



Promoting Public Sector Education in an Age of Austerity

Resolution on EU-Colombia Free Trade Agreement

Submitted for adoption presented by GEW (Germany) and seconded by NASUWT (UK) to the ETUCE Conference, the Regional Conference of Education International, meeting in Budapest on 26-28 November 2012, adopted on 27 November 2012

The Conference of the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) from 26 – 28 November 2012 in Budapest opposes the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Colombia which is currently being ratified by the European Parliament. There is continuing evidence of ongoing violations in Colombia of human and trade union rights. Evidence from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) shows 35 trade union activists have been killed in Colombia in 2011. At least 69 trade unionists were murdered in the first two years of the President Santos administration. Teachers are especially affected by this violence - during the past year 17 members of the education union FECODE have become victims of political assassinations. One of the main problems is the widespread impunity - according to a 2012 report by the UN Development Program, in 95% of these crimes the perpetrators go unpunished. Teachers also continue to face false accusations and imprisonment by the Colombian authorities as a result of their work. Omar Combita, a member of FECODE has been detained since 2 October 2011, accused of “rebellion” on the basis of dubious evidence and denied due process. Capital crime is only rarely solved and punished. Even supporters of the Free Trade Agreement do not deny these problems.

Resolution B7-0114/2012 of the European Parliament dated 13 June 2012 concerning Colombia shows that the members of parliament take these concerns seriously. The resolution does not go far enough, although it includes detailed proposals and demands to the government of Colombia as well as the European Commission in order to solve the problems. It remains vague on how sanctions will be introduced. The resolution is based on a so-called “road map” modeled on a similar Free Trade Agreement concluded between the USA and Colombia. Even after the agreement the killing continues with major issues of the “road map” are not being implemented.

The ETUCE Conference calls on the members of the European Parliament to use their mandates in the interest of enforcing human and trade union rights and to reject the EU Free Trade Agreement with Colombia.