



Education International
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Bildungsinternationale

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Mr Peter MacMenamin,
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BY EMAIL: pmacmenamin@tui.ie

Brussels, 26 January 2011

Dear Peter,

I understand that, during your attendance and that of your President at the EI conference "Equality on the Move", there were particularly nasty and unpleasant anti-trade union media comments referring to your attendance in Irish newspapers. I regret this very much, both in respect of your union, which is very well regarded as an active and committed member organisation in EI, and for yourselves personally.

I would like to express my appreciation, and that of EI, for your attendance and participation in the conference. It was a conference of enormous significance, both for EI and for the affiliated unions, as well as for those suffering from social and gender inequity in many countries in the world. The conference has rejuvenated the determination of Education International to work towards the elimination of such inequities. Frequently we find that the resolution of problems in one country can be progressed by support from organisations in another or from the international movement itself. Organisations like EI, which facilitate global solidarity, can have a powerful influence on national and international policy trends to the benefit of all. You are aware that EI has been of assistance to your union in the past in making representations to your Government where there have been drastic cutbacks in educational funding. This we can continue to do.

As you are aware EI is the world's largest and leading international education trade union body and it places equality and access to education as priorities on its global agenda. Far from being "obscure" it is recognised and has consultative status with the United Nations, OECD and the ILO. Its European Region is recognised by the EU as a social partner. A junket is a term of abuse frequently used by critics who are unable to justify their criticism otherwise. As I understand it, it means a trip for personal pleasure at the public's or an organisation's expense. Given the heavy schedule for the conference, which I can confirm was attended in full by you and your president I would find it hard to see how the "pleasure" would arise, other than in the satisfaction of participating in and contributing to the outcomes of such an important conference.

I regret the public impact of such negative comments on yourselves personally and again I would like to express my appreciation for your attendance and contributions.

Yours sincerely,

Fred van Leeuwen,
General Secretary



Statement from Education International to the editors of the Irish Independent and the 'Irish' Mail online regarding reports which they published on the participation of representatives of TUI in the EI conference "On the Move for Equality" in Bangkok

"Education International is the largest organisation of its type in the world with 400 member organisations in almost 200 countries and territories. Those organisations have 30 million individual members. It promotes the achievement of quality education for all, social justice, democracy and equity in society. As a global organisation it holds its conferences in venues which are convenient and affordable for its members. Convenience is determined by transport facilities, usually air transport. Conferences are usually convened in venues when they are outside of their tourist season. In the case of the Bangkok conference it was scheduled originally for May of last year but had to be postponed due to the internal political difficulties in Thailand. Bangkok is a major air hub, convenient to East and West of the globe and relatively affordable when compared to costs in Western European or North American cities.

Since its foundation in 1993 Education International has promoted gender equality as an essential element of a just and democratic society. The conference in Bangkok was held to review the progress which has been made in achieving that objective and to plan strategies to pursue the achievement of that objective in the future. High level representatives of member organisations were invited to attend the conference together with EI representatives at regional level who are involved in equality work.

The TUI in Ireland is a valued member of Education International. It has contributed to the development and implementation of EI policies since its foundation in 1993. The TUI is highly regarded among EI members for its ongoing concerns about social justice issues and commitment to the promotion of equality. Its representatives made a useful and positive contribution to the deliberations at the conference in Bangkok. It would be unfortunate for international development and solidarity if organisations were inhibited from contributing to the promotion of values such as equality, social justice and education for all at global level by the publication of such contemptuous articles in newspapers. Participation in conferences such as the one in Bangkok is one of the means through which organisations express their commitment to such values and their solidarity with their colleagues throughout the world."

Fred van Leeuwen,
General Secretary

26th January, 2011