



TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

A METHOD MANUAL ABOUT TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION



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European Parliament: page 13 (Giampiero Alhadeff), 25 **SAMAK**: page 23 **ITUC**: page 27 **IF Metall**: page 34 **HRF**: page 35
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1 INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION	6
1.1 Trade union-political cooperation in Sweden	7
1.2 Trade union-political cooperation in other countries	11
1.3 Trade union-political cooperation in international development cooperation	19
1.4 Wider arenas	22
1.5 Possible questions for global trade union-political cooperation	29
DEL 2 METHODS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION	33
2.1 How do we move on from here?	34
2.2 Starting and implementing an international project	37
2.3 Rights in focus	43
Links	46
Recommended reading	47

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Respect, trust and common values. This is the premise for our trade union-political cooperation in Sweden.

Through trade union-political cooperation trade unions influence policy and issues affecting the everyday lives of their members. The party gets support at workplaces, which strengthens its ability to pursue a sound policy and gain the confidence of workers.

In Sweden the trade unions were involved in the establishment of the Social Democratic Party, and trade union cooperation with this party is a natural part of the labour movement. It is one of the foundations of the structure of democracy and welfare in our country.

When we meet activists and organisations from other countries we are often asked about Swedish trade union-political cooperation. How does it work? What do you do? Do you have any tips? There is great curiosity about the method and the results it has achieved. Many people are inspired by the power that cooperation gives and see the potential for trade union-political cooperation in their own societies. We also see this potential – partly for trade union-political cooperation in other countries, partly for cross-border trade union-political cooperation at regional and global level.

Consequently, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the Olof Palme International Center have prepared this method manual in support of increased international trade union-political cooperation. The method manual describes trade union-political cooperation in Sweden and other countries, and it provides examples of the forms international trade union-political cooperation may take. What can parties and trade union organisations in other countries learn from us? And what can we learn from them? It also gives support to those of you who want to carry out trade union-political work in international development projects.

We hope that this method manual will contribute to developing trade union-political cooperation the world over. In that way we can strengthen the work for democracy and human rights, both at work and in society as a whole.

Wanja Lundby-Wedin



Jens Orback



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wanja Lundby-Wedin'.

Wanja Lundby-Wedin
President

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jens Orback'.

Jens Orback
Secretary General

Olof Palme International Center

PART 1

**INTERNATIONAL
TRADE UNION-
POLITICAL
COOPERATION**



1.1 TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION IN SWEDEN

“Social democracy and the trade unions are just two sides of the same large underclass movement”.

Hjalmar Branting, chairman of the Swedish Social Democratic Party on the formation of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) in 1898.

The first trade union demands in Sweden, as in other countries, grew from the conditions of the

working class in the industrial society of the 19th century. They were about reasonable remuneration for the work performed and the right to bargain for it. It was about working hours that left some hours over for a life of one's own, about financial protection in the event of illness or unemployment and pension when you no longer had the strength to work. Demands that today may seem obvious in Sweden, but at that time were more or less revolutionary, and still are

in many countries. The first trade unions were based on a vow, a vow that even today constitutes the foundation of all trade union work throughout the world:

”We solemnly vow never to sell our labour at a lower price or under worse conditions than we have promised each other. We promise each other this in the deepest realisation that if we all keep this promise the employer must pay.”

In Sweden too, workers’ demands for humane working conditions and the right to organise were met with violence and repression, both from the employers and the government. Trade union activists lost their jobs, were blacklisted, assaulted and imprisoned. As recently as in 1931, five strikers were shot dead by the military at a demonstration in Ådalen, Ångermanland.

However, the trade union movement grew in strength and spread slowly but surely throughout the country. It soon became clear that the struggle at workplaces was not sufficient to change society. The working class also needed a political voice, a voice that could challenge those in power where decisions were made – in parliament. So the trade unions joined together and formed the Swedish Social Democratic Party in 1889. Less than a decade later, in 1898, a country-wide organisation for Sweden’s trade unions was established, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO.

LO’s first constitution stipulated that the trade unions affiliated to LO were obliged to join the Social Democratic Party, which two years later was changed to an exhortation to join. At the 1909 Congress ”collective affiliation” was introduced. This made it possible for trade unions to collectively affiliate themselves and thus their members to the party, but with the possibility for individual members to opt out of membership of the party. In 1987 the Social Democratic Party Congress decided to discontinue collective affiliation and replace it with the individual membership that applies today. According to the decision, trade union-political cooperation must be based

on personal commitment, personal activity and personal membership. However, when collective affiliation ceased, trade unions were able to affiliate themselves with the Social Democratic Party locally, without the individual trade union members becoming party members.

Cooperation today

”Both branches of the labour movement are inseparable. But they are not identical. They have different tasks and may therefore arrive at different opinions on current issues. We have clear separate identities”.

Olof Palme, then Prime Minister and Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, at the Swedish Building Workers’ Union congress in 1984.

Today trade union-political cooperation between LO and the Social Democratic Party is established and well-organised. Social Democratic policy and ideology are part of LO and its affiliates’ trade union education programmes. Organisationally cooperation means that trade unions and the party participate in canvassing and other activities. The party also receives financial support from LO and its affiliates.

By getting more trade union members active in the party’s work the LO affiliates try to ensure that opinions and demands arising at workplaces

Eva Olovsson



Mikael Bogsjö



pass into the political debate and the decision-making process. An increasingly common way of organising trade union members politically is also to establish special Social Democratic workplace associations.

Eva Olovsson, trade union official for LO in central Norrland, relates that trade union-political cooperation with the Social Democrats is important for the LO District:

”Cooperation is well-established both regionally and locally in our municipalities. We often attend each other’s courses and we have regular meetings when we discuss current trade union and political issues. At the same time we try to get our members to be more active in politics by getting more people to join the party and by forming trade union Social Democratic associations,” says Eva Olovsson.

Mikael Bogsjö, Social Democratic Party official in Södra Älvsborg, in the west of Sweden, has similar experiences from the point of view of the party:

”Most of our collaboration is in the municipalities, between our local branches of the Social Democratic Party and the trade union branches of the LO affiliates. We also take part regularly in each other’s courses and have several trade union Social Democratic associations, organised by sector, and we are trying to establish more. Cooperation with the trade union is important to us, it gives us support at workplaces, which makes us stronger in the political work,” says Mikael Bogsjö.

Trade union-political cooperation in Sweden has always been motivated by the common interest of the trade union and the party: the trade unions need the party and the party needs the trade unions.

The ties between the political and the trade union parts of the labour movement mean that the employee perspective becomes a natural part of policy. The cooperation also builds on the LO and its affiliates sharing basic values with the Social Democratic Party. This does not mean that

LO agrees with the party on all current political issues. Opinions about the means that should be used to reach the goals may differ. The organisations also have separate roles. LO and its affiliates must represent their members’ interests. The Social Democratic Party must represent more groups than LO members, while at the same time dealing with situations that may arise in different parliamentary assemblies.

LO may carry on a dialogue on various issues with others apart from the Social Democrats. When the Social Democrats are not in Government it is important, for example, to be able to carry on talks with representatives of other parties as well to try and influence political decisions. However, there is a crucial difference between such temporary cooperation on various issues and the close ideological and long-term cooperation LO has with the Social Democrats.

LO-Sweden and the Swedish Social Democrats also have a long history of trade union-political cooperation on international issues. Important areas for cooperation have, for example, been the struggle against nuclear weapons and for disarmament, support for the anti colonial movements, solidarity with the people of South East Asia during the Vietnam war, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and against the former military dictatorships in Southern Europe and Latin America. LO and the party also cooperated in supporting the Polish trade unions in Solidarnosc and others who opposed the Communist oppression in Eastern Europe.

As an expression of that cooperation on international issues, both LO and the Social Democrats took part in the foundation of AIC, The International Centre of the Labour Movement, which later was renamed the Olof Palme International Center.

Challenges

Hardly anyone, not even the labour movement’s political opponents, deny that trade union-

political cooperation has had great significance for the strength that both LO and social democracy has had, and still has, in Sweden. LO has had the advantage of a more direct channel to municipal administrations, members of the Riksdag and governments than any other organisation. At the same time the large number of LO affiliates' members active in the party has meant that the party's policies have been influenced by the issues discussed at workplaces.

However, Swedish trade union-political cooperation is facing several challenges. The high level of class voting in Sweden in international terms is no longer a given. The percentage of members of LO affiliates that vote for the Social Democrats has fallen in the last elections, though they are still in the majority. Younger LO voters also believe considerably less in cooperation with the Social Democrats than older voters. At the same time there are fewer workers who are politically active, committed canvassers or nominated for political elected positions. Elected representatives in the LO affiliates devote less time to political work than they did previously.

The trade union organisations that are growing most are also those that organise white-collar workers and academics, the Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO), and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco). Both these organisations are without party-political affiliation and cooperate with different parties and organisations on the basis of their position on various issues.

Among those who are active in LO and its affiliates, as well as in the Social Democratic Party, there is still strong support for continued organised trade union-political cooperation. However, there are voices in the trade union movement that want to cooperate more with other parties, such as the Left Party. There are also Social Democrats who believe that close cooperation with LO makes it more difficult to cooperate with other important trade union organisations, such as TCO and Saco. The debate in Sweden has also

been influenced by the fact that LO's equivalents in Denmark and Norway have chosen to leave the former close collaboration with their countries' social democratic parties and take on a more independent role.

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, however, stresses that cooperation must partly be based on common values, which excludes the non-socialist groups, and partly that LO needs a party that is able to bring about real social changes, which means that collaboration with the Left Party is of no interest.

This is how the President of LO, Wanja Lundby-Wedin, expressed it when she was elected as President in 2000:

"For me it is natural that we must strengthen trade union-political cooperation. But we should not do so for nostalgic reasons. We should not even do it to help the party. We must do it for the sake of the LO membership. We must do it because the Social Democratic Party is the only party that has both the will and the power in the long term to pursue a policy that is in the interests of LO members.

Discuss:

- What examples are there of Swedish social changes that have taken place as a result of trade union-political cooperation?
- Should cooperation between LO and the Social Democratic Party be changed? If so, how? And why?



1.2 TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Norway

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO Norway) used to cooperate with the Norwegian Labour Party in a similar way as LO and the Swedish Social Democratic Party. LO Norway now has a freer role and is formally party-politically independent. They are still ideologically close to the Norwegian Labour Party and contribute financially to the party. However, LO Norway also gives financial contributions to the Socialist Left Party, which is a party more to the

left of social democracy but without the communist roots of the Swedish Left Party, for example. Some LO Norway affiliates have also contributed to the Centre Party, which in Norway is part of a red-green alliance.

Before the 2005 election in Norway LO Norway started a campaign in which the members were encouraged to talk about the political questions they thought were most important. When the LO members' demands were compiled, LO Norway asked all the political parties how they stood. LO

Norway got the greatest support from the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party. On the basis of this LO Norway decided to support the red-green alliance formed by these three parties. Attention was given in the election to the demands of LO Norway and the red-green alliance won. The Labour Party received more than 50 per cent of the LO Norway members' votes.

The model used by LO Norway has sometimes been called the Trondheim model in the debate, after the town in Norway where it was first tested. In simple terms, the model involves the trade union presenting its political demands and then giving its political support to the parties that then meet the demands. Ahead of the red-green alliance that emerged before the Swedish election to the Riksdag in 2010 there were some people who believed that LO Sweden should work according to the same model as in Norway. LO Sweden, however, said no to this, arguing that cooperation must rest on a long-term attunement of views, not on conditional support based on parties' position on various current issues.

Denmark

LO Denmark also has a history of close collaboration with the social democrats. In many ways it was even closer than in Sweden. For example, both LO Denmark and the party had the formal right to appoint two members of each other's leadership. The formal cooperation between LO Denmark and the Social Democrats ceased, however, through a decision at the LO Denmark congress in 1996. Instead, in the future LO Denmark would be prepared to collaborate with all political parties on matters where they were in agreement. As an important reason for discontinuing formal cooperation, LO Denmark stated that a majority of the members no longer voted for the Social Democrats and therefore the cooperation had lost its legitimacy. Some years later LO Denmark also stopped its financial contributions

to the social democrats. It was instead decided to use the money for their own political work to draw attention to LO's issues in the debate.

Despite the fact that there is no longer any formal cooperation, LO Denmark, like LO Norway, remains ideologically close to the social democrats. LO Denmark has also clearly taken a position in favour of a government led by the social democrats. Both LO Denmark and LO Norway also still participate in the Joint Committee of the Nordic Labour Movement (SAMAK) (see below).

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom too, formal relations between the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) have thinned out. The former system for trade union influence on Labour went much further than it ever did in Sweden. For example, Labour's party congresses had the "block voting system" that meant that trade union representatives could vote collectively on the basis of the size of their membership. Consequently, at Labour Party congresses representatives of the trade unions could hold more votes than the party members' elected representatives. This system was discontinued during Tony Blair's time as party leader.

The Labour politician Nita Clark was a former colleague of Tony Blair and herself has a background in the TUC. The reason the close ties between Labour and the TUC have thinned out is because of the trade unions' altered position in the United Kingdom, she believes:

"The trade union organisation rate fell drastically in the years of Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher. The trade union movement no longer represents a majority of the country's workers. Of course this has consequences, the party must seek broader alliances without on that account abandoning the cooperation with the trade union movement.

Nita Clark emphasises, however, that Labour

and the TUC still have close relations. They still meet to discuss current trade union and political issues while at local and regional level there is still some organisational cooperation, though in varying degrees. Trade union organisations still answer for a large proportion of Labour's funding and many workers are party members in that their trade union is affiliated to the party. When Ed Miliband was elected as new Labour leader in 2010 the votes from the trade union members were crucial. This trade union influence in the party is a matter of debate, however, and Ed Miliband has proposed that it be changed.

Giampiero Alhadeff, who is the Secretary General of the European Parliamentary Group of Labour Party, believes that during Tony Blair's period as party leader there were areas of disagreement between the Party and the trade unions on issues of great importance to them.

"The trade union side thought that Labour was not paying enough attention to protecting workers in an increasingly globalised world. Arguments between trade unions and Labour are nothing new and even in Tony Blair's period of office there were many areas of agreement," says Mr Alhadeff:

"We are family, and arguments in a family can be constructive. You can argue a lot with family, but it is still your family. Under Ed Miliband, there is a stronger dialogue between the trade unions and the party, a dialogue now more important than ever. We are in opposition, facing a

government which is bringing much destruction to our communities. We need to find a way forward from the crisis our societies and economies are facing and we need to convince our voters to give Labour a mandate at the next election.

"Ed Miliband is challenging the values on which UK society and economy are built. He is challenging "the something for nothing culture" and the "short term thinking" which has created much of the dysfunctionality we see in the UK and in the global economy, where profit today comes before jobs and before sustainable businesses. This is a challenge the trade unions welcome."

Belgium

The Belgian trade union movement is clearly divided according to political sympathies. In Belgium there are three different trade union central organisations each with their own political focus. One is close to the Christian Democrats, one cooperates with the social democrats and a third is more or less liberal. The Christian Democratic trade union confederation, CSC/ACV, is the largest.

Ann van Laer works at the CSC/ACV, but wants to tone down the party-political ties.

"We are keen on having good contacts with all political parties, not just the Christian Democrats, even though traditionally and historically we have been closer to them. For us it means that we come from a Christian and Christian Democratic tradition.

However, we do have members who sympathise with different parties, and we are not a Christian organisation in a confessional sense. You absolutely do not have to be a believing Christian to belong to the CSC/ACV. We have many Muslim members, for example.

All three trade union confederations in Belgium belong to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), as well as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). Traditionally there are close relations between the three trade



Giampiero Alhadeff



Ann van Laer

union central organisations, including within the framework of the tripartite collaboration established between the Belgian government, the trade unions and the employers.

South Africa

The South African freedom movement, now the government party, ANC, is based on a formal alliance between the ANC, the trade union central organisation COSATU and the Communist Party.

COSATU played a decisive role in the struggle for freedom against apartheid and has also functioned as a recruitment base for the ANC, which has meant that many former trade union leaders are now in the political leadership. COSATU stands very close to the ANC, which without doubt has contributed to ANC's major successes in the political elections.

Almost five million South Africans belong to trade unions, giving an organisation rate of about 30 per cent. The trade union influence on policy has contributed to the introduction of some labour statutes on working hours and holidays, as well as minimum wages for farm workers and domestic servants. Today, however, the relationship between the party and the trade unions is not always problem-free. Privatisations and cutbacks in the public sector have met with strong criticism from the trade union movement and cooperation between the ANC and COSATU has been under increasing strain.

In March 2010 the Palme Center arranged a trade union-political cooperation conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the Swedish Industrial and Metalworkers' Union IF Metall and the Social Democrats met the ANC and the South African trade union movement. The ANC member of parliament Thulasi Nxesi, who himself has a trade union background, was at the conference. He said that the ANC and the trade union movement must find new independent roles at the same time as they must continue to cooperate on common goals:

"We were joined in the fight against apartheid but now more than before we must ask ourselves how we treat each other as independent organisations. It is about promoting honest debates and respecting each other's independence," said Mr Nxesi.

"At the same time, the South African revolution is incomplete and continued collaboration between the trade union movement and the ANC is necessary to bring about change. But the trade unions must never become a transport company for the government. That would lose them credibility among their members. A progressive trade union movement must also develop independent programmes that are based on the needs of the working class."

USA

The USA has the world's largest free trade union movement in terms of membership. Nor does the trade union movement hesitate to take a political stand and it is definitely a force to be reckoned with in American politics, despite having been weakened in the last decades. For example, it was hard hit by the right-wing Republican government and by deliberate anti-union strategies on the part of many employers. In recent years, however, there are indications of a break in the trend. An increasingly aggressive right and the attempts of Republican governors to push through anti-union legislation has led to renewed trade union activity in many states. The American trade unions play an important part in the Democratic party's funding and in the grass-roots work ahead of elections. In the 2008 Presidential election the trade union took an active part in Barack Obama's campaign and more than two thirds of trade union members voted for Obama as president. In several states the trade union also took the initiative for referendums, for example on raising the minimum wage.

The USA's trade union movement is today dominated by two central organisations. The

largest is the AFL-CIO, with about eleven million members. The second, Change to Win, has about five million members and was formed in 2005 as a breakaway group from the AFL-CIO. The split mainly concerned internal trade union issues and both organisations are politically close to the Democrats.

Since 2005 there is also "Working America", a trade union network that also conducts political campaigns. Working America is allied to the AFL-CIO and aims to recruit employees who do not have any trade union at their workplace and who are therefore not organised in a trade union. The network has about one million members and conducts political campaigns to support trade union demands. Working America was very active in the elections to Congress in 2006 when they employed grass-roots activities to support candidates close to the trade unions. They also participated in Obama's health care reform campaign.

The political left in the USA has long been weak. The left-wing forces that exist mainly work in the Democratic party. In the US Congress, Democrats that have more left-wing tendencies are grouped in the "Progressive Caucus" that has about seventy members. Similar groupings or fractions are common in American politics, since it is difficult to achieve success through newly formed parties because of the two-party system and the system of personal elections in single-member constituencies.

Social democratic parties in Europe and the rest of the world have a long history of close relations with the Democrats, since that party houses the forces closest to social democracy. The Democrats also take part in the Global Progressive Forum (see page X). However, there is one Social Democratic Party in the USA that is also a member of the Socialist International, the Democratic Socialists of America, DSA. The DSA is a very small party without any particular trade union connection and mainly works to support social democratic candidates or proposals in the Democratic party. In the USA there are also some

other small left-wing parties, but due to their size and lack of political support are of no political significance.

Pakistan

Text: Frida Perjus

During Pakistan's 63-year history the country has been a military dictatorship for more than half the time. Pakistan has the world's sixth largest population, half of whom live below the poverty line. In addition, 20 million people were seriously affected by the floods in 2010. It is an understatement to say that Pakistan's labour movement faces an enormous challenge.

One of the greatest threats to trade union organisation in Pakistan is the rapid privatisation following the International Monetary Fund's and the World Bank's structural adjustment programmes. The privatisations meant that one million workers lost their regular employment and were instead employed on contracts that expire after a couple of months. After that the employer decides if the employee is to be given a new contract. Contract employment is a way

for employers to avoid giving workers rights such as sick leave, holiday and parental leave. They also mean that workers lose the right to a pension. Contract employment also makes it difficult for workers to protest against poor working conditions and organise trade unions, since that would mean risking non-renewal of their contract.

Another major challenge for the trade unions in Pakistan is the informal economy, in which 73 per cent of the labour force is found. A large proportion of these "informal workers" work in their homes and have no direct contact with the market or the employer. These are very poor people who are employed by sub-contractors who pay far below the minimum wage. These workers are not seen in the statistics either and are not protected by any laws.

The Labour Education Foundation (LEF) is a trade



Khalid Mahmood

union umbrella organisation for 39 different trade unions that together organise more than 60 000 workers throughout the country. The LEF trains workers in organisation, human rights and trade union-political issues.

The LEF cooperates with the left-oriented party Labour Party Pakistan (LPP). Khalid Mahmood, the Director of the LEF, believes that the trade union movement must also be political.

”The only way to prevent the development we are now seeing in the labour market is to act politically, to involve progressive political parties in the issue. Working together with political parties is not only our strategy but also our goal. We are fighting to get more workers involved in politics,” says Khalid Mahmood.

Even if the LEF cooperates with the LPP, workers, particularly women workers, are severely under-represented in Pakistani politics. The LEF is trying to involve workers politically through Labour Community Projects in which the LEF gives workers from the informal sector a platform to discuss and organise

themselves to safeguard their rights. This is often done in the form of study circles. It is often impossible to organise these workers directly at the workplace since a majority work at home and in so many different sectors. Consequently they are organised on a territorial basis. A majority of the participants in the projects are women who are home-based workers. Through the projects these workers get in contact with other workers in the same situation and can organise themselves to demand better working conditions. The LEF also encourages them to discuss political issues and many become involved in local politics.

At the beginning of March 2011 the LEF received the European Silver Rose Award in the European Parliament. The price was received by Khalid Mahmood. Olof Palme International Center has worked with the LEF for a long time for human rights and democracy in Pakistan, and nominated the organisation for the award.

The Philippines

Text: Frida Perjus

The central trade union organisation APL was established in 1996 and calls its strategy ”Social Movement Unionism”, which among other things means that they work as a trade union, socially and politically. The APL’s goals right from the start were to establish a workers’ party and in 1998 they decided to support the formation of the progressive party, Akbayan, which also cooperates with the Swedish Social Democrats and Olof Palme International Center. The APL is also involved in LEARN (Labor Education and Research Center) which is the equivalent of the Swedish Workers’ Educational Association.

Josua Mata, the Secretary General of APL, believes that though Akbayan is not a pure workers’ party, it is

In the Philippines the trade union movement APL cooperates with the party Akbayan, which includes joint campaigns to put pressure on those in power.





Josua Mata

the only party in the Philippines that is progressive and that works in the interests of the workers.

“I come from a generation of activists who thought that the elections were just a fake. But we started to rethink, since we saw that there is no better way than to try and take over the elec-

tions and win through politics and the system that already existed. The workers need to take over the political arena. It was on the basis of this idea that we started supporting Akbayan, it was quite simply the best party to try and reform.”

Both Akbayan and the APL are independent organisations and the party only recruits individual members. To settle conflicts and agree on how to cooperate there is, however, a joint working committee, the Labour Caucus. Several of the APL’s leaders are also elected members of Akbayan’s party executive. The APL also encourages its members every year to collect the equivalent of a day’s wages for a trade union election fund that is then used for campaigns for Akbayan. Thus it is the APL that contributes financially to Akbayan and never the other way round.

“This means that the APL is not responsible to Akbayan but that Akbayan must work for and support the APL,” says Josua Mata. We have learned from other countries where the party has taken over leadership while the trade union has had to step back. This means that the party loses its ties with the workers and starts to pursue policies that are far from being in their interest, such as support for privatisation.

Akbayan and the APL collaborate closely to put pressure on the government through joint campaigns, for example. They also work together to change labour legislation. If Akbayan makes a decision or agrees to proposed legislation that the APL does not agree with, it is not a problem to criticise Akbayan openly.

“We are there to put pressure on the party. Akbayan is not always as critical of the government’s

policy as the APL. They must be more diplomatic so as to create alliances and reach better positions in the leading class in the Philippines.”

From 2002 the social democrats in Uppsala had the main responsibility for working with the Philippine labour movement to develop trade union-political cooperation between Akbayan and the APL. There is more about this below.

Discuss:

- What can we learn from trade union-political cooperation in other countries?
- What can other countries learn from Sweden?



1.3 TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Cooperation between LO and the Social Democratic Party in Sweden has also applied to international questions. LO was involved in founding the Olof Palme International Center and several of the projects that LO and the Social Democrats support together through the Palme Center are aimed at supporting trade union-political cooperation in other countries.

LO and the Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) have also established the LO-TCO

Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation, which supports trade union organisations in other countries. The work of the Secretariat is party-politically independent but several of the projects that are supported concern the promotion of trade union organisations' political influence.

Brazil

An example of Swedish support to trade union-

political cooperation in other countries is the partnership that IF Metall, supported by the Palme Center, has had with the Brazilian metalworkers' trade union CNM and the trade union confederation CUT.

To start with, the cooperation concerned education, organisation development and other trade union questions, but in the early 2000s IF Metall was given support from the Palme Center to develop trade union-political activities as well. The work was aimed at increasing the political knowledge of trade union leaders at national, regional and local level and supporting trade union-political cooperation with the Brazilian Workers' Party, PT, which has also been the government party for several years in Brazil. The ties between the CUT/CNM and the PT have been very strong for a long time. The movements are both children of the fight against the previous military dictatorship and Brazil's former President until 2010, Lula da Silva, himself has roots as a trade union activist in the metalworkers' union CNM.

To spread the project's activities as widely as possible IF Metall and the Brazilian trade unions used study circles at workplaces. The purpose was to inspire and prepare locally active trade unionists for political involvement and political assignments. During the entire project, which lasted from 2002 to 2004, more than 13 000 people participated in the various trade union and political training courses. This trade union-political work has continued since then, now under the management of the Brazilian trade unions.

The Philippines

From 2002 the Palme Center, through the social democrats in Uppsala, has supported the trade union-political cooperation between the Akbayan party and the central trade union organisation APL. An important aim has been to get local trade union activists to understand the link between workplace issues and national politics. The

trade union-political cooperation in the Philippines has been built up by the APL and Akbayan themselves, but the Palme Center and the social democrats in Uppsala have worked with them to support the development, by describing Swedish experiences and giving representatives from the Philippines the opportunity to visit Sweden.

An important partner in the project has also been the Philippine adult education organisation LEARN. It was formed from independent trade union organisations and other groups to promote trade union solidarity, collective worker action and training of future trade union and political activists. LEARN has also received support from the Swedish Workers' Educational Association (ABF), the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation and LO Denmark.

In addition, the Philippine trade union movement receives support from several LO affiliates. The Swedish Food Workers' Union has an on-going project in the Batangas region of the Philippines, aimed at strengthening the APL through organisation of local trade unions. The project also tries to reach out to politically organise socially vulnerable groups outside the trade union core groups. Local trade union-political cooperation with Akbayan is an explicit part of the project. At the same time SEKO, the Union for Service and Communication Employees, has several on-going projects to organise Philippine dock workers. Trade union-political cooperation is also an explicit aim of SEKO's projects.

Discuss:

- How can trade union-political cooperation on international issues be developed in cooperation between LO affiliates and the Social Democrats?

”We Swedes don’t always know best”

”Of course we Swedes, with our long history of trade union-political cooperation, have a lot of experience that may be of use to our friends in other countries. But we also have a lot to learn from them as regards such things as base work and grass-roots organisation. The most important thing as a Swede is not to go to preach, but to listen to them and their experiences. We Swedes don’t always know best.”

These are the words of Ingrid Rudin, official for the social democrats in the county of Stockholm, who is working on a project in Malawi. The project is aimed at supporting the Malawian trade union movement and has been going for a long time. In preparation for the 2014 election in Malawi, some of the project covers trade-union political cooperation, ideology and democracy.

Malawi is a very poor country and the economy is based on agriculture. Illiteracy is about 60 per cent. In 1994 the first free election in 30 years was held and since then a democratic process has been in progress. Labour market legislation has improved as regards basic demands for trade union rights but there is still harassment of trade union leaders.

”Trade unions in Malawi have often found that the political parties do not listen to them. So now it is a matter of specifying political demands and trying to see that people from the trade union movement are in electable positions. There is also an on-going discussion of how trade union-political cooperation can take place. Should the trade union go to any of the parties that already exist or should they form their own? These discussions are similar to the ones that were conducted in Sweden over 100 years ago.”

”During my visit a meeting was arranged between the trade unions and the political parties. The parties that were there were clearly interested, there is a mutual benefit to cooperation. How it will go is too early to say, but the trade union organisations are now working on an election programme with their most important demands.”



Ingrid Rudin



1.4 WIDER ARENAS

As early as in 1848 Karl Marx wrote the classical words "Proletarians of all countries – unite". But those who more than anyone else followed Marx' exhortation are the trade union movement's opposite party, the employers and capital. Globalisation has opened new opportunities that above all have been used by trade and other market interests. Money moves fast over the world, and production in enterprises in different parts of the country or in different countries can be easily coordinated. Internationalisation changes the entire social pattern and creates new paths for production and consumption. The global labour

market is bigger than ever. The role of nations and thus politics is changing. International and national issues merge.

One person who has reflected on the role this has played for trade union work is Bertil Jonsson, who was President of LO Sweden in 1993–2000:

"When I participated in different international trade union meetings in the 1990s I was mainly struck by one thing: that participants from entirely different parts of the world increasingly had similar experiences in their trade union work.

Whether they were from Brazil or Malaysia, South Africa or Australia, the USA or Europe they

could tell of toughening global competition, wage dumping and threatened social protection for workers, of growing economic divides, of pressure and threats from large international companies and players in the financial market.

”That is why I believe that all today’s trade union questions are basically international. This makes it even more necessary for the trade union movement to have an influence on politics.”

In its party manifesto the Swedish Social Democratic Party writes of the need for trade union-political work in today’s globalised world:

”Today’s shifting of power to capital interests is not an inevitable and thus unchangeable consequence of globalisation. It can be broken by conscious political and trade union efforts. New major opportunities are opening up to close divides and spread democracy and welfare, but political will and political power are needed to utilise these new development opportunities. Swedish social democracy wants to be a part of this political power, which will make globalisation a tool for democracy, welfare and social justice.”

The Nordic arena

Organised trade union-political cooperation between the trade union movement and social democratic parties is to a great extent a Nordic phenomenon. Similar models emerged simultaneously in the Nordic countries.

A concrete manifestation of this is SAMAK, the Joint Committee of the Nordic Labour Movement, a forum for Nordic trade union-political cooperation. SAMAK has existed for more than 100 years and includes the social democratic parties and central trade union organisations of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, Åland and the Faroe Islands.

In recent years SAMAK has drawn up joint Nordic programmes on the EU, welfare policy, human rights, globalisation, democracy and the Nordic model for welfare and the labour market.

At present SAMAK has six main objectives:

- To strengthen and develop Nordic cooperation within the labour movement at national and international level on different issues.
- To strengthen and develop the role of the labour movement – politically, professionally and organisationally – in Nordic cooperation.
- To promote occupational and political interaction and maintain social democratic values in the Nordic countries and in European and international contexts where member organisations work.
- To bring together opinions and experiences, formulate joint positions and lines of action and programmes for the Nordic labour movement on matters of central importance for both social democratic policy in general and the work of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- To introduce a joint Nordic debate on issues for the future.
- To develop contacts between different organisations of the labour movement in the region to increase contacts and exchange with Nordic, European and international social democracy and the trade union movement.

”Just now we are working on a large project on the Nordic model in which we are collaborating with a number of researchers in different areas. Trade union-political cooperation is an important part of this model, even if the forms it takes differ between the different Nordic countries,” says SAMAK’s Secretary General Inger Segelström.

”I definitely believe that trade union-political cooperation will be important in the future too. The national level is not enough, not even the European



Inger Segelström

level is sufficient. At the same time I believe that we must also become closer to other progressive forces and social movements. The labour movement must be open.

Discuss:

- What opportunities exist to develop trade union-political cooperation at Nordic level?

The European arena

"I reject a Europe that is just a market, a free trade area, without soul, without conscience, without political will and without a social dimension."

Jacques Delors, French socialist and
President of the European Commission
1985–1995

Growing European cooperation has made cooperation between European trade union organisations increasingly important. A forum for such cooperation is the European Trade Union Confederation, ETUC, to which the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco) are affiliated.

An important task for ETUC is to influence European policy and legislation, as well as to build up industrial relations with the European employers and their European organisations. This is done within the framework of the EU social dialogue, which entitles the European social partners to negotiate framework agreements, which can then become binding legislation in the Member States. Up to now three such agreements have been negotiated; on the right to parental leave, fixed-term employment contracts and working conditions for part-time work. The agreements have now been incorporated into European legislation.

There is also European cooperation between the political parties. For example, the Social Democrats have the Party of European Socialists, PES, which has become an increasingly important and more influential political power. However, it is not a given for ETUC to only have trade union-political cooperation with the PES in the same way as the trade unions in the Nordic countries have cooperated with the social democrats. The ETUC includes trade union organisations with different political alignments, though they are agreed on basic trade union issues. In some countries the trade union is linked to social democracy while some work with the communists or other left-wing parties. There are also liberal or Catholic/Christian trade union organisations that cooperate with Christian democrat parties while others are party-politically neutral.

There are, however, examples of successful trade union-political cooperation even at European level. One of these is when in 2004 the European Commission presented its proposal to facilitate trade in services in Europe, the Services Directive.

Under the Commission's proposal the trade unions would no longer be able to demand an employer representative to negotiate with when an enterprise carried out temporary work in another country. In addition the Commission proposed a country of origin principle. This meant that wages and working conditions in the country the enterprise came from would apply, not the conditions applicable where the services were performed. The assessment made by LO's International Department, together with the lawyers from LO-TCO Rättsskydd (the legal bureau of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the Confederation of Professional Employees) was that this would lead to low-wage competition and undermine collective agreements.

Consequently, LO started work on several levels to bring about changes to the Commission's proposal. Since Sweden had a social democratic government in 2004 LO could use its good rela-

”Solidar can be a catalyst”

The former Secretary General of the Solidar network, Giampiero Alhadeff, now leader of the Secretariat of British Labour MEPs, believes that there is enormous potential for increased cooperation between different progressive forces, both in Europe and globally. But this requires persistence and a long-term approach:

”It works well at European level, but is more difficult globally. The Socialist International is not the vigorous organisation it once was. So I believe that global networks such as the Global Progressive Forum and in the networks of voluntary organisations of which Solidar is a part have an important role at present.

A possible future area of cooperation, according to Mr Alhadeff, is the ILO core conventions on human rights in working life (Core Labour Standards). In addition he believes that the employment issue must be put on the agenda again, referring to the work done by the the Swedish Social Democrat Allan Larsson when

he was Director General of the European Commission at the end of the 1990s and the Decent Work Campaigns of the ILO, trade unions and NGOs which were led by the ILO’s Juan Somavia.

”At that time the ITUC, the ETUC, the European social democrats and Solidar built a common platform to campaign on Decent Work and had a clear position. Today the European right is stronger and opposition greater, but I believe that strengthened cooperation between progressive parties, trade unions and social movements could be successful. Here networks such as Solidar can play an important role as catalyst”



Giampiero Alhadeff

tions with the social democrats. They succeeded in convincing the government that the proposal had deficiencies and to work within the EU to exempt labour law in the Services Directive. Together with TCO, LO also drew up its own trade union proposal for changes, which was passed on to ETUC.

ETUC used its contacts with members of the European Parliament from different countries and parties that were friendly towards trade unions and got them to put forward the trade union views in the European Parliament. After patient negotiations, the social democrats in the European Parliament could at last agree with the conservative and Christian democratic groups on a compromise.

Like LO and TCO, ETUC was satisfied with the

compromise, though not all the trade union views gained support. However, the most important things were included. The principle of country of origin was withdrawn and labour law was exempted from the Directive. In addition it was no longer prohibited to require an employer representative to negotiate with. Both the European Commission and the government representatives on the Council of Ministers then accepted the principles of the compromise.

Another forum for trade union-political relations is the ”Trade Union Intergroup” in the European Parliament. The group is one of several ”intergroups” where interested members meet to discuss issues of special interest to them. The Trade Union Intergroup consists of members inte-

rested in trade unions from all the major political groups in the European Parliament. The work in this group was of great importance, for example, when processing the EU Working Hours Directive and it functions as a complement to direct trade union contacts with the socialist group. ETUC takes part in all meetings and gives an account of its position there or on the issues dealt with.

In this context it is also worth mentioning Solidar, a European network for trade unions, popular movements and other progressive voluntary organisations. Solidar tries to work side by side with the trade union movement and the European socialists. Solidar's main areas of work are education policy, a social Europe and issues of global justice. Swedish members of the network are the Swedish Workers' Educational Association, ABF, and the Olof Palme International Center.

Discuss:

- What possibilities exist to develop trade union-political cooperation at EU level?
- Which questions could increased European trade union-political cooperation deal with?

The global arena

"We must organise ourselves now. We must create common strategies, not just nationally but also globally. Solidarity must be as mobile as capital."

Richard Trumka, President of the American central trade union organisation, the AFL-CIO, in a speech in August 2011.

The ITUC, the International Trade Union Confederation, is the international federation for the world's independent and democratic trade union organisations. The ITUC was established at a congress in Vienna in November 2006 and consists of more than 300 member organisations in 150 countries. This means that the ITUC represents

176 million workers all over the world.

The new International consists mainly of two former trade union international organisations; the ICFTU, which in simple terms can be said to have mainly had social democratic or "centre-left" tendencies, and the WCL, which had a Christian or Christian democratic base. The main reason for forming this new trade union International, to which the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco) are affiliated, was the challenge to the world's workers and trade unions set by globalisation. In a world where the labour market is global, the trade union movement must also be global.

The most important goal for the ITUC is to extend and defend the rights and interests of workers. This is done through strengthened international cooperation between the world's trade union organisations, global campaigns and advocacy in relation to global institutions such as the UN labour organisation, the ILO (see below), the World Trade Organisation, WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The ITUC's priority goals are:

- Human rights at work and in society.
- Gender equality and fighting all discrimination.
- International solidarity.

A priority task for the ITUC is to promote trade union rights, that is, human rights at work. These rights have been formulated in conventions by a very important international actor for the trade union movement, the UN body, the ILO, the International Labour Organization. The ILO is a tripartite organisation in which representatives of workers and employers participate in the work on equal terms with government representatives.

Regions and industries

The ITUC also has a regional structure. The

“We must coordinate the political force of the world’s workers.”

“Political organisation is a central issue for the future for the trade union movement. We need a new global story that links trade unions and progressive parties throughout the world in a joint strategy for economic and social justice.

This is what Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC says. Accordingly she is seeking a renewed discussion of international trade union-political cooperation, both among trade union organisations and political parties.

“We need to coordinate the political force of the world’s workers, to support progressive policy. The ITUC wants to help its member organisations to build political power and influence, an influence that can be used for the benefit of workers.

“Many of our member organisations already have a history of political work and organisation. We must learn from these experiences, but also evaluate them. Some, for example, have concentrated on supporting one or more parties at election time, but I believe that is an insufficient strategy. What we now need is more long-term and in-depth relations between the trade union movement and politics.

At the same time Ms Burrow is critical of the

number of social democratic and progressive parties that have met challenges from the global economic crisis.

“The economic crisis should have been an obvious opportunity for all progressive parties to push for reforms, but unfortunately in practice many have acted against the interests of workers. At the same time we have a trend in which political parties, with few exceptions, have lost ground. Instead the political power of large enterprises has increased, along with support for conservative and right-wing populist parties, a development that in the long term is a threat to both gender equality and human rights,” says Sharan Burrow. She continues:

“Strong trade unions are necessary for social and economic progress, but without political influence and governments that share workers’ values we can never build a more equal world.”



Sharan Burrow

regional organisations are called 1. ITUC Asia-Pacific 2. ITUC Africa 3. Trade Union Confederations of the Americas (TUCA).

In addition, the trade unions have their own international industry organisations, global trade unions. They organise free and democratic trade unions the world over that are active in the same sectors. One important task for the global trade unions is to try to sign agreements with multinational enterprises. The agreement obliges the enterprise to follow internationally acknow-

ledged principles regarding social responsibility and workers’ rights and can lay the foundation for local negotiations. These agreements are becoming increasingly important tools in the struggle to get respect for human rights at work. At present there are more than 40 global framework agreements in multinational groups and a large proportion of them are Swedish. IKEA, Skanska, SKF, Hennes & Mauritz, Duni and SCA are examples of Swedish enterprises that have such agreements.

Other networks

The political parties also work together across national borders. The social democrats, for example, belong to the Socialist International, SI, that has about 120 member parties and about 40 consultative or observer parties worldwide. Contacts between the ITUC and the SI exist, but as at European level, the possibilities of trade union-political cooperation on the Nordic model are limited by the fact that the ITUC includes trade union organisations of different political colours.

Another important network for progressive parties and movements is the Global Progressive Forum, GPF. The GPF was born out of the success of the first World Social Forum held in 2001 in Porto Alegre in Brazil and is an initiative of the Party of European Socialists together with the Socialist International. The Global Progressive Forum aims to bring together a diversity of movements, parties and organisations from all over the world to discuss and work for globalisation based on democracy and social justice.

Another organisation in the area is the old communist trade union international, the World Federation of Trade Unions, WFTU. The organisation's heyday was in the cold war period when it was dominated by the state-controlled trade union organisations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the WFTU languished, even though it still has observation status in the ILO. The WFTU's present member organisations include the regime controlled trade union organisations in China, Vietnam and Cuba. The ITUC does not regard the WFTU as a real trade union international since it is dominated by organisations that are neither democratic nor independent.





1.5 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR GLOBAL TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION

“Human rights are about the classical political freedoms, about the religious freedoms – but also about economic and social rights.”

Anna Lindh, former Swedish Social Democratic Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In 2006 the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the social democrats arranged the annual Anna Lindh seminar in Stockholm, which that year concerned how globalisation affects employment. Both the ITUC and the Socialist Internatio-

nal, as well as the ETUC and the Party of European Socialists, PES, took part in the seminar.

The purpose of the seminar was also to discuss the possibilities of increased international trade union-political cooperation based on the challenges posed by globalisation to both the trade union movement and social democracy.

The seminar ended with the following joint principles for trade union and political collaboration in the international area:

- The right to organise and bargain collectively.
- Respect for fundamental human rights at work.

- Reform of international financial institutions.
- Respect for human rights and democracy.
- Free and fair trade with social security as an important component.
- Sustainable development leading to full employment.

Several of these points are based on the ILO conventions on human rights at work, adopted in 1998. The most important of them were gathered into the eight "core conventions." They constitute a minimum standard that applies to all states and are to cover all the world's workers.

The eight core conventions cover four different areas.

Freedom of association and collective bargaining

- *Convention 87*: Freedom of association and protection of the right to organise
- *Convention 98*: Right to organise and collective bargaining

Forced and compulsory labour

- *Convention 29*: Forced labour
- *Convention 105*: Abolition of forced labour

Discrimination

- *Convention 100*: Equal remuneration for equal work regardless of gender
- *Convention 111*: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)

Child labour

- *Convention 138*: Minimum age
- *Convention 182*: Worst forms of child labour

Despite the fact that these only cover minimum levels, there is far to go to the goal of all states respecting human rights at work. However, for the international trade union movement these rights

are a natural part of human rights as formulated by the UN. Consequently, the ITUC believes that these basic rights must be promoted in the policies of international intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the WTO and others, and that cooperation must be established between these bodies and the ILO. The international intergovernmental organisations must quite simply contribute jointly in their activities to a social dimension of globalisation.

A political problem in the global arena is that there are no mechanisms that defend trade union rights. The ILO can decide that a state has acted wrongly but has no sanctions to back up its decision. It is the individual country, in other words those in power in that country, who decide. On the other hand, the World Trade Organisation, WTO, can decide on economic sanctions and penalty tariffs against countries that do not comply with agreements. Trade and commercial interests thus have higher priority than human rights at work.

It is also a long-term trade union goal for the ITUC to create binding rules for corporate international behaviour. The fundamental human rights at work must be incorporated into international trade to combat exploitation of humans. Trade policy must be changed in the countries that currently compete in the global market by deliberately violating trade union rights.

The OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises are also important in this context. Under these guidelines enterprises must respect human rights and their employees' right to organise and bargain collectively. They also include rules against environmental degradation and corruption. The guidelines have been negotiated by governments, trade unions and employer representatives and the countries have established national contact points to ensure compliance.

Another political issue promoted by the

”Trade union-political cooperation must be global”

”I believe that social democracy and the trade union movement have an important joint role to play in shaping alternatives, both to the right-wing forces and to the left that only looks back without seeing the need for supranational political solutions. The time for wholly national solutions is past. When capital and the labour market are globalised, trade union-political cooperation must also be global.”

Ann Linde, international secretary of the Swedish Social Democratic Party. She believes that an important area for increased international trade union-political cooperation is to strengthen global trade union rights.

”Global trade union rights may act as an important counterbalance to borderless finance capital. For example, the right to take cross-border sympathy action and persuading more countries to ratify the ILO’s core conventions on human rights at work.

”Social democratic parties must never accept the creation of competitiveness through lower wages and poorer conditions of work. Prohibition of free trade union organisations is not only a violation of human rights but also puts a brake on continued social and economic development.

At the same time Ann Linde emphasises that

the developments of recent decades have also brought major positive changes:

”It’s easy to forget the progress that has in fact been made. Never before in history have there been so many democratic states as there are today. More people than ever before have lifted themselves out of oppression, starvation, disease and illiteracy. I am convinced that that development can continue and be strengthened, if the political will exists. The threats are that social divides will be allowed to increase and that nationalist and fundamentalist currents will be reinforced.

”It has never been a principle of the labour movement to prevent changes and nor can it be now. We must embrace globalisation but at the same time fight for globalisation that is coloured by democracy and social justice. Globalisation must be democratised and democracy must be globalised.”



Ann Linde

international trade union movement is to create a regulatory code for the free movement of capital. Here a ”Tobin tax” has been put forward as a possible way forward, a model now also supported by the European Parliament. A Tobin tax entails taxing international financial transactions in order to counteract short-term currency speculation. The name comes from the American economist and Nobel laureate James Tobin.

LO Sweden has also taken an initiative in the international trade union movement to be able to undertake trade union sympathy strike measures at global level, a demand now also being put forward by the ITUC. They believe that the trade union movement needs a legal way of itself taking action against grave violations of fundamental rights and not always having to be dependent on government measures.

Discuss:

- How can we reinforce the conclusions of the Anna Lindh seminar?
- Can we develop trade union-political cooperation at global level? How?
- The text above mentions examples of questions that can be pursued through international trade union-political cooperation. How do you regard the examples? Are there more?

PART 2

**METHODS FOR
INTERNATIONAL
TRADE UNION-
POLITICAL
COOPERATION**

2.1 HOW DO WE MOVE ON FROM HERE?

Up to now we have discussed three forms of international trade union-political cooperation:

Cooperation between trade union and social democratic organisations here in Sweden, on international issues that we pursue together.

This is what we did as regards apartheid in South Africa and in the fight against fascism in Spain. And we can do the same today for example as regards the oppression in Burma and the fight for human rights at work. In that way together we can influence the actions of the Swedish government in various international contexts.

Cross-border cooperation, for example between the ETUC and the European social democrats, as well as between the ITUC and the Socialist International.

The possibility of such cooperation is restricted in that the ETUC and the ITUC include trade union organisations with other political alignments and are therefore party-politically independent. However, there is consensus with social democracy on many issues. Two such examples, described above, were the cooperation regarding the EU Services Directive and the common conclusions at the Anna Lindh seminar in 2006 on human rights at work. There is scope to do more on these matters.

Projects to support and develop trade union-political cooperation in other countries.

There are many examples of such projects and several of them are described above. We will describe below what needs to be done to start such a project.



Anders Ferbe

Anders Ferbe is Vice President of IF Metall and has long experience of international trade union and political work.

”Really I think that all trade union development assistance is about trade union-political cooperation, that is, how trade unions can influence policy. For that reason trade union and political work can never be fully separated. All democracy projects we work with are basically trade union-political projects. The purpose is always to increase trade union political awareness,” says Anders Ferbe.

IF Metall conducts extensive international activities, supporting trade union organisations in many countries. Recently a project was started in South Africa to promote dialogue between the miners’ trade union NUM and the metalworkers’ trade union NUMSA concerning their relations with the ANC. A project to support the trade union movement in Indonesia has also been initiated, to contribute to a stronger, democratic and independent trade union organisation in the country. This cooperation feels particularly fitting, since the Indonesian metalworkers’ union has local branches at Swedish companies that operate in Indonesia, such as SKF.

Anders Ferbe has the following advice to give those who want to be involved in supporting trade union-political cooperation in other countries:

”It is important to realise that long processes are involved. It must not be a matter of ‘we have a new Social Democratic Party, now help us to be like Sweden’. We should not get involved simply to give a new party legitimacy. It is important for the trade union to choose between long-term cooperation with a party or jumping here and there, from party to party, depending on the support you can get on individual issues.

We can’t just export our model. Trade union-political cooperation in other countries cannot follow a ready-made template from Sweden. It is important to respect different countries’ traditions and history.”

Anders Ferbe thinks there are six factors that made trade union-political cooperation successful in Sweden:

- The party and the trade union movement share a basic ideological outlook.
- The trade union has a high organisation rate and the party has a large membership.
- Cooperation delivers results for both parties. The trade union can see reforms that benefit its members and the party can receive help to reach out to workplaces.
- Cooperation is established at local and regional level as well. This is supplemented by trade union-political cooperation in related organisations, such as the Swedish Workers' Educational Association, ABF, and the Olof Palme International Center.
- We have respect for each other's separate roles. The trade unions can criticise the party on various issues and vice versa, without jeopardising long-term ideological cooperation.
- Both parties have fundamental confidence in each other even when there are setbacks

"When I meet friends in other countries the question of how we reconcile our close trade union-political cooperation with sometimes holding different opinions on some issues gives rise to a lot of discussion. People sometimes wonder if the trade union and Social Democrats never argue in Sweden. I reply that we are always arguing,"

says Anders Ferbe and laughs.

"The trade union can never be non-political but it is important for us to constantly test the forms we use. Conditions vary from country to country and it is important that we start building where



Ella Niia

we can," says Ella Niia, President of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union.

"To start with you have to find questions that people can grasp. We must also get politicians to understand that cooperation with trade union organisations in the long run benefits politics and political decisions. We must try to find common strategies, for example as regards issues such as migration, fixed-term employment contracts etc."

Brazil and the Philippines

You do not need to be a trade union official or a centrally elected representative to participate in the international activities of the labour movement. New technology, for example, has made it easier for anyone to participate in discussions and networks together with trade union and political colleagues in other countries.

Trade unionists active locally can also be involved in the international work of the local branches and party districts of the Social Democratic Party and bring their trade union experience with them. As in all trade union-political cooperation it is a matter of shared benefit. The work of social democracy is strengthened through the trade union perspective, for example as regards the importance of human rights at work. And through the political experience, trade union activists can learn more of how to exert political influence, not only in our country but in the entire world.

Those who are considering starting development projects together with people in other countries can learn much from the experience of IF Metall and the social democrats in Uppsala from their projects in Brazil and the Philippines.

"Projects like we implemented in Brazil require a long-term approach above all. We have worked together with the Brazilian trade unions since the end of the 1970s and have been able to build on this. In Brazil there has been a long-standing affinity between CNM/CUT and the Workers' Party, PT, not least through President Lula's own

trade union background,” says Erland Lindqvist (PHOTO), International Secretary at IF Metall. He says that IF Metall has gone further and received support from the Palme Center for a similar trade union-political project in Colombia, also a country where IF Metall has long-standing trade union contacts.

Bertil Kinnunen (PHOTO) is an official of the Social Democrats in Uppsala and has been involved in the trade union-political project in the Philippines for several years. He says that it all started when representatives of the Swedish Food Workers’ Union in Western Sweden met Philippine trade union activists in the 1980s at an IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations) meeting.

”There was great interest in international issues at the Foodworkers’ Union in Western Sweden. They heard about the Philippine trade unions’ need for premises for education and administration and in due course contacted the AIC, now the Palme Center. The AIC in turn contacted the Workers’ Educational Association, ABF, which was in touch with the Philippine adult education institute LEARN. SEKO (the Union for Service and Communication Employees) was also included since they had previously worked with the Philippine seamen’s trade union organisations.

Bertil Kinnunen would like to see many more shared trade union-political initiatives in the international area:



Bertil Kinnunen

”It makes no difference how good you are at educating trade union activists if the legislation in the labour market discourages trade union activity. And if you are to change laws and structures, there is only one arena where you can do it: the political arena. And

if they have no political party that listens, then they have to form their own. That’s what we did in Sweden and that is what they have done now in the Philippines. Only then can changes be achieved throughout society.



2.2 STARTING AND IMPLEMENTING AN INTERNATIONAL PROJECT

1. Put together a project group

When you are putting together a project group the first question is who should be included. If the purpose is to support trade union-political cooperation it should include people with both political and trade union backgrounds. It is also important to strive for a balanced gender distribution and in general for the experience and knowledge represented to be as diversified as possible. It is also an advantage if several people share responsibility, since an international development project can

be both strenuous and time-consuming, while also requiring foreign travel. Having several people in the project group is also a way of preventing corruption and increasing transparency in the project.

2. Acquire knowledge

Before the project is designed you must seek knowledge and information about the society in the place where the project will be conducted.

Read up on the trade union and political situation and get help from people and organisations that have knowledge of the country or have worked on projects there before.

The most important question is whether trade union-political cooperation in this case brings mutual benefit to both organisations. It is also important to acquire knowledge of the organisations or parties you wish to work with.

Is the trade union organisation independent and democratic? How many members does it have? Is it a relevant actor that can have real significance for working people? Here the international departments of LO and its affiliates, as well as the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation, can be of great help. You should ask the same question with regard to political parties. What are the party's values? Does it have a democratic structure? Is it a realistic partner for the trade union organisation? Here the Social Democratic international secretaries, as well as the Palme Center's executive officers, can be of great help.

Making an organisational assessment of your partner is a very important part of planning a project. Experience shows that the reason for a project running into problems or simply failing is often that knowledge of the partner is too superficial. Identifying the organisation's weaknesses also means that work to actively strengthen the organisation can be started. With the help of the document "Organisation assessment", which is available on the Palme Center website, you can identify the partner organisation's strengths and weaknesses. Examine the organisation's annual accounts as well, in order to gain knowledge of its finances and any qualifications made by the auditor. Read more in the Palme Center's project manual.

The Palme Center's international work is based on reciprocity and solidarity. Projects must always

be implemented on the basis of the needs that exist and it is the local partner organisation that in practice identifies and implements the desired changes. It is absolutely necessary that the partner organisation and the target group actively participate and feel ownership in the project planning.

3. Make a plan

When you have decided that there are good reasons for starting a project, as soon as possible you should meet your partners and together draw up a strategy and a specific plan with clear goals: What specific goals do we have for the project? Which activities do we need to carry out to achieve these goals? What obstacles to this exist at present and how can we deal with them?

Of course there is no universal template for exactly which trade union-political goals and rights are important to address. This varies from country to country, depending on the specific conditions. They may include anything from helping the trade union to influence a political party on a specific topic, to helping a party to make trade union contacts, or to supporting the formation of a new party.

As regards trade union-political cooperation it is also important that the project has support at national level in the organisation you will be working with, even if the work itself is to be carried out locally or regionally. This is often a prerequisite for the viability of the project at all.

It is of great help if you have decided already from the start how different opinions should be dealt with, how you will act when it is difficult to establish contact or receive answers to specific questions, how changes in the activity plan or budget are to be approved and who is entitled to decide on changes. It is preferable if you formalise your agreements by writing down the conditions of cooperation. It is not about having to be in agreement on all questions, but it is always a good idea to have a common platform for the discussions that may arise.

All projects run with funds from the Palme

Center must be planned using the LFA method, which is a generally accepted method in international development cooperation. The LFA (Logical Framework Approach) helps you in a structured and logical way to plan, implement and evaluate a project or a programme. A key aspect of the method is to start by identifying the problem itself and then state what you want to achieve (that is, the objective), instead of first talking about what you want to do (activities).

The LFA method is based on a participatory

process. It is important that the project planning is carried out together with your local partner. Sit down together and go through each part of the LFA steps. Brainstorm! If you cannot meet physically there are communication tools such as telephone conferences, for example via Skype. The process will strengthen your relations and the shared accountability, which will improve the chances of a successful project.

Overall, the LFA consists of the following nine steps:

The steps of the LFA method	Basic questions at each step
1. Context analysis	What is the situation in the country/county/municipality in which the project will be implemented?
2. Stakeholder analysis	Who will be affected by the project? Who will affect the project? Will some people win and some lose as a consequence of the project? Will anyone oppose the project?
3. Problem analysis	What problems exist in the area? What is the main problem that the project can contribute to solving? What are the reasons for the problem? What are the consequences of the problem?
4. Formulation of objectives at different levels	What changes do we want to achieve through the project – in the short term, medium term and long term?
5. Plan of activities	What needs to be done to achieve the different intermediate goals of the project?
6. Resource planning	Which resources (human and financial) are required for implementing the project?
7. Indicators of results	What can help us to measure that we are moving towards the objectives of the project? How are we to determine, when the project is completed, if we have achieved our objectives?
8. Risk analysis	What are the risks and threats that may prevent us from achieving our objectives? Can we rank the risks? Can we manage the risks?
9. Analysis of assumptions for achieving objectives	What are the prerequisites for the different activities to be successful, so that the project objectives are achieved?

The analysis steps do not necessarily have to be done in this order. Often it is more logical to start by defining the problem (step three) to be solved and who the stakeholders are (step two), and then proceed to formulate the dif-

ferent objectives (step four). Problem analysis is one of the most central components of the LFA process.

Read more on project planning and the LFA steps in the Palme Center project manual.

A basic requirement laid on a Swedish organisation that wants to work through the Palme Center is that the organisation is a member organisation of the Palme Center, or a regional or local subdivision of a member organisation. Read more on the other requirements in the Palme Center's project manual.

4. Implement the project – with confidence and dialogue

While the project is being implemented, confidence and dialogue between the organisations is extremely important. This is a necessary condition for the project's success. Here it is important to listen to the partner you have. The work must be based on their experience and will. Of course, tips and experience from Sweden may be useful, but the point of departure must always be to respect the partner's priorities and the historical and political situation that applies in the society where the project is to be carried out.

It is also important to always be in contact with the project administrator at the Palme Center, for example as regards financial and administrative issues. It is also important to regularly cross-check with the administrator that the project is on the right track.

To easily be able to follow the progress of the project work and to facilitate future accounts we recommend that the project documentation be kept safely and with easy access, for example a separate file can be started for the project. The file should be accessible to everyone in the project group so that important information is not just held by one or two people.

Both organisations and the Palme Center must have access to the project documentation for up to ten years after project completion. If Sida selects the project for a spot check they go through the documentation and can also evaluate the project on site.

It is important that several people in the orga-

nisation know where the project documentation has been saved, so that it is not just the project manager and financial officer who know this. It may be so that project managers leave and then it must be simple for other people in the organisation to access the documents.

To be able to determine whether an on-going project is going in the right direction it is important already at the planning stage to decide how the project is to be followed up in the course of the financial year and who will be responsible for monitoring the different components. In step seven of the LFA "Indicators of results" measurable indicators are set, which help you to determine if you are moving towards achievement of objectives (see Chapter four of the Palme Center's project manual). These indicators must be followed up regularly during the course of the project.

Agree at an early stage with your partner on how follow-up and reporting is to take place while the activity is in progress. Follow-up can be via verbal or written communication, reporting or visiting. Preferably keep a diary of the project. By gathering positive and negative experiences, small changes and impressions, you can later get a good picture of what has been achieved over time.

It is important that the local partner has a system for systematically documenting and following up the project throughout the activity.

Always follow up the results at all levels of objectives: project objectives, interim objectives and overall objectives (see Chapter four of the Palme Center's project manual). Discuss which activities have been implemented and what they have meant for the target group. Will we be able to achieve the objective of the project if we continue according to plan or must we change the setup?

Always start from your application and use the project's LFA matrix in the follow-up. The objectives and activities in the application form the basis of the project and you must always discuss any and all deviations with the partner organisation.

It is important that communication with the partner organisation is good throughout the project. The more frequent contacts you have, the greater your understanding of each other's situation. Above all you must stay informed of how the project is progressing, but it is also important to follow the general political and social development in the project area. Make an agreement early on about how you are to stay in contact, which reports must be sent and when. Both parties are responsible for the effectiveness of communication.

The cooperation between the Swedish organisation and the partner organisation may take various forms. Sometimes it will mean working closely together, sometimes more formal collaboration. But what must always leave its mark on a partnership is mutual respect and awareness that

both organisations are equally important for a favourable project outcome.

Commitment to a project through the Palme Center entails great responsibility. This means that you are representing the Palme Center and your own organisation and will be regarded as a representative of the labour movement's international engagement. The Palme Center Board has therefore adopted a "Code of conduct for consultants and representatives of the Palme Center." It is a policy document that covers staff, elected representatives and member organisations working with support from the Palme Center. Since 2009 the Code of Conduct has been part of the agreements signed by the Palme Center with applicant organisations.

Some of the central guidelines of the Palme Center's Code of Conduct are:

- We may not abuse our position of power. It is not unusual for us to come into contact with people who are or who feel as though they are in a position of dependence towards us. Irrespective of whether the person in question really is in a position of dependency to you or only feels like this, you must never improperly abuse your position as an international representative. Nor may you use your position of power to give other people benefits that they would not normally have had.
- Your behaviour and your relationship with other people must be such that it can never be construed that you are demanding or expecting different services or benefits.
- Sexual relationships with people who are or can be considered to be in a position of dependency to you (that is someone who is

linked to the project in some way) are clearly unsuitable and should be completely avoided. Such relations would entail the risk of having a negative impact on the person in a dependent position, both during the project period and in the future.

- As regards alcohol we must adopt a highly restrictive approach. You must not develop an "alcohol relationship" between you and your partner organisation where meetings and decision-making takes place in bars. It is not acceptable to be intoxicated together with your partner. Alcohol consumption is completely forbidden when driving. We must have nothing to do with narcotics.
- The Code of Conduct also contains sections on discrimination, harassment, sex purchases, sexual abuse, pornography, corruption and organised crime.

5. Follow up and evaluate

Follow-up is an important part of all development cooperation and something we must set aside time and resources for every year that the project is running. At the start of the project, set up a system of written reports on how the project is progressing. It is important that the framework and content of reporting is decided on together with your foreign partner organisation, so that both parties consider that they benefit from it. For example, reporting can be monthly, quarterly or six-monthly.

It is common for the Swedish project organisation to visit the partner country while the project is running. Some travel may be associated with project activities, for example if we are to participate as speakers for a training course. Other journeys may be more in the nature of follow-up, called "monitoring", where the focus is on cross-checking the development of the project.

Monitoring is a common concept in development cooperation and essentially means follow-up. The purpose of monitoring is to obtain a picture of how the work is progressing and if the activity is relevant in relation to the problems that exist in the area.

It is principally the target group for each project which can determine if the project is achieving its purpose or not. But it is also important to gain your own idea of the project's development, the strengths and weaknesses of the partner organisation, the results the project can conceivably achieve, etc.

The Palme Center's project manual contains specific advice on possible follow-up methods during a project and which questions that may be relevant to discuss with your partner.

When the project is completed you also need to evaluate the results and consider whether anything should be done differently next time.

Even if you think that most things are going well it is necessary to stop and reflect on whether

methods and activities really lead to the objectives. This can be done in different ways, for example by external inspectors or in the project group. External follow-ups and evaluations are usually carried out by the Palme Center for major projects, while smaller evaluations are made within each project, preferably annually. A reasonable guideline is to gather the Swedish project group and the local partner organisations at the end of every year to discuss the progress of the project and any problems and how they should be handled.

After each year of activity a report on the project should be given so as to record the results achieved. It is important to show the results of development cooperation. The report shows that the project activities have led to the creation of positive change. The financial accounting shows that the money has been used responsibly. Thus the combined reports constitute feedback to project participants, target group, donor organisations and Swedish taxpayers.

The report is also a tool for improving future work, it makes problems, difficulties and deviations from objectives and plans visible. If the organisation's internal procedures for reporting work, this creates credibility among donors regarding the capacity of the organisation to receive project funds also in the future.

The report should build on the overall impression of the activities. Consequently it is important throughout the project's progress to discuss and write down successes and setbacks. This gives an overview of the activity, which makes it easier when writing the report. It is important that the report is not just based on the assessment of the Swedish organisation. The best solution is if you can write the report together with the local partner organisation.

Other components of project completion are following up the results, transferring responsibility to the local organisation and making a major or minor evaluation.

Read more about methods of following up results in the Palme Center's project manual.



2.3 RIGHTS IN FOCUS

One of the foundations of Sweden's international development cooperation is the *rights perspective*. The Palme Center's fundamental values and our practical work proceed from the principle that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent.

The activities of the Palme Center relate to rights established in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in particular:

- the right to freedom of opinion and expression
- the right to participate in the government of

one's country, directly or through freely elected representatives

- the right to freedom of association, and the right to join a trade union
- the right to work under fair and satisfactory working conditions

The four principles of the rights perspective: *non-discrimination*, *participation*, *transparency* and *accountability* inform the work of the Palme Center. Strengthened citizens' **participation** is one main area of the Palme Center's development cooperation. Participation means that people are independent, thinking and active citizens who

have the right to participate in democracy and influence decisions.

Structural and individual discrimination violates human rights. Consequently, the Palme Center works actively with **non-discrimination, including gender equality** as an overarching theme, not only as regards project planning but also in implementing project activities. The goal of the Palme Center's non-discrimination work is that people must have the same opportunities to shape society and their own lives, regardless of gender, transgender identity and expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. Non-discrimination is a prerequisite for democracy, peace and poverty reduction. It allows all citizens to participate on equal terms and guarantees everyone's right to live free from oppression.

Gender equality is a central part of the work to combat discrimination. All projects run with funds from the Palme Center must include a gender equality and power analysis. The Palme Center has drawn up a method manual to support the work of gender equality and LGBT rights *Alla vinner på jämställdhet (Everyone gains from gender equality)*.

HIV and AIDS are also closely linked to the work to combat discrimination. HIV and AIDS have major political and social consequences, since the disease affects marginalised groups worst. The problems associated with HIV and AIDS are closely related to the Palme Center's cornerstones of democracy, human rights and peace. Important means of alleviating the negative effects of HIV and AIDS are access to knowledge, increased gender equality, social and economic development, strengthening of marginalised groups and political advocacy. All projects run in sub-Saharan Africa must include an analysis and action plan for HIV and AIDS. The Palme Center has drawn up methodology support to integrate anti HIV and AIDS work in project activities *Bryt tystnaden! (Break the silence!)*.

Processes for **accountability** and people's ca-

capacity to demand their rights and accountability from those in power are central to democratisation processes. The Palme Center's target groups often lack knowledge of their rights and of channels for influencing society, so the Palme Center puts a major focus on education in its activities. Accountability is also hindered in societies and organisations with severely unequal power structures by the risk it entails for individuals to demand their rights and accountability from those in power. A focus on strengthening participation and strengthening the capacity to organise thus aims to create the opportunities for people to support each other and to demand accountability.

The Palme Center has a special methodology support for people who want to start and run international projects: The project manual. It is aimed at giving those who are already or are considering becoming involved in the activities of the Palme Center guidance, inspiration and specific advice as regards project planning, measurement of results, financial administration, accounting and evaluation. In the manual you can read more about the activities of the Palme Center and how, through its project areas citizens participation, trade union community work and party political organisation the Palme Center contributes to achieving the goal of Swedish development co-operation; to contribute to creating conditions for poor people to improve their lives.

The project manual and other methodology support can be ordered from the Palme Center or downloaded from www.palmecenter.se.

”Patience is most important”

”Perhaps the most important thing you need when starting a project like this is patience, realising that it takes time. You often have to start from scratch, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina we had help in that there was both a Social Democratic Party, the SDP, which was interested, and a trade union forum, the FA, within the party. In addition, IF Metall in Östergötland has long been involved in supporting Bosnian trade unions,” says Irma Görtz, responsible for the project in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is being run, via the Palme Center, by the Social Democratic Party in Östergötland and LO in central Sweden. The purpose is to support the Association of Trade Union Activists in the Social Democratic Party (FFA-SDP) in Sarajevo and develop trade union-political cooperation.

”Our project started when IF Metall in Östergötland met an elected trade union representative who was looking for partners in Sweden for trade union-political cooperation. That was how we in the party district became involved,” continues Irma Görtz.

”We started with a round-table talk with no specific agenda between the social democrats and the trade union organisations to try and find common ground. The discussion focused largely on what trade union-political cooperation could achieve. We concluded that it would give the trade unions a chance to achieve legislation on issues they had long been pushing for, such as health and safety and other working conditions. At the same time the party could

gain important support at workplaces.

”If a project like this is to be successful it is also important that it is sanctioned by the national leadership, both in the trade union and the party, even if the project is to

be local or regional. For us it was of course also important to have the support of the Swedish trade union from the start.

”It is also important to have specific examples that things are happening both regionally and nationally. Now there is efficient collaboration between the party and important trade union organisations. It has not been without problems, but both in the party and the trade union movement there is now greater understanding of the value of collaboration than there was before.

”The project is continuing now, not least locally and regionally. We give priority to a number of areas that are important both to the trade unions and the party. Some of these are unemployment benefit, the work environment and parental leave. Now it is about shaping policy in these areas that can result in proposals the SDP can put forward.

At the same time work continues to get more trade union organisations to join in.



Irma Görtz

LINKS

Swedish Social Democratic Party
www.socialdemokraterna.se

Swedish Trade Union Confederation
www.lo.se

SAMAK
www.samak-nordicmodel.org

Party of European Socialists
www.pes.org

European Trade Union Confederation
www.etuc.org

Socialist International
www.socialistinternational.org

International Trade Union Confederation
www.ituc-csi.org/?lang=en

Solidar
www.solidar.org

Global Progressive Forum
www.globalprogressiveforum.org

Olof Palme International Center
www.palmecenter.se

LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation
www.lotcobistand.org

International Labour Organization
www.ilo.org

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
www.sida.se

Ministry for Foreign Affairs
www.ud.se

RECOMMENDED READING

The Palme Center's methodological publications

Projekthandboken (The project manual)

The Palme Center's methodology support in project planning, project management, follow-up and evaluation

Alla vinner på jämställdhet (Everyone gains from gender equality)

The Palme Center's methodology support in gender equality and LGBT rights

Bryt Tystnaden! (Break the silence!)

The Palme Center's methodology support for work relating to HIV and AIDS

Korruption – ett hinder för utveckling (Corruption – an obstacle to development).

The Palme Center's methodology support for anti-corruption

The Palme Center's web-based training courses

Conflict Academy

An interactive educational tool on conflict management on the Palme Center's website

Working for Democracy

Interactive educational material on democracy for political parties on the Palme Center's website

Other

Migrantarbetare – Grundkurs om rörlighet, rättigheter och globalisering

(Migrant workers – Basic course in mobility, rights and globalisation)

Anna-Lena Lodenius and Mats Wingborg, Palme Center and Premiss förlag, 2008

Samverkan – inte sammanblandning (Cooperation not confusion).

A report on changed conditions for trade union-political cooperation

Arbetarrörelsens tankesmedja (The Swedish Labour Movement Think Tank)

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

A METHOD MANUAL ABOUT TRADE UNION-POLITICAL COOPERATION

This manual describes how trade union-political cooperation works and might work in Sweden and in other countries, as well as in the EU and at a global level. The manual also provides support for those who want to work with trade union-political cooperation in international development projects. More manuals about international development cooperation can be ordered from the Olof Palme International Center.

www.lo.se

www.palmecenter.se