

LESSON 1: UNDERSTANDING UNIONS AND THEIR ROLE

Lesson aim:

- ✚ To explain to students what unions are and what they do.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- ✚ provide a definition of a union and outline the general aims of a union.

Lesson outline:

Explain to students that they are going to learn about unions in Ireland, how they operate and what they do.

Write the word “union” on a flipchart or blackboard so that students can easily read it. Ask them what they think a union is and what it might do. Put their contributions where they can be read.

Discuss their explanations referring to “Understanding Unions” (it is a collective group with common interests and aims) and explain that a union organisation differs from a business organisation in what it aims to do.

Continue using the following and the relevant resource section to stimulate discussions:

- ✚ What do you think are the aims of a union?
- ✚ How do you think these aims can be achieved?
- ✚ What do you think is the relevance of unions today?

Read out the aims ensuring students understand them and ask if they think they are relevant to young workers? Why/Why not?

Ask students to write out two aims that they think a union should pursue explaining the reasons for their choice.

Assignment: Individual project

Write to a union of your choice requesting a brief interview with a Senior Trade Union official outlining the reasons for the interview and questions to be posed. Use the following as a guide when preparing questions (these can be added to if wished):

- ✚ How long have you held the current position?
- ✚ What attracted you to this job?
- ✚ What is your least/most favourite part it?
- ✚ What is important for young people to know about unions?
- ✚ What is the message you would like to give to young people starting work?
- ✚ Do you or do you intend in the future to run programmes or campaigns specifically for young workers? Please provide some detail.
- ✚ What in your opinion is the future of the trade union movement?
- ✚ What changes would you like to see happen in the union movement in the next five to ten years?