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# POPULAR EDUCATION IN EUROPE ..... WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

**What do we mean by popular education? In France** alone, the definition is not self-evident as there is not just one definition. Jean-Claude Richez suggests two underlying principles that help define it: giving access to culture to as many people as possible and culture as a condition of exercising citizenship. These two invariants have a corollary, which is the implementation of active teaching. Popular education therefore means education based on these three principles.

There is very little recent literature on the subject. So what does this philosophy, this way of thinking, really mean around Europe? Does popular education really exist? What does popular education mean to a Swede or a Spaniard? We conducted a survey of our European partners to answer that question. The answer is yes, popular education is still alive and kicking all around Europe.

We could not conduct an exhaustive review but we were able to pinpoint many similarities throughout Europe. First, **in Scandinavia, in Germanic countries, in Italy and in Spain**, there is a long tradition of popular education and cultural activity dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **In Finland, Sweden and Germany**, this did not come about in reaction against the church (on the contrary) and **in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland** it takes the shape of further education for adults. On the other hand, **in France, Italy, Spain and Belgium**, popular education offered by working men's insurance companies, cooperatives and citizen's bureaus has often been in opposition to religion and/or conservatism. In all these countries, the aim was the emancipation of the individual within the group.

**Greece and the UK** stand slightly apart. The associative sector in **Greece** is still poorly structured despite anti-austerity movements arising from the financial crisis. **In the UK** on the contrary, associations are numerous and "professional". Volunteer work is widespread but the economic model (in particular state funding of NGOs) and practices are currently too different to be able to draw comparisons. Adult education, feminine emancipation, culture for all, rights for minorities, social inclusion, fighting prejudice, commitment, volunteering etc. all these are not strictly popular education yet they definitely contribute to its definition, with the two invariants mentioned earlier. If we had to stipulate a "French exception", it would be in the close links between popular education and formal education that exists **in France**. Apart from **in Belgium**, there are no such close ties with schools elsewhere in Europe.

The term and the underpinning of popular education are old although the practice is less so and differs from country to country depending on the period in history. How important is it in today's Europe? The acknowledgement of formal and informal learning as part of lifelong education is one of the major orientations of popular education in Europe. There is also the desire to cater for the interests of the community as a whole and to address the issue of active citizenship in popular education. In this report, all stakeholders in civil society demonstrate their commitment to organising society so that a European-wide civil dialogue can really take place. But that is a story for another day.

Ariane Ioannides

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Kari Anttila<sup>1</sup> is former Finnish secretary of state for culture and education and ex secretary general of the Workers’ Educational Association (TSL). With a long history of political activism, Kari explains what lifelong education means in Finland; continuing professional development, but also general education (elementary, secondary or higher education)



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# “POPULAR EDUCATION IS NOT AT ALL MARGINAL”

*Les Idées en mouvement: Until very recently, you were secretary of state for culture and education. You have also long been a political activist.*

**KARI ANTILTA:** Before becoming secretary general of TSL, I spent 15 years as a consultant and trainer for local authorities. I did a lot of work with NGOs and the public sector. I was also very involved in youth movements, especially Allianssi ry which coordinates youth and education associations in Finland. I have been a trainer for people working with children and youths (club leaders etc.), member of ecological and social democratic organisations, etc. I am driven by the organisation of civil society, it’s what makes me tick and it’s how I can actively contribute to making the world a better place.

*What do you understand by “popular education” in Finland and what role does it play in society?*

In Finland it is largely focussed on adult education<sup>2</sup>. It’s a sort of second chance to get an education, in a good way. We believe that everyone should have the chance to start over. It’s an important principle of our educational system. In Finland we have several “sources of education” and adult education is one of them. Second, we are convinced that motivation can increase and strengthen skills. Finally, the third characteristic is that in our country, associations and NGOs play a major role in civil society. At TSL we train people who want to be active in local councils for example. To sum up, Finnish adult education is based on the idea that people have to believe in their own potential to play an active role in society. So, in Finland, what you call “popular education” and what we call “adult education” is by no means uncommon.

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*What form does adult education actually take in Finnish society?*

We have adult education centres, folk schools, summer schools, study centres and sports institutes. We have around 300 adult education centres run by local authorities. Courses are open to all. In total, over a million people each year take lessons (out of a population of 5.3 million). The first folk schools were founded in 1891, inspired by the philosopher Grundtvig<sup>3</sup> who had a major influence in our country. There are now 87 of them offering free, long and short courses. We also have twenty or so summer schools that are open to all. Further education is a longstanding tradition and was especially important when many workers had no formal education. The Lutheran church also addresses that problem and we are not at all opposed to their ideas on that matter. Today, things have changed. Our education system is much better than it used to be and we attract a different audience.

*What is your target audience nowadays?*

The results of the PIAAC<sup>4</sup> survey of adult skills reveal a need for lifelong education, particularly for seniors who have to deal with the challenges of our information society and who lack the relevant skills. Immigrants, who need language training and information about the local culture and job-seekers are also part of our target audience. At the moment, the atmosphere surrounding these categories of the population is tense. There is finger-pointing in Finland and all over Europe and increasingly they are victims of hate speech. Our biggest challenges are therefore social inclusion and minority rights, to build a society in which everyone has a place. Politically, we are going to have to come to terms with a more conservative government<sup>5</sup> that has a preference for formal qualifications.

*Several studies show the Finnish education system to be one of the best among OCDE countries. How does adult education tie in with school?*

We work alongside each other. Adult education is quite independent. However, it is involved in foundation programmes because training centres can offer courses, improve general knowledge and be national examination centres. There is no competition between us. The added value of further education is widely acknowledged. Work experience enhances the skill set. Skills acquired at school, university or at work form the basis of qualifications. That is the strongest link between what you call formal and informal education. That may be a little less true today because society has a tendency to overestimate the value of diplomas or degrees.

Interview conducted by Eve-Laure Gay and Ariane Ioannides.

## TSL, SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION

TSL (Työväen Sivistysliitto), the workers’ educational association, is one of the largest educative associations in Finland. It was founded in 1919 and runs several adult education centres. Aside from general knowledge and language courses, TSL offers consultancy (for education), publishes research, trains tutors and local decision-makers to become experts in EU regional and structural politics, union representatives and any members of associations. TSL focuses on team work, communication skills, technology and personal development. It trains some 150,000 people each year. From a political standpoint, it promotes lifelong education. TSL is a socio-democratic study circle and upholds the values of the Finnish workers’ movement. There are dozens of study circles covering the entire political and religious spectrum. [www.tsl.fi/in\\_english](http://www.tsl.fi/in_english)

1. Following the legislative election, Kari Anttila was appointed general secretary of the social democrat (SPD) parliamentary group. He subsequently stood down as secretary general of TSL.  
2. To a lesser extent, there are activities for youths organised by scouting movements or local authorities.  
3. Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872), a Danish Lutheran pastor, writer, linguist, historian and teacher. Founder of folk schools, he is considered the father of lifelong or further education. Today, Grundtvig is the name of the European Commission’s actions in the field of education and training within the vast Socrates programme.  
4. An international survey conducted in 33 OECD countries as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). It measures the cognitive faculties and competences in work environments that are considered necessary for individuals to successfully evolve in society and are essential for economic prosperity.  
5. The centrist opposition party won the legislative elections in April 2015. The conservative party came third. The nationalist, Eurosceptic Finns Party (formerly known as True Finns) came second. The social democrat party (SPD), part of the previous government coalition, came fourth.



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# LEARN AND FLOURISH

The adult training organisation DAPHNI KEK was founded in 1996 by a group of Greek university professors to combat unemployment. Today, Vassiliki Tsekoura and her husband remain at the helm and are still convinced that lifelong training is essential in Greece<sup>1</sup>.

Based in Patras in the village of Elaiochorion (Peloponnese) the association offers a wide range of courses: ICT, agriculture, artistic and cultural education for vulnerable persons such as immigrants and job-seekers.

“We are convinced of the necessity and appropriateness of our project” declared Vassiliki Tsekoura, cofounder of **DAPHNI KEK** and trainer. Within the economic, financial and social crisis currently underway in Greece, **DAPHNI KEK** has to deal with political and financial instability and is therefore very adaptable. The organisation is currently carrying out outstanding work for Romani groups. Between 2012 and 2014 it conducted a social entrepreneurship recycling project involving a hundred Romani people in Patras. The project was put together with the Romani community, from the selection of participants to the content of the training workshops. Cohabitation between Romani and Greek trainees is not always easy in today’s economic climate<sup>2</sup>.

**DAPHNI KEK** works towards the emancipation of Romani women in particular. Several workshops have been set up for writing, sewing, parenting etc. Over time we have

built a trusting relationship between trainers and Romani women. Vassiliki says that “*trainers have learnt as much as the women*”. Thanks to this very human approach, **DAPHNI KEK** has forged a reputation in the area and has built up a local network of training professionals and stable European partnerships.

The EU is a necessity for **DAPHNI KEK**, from a political and a financial point of view. A member of the European association for adult education, **DAPHNI KEK** contributes its expertise and works alongside other associations such as the Ligue de l’enseignement for the acknowledgement of informal adult education. The Greek associative sector has taken a bashing since the economic crisis. But Vassiliki is optimistic: “*In Greece, lifelong education and training are seen to be for adults with little or no qualifications. Our aim is to render them accessible to all citizens as a means of furthering self-fulfilment and a better social mix.*”

Mélanie Schoger and Ariane Ioannides.

[www.kekdafni.gr/en](http://www.kekdafni.gr/en)  
[www.eaea.org](http://www.eaea.org)

1. In Greece, the associative sector is not very structured or organised. It depends on funds from national public institutions, which are not very forthcoming. The most powerful and influential associations are religious institutions, charities, cooperatives and those in the field of sport. The impact of civil society in debates and decision-making is weak, even though trade unions still have the means to pressurise.  
2. The anti-austerity solidarity movement was formed in the summer of 2011. It is open to all, Greeks and migrants. It includes 400 organisations working in the fields of health, education, legal aid, culture etc. Some 10,000 people across Greece are members of the movement. Fifteen percent of those helped are also members. (Information gleaned from a presentation by Christos Giovanopoulos, member of Solidarité pour tous). More information on solidarity in Greece in the magazine Activism by the European civic forum: [www.civic-forum.eu](http://www.civic-forum.eu)





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# WIDESPREAD VOLUNTEERING IS A CULTURAL THING

Civil service in Germany has been compulsory for a while. Compulsory military service was abolished in 2011 and has been replaced by federal voluntary service, a national scheme for all ages. The scheme plays a major role of German culture and runs alongside other volunteer schemes for 16-27 year olds such as social or work. All schemes are year-long commitments in associations or in the public sector. Let's take a closer look at ASC Göttingen<sup>1</sup>, which manages the scheme in Lower Saxony.

**ASC** has been running the Lower Saxony social volunteer scheme for sport since 2002<sup>2</sup>. The club receives some 750 volunteers each year and has nearly 900 host establishments, mainly sports clubs and an increasing number of schools since the reform encouraging extracurricular activities. Very popular in Germany, **the volunteer year** is seen as “a year of personal development and the first step in a career for young people as well as being a way of contributing to the community” says Ole Fröhlich of **ASC**. During the year, volunteers receive a total of 25 days training shared between three seminars hosted by ASC. The club has also encouraged overseas volunteer schemes in five African countries and in France in partnership with the Ligue de l'enseignement as part of a Franco-German partnership.

Since 2011, **ASC** has also been involved in a federal volunteer scheme (Bundesfreiwilligendienst): “*This scheme*

*is also open to people over 27 and can be a part-time commitment*”, says Ole Fröhlich. The **ASC** has between 20 and 40 older volunteers each year, often seniors. A group might include a retired university professor, a housewife and an unemployed graduate. The programme offers less training but we organise seminars in which volunteers play a major role, starting with the choice of topics. As with social volunteering, training is a fundamental aspect of the commitment.

Civil volunteering began in churches in the 1950s. Charities quickly followed suit by setting up volunteer schemes in the medical-social field. Today, the field has widened to include sport, culture, education etc. In 2014, Germany boasted 100,000 volunteers in social, ecological and “Bundesfreiwilligendienst” schemes.

Mélanie Schoger.

1. ASC Göttingen, a sport's club founded in 1842 now has 8,600 members and offers a wide array of sporting activities ranging from traditional sports to leisure pursuits that stem from the latest medical discoveries: nordic walking, aqua gym, physiotherapy exercise and wheelchair sports. ASC has the most volunteers in the sporting field in Germany. See [www.asc46.de](http://www.asc46.de) for more information.

2. Volunteer schemes for 16-27 year are financed by the Länder (regional councils).



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## “WE NEED TO BUILD A EUROPEAN NETWORK”

In Italy, just like in France, popular education is totally separate from schools or formal education.

However, it remains largely political. Carlo Testini, manager of the cultural sector of Arci, a popular education movement, explains how he sees things and the challenges that his organisation will soon be facing.

### ARCI, A LONGSTANDING TRADITION IN SOLIDARITY

**Arci** (Associazione ricreativa e culturale italiana), Italian association for recreation and culture is the biggest popular education movement in Italy. Founded in 1957 in Florence following a project to maintain the associative experience of people's houses and mutual aid societies, **Arci's** history and values are rooted in 19th-century mutualism and the solidarity inherent in Italian civil society.

The association is funded by its members. It focuses on the promotion and development of associations, support for the non-profit sector, the social economy, the fight against social exclusion, international solidarity, civic service and volunteering.

**Arci** is a federation of 5,000 circles and a million members. A circle represents a town, a district or an area. Some 2,000 of these circles focus on cultural activities. Others are active laboratories for a participatory society. They take a stance against racism, for the social inclusion of the physically or mentally handicapped, for prisoners' rights, homosexual rights etc. At the same time, **Arci** conducts international solidarity projects in Palestinian territories, Cuba, the Philippines, Brazil and Mozambique and is an active member of European social forums. Finally, every year in early July, **Arci** holds a summer school between Florence and Cecina Mare in Tuscany.

[www.arci.it](http://www.arci.it)

protagonists within society. Film, drama and reading—the creative process in general—can be efficient tools in the training and promotion of popular education.

*All the same, there seems to be a thriving cooperative spirit in Italy. Can you tell us why that is?*

“Workers' societies” flourished in late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italy, set up by workers in the major industries of the north and by farm workers in the south. These societies offered aid for the poorest workers and were a forum for free political discussion. Civic movements were set up too. “People's houses” sprang up all over the country at the same time. They were built by workers and housed cooperatives, left-wing party headquarters, trade union offices, cultural and leisure activities. As they were mostly linked to left-wing movements, during the 20-year long fascist reign, they were closed or turned into fascist headquarters. In the post-war period, they were reopened and workers flocked back. To strengthen the associative movement, there was a need for a network that reflected those roots. Arci was born in 1957 of a combination of structures close to the communist and socialist parties. From then on, associative and cooperative movements went from strength to strength. Today, the various sectors are independent but some buildings still house associations, trade unions and cooperatives.

*What challenges is Arci currently having to deal with?*

We are currently rethinking our political engagement and our organisation. The challenges are so great that we need to employ all the means at our disposal to strengthen the popular education project and make a real difference in changing society. In the last two decades, we have maintained our interests in leisure and culture associations. At the same time, we have stepped up our defence of personal rights. Our defence of refugee rights has become a symbol of Arci's action<sup>1</sup>. Our aim remains a fairer, more sustainable model for society and we support the networks around the Mediterranean and across Europe that defend Human Rights: access to culture, citizenship, sexuality, tolerance, including of religion, fighting inequality and the mafia. All this work is possible thanks to the support we get from other major popular education organisations that share our values, like the Ligue de l'enseignement in France<sup>2</sup>. One of the aims we have in common is to promote progressive ideas on building an organised, independent civil society throughout Europe and the world.

Interview by Ariane Ioannides.

*Les Idées en mouvement: What role does popular education play in Italy?*

**CARLO TESTINI:** In today's Italy, the notion of popular education sounds hollow/has no real echo. It was more meaningful during a more complex period in our history and at a different stage in our development, after WW2 up until the sixties, when the poorest classes became emancipated. At the time, many educational movements grew out of the confrontation between left-wing secular culture and the religious, conservative culture of the centre-right. There was no real organised teachers' movement to promote the concept of popular education although teachers supported free education in a specific social and cultural context.

*All the same, are school and popular education totally separate?*

Yes, unfortunately they are. Many schools offer cultural activities alongside formal education but they are paid for by parents. In Italy, we tend to talk of further education, which is different to the concept of popular education that the Arci network promotes. We work on the principle that it is necessary to improve people's “cultural ability” to make them more independent and encourage them to become

1. Arci recently questioned the EU on the dramatic refugee situation. The press release entitled “Stop the massacre. Now! The Mediterranean is life or death for Europe” was signed by many organisations in Europe, including the Ligue de l'enseignement. It put forward ten proposals to deal with the emergency. There was an international demonstration on 20 June—world refugee day.

2. Since the Chianciano and Toulouse congresses in 2010, Arci and the Ligue de l'enseignement have been working closer together. Both movements are part of the European social forum. Since 2012 there has been bilateral work on topics such as the environment, culture and secularity. The federations of the Ligue de l'enseignement in the south of France hosted the “antimafia travelling exhibition”, an Arci project to counteract the “film star” attraction of the mafia and raise awareness among young people on the illegal systems set up.





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# READING AND WRITING TO DEFEND YOUR RIGHTS



© ABF

The “Read to Me Dad” programme stemmed from the simple facts that men read less than women and that children from working-class backgrounds find it more difficult to read. ABF, which has always had close ties with trade unions<sup>1</sup>, launched the project for fathers, grandfathers, step fathers and children aged 0-12 years.

A group of fathers spends a day with an author. Together they discuss the role of the father in helping children learn to read, the importance of reading aloud and of letting your child see you read. For Torgny Karnstedt, author and former worker, “this programme has a major impact on the lives of fathers and children alike”. “Read to Me, Dad!” addresses the need to give workers a second chance and to enable them to play a role in their children’s education. Knowing how to read and write is the foundation of self confidence and the basis of defending one’s rights. Fathers then follow a guided tour of the local library to see how it works, including the children’s area. They borrow a book for each of their children and one for themselves. Workers are paid for the day as part of their

The Swedish association ABF (Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund or association for worker’s education) introduced a programme to encourage worker fathers to read to their children.

employee training allowance. Thousands of workers have taken part since the scheme began. Marianne Högmark, head of the culture department at ABF and programme coordinator is now seeing a new generation of fathers asking to take part as their fathers did before them. For ABF, the programme is a real success: over half the participants change their reading habits after the training day and regularly go to the library—which is free. The project has given rise to other programmes such as “Read to Me!”, which encourages parents, especially bilingual families, to read aloud to their children in different everyday situations.

Morgane Roturier.

1. Some 85% of Swedish workers are union members.

## ABF, INFORMAL ADULT EDUCATION

Founded in 1912 by the Swedish social democrat party, a consumer cooperation movement and the confederation of unions, **ABF** is the biggest informal adult education association in Sweden. Its role is to promote and develop activities that enable people to take charge of their lives and to encourage people to play an active role in society, to reduce educational inequality, raise the overall level of education and stress the importance of culture. ABF covers the whole of Sweden via its member organisations and partners. Over 650,000 people take part in their 85,000 study circles (small groups of 8-12) each year and nearly 5 million people attend cultural events. Overall, some 3 million Swedes take part in study circles (out of a total population of 9.5 million).

<http://www.abf.se/>



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# VOLUNTEER AFTER 50

The UK has a strong associative culture<sup>1</sup> thanks to early awareness of volunteer work in the education system where the practice is highlighted. The association Volunteering Matters has launched the Grandmentor project<sup>2</sup> which brings together mentors aged 50 and over and young people in difficulty.

**Volunteering Matters** promotes voluntary action. In the UK, 15,000 volunteers aged over 50 take part in the association’s various schemes. Those involved in the Grandmentor project help young people aged 16-24 from working-class neighbourhoods such as Hackney, Islington and Hounslow. The young people are excluded from the school system, training and the job market. The crux of the project is the reciprocal commitment. Volunteers agree to meet up with the young person on a regular basis over a period of 6 months to help him or her regain confidence. In exchange, the young person goes on a further education course and receives special tuition.

Louise Gooding, 52, is a Grandmentor volunteer. She mentors Anna, a 23-year-old who left Eritrea alone when she was 16. One of the main objectives was for her to regain her self-confidence. I helped her with her CV and made a list of the things she is good at. By working together regularly, we have become friends. Thanks to our conversations, her English has improved. It’s an enriching experience for me too. It’s gratifying to feel capable.

Morgane Roturier and Ariane Ioannides.

## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS! YOU CAN HELP!

**Volunteering Matters**, formerly CSV, is a nationwide association that has been promoting volunteer work for over fifty years. Like most British associations, it works with local authorities to combat isolation and social exclusion of vulnerable people (the handicapped, seniors, youths and families). **Volunteering Matters** thinks people should play an active part in their community. The association manages the network of national volunteer-involving agencies, a sort of national agency that covers 80 national associations and some 2 million volunteers.

<http://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/>

1. There are no recent surveys on volunteering in the UK. In 1997, 48% of the UK population was a volunteer, that is nearly 22 million people.  
2. A charity is an association that is based on volunteers, as opposed to a professional association.



Hanane Cherqaoui, trainer at the Belgian Ligue de l'enseignement runs literacy workshops in the working-class district of Saint-Gilles, on the outskirts of Brussels. She has been teaching French to women of Moroccan origin and helping them build up their self-confidence for nine years now.



© Ligue de l'enseignement belge

# LITERACY: THE GATEWAY TO CITIZENSHIP

*"Originally, these literacy courses were intended for parents who don't speak French, or not very well, to help them read their children's school reports, understand the institution and monitor their children's education", explains Hanane Cherqaoui, trainer at the Belgian Ligue de l'enseignement. She has been teaching in Saint-Gilles, a cosmopolitan district in the suburbs of Brussels, for nine years now. From September to June, three or four mornings a week, she teaches a group of fifteen to twenty mostly Moroccan women. There are no men. Mixed classes would constitute a barrier and men, who have generally received an education, attend more formal courses in French as a foreign language. In Hanane's class, the atmosphere is studious, although not too theoretical. Naturally, there has to be some grammar and verbs but she focuses on role play in real-life situations as much as possible. She bases her lessons around trips to the theatre, to the cinema and cookery or needlework workshops. Anything goes as long as French is spoken! Having the courage to speak out is the most important thing. It's not so much a language issue as a lack of self-confidence. Once women feel confident, they can talk about anything, make themselves understood and achieve a certain degree of independence.*

A step along the path to emancipation, not an end in itself. Until last year, lessons took place within the school. For women who needed their husband's approval to attend, especially those from Arabic/Muslim backgrounds, the fact that it was in school made it more acceptable. It was also easier to speak to teachers and take part in school life. This year, the school has a bigger intake. Hanane and her "lear-

ners", as she calls her pupils, have had to move out of the school. Hanane's first reaction was *"How can we be called the Ligue de l'enseignement and not be in a school?"* In the end though, it turned out to be a good thing. Relations with the school remain closer than she had feared. Parents still ask her for help, especially to explain their child's career choice. Lessons are now open to all, not just to parents.

At first, Hanane had to give out leaflets in front of the school to publicise her lessons. Nowadays she is overloaded with requests and will soon be opening a second group. But Hanane and her nine colleagues will soon have to change the content and objectives of their lessons. The local authority has announced its cohesion programme for the next five years. It focusses on *"learning the French language as an active citizen"* with the aim of obtaining a sufficient level of oral and written French, *"in accordance with the CEFR, Common European Framework for Languages."* In other words, the aim is employability. Funding will be granted on the basis of these criteria. That means assessments at the beginning and end of the course and groups per level. Some learners hardly went to school in their country of origin and some have difficulties in memorising or grasping notions. Hanane is worried: *"These women aren't just here to learn to read and write. Literacy is a step on the way to emancipation, not an end in itself."*

Philippe Ridou.

See the article on page 21 of *Idées en Mouvement* (literally Ideas in Movement) n°222

## THE BELGIAN LIGUE IS 150 YEARS OLD

The Belgian Ligue de l'enseignement celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014. It was founded by Charles Buis to improve education in Belgium and to safeguard the principle of freedom of conscience in schooling. Thanks to an encounter between Charles Buis and Jean Macé, the league came into being in France. The Belgian Ligue de l'enseignement has a similar outlook to its French counterpart and aims to defend and promote public and secular education. It is implanted mainly in Brussels and in the French-speaking part of the country.

[www.ligue-enseignement.be](http://www.ligue-enseignement.be)

# BROADENING THE FIELD OF POSSIBILITIES

In Haute-Garonne, La Ligue de l'enseignement runs journalism workshops with secondary school dropouts. This activity is run as part of the "relay workshop" (atelier-relais)<sup>1</sup> programme and aims to motivate pupils.

Florian, Marouane and Dounia are year 9 and 10 pupils in Colomiers, Haute-Garonne. They regularly go to the **relay workshop**, a scheme aimed at pupils on the verge of dropping out of school. Four hours a week, for twelve weeks, they leave the classroom behind and set out to be reporters. Aims: regain their self-confidence, regain trust in the institution, encourage them to play a part in their own learning —through experimenting with journalism. *"These pupils endure things, they get bored in class and become very passive. Some may be absent for two half-days per week"*, says Philippe Rulié, responsible for la Ligue in Haute-Garonne.

Today, the group has a meeting in Tournefeuille, a suburb of Toulouse, to visit a street art venue. In a classroom at Léon Blum secondary school, eight teenagers sit around a table to prepare the trip. The air is laden with silence. Heads feel about to explode. There are four participants missing this morning. Another pupil arrives ten minutes late. *"Hey, someone's back"*, says Cheyenne, 14. From the computer desk, she suggests looking up the day's itinerary on the internet. *"Nice to see you again"*, says one of the workshop's three leaders as the teenager joins the group. Who? When? What? Where? How? The pupils use the bases of journalism to determine the questions to ask and then share out the roles: photographers, journalists and sound engineers. *"I'm inquisitive, I'm interested in everything"*, says Dounia, enthusiastic. She chooses to work on the radio.

## Collaborative work with individual results

Colomiers, 10 km to the west of Toulouse is the second most populated town in the district (département). Some of the pupils of its four state secondary schools are in great social difficulty. When the state introduced the relay workshops in 2002 to combat dropouts, the town was one of a dozen experimental sites in France. At the time, one of the four schools requested to be included in the programme. The head teacher was also a local politician in charge of education. Since then, the scheme has grown with help from popular education movements such as the Ligue de l'enseignement and **Francas**. Each year, thirty pupils benefit from the programme.

Pupils are selected based on their attitude in class, which may be disruptive or on the contrary, totally passive with many absences. They undergo an interview and are invited to a trial session at the workshop. *"The pupils describe their relationship with school, their expectations, needs, their behaviour in class and their feelings. They are questioned on their extracurricular activities and their family environment. We take everything into account. They are also asked what they could contribute to the workshop. That's the first overview of the situation"*, says Philippe Rulié. Next stage: pupils receive a formal invitation to join the group from a ruling committee. *"There is a formal commitment. Pupils and their parents agree to participate and get involved."*

When pupils no longer feel part of a class and see no point in learning, the role of the workshop is to motivate them via teamwork. *"There has always been a collective aspect to encourage cooperation and improve social skills to make these young people feel better about themselves"*, explains Philippe Rulié. Several years on, group leaders have noticed that the use of journalistic techniques and field reports

always sets in motion an interesting process in terms of group dynamics, responsibilities and trust.

## One step at a time

A tour of Airbus, behind the scenes at a local newspaper, watching craftsmen or personal care workers go about their tasks...—when they are not in maths or French lessons, pupils get a glimpse of a variety of real-life workplaces designed to incite enthusiasm, ideas, even vocations. *"A few years back, we followed their lead but we ended up with stereotypes like plumber for boys and hairdresser for girls"*, says Philippe Rulié. Yet, despite broader horizons, some pupils are still not interested or concerned. *"They have a very short attention span"* says Luis Mendez who helps the pupils with the radio, from the fieldwork to editing and presenting a real programme on local radio station.

*"We try things, but we don't have a magic wand. Sometimes it comes together, it all depends on the group and how the pupils relate to each other"*, explains the teacher who coordinates the workshop, Benjamin Boulbès. With funds diminishing each year and limited time, the adults are frustrated and conscious that the workshop cannot solve all the pupils' problems. *"Some pupils have such huge problems outside school. When a pupil is totally preoccupied with things that are going on at home, trips and teamwork are not going to be enough to motivate him"*, he concedes.

Although the effect of the workshop on the number of dropouts have not yet been assessed, and are necessarily noticeable by the other teachers, the time spent, the maturity gained and the help obtained often enable pupils to redefine their career ideas and to remain in the education system. *"We are not here to give careers advice. There is a difference between career education and careers advice"*, says Philippe Rulié. He knows that the workshop is just a stage in their education.

Thomas Dusseau.

1. "Relay-workshops" (les ateliers-relais), a new way of teaching.

## "RELAY-WORKSHOPS" (LES ATELIERS-RELAIS), A NEW WAY OF TEACHING

The workshops are designed to avoid secondary school dropouts. These schemes are not stopgap measures used by schools to cope with failure. If their initial intentions remain unchanged, they are excellent laboratories for learning techniques.

The crux of these workshops is the "time out", i.e. taking the pupil off the school premises for a limited period. A typical team is composed of teachers, social workers and associative helpers or representatives of the local authority responsible for cultural, artistic, sporting or civic actions. The coordination is shared between the teacher and a representative of popular education.

The main idea is to prevent pupils from dropping out by watching out for tell-tale signs as early as possible, in years 7 to 9. The aim is to motivate pupils about school and to encourage them to pick up where they left off. For a relatively short time, 6–12 weeks, pupils will not go to school as usual but will attend the workshop instead, which is usually not on the same premises.

These pupils are not taken out of school as such, they are being educated elsewhere. The workshop is not a disciplinary sanction like being expelled. It should be well received by the pupil and his or her family. Pupils are selected by the head teachers and teaching staff in collaboration with medico-social staff and their case is examined by a committee that proposes a solution.

At the workshop, pupils work a normal school day in small groups of 6–10. There are special science, maths and French lessons, plus presentations from members of the associative, cultural or sporting world. Directly, or indirectly, these projects aim to give young people a different approach to learning. Playing board games, for example, is a way of working on a number of skills such as understanding rules, the reaction to rules and to other players, fellow pupils and adults. The difference is in the teaching approach. The idea is to motivate and to make learning meaningful.

Ariane Ioannides.



# THE SHAPE OF POPULAR EDUCATION ACROSS EUROPE

There are just about as many definitions of popular education as there are movements. All the same, two main principles stand out: giving access to culture to as many people as possible and culture as a condition of exercising citizenship. These two invariants have a corollary, which is the implementation of active teaching. Extracts from a presentation by Jean-Claude Richez, associate researcher at Injep on 16 January 2013 at the media club in Strasbourg on this topic<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>(a) Education popular, this is loads of movements  
<sup>2</sup>(b) But only one in common: walking towards citizenship  
<sup>3</sup>(c) Popular education

**Popular education concerns Northern Europe as well as Mediterranean Europe.** Germanic Europe and Scandinavia have long been the scene of powerful popular education movements in the form of summer schools with close links to the notion of Volksbildung in German and Folksbildning in Swedish (literally “people’s education”). The complex notion of “bildung” in German covers both training and culture, a process and a state. It means to get training and to be cultivated. The term also comprises the idea of transformation and personal fulfilment.

In France, we tend to see Condorcet as the founder of popular education but in Scandinavia and beyond, it was Grundtvig, the Danish poet, linguist, teacher and historian. Grundtvig’s teaching focuses on an individual’s environment, on real life, the world as it is. It aims to develop our sense of a common resource. The folk school movement launched by Grundtvig in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century spread all over Scandinavia and remains strong today. There are many folk schools with many pupils. Their courses are often similar to those proposed via popular education in France.

In Germany, the DVV network has over 1,000 folk schools. They act as local lifelong learning centres and cater mainly for adults. The system is similar to the ones in Austria and Switzerland (another birthplace of popular education).

## “The French exception”

In some ways, popular education in France is an exception. It differs from the rest of Europe in two ways. First, popular education in northern Europe mainly concerns adults, while in France the field also addresses youth problems. Different types of popular education have all but taken over informal education for this segment of the population. Second, in northern Europe there is no link between

adult education and help for youths outside schools although there is in France. Northern European youths have traditionally been catered for by youth movements linked to political parties (socialist workers or communist parties or directly by the catholic or protestant church).

These differences can be explained by the fact that in countries where widespread education for children was introduced long ago, the issue did not lie with formal education, but with further education, in particular for the working classes who had no secondary education<sup>2</sup>.

Since 1981, many folk schools have been introduced in Spain. They are part of a general desire for adult education. They are based on a number of shared values in keeping with Spanish teaching tradition: lifelong training and access to education, for all, at any age, gender equality, interculturality and democratic citizenship through social and cultural participation.

Popular education is no more a foundation of Europe than secularity. Yet, today, both formal and informal education is acknowledged in European strategy on the principle that learning is a lifelong process.

1. The presentation is available on the website [www.injep.fr](http://www.injep.fr)  
 2. Another explanation: the Popular Front’s refusal that the state intervene in youth issues, considering it to be the role of civil society via popular education movements.



## ▲ WOMAN, A ROMANI AND EMANCIPATED

Drom Kotar Mestipen, Romani for “road to freedom” is an association founded in Barcelona in 1999 by Romani and non Romani women. Its aim is to promote the emancipation of Romani women and girls without denying their roots. Drom Kotar Mestipen is active throughout Catalonia, which is home to some 80,000 Romani (official data).

The association set up a training course for “leisure time and canteen staff” eight years ago and nearly 200 women have been trained to date. The course is officially approved by the Catalanian government and enables women to work in after-school clubs or in school canteens. It was introduced in response to a recurring demand from schools with Romani pupils. The Romani staff act as role models for the children and help prevent absenteeism. There is a real need for this in Catalonia, explains Natalia Fernandez, coordinator of the association.

Training sessions are organised and planned by the women themselves. They set the schedule, allocating the 308 hours (including 150 hours of hands-on practice) according to their own timetables. The theory lessons include lessons on Romani history and culture. The course is free and childcare is available. Over 80% of trainees find a job after the course. Aside from employment, the course gives women the opportunity to be a part of school life.

## Fighting prejudice

Drom Kotar Mestipen also uses the principle of coeducation with “trobadas” (meetings) between Romani women pupils and students and those who would like to be. These encounters involve 250-300 women twice a year. “I found it really useful to go to a trobada. I met some gypsy students. They weren’t like my family. It was a bit of a shock. With no men around, the women express themselves more freely. It’s not out of fear, because the men know about the scheme and support it. It’s more out of respect for fathers or elders,” says Cristina a volunteer member of the association. Drom Kotar Mestipen also helps combat the cliché that Romani don’t want to study or work and don’t look after their children.

Eve-Laure Gay and David Lopez.

## POPULAR EDUCATION IN SPAIN

Spain has a long tradition in popular education and cultural activities that goes back to the industrial revolution in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Catalonia, the ateneus (similar to Italian people’s houses) are places to meet and to learn. The first one dates from 1820. Libertarian, federal, Catholic or private, an ateneu is a cultural venue. In Spain, popular education associations were either demolished under Franco or taken over and used for his own idea of popular education. Associations flourished again after 1975 and residents’ associations in districts and villages helped constitute a new political class. The associations differ from region to region. In Andalusia for example, agricultural cooperatives are particularly present.

**Popular education in Europe,  
what does it really mean?**  
.....

Founded in 1866, la Ligue de l’enseignement is one of France’s largest organisations in non-formal education. It gathers 25,000 associations in 103 local and 22 regional federations with the common aims of training responsible citizens, fighting against all inequalities and building a fairer and more independent society. It aims to guarantee access to education for everyone and further promotes a secular society, solidarity among citizens and active citizenship.

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