

GEW International

Agreement and unity in the trade union movement have always been key to achieving greater influence and campaigning successfully for our goals. That is why the GEW takes an active part in Education International.

EI (www.ei-ie.org) has about 30 million members, making it the largest Global Union Federation in the world. Like the other sectoral GUFs, it works within the framework of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Its main fields of work are:

- the Global Campaign for Education (www.campaignforeducation.org), commitment to human rights and participation in urgent action appeals,
- help for trade unions suffering repression,
- cooperation between trade unions in North and South,
- educating people to live together in a society of tolerance, equal rights and non-violence,
- pursuing European trade union policy within the pan-European structures of Education International and the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE),
website: www.csee-etuce.org

The GEW also maintains important bilateral links that have grown over the years into reliable partnerships, e.g. with EI affiliates in Israel, Turkey, the United States, Nicaragua, South Africa and Burkina Faso.

Our ties are especially close with education unions in neighbouring EU countries and Scandinavia. Another major focus is dialogue and understanding with trade unions and their members in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Our commitment to human and trade union rights is also reflected in our international work. In 1981 the GEW set up the Heinrich Rodenstein Fund to assist teachers and researchers faced with persecution.

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Die GEW informiert

Internationales

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Trade union structure and international activities



**Gewerkschaft
Erziehung
und Wissenschaft**



GEW: The education union

The Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW) is the education sector trade union affiliated to the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB). Its members are teachers working in every kind of school, academic researchers, and men and women working in adult education, social education and other forms of teaching. This is a trade union for a professional community, but our members are not only teachers currently in employment or retired. We also have unemployed colleagues and students among our ranks.

The GEW is an independent trade union in terms of party politics (like all trade unions in the DGB). It is by far the biggest organisation in the education sector in Germany, with currently about 250,000 members. Trade union membership in the sector ranges from 20 to 50 per cent, depending on the region.

The GEW not only defends the material and social interests of its members. As an education union, it also plays a driving role in updating and implementing education reforms.

The GEW confronts change

One common feature of education unions is a high proportion of female membership: 70 per cent of the GEW's members are women. The GEW has been working for years, through its policies on women and gender, to ensure that women are properly represented on its committees and in its activities. The age structure of our membership has shifted dramatically in the last 30 years. We have grown older. To recruit new and younger members the GEW has been investing more in services that will appeal to beginners in the profession, with targeted membership campaigns and the creation of structures like „Young GEW“.

What can the GEW offer members?

Trade union services to our members in the field include legal support, social and professional advice, a wide range of information and continuous training and, of course, back-up if it comes to a dispute: the GEW provides financial and legal support for members on strike. Our members are also covered for professional third party liability by a trade union insurance policy.

In addition to these and other services, members at local, regional and national level can take advantage of a broad spectrum of training courses and wide-ranging opportunities to participate in debates about social and education policy.

Who decides in the GEW?

The trade union policy guidelines are adopted by the trade union assembly. This is a congress of 432 GEW delegates from all over the country that is convened every four years. The day-to-day priorities for trade union work are agreed by the Executive Committee (80 members) and implemented by the Executive Board, which consists of eight members working full-time for the GEW.

Within the GEW an important role is played by the 16 regional organisations, each with their own executive committee, based in the 16 German federal states. This is due to the federal structure of government in Germany. The federal states are competent to make their own decisions in many fields of policy. That is why many major decisions, notably with regard to schools and universities, are not taken in Berlin but in the regional capitals. So the GEW needs strong structures with the confidence to pursue their objectives in the 16 federal states.

International work is carried out by the National Executive and the Executive Board. Responsibility here lies with the General Secretary.