

Call for papers: Perspectives on Workers' Education, ELHN 2026

Call for papers for the working group *Workers' Education*, European Labour History Network's Conference, June 16-19, 2026, Barcelona

Deadline for abstracts: 1 August 2025

Early on, workers' education was organised by and for the working class and served multiple purposes. Workers' education aimed to compensate for the limited formal education available to many workers. In such contexts, workers' education was a bridge to higher education and a pathway to upward social mobility. Workers' education also became a means for the cultural empowerment of the working class. Importantly, workers' education also constituted the institutional foundation for the political education of the working class. These programs ensured members had the skills to manage organisations, represent labour parties in parliamentary institutions, and engage meaningfully with ideological debates. While the structure and goals of such educational initiatives have varied between countries, many formats have been used, including labour colleges, folk high schools, study circles, lectures, and correspondence courses.

Because workers' education has diverse aims, the educational sphere within the labour movement has often been marked by conflict. Different branches of the movement have competed for control over workers' education institutions, bourgeois forces have attempted to curtail or co-opt these efforts, and funding has frequently been a source of contention.

In these sessions, we aim to explore educational practices, teaching methods, and the cultural and political significance of workers' education. We welcome contributions from various disciplines, including case studies and comparative analyses. Papers may examine workers' education in different national contexts.

We particularly welcome papers that address:

- Conflicts surrounding workers' education, such as tensions between factions within the labour movement or between labour organisations and the state
- The funding and financial organisation of workers' education
- Influential individuals who played a key role in advancing workers' education

We especially encourage contributions that approach workers' education from a gender perspective.

Coordinators

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