

Letter of Intent

for cooperation within the Global Labour

University network

§ 1

The Global Labour University initiative is a network of universities, trade unions, research institutes, the International Labour Organisation and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

§ 2

The undersigning organizations will cooperate within the Global Labour University and bring their different expertise together to

develop and implement university post graduate programs on labour and globalization

undertake joint research and organize international discussion fora on global labour issues.

publish textbooks, research papers and books on labour and globalization

§ 3

The current form of globalization has a profound impact on labour and on societies at large. It is undermining existing national regulations and arrangements without providing an adequate new regulatory framework. Successful representation of labour interests on national and global level requires more analytical capacity and research to engage effectively in social and economic policy debates.

Understanding the forces of globalisation and identifying different policy options is a key precondition to translate concern about unsatisfactory social and economic outcomes in constructive policy proposals. The anger and despair in many world regions will grow if the

answer to the people's concern is the further prescription of repeatedly unsuccessful medicine. Fairer distribution and equity will not be achieved by unleashing market forces only. Equity and fairness are not development outcomes but development ingredients.

§ 4

The objective of the Global Labour University is to strengthen global labour networks through a one-world learning, study and research environment that promotes multicultural and multiregional understanding and cooperation.

The Global Labour University is not designed to disseminate readymade answers. The GLU is an instrument to facilitate mutual understanding and work on practical answers to the social and economic challenges working people and their families are facing in today's world. It is a laboratory of ideas. The global network will provide a unique possibility for research and policy development in a truly multi-cultural and multi-regional environment. Different cultural traditions, economic constraints, organisational capacity, quality of governance, etc. will result in different responses even to seemingly similar problems. The real world experience and practical competence of most participants is a major asset for the GLU to become a place for creative and pragmatic thinking that combines analytical and scientific capacity of universities with the knowledge of people representing workers' interests in practice.

§ 5

The partners intend to establish international masters' programs and other post graduate courses on labour and globalization and cooperate closely in delivering the programs.

Globalisation affects regions and countries differently and they also have different capacities and needs for further knowledge and expertise. Therefore the different programmes have common features, but also particular regional and thematic profiles. This provides an opportunity to develop a broader area of issues and to reflect the different priority needs of the network partners. Each program will also have a regional focus dealing with the specific problems their regions are facing in the globalisation process. The current MA programs are described in the Annex. The GLU is open for other partners to join. The annual council meeting decides about the inclusion of new programs in the network.

§ 6

To ensure common ownership in the project, curriculum development will be supported through joint working groups with representatives from the partner universities, the trade unions and the International Labour Organisation. Experts from the ILO, the international trade union movement and the partner universities are involved in co-teaching. An interdisciplinary approach covering economics, sociology, political sciences and law is applied.

§ 7

The curriculum for the different programmes and the Masters degrees will be recognised at each partner university separately. Mutual recognition of degrees is sought by the cooperating universities. The Universities will mutually recognise course work and credits acquired by students at the different courses.

§ 8

Students will have the possibilities to study at different partner universities. The universities will cooperate in faculty exchange. Trade Unions and the ILO will - dependent on the availability of extra-budgetary resources - offer internships for students and will provide guest lectures or targeted workshops in the different courses.

§ 9

Gender issues are given high priority in the curriculum and mainstreamed in all course modules. A significant representation of at least 40 per cent women on the course is an additional important measure to ensure that the gender perspective is integrated part of the learning processes and research activities.

§ 10

International cooperation will be facilitated through the annual GLU conference, summer schools, curriculum development and research workshops, guest lectures, working papers and joint textbook development. A common electronic platform will allow for information exchange, sharing of curriculum outlines, a common alumni network and online discussions.

§ 11

The partners will cooperate to mobilise the necessary resources .

Undersigning Institutions:

Berlin School of Economics

COSATU

CUT

DGB

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

Global Unions

IGMetall

ILO ACTRAV

TATA Institute for Social Sciences

University of Campinas

University of Kassel

University of the Witwatersrand

Annex

University of Kassel/Berlin School of Economics

Regional focus: Europe

Topical focus: Employment orientated macro economic policies (Kassel/Berlin)

The rules of economic global governance as promulgated in multilateral agreements and international organizations such as IMF, World Bank, World Intellectual Property Organisation etc. are increasingly influencing the living conditions of the working classes and the political powers of their representatives around the world. Despite the impact of those multilateral agreements on the working classes, labour issues are not sufficiently reflected at the bargaining tables. The labour movement, with some notable exceptions, has 'underinvested' in developing its own voice on international economic governance. As a result the rules of global capitalism are moving towards a constitutionalism that privileges private ownership rights over national sovereignty and the rights of the producers and consumers.

The theme of macroeconomic policies and employment has assumed a renewed urgency in view of increasing concern about the social effects of liberalisation and globalisation, and a long-term slowing of the rate of growth of global output and employment. The promotion of freely chosen, productive and remunerative employment, based on respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, is crucial to the realisation of decent work for all. Success in employment generation is intrinsically linked to trade and fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies. The design of macroeconomic policy frameworks is a central question on the political agenda of most countries. Success or failure affects economic and social progress. There is a growing acceptance of the need for rethinking the balance of macroeconomic policies to replace the so-called "Washington Consensus".

University of Campinas (Brazil)

Regional focus: Latin America

Topical focus : multinational companies, international industrial relations and global production systems

As they grow bigger and more powerful, Multi-National Enterprises (MNEs) become more influential in their respective governments' policy processes. They may even set their

governments foreign policy priorities. Together with the governments of the most developed market economies, companies also influence the economic policies of the key multilateral financial institutions. These, in turn, promote an agenda of privatisation, deregulation, and encouragement of foreign direct investment, thereby further strengthening the position of MNEs.

In many cases, this changing nature of business relationships brings enormous challenges for trade unions. Bargaining structures do need to change along with the changing business structures, or they run the risk of getting outdated or invalid. With the ever present threat of relocation to countries with low wages, low standards and a low degree of organisation, MNEs are in a strong position to put pressure on trade unions and their workers, as well as on their governments, to accept what they are demanding. Their control of the value chain reaches well beyond their own factories. It encompasses most of their suppliers which are left with razor thin margins. The result is even more pressure on workers at the lower end of the value chain.

University of the Witwatersrand

Regional focus: Africa

Topical focus: Labour and Development

Much of the literature that explores the determinants of economic development has focused either on the market and its social carrier, employers, or on the developmental state and its technocratic elites. This developmental literature has tended to see peasants and workers as either victims or beneficiaries, but rarely as active agents of economic and political transformation. The focus in this programme will be to analyse the role of labour in the development process both historically and in the current epoch of globalisation. Priority will be given on labour and development in Southern Africa and the Global South. A key challenge facing labour is its relationship to the post-colonial state, especially the role of labour in economic policy formulation and implementation. Another important concern is the relationship of trade unions (which traditionally organise mainly permanent or 'core' workers) to other civil society organisations, the working poor, peasants and the informal economy. To answer these questions it is necessary to understand labour as an independent actor, its evolution and the dilemmas it faces in developing societies.

To be included after decision of the Steering Committee and confirmation by the annual council meeting

Tata Institute for Social Sciences

Regional focus : Asia

Topical focus : Securing basic social and employment rights for informal economy workers (India)

Contrary to earlier predictions, the informal economy has been growing rapidly in almost every corner of the globe, including industrialised countries. It can no longer be considered a temporary or residual phenomenon. The bulk of new employment in recent years, particularly in developing and transition countries, has been in the informal economy. Many people have been forced to seek employment within the informal economy because they cannot find regular jobs or are unable to retain or secure work or start businesses in the formal economy.

Informal economy workers are usually not covered by labour laws and therefore receive little or no legal or social protection and are unable to enforce contracts or have security of property rights. They are rarely able to organise for effective representation and have little or no voice to make their work recognised and protected. They are excluded from or have limited access to public infrastructure and benefits. They have to rely as best as they can on informal, often exploitative institutional arrangements, whether for information, markets, credit, training or social security. They are highly dependent on the attitudes of the public authorities, as well as the strategies of large formal enterprises, and their employment is generally highly unstable and their incomes very low and irregular.

Work in the informal economy cannot be termed “decent” compared to recognised, protected, secure, formal employment. Addressing the issue of informal and unprotected employment and securing basic social and employment rights for informal economy workers are key challenges in many societies and a precondition for sustainable and inclusive development.