC members are confronted first with the plethora of structural constraints to which they are expected to adapt and 'co-manage'. As a result, EWC novices are not put in the position of creators who aim at overcoming whatever boundaries are presented to them. It also seems inappropriate that campaign management is not taught to EWC members, whereas it is included in the ETUI learning pathway for EU-level union officials. EWCs can be a space from which joint cross-border campaigns and other actions arise. An increased ability of EWCs to conduct transnational campaigns would enhance their European (labour) identity and contribute to the making of a European system of industrial relations (Hann, 2010).

The ETUI appears to have difficulties in clearly defining affective aspects. The list of attitudes sounds more like a mixture of skills, characteristics and aptitudes than ways of thinking. Missing is an

explicit specification of labour's values (such as solidarity) across Europe. In order to put mobilization theory into practice, the concepts of justice and power need additional educational space for theoretical clarification and application, as much as other common values like democracy, equality and liberty. Moreover, it is questionable why EWC members are supposed to 'avoid conflicts': fear of confrontation and rather reactive behaviour seem inbuilt in the pathway, as opposed to developing self-confidence and proactivity to initiate conflicts with management, if necessary. Creating behavioural patterns of reaction and avoidance contradicts the knowledge area where EWCs are envisioned as a 'proposing and innovating body'. Avoiding conflicts for the sake of interpersonal and inter/intra-organizational harmony is surely a road to concession bargaining. The appropriate attitude for EWC members would rather be courage to undertake conflicts and persistence to see them through. After all, labour relations are not about the suppression but about the articulation of conflict (Currie et al., 2016). Although some of the skills mentioned in the pathway involve initiative, innovation and intuition, which may in turn foster transformative power, the attitudes included in the pathway appear too defensive to motivate participants to push for transformative change.

EWC training in Germany

In Germany, the central union confederation, the DGB, does not offer EWC training and leaves the field to its affiliates. Our investigation therefore focuses on its two largest member unions, IGM and *ver.di*. Both offer EWC seminars as part of their annual education programme as well as ad hoc seminars tailored to the demands of specific EWCs, called in-house seminars. Neither union has produced a formal EWC learning pathway comparable to that of the ETUI however.

In the programmes of the *ver.di* education agencies, b+b (*Bildung und Beratung*) and GPB (*GewerkschaftsPolitische Bildung*), EWC-related topics played a rather marginal role before 2015. A 5-day language course to improve delegates' English skills was scheduled in 2003 and 2006. In 2004, 2005 and 2011, b+b offered a 5-day introductory EWC course. Between 2007 and 2009, between six and eight seminars for European and world works councils were listed. Since 2012 however, EWC-related seminars have been absent from the annual course programmes. Instead, the union's sectoral subdivisions request tailor-made EWC courses from b+b on an ad hoc basis, as multi-divisional courses are more difficult to fill. Although *ver.di* does not produce statistics on these ad hoc training activities, its union official in charge of EWCs estimates that it is likely that five or six take place each year.

In contrast, EWC-related activities have played a notable role in IGM education programmes ever since the adoption of the EWC directive in 1994; this mirrors the larger presence of multinationals in the manufacturing sector. The programme started with one basic EWC seminar in 1995 and has increased to seven different courses since 2013. Besides the 3-day introductory seminar on founding an EWC, there are seminars on optimizing its practice and on intercultural competence, and four English-language courses. However, the education department does not offer tailor-made activities for particular EWCs; rather, these are organized either directly by the IGM department in charge of EWCs or by the ETUI.

Knowledge, attitudes and skills in German union education programmes

Ver.di (2007) defines education in terms of providing knowledge and skills in order to enable participants to identify connections between the economic and the social world. The union does not appear to pay explicit attention to attitudes in its understanding of union education. Yet it wants its members to become 'emancipated, confident' people who can influence social processes 'democratically, creatively and effectively'; and to do so, members need to 'combine knowledge, thinking, feeling and willingness' (*ver.di*, 2007: 17). Given the neglect of attitudes in its education programmes, *ver.di* perhaps considers that these attitudes will develop spontaneously, such as the willingness to act in solidarity and initiate or participate in mobilizations.

IGM (2014) aims to develop knowledge and skills with the aim of facilitating occupational competence and efficiency. The union realises that individual attitudes are vital, viewing these as ‘the basis of orientation, evaluation and motivation’. Reflection on attitudes is therefore always included in their educational activities. Interestingly however, no reference is made to collective attitudes; and even if attitudes appear to receive a dedicated space in IGM education, they do not yet seem to be valued on a par with knowledge and skills. This hierarchy is also visible in the union’s 10 guidelines for union education where ‘new knowledge and action’ is mentioned first, and ‘work on attitudes’ is the second point. The hierarchy between knowledge and skills, on the one hand, and attitudes, on the other, seems to contradict the aim to utilize education as an organizing tool: ‘head and heart must be in unison so that the hand writes down the name on the declaration of membership’ (Kehrbaum, 2015: 1). By saying this, IGM underpins the notion that ‘emotional reason’ (Sayer, 2011) triggers action. Hence, unlike *ver.di*, IGM expresses awareness of the centrality of attitudes in union education to enable transformative action. Nevertheless, it has not yet mainstreamed this awareness. As neither *ver.di* nor IGM has any structured description of EWC training comparable to the ETUI learning pathway, it is difficult to assess which, and to what extent, knowledge, attitudes and skills are actually anticipated.

EWC training in Ireland

The ICTU (2013a) has not yet offered any EWC training, although its Education and Training Committee has been working since 2013 on formulating educational activities for company-level workers’ representatives. Instead, it has referred most EWC-related activities to the ETUI.

The largest affiliate, SIPTU, is not very active in the field either, although its members participate in approximately 30 EWCs. In 2012, the union failed to replace its only EWC educator after his retirement. SIPTU held only one EWC seminar in 2015, which was organized by its manufacturing division. However, the union decided to revitalize its EWC training activities. Accordingly, its research and training institute, IDEAS, launched an EU-financed project on EWC training in cooperation with other European unions. The second largest Irish union, the public sector union IMPACT, does not offer any EWC training. The retail workers’ union, Mandate, has at least two representatives on the Tesco EWC. These are coordinated by the union’s head of industrial relations, who may refer them to ICTU for training activities. UNITE, which is headquartered in London but is active in Ireland, North and South, is currently the only union that can be called active in EWC training. It runs a week-long EWC course every quarter in its education centre in Esher Place (UK), open not only to UNITE members but also to EWC members from other countries and unions. In addition, UNITE offers specific seminars, for example, on the recast EWC Directive.

Knowledge, attitudes and skills in Irish union education programmes

As in Germany, union education programmes in Ireland concentrate on developing knowledge, skills and competencies. Activists are equipped with the tools they need for their daily activities as local representatives, for example in collective bargaining, labour law, occupational health and safety, and project management. Only very few course descriptions indicate that social inequalities and discriminations are discussed, mostly through the subjects of equality and diversity. Given the official educational focus on knowledge and skills, even these topics are probably seen in analytic and functional terms rather than emotionally for developing attitudes.

Some Irish labour educators, like the IDEAS expert we interviewed, might argue that labour representatives develop values like solidarity and fairness ‘on the job’ through their daily union work. This cannot be taken for granted though, as another SIPTU tutor stated the opposite, maintaining that the membership often lacks emotional investment in what is happening to brothers and sisters.

The ICTU (2014) supports in theory Sayer's concept of 'emotional reason'. As union education in Ireland neglects the development of 'heart and soul' elements however, union educational activities appear ill-prepared to foster workers' attitudes towards transnational solidarity and transformative collective action. Correspondingly, the IMPACT General Secretary told us that he believes that Irish unions' overall educational challenge is to form people's attitude towards collectivism. This means, conversely, that union education in Ireland has so far failed to transform the neoliberal advocacy for individualism. In Mandate, attitudes regarding building the union and solidarity are addressed on the courses, but other unions do not seem to do so.

In conclusion, EWC training activities in Ireland are much less developed than in Germany, reflecting scarce resources, lack of institutional support for works councils and the peripheral location of Ireland in the European economy. UNITE is the only union that has included an introductory EWC seminar in its educational programme. SIPTU and ICTU are in the process of (re-)building their EWC training efforts. Because of the lack of transformative knowledge and attitudes in official union education goals, it is questionable whether the new courses will offer significant progress in improved cross-border collaboration. At times, this deficit may be compensated by tutors who are committed to politicizing social injustices in a transnational sphere, as in the ABB Alstom Power case. Nevertheless, the lack of appreciation of mobilization theory in unions' learning pathways and course outlines is a strong indicator of the lack of engagement with its insights in practice.

Why has EWC education not been used as a transformative tool?

Our study has shown that the key difference between the EU-level, German and Irish EWC union education programmes – unequal resources – cannot explain why the capacity of all programmes to foster transnational action has remained limited. Whereas the right to training included in the recast directive must be welcomed, the lack of any transformative nature in EWC training cannot be attributed to unequal resources. The ETUI, *ver.di* and IGM have far more resources available for EWC training than their Irish counterparts; but EWC education in all cases seems to face similar problems, namely, assigning priority to technical knowledge and skills at the expense of transformative knowledge and attitudes.

Unequal resources

Since 2012, the ETUI has received around €3 million annually from the Commission for its educational programmes. Of this, the ETUI allocates almost €400,000 to EWC training. It is also noteworthy that 'until now, the Commission [has] never refused or suggested something about [ETUI] topics and political choices'. However, the constraint of a yearly grant, and hence of annual business planning, prevents the ETUI from a longer course cycle and thus a higher cost-efficient use of resources. Moreover, given the finite nature of resources, the demand for EWC courses exceeds what ETUI can deliver. The ETUI also receives funding from the ETUC European Worker Participation Fund (EWPF), which obliges board-level employee representatives in European companies to donate a considerable part of their remuneration to fund research and training activities.

In contrast, the ICTU lost its annual grant for its Education, Training and Advisory Service after the Irish government abandoned social partnership and decided in 2011 to dissolve the Training and Employment Authority *Foras Áiseanna Saothair* (FÁS), where employer and union representatives played an important role in the governing body. Furthermore, Irish unions have not created a fund to finance training and research akin to the EWPF and the DGB's Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, even if a few Irish worker representatives are also paid for their work on company- or state boards. Because of its reduced income, ICTU had almost halved its staff in Dublin and Belfast from 47 to 25 by the end of 2011. This had a negative effect on its education activities, as officials' role in education is secondary to their many other duties. In contrast, the education colleges of SIPTU, Mandate and UNITE do not

appear to have suffered dramatic cutbacks following the crisis and the end of Irish social partnership. This, however, cannot explain why EWC training has a very different standing in these unions.

German unions receive substantial public funding for political education; but, although the ETUI did not report any political interference in its course programmes by the European Commission, the German *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung* recently refused to fund a *ver.di* seminar on neoliberalism for political reasons. However, German codetermination laws, which oblige employers to cover training costs of works councillors, provide unions' education centres with additional income. Finally, German unions also invest a notable proportion of their members' (substantial) contributions in their educational centres, namely, 4.3 percent in the case of IGM and 1.5 percent in the case of *ver.di*. SIPTU, which runs the biggest education programme in Ireland, dedicates 2.9 percent of its (relatively modest) membership dues to union education. The ETUI and IGM have more resources available than *ver.di* and the Irish unions. Despite this difference however, all unions share the same problem, namely, a limited transformative character of EWC education.

Consistently narrow pedagogical focus

In all our cases, education concentrates on developing knowledge and skills, but marginalizes attitudes. Even though the ETUI includes attitudes in its EWC learning pathway, the number is very small and the selection sometimes appears confused with character traits and skills. IGM refers to attitudes but seems to consider them less important than knowledge and skills. In Ireland, not only is EWC education almost absent but unions seem much more involved in vocational training activities designed to upskill or reskill people for companies' needs than in transformative social and political education. In the contents of the ETUI pathway, there is no reference to knowledge of mobilization theory either. Furthermore, the sequence of knowledge provision is important for creating in EWC members a transformative as opposed to an accommodative mindset. Confronting new EWC delegates first and foremost with constraining legal texts and structures may inhibit their ability to develop their own potential to question and overcome these constraints. Incidentally, the chair of a recently established EWC admitted that being confronted with very ambiguous legal texts at his first ETUI training seminar left him not only somewhat lost in defining what transnational issues EWCs can influence but also very unsure about the legal, industrial and political channels EWCs can pursue to challenge company decisions (Föhrer, 2015b).

Structural pressures and limited individual and organizational commitment

The most important function of EWC educational activities is the opportunity for representatives from different companies to exchange information. EWC members, however, do not always take these opportunities. In 2014, for example, because of insufficient applicants, neither of IGM's two introductory seminars and only one of four EWC workshops took place. EWC members usually have very diverse functions, and this means that they may have priorities other than transnational work that they consider more urgent. They seem too busy locally with their day-to-day duties and managing themselves within capitalist structures rather than attempting to transform them. This assessment is supported by an ICTU survey of 905 union officials, organizers and office-holders, which showed that technical modules would interest them most (ICTU, 2013b: 113). Although some skills may be transferable to work at transnational level, Irish trade unionists did not seem to ask for European and other transformative seminars. Instead, their preference for legal knowledge as well as skills training in workplace issues indicates that union members see themselves as 'co-managers' and local fire-fighters rather than agents of social transformation. Unions' pedagogical focus on knowledge and skills can thus also be seen as a reproduction of potential participants' interests in education for accommodation.

In addition, not all transnational labour representatives are interested in training outside their company. Because of fear of losing their jobs or of hampering their career prospects, some European works councillors were, according to an ETUI tutor, adopting a common management view according to which training is something internal to the company, such as a lecture by the Chief Finance Director on how to understand company annual reports.

Individual commitment to EWC training is also a result of people's identity. As we noted earlier, depending on the pedagogical focus, union education can support participants in accommodation or compliance as much as in transformation. Freire (2002) distinguishes between critical and naïve thinkers. Whereas the former aim for continuous transformation of the present in the pursuit of the vocation of humanization (Zeuner, 2012), the latter prefer accommodation to the present as an improved version of the past (Hürtgen, 2008). In order to enhance transnational labour action, however, EWC training needs to form more justice-oriented citizens, that is, transformers, for which critical-emancipatory pedagogy and a focus on the full educational triangle of knowledge, skills and attitudes is central. This can also be learned from the ABB Alstom Power case, where French and German union members were equipped with a transformative cocktail of practical activist and transformative training experiences that they had acquired in and outside the labour movement – an 'activist-ABC' (Cox and Nilsen, 2014: 10). This enhanced their capability and determination to overcome structural hurdles through transnational action (Erne, 2008).

Finally, EWCs are also underperforming because of the lack of appropriate union support for more transformative education. Given members' apparent educational preference for accommodation to given structures, unions do not seem driven to shape the demand for EWC training with a view to transformation. Unions may fear losing educational business to competing unions, commercial consultants and other organizations in the EWC training market (Föhrer, 2015a). Consultants, who are seen as rather business-inspired, are especially perceived as a threat, as they may use their 'non-union' label to convince employers to cooperate with them with a view to creating management allies. In Germany, for example, the unions face strong competition from a major private provider of EWC training, the *Institut zur Fortbildung von Betriebsräten* (ifb, Institute for Works Council Further Education), which claims to be non-political and attracts EWC training 'customers' through 'free starter kits' including legal textbooks. Once labour representatives are lost to private consultancies, according to an IGM expert, they are difficult to get back. Therefore, unions' commitment to assisting EWCs in their development process from the beginning and beyond is decisive for the effectiveness of members and bodies.

Conclusion

The very unequal resources available to the EWC training programmes of the ETUI, *ver.di* and the IGM on one side, and their Irish counterparts on the other cannot explain why EWC education has so far had such a limited transformative impact on transnational union action. Instead, all these EWC programmes seem to suffer from a very narrow pedagogical focus on technical skills and knowledge as well as a limited individual and organizational commitment.

Our review of the insights from critical-emancipatory pedagogy, mobilization theory and strategic management suggests that transformative, transnational collective action requires education programmes that address all dimensions of the educational triangle of knowledge, attitudes and skills equally. So far, however, this has not been mainstreamed in European unions' EWC education programmes. Instead, EWC training at the ETUI, and more so within the German unions *ver.di* and IGM and their Irish counterparts, focuses primarily on developing technical knowledge and skills. Unionists' hearts and souls, however, receive the least attention. Knowledge and skills are important. However, to increase the effectiveness of EWCs and revitalize national and European labour movements, workers and their agents must go beyond this dichotomy by giving a higher priority to attitudes and by making them explicit and equal areas of learning. Both mobilization and solidarity require 'emotional reason' (Sayer, 2011). Solidarity originates from compassion for others

and the understanding of certain values, particularly 'generosity of spirit' (Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2003: 161).

Some trade unionists in Ireland and Germany acknowledge that the education of attitudes is vital for the future. Irish unions' challenge is 'to get people thinking in terms of collectivism', a leading IMPACT official told us. Deliberation on values is particularly important for *ver.di*, because neoliberalism has altered values through increased alienation and precariousness in society, according to the head of trade union education at the *ver.di* GPB. In his view, education involves an interconnection of equally important areas of *Wissen* (knowledge), *Wollen* (will) and *Können* (skills). These statements underlie a particular individual commitment to union education. Mainstreaming a transformative understanding of EWC training, however, requires a corresponding curriculum and organizational commitment, and hence, our focus is on *formal* labour education programmes.

A pedagogical approach and praxis that facilitate both critical analysis of the present and emancipatory debates about utopian alternatives of the world of work and human society seem crucial. EWC training must address labour representatives' perceptions of powerlessness and transform their emotional crises into proactivity and determination to liberate themselves and others, through transnational collaboration, from the structures that have been causing the very crises. Thus, transformative EWC training would eventually address representatives' head, heart, hand and soul with a view to creating innovative collective structures and a spirit of new labour internationalism. By putting heart and soul first in transnational collective action, labour would also contribute to the goal of humanization, of becoming 'more fully human' (Freire, 2002: 44). As long as union education does not consciously unite EWC members' knowledge, attitudes and skills however, labour representatives are geared for accommodation to existing economic, political and social structures rather than for transforming them. This, however, is more easily said than done, given the structural pressures that shape both individual EWC members' and unions' organizational commitments as EWC training users and providers, respectively. And yet, one should not forget that transformation is possible.

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Author biographies:

Bianca Föhrer is a researcher at the UCD School of Business, Dublin, Ireland.

Roland Erne is Jean Monnet Chair of European Integration and Employment Relations at the UCD School of Business, Dublin, Ireland.

Table 1. EWC learning pathway

Stages	1	2	3, 4, 5...
KNOWLEDGE (26 subjects)^a			
<i>1. Legal framework</i>			
Legislation applying to EWCs; EWC agreements; Employee representation systems; Directive 2002 on information/consultation	+	+	
Other directives: SE, site relocation...		+	
1989 Charter of Fundamental Social Rights	+		
<i>2. Company framework</i>			
Structure of the company; Social mapping of the company	+	+	
Linking national and European issues	+	+	+
Financial and economic situation		+	+
<i>3. Trade union framework</i>			
ETUC; ETUFs: Role and responsibilities; Coordinators: Role and responsibilities; National organizations	+		
<i>4. EWC functioning^b</i>			
Multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism; Good communication; Effective coordination	+		
Effective application of EWC agreement	+	+	
Good search and use of information; Task planning and organizing; Reporting; Expert support; Creating European strategies for common issues; Rights articulation: EWC rights/national rights	+	+	+
Good response to consultation		+	+
Change anticipation strategies; EWC as a proposing and innovating body			+
<i>5. EWC action and trade union strategies</i>			
Monitoring national and local consultation procedures and trade union rights; EWC and sector coherence; National and local collective agreements; Identification of EWC and/or national issues; Action plan	+	+	+
<i>6. Topics EWCs might deal with at European company level</i>			
Financial data; Social minimum standards (IFA, CSR, OECD Guidelines...)	+	+	+
Health and safety; Sectoral overview and company strategies; Employees' data protection; Equal opportunities		+	+
Vocational training			+
SKILLS (23 subjects)			
Communication and interaction skills	+	+	
Linguistic skills; Negotiation skills; Working skills; Striking the balance between national and European; Research, analytical and assessing skills; Strategic planning	+	+	+
Anticipating and managing changes		+	+
Project elaborating and managing; Initiative and innovation			+
ATTITUDES (8 subjects)			
Acknowledgement of diversity and equity; Trade union values applying; Open and flexible mind; Tolerance, respect, avoiding and resolving conflicts; Competence sharing and delegating; Resilience; Building a common transnational body; Strengthening trade unions and ETUFs	+	+	+

Source: ETUI (2013), different subjects are separated by semicolon; own illustration

^a excluding the 13 skill-related subjects in the EWC functioning knowledge section

^b including the 13 skill-related subjects in the EWC functioning knowledge section