



GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN TRADE UNIONS *MSU Manual*

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GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN TRADE UNIONS

MSU Manual

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Published by ISERES · Salzburg 2004 · Editor: Brenda de Jong, Erika Pircher · Style editor: Ann Simpson
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The MSU Manual is available in English and French on the following website: www.iseres.org/msu
The publication of the MSU Manual was subsidised by the European Commission – DG Research
Directorate-General Contract N° HP-CT-2001-00061

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MANUAL

Discussions on the introduction and implementation of gender mainstreaming in trade unions in European countries began several years ago. Meanwhile, in many unions, concrete decisions have been taken and projects introduced, in order to integrate gender mainstreaming within union structures – and also in collective bargaining agreements. These unions have acknowledged that the principle of gender mainstreaming can support them, not only in order to keep their current membership, but also to attract new members. Moreover, introducing gender mainstreaming in union practices is an effective way of reinforcing the battle against all forms of inequality between men and women – at work and in society. It should be recalled that, in spite of the increasing participation of women in economic activity, inequalities persist in all European countries: lower employment rates, above-average unemployment, occupational segregation, unequal pay, differences in type of status and working time and, also, unequal distribution of domestic chores within families.

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy – namely to achieve equality of women and men in internal union organisation and in external practices (collective bargaining and union action) – takes many different forms in Europe. Even though some trade unions do not use the terminology and, therefore, are not even aware of gender mainstreaming policies, they do, in fact, practice gender mainstreaming. This is the case, for example, when, on drawing up union demands in the area of working time policies, attention is paid to how these would affect the work-life balance of all employees, women and men, taking into consideration the great variety in needs amongst them, for instance as result of household and family responsibilities.

This manual, “Gender mainstreaming in Trade Unions”, has been developed within the scope of a three-year project (2001-2004) called: “The Challenge of Mainstreaming for Trade Unions in Europe: How can trade unions foster gender equality in the workplace and in daily life?” (MSU). This project was carried out within the fifth framework of the Programme “Improving the Human Research Potential and the Socio-economic Knowledge Base” and included research institutes in six countries – Austria (Diversity Centre), Belgium (I.I.S.A), Denmark (Valbjorn IHRD), France (ISERES), Italy (IRES) and the Netherlands (Brenda de Jong).

This project was embedded in the philosophy that the implementation of equal opportunities policy for women and men is not something that trade unions do automatically and, thus, represents a challenge. In the history of union demands concerning women’s rights, pressure from inside and/or outside was always required, in order for trade unions to make these issues their own and push for them in collective bargaining. When the EU Commission defined gender mainstreaming in the mid-90s to promote the equality of women and men, the European trade union movement was also being addressed to become active in this field.

This project is a comparative study of trade union and collective bargaining policies, regarding the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy in the project’s partner countries. The study was carried out in three phases. Firstly, trade union confederations, their policies on gender mainstreaming, as well as the representation of women in them were examined. Secondly, sector-

level unions in three specific areas – namely metal industry, commerce and public services – were researched in detail. And thirdly, case studies were carried out at enterprise-level concerning examples of good practice in two areas of union work: equal pay and working time. The results of this study serve as the basis of this manual.

The concept of diversity, based on Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, according to which no one can be discriminated against based on sex, religion, ethnicity, disabilities or sexual orientation, was not a specific topic of this project. However, the issue of diversity, along with gender mainstreaming, is finding increasing interest within trade unions. In the process of searching for good practice examples for gender mainstreaming in unions, we have encountered cases of diversity management and have highlighted them accordingly.

The manual concentrates on various areas of friction within trade union equality policy: on the one hand, regarding the functioning of union structures and, on the other hand, regarding policies and negotiations on specific topics, namely on equal pay and working time.

The manual will, therefore, serve the interests of union organisations, which represent employees at enterprise and sector-levels. It targets trade union officers, in particular those who are active in trade union structures and in the collective bargaining process, shop stewards and works councils, other union officers and activists at workplace level. The main aim is to support and help these people in the following activities:

- the discovery and removal of inequalities based on gender;
- the development and implementation of measures, which foster equality for women and men in trade unions, the collective bargaining process and within enterprises;
- the exchange of experience, based on the principle of good practice examples.

It is NOT the aim of this manual to provide precise instructions or models on how to implement gender mainstreaming in trade unions. The text is intentionally general, so that the needs of as many users as possible can be met.

The manual is composed of six modules, which can be read separately: mission statement; trade union structures; trade union culture and functioning; union actions and collective bargaining; equal pay; and working time. The content of each module is structured as follows: general introduction to the topic; background; good practice examples; recommendations; references and links to relevant websites. The manual also contains an introduction to gender mainstreaming, a glossary, and the legal framework for gender mainstreaming in all the countries participating in this project.

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WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

■ INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming is an approach, which is new to many people in trade unions and can be seen as the current culmination of the discussions on equal opportunities for women and men. Gender mainstreaming implies a **dual strategy**: it supplements, but does not replace, positive action measures for women.

■ BACKGROUND

As a concept, gender mainstreaming was first widely disseminated at the Third World Women's Conference of the United Nations in Nairobi in 1985. The point of departure for the current debate can be situated at the World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. Gender mainstreaming then became a central theme within general European equality policy. According to the definition of the Council of Europe, "Gender mainstreaming comprises the re-organisation, improvement, development and assessment of decision-making processes in all policy and working areas of an organisation. The objective of gender mainstreaming is to include the perspective of gender relations in all decision-making processes, and to make use of all decision-making processes for gender equality." In 1995, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) decided to integrate both women's and men's interests consciously into all areas of action within trade union policy. Since then, gender mainstreaming has slowly enjoyed implementation within the ETUC affiliated unions, albeit of varying quality.

In this context, the term "gender mainstreaming" should be clarified, as it is probably not well-known to readers of this manual and therefore still needs explanation.

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles of both men and women, and of the relationship between them – men are an integral part of a gender approach.

Gender characteristics (social and cultural roles of men and women respectively) are regarded as something that has developed in historical processes; they can largely be changed and re-organised by deliberate policy. In this framework, biological differences between men and women are not to be used as justification for the different roles and positions, which are attributed to them, for instance in work and in the labour market.

In a gender mainstreaming approach, the relationship between men and women or the specific position of women is not a special topic as such. It is, rather, a theme that cuts through all other topics, and is relevant in all areas.

Gender mainstreaming proposes a new conception of gender equality, which is not dealt with apart and separately from decision-making, but in an integrated and permanent way. Given such rationale, there are no longer economic policies, negotiations and action on the one hand; and on the other, the issue of occupational equality, which is seen independently and is aimed at correcting earlier inequality.

There are, therefore, two essential dimensions to this approach. It is firstly a matter of conceiving equality permanently and upstream at the very moment when policy is being drawn up. Secondly, it is a matter of involving all actors, who have a decision-making role, i.e., obviously public actors, but also social and local actors (companies, trade unions, local councillors, etc.). Mainstreaming is essentially the development of an integrated approach and should not be an alibi for slowing down or removing specific actions and budgets for equality. The dual approach involves maintaining positive action, while, at the same time, developing a transversal approach to equality.

In factual terms, it means the following. The policy of enlarging the active participation of women (positive actions) in organisations – for example measures

to increase the number of women in collective bargaining groups, to place women in leading positions, or to maintain institutions promoting women, e.g. women's departments – is still a necessary component of equality policies, as long as women are under-represented in decision- and policy-making. Gender mainstreaming can supplement the aims of these measures with its dual approach of supplementing, not replacing, positive action.

Gender mainstreaming is, thus, a strategy that deals with the wide variety of decision-making processes in the disparate life situations of women and men and considers their differing interests and needs. In contrast to the politics of positive actions and the promotion of women, gender mainstreaming is aimed at both men and women. Thus measures to balance the needs of work and private life, for instance, should consider the needs of both women and men – in the area of company working time policies, this could include, for example, the promotion of working time arrangements for those in leadership positions, such as part-time work in certain countries, in order to break up stereotype images of the role of women and men.

Introducing gender mainstreaming in an organisation is a long process, which requires commitment of and active implementation by the top leadership level. This does not mean, however, that change has to be a hierarchical process and can only be carried out top-down. Experience has shown that the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming requires a combination of both bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Only then, when everyone becomes involved, from top leadership down to the grass roots, who all consider themselves to be directly responsible for the immediate success of a gender mainstreaming project, can this process be a success.

The objective is to launch processes of change, for example in the organisation of work, working time arrangements and collective bargaining policy. Those holding managerial/ leadership positions should include gender mainstreaming in their daily activities, just as they consider budgetary possibilities and constraints on an everyday basis and in all decision-making.

To sum up, gender mainstreaming:

- is a strategy to achieve equal opportunities;
- deals with decision making processes;
- requires commitment and active implementation by leadership;
- is aimed at both men and women;
- and requires active commitment and involvement of the whole organisation.

With this in mind, union leaders and heads of works councils are required to implement gender mainstreaming in everyday union business. The various starting points, related to the key topics of gender equality, will be dealt with in the following modules.

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■ INTRODUCTION

The political will to introduce new models of organisation and adopt new procedures and forms of behaviour is vital for the success of gender mainstreaming in trade unions. In order to prevent such commitments from remaining a dead letter and to ensure that they really lead to tangible results, a mission statement is a good way for trade unions to formalise their commitments.

■ BACKGROUND

Drawing up a mission statement about a structural approach – namely, integrating the gender dimension in daily working and decision-making processes – can help to preserve or strengthen the defence of social and economic, general and specific interests and needs of all employees, both women and men. If trade unions want to communicate their commitment in a successful way, the mission statement should be measurable, definable and an appeal, which everyone knows about and can act upon. Mission statements can come in different forms: for instance via congress resolutions, official statements, guidelines or rules. It is not the form that matters, but the content and the way in which the content can be verified over a longer period.

A trade union's ideological and political background will influence its mission statement. Each organisation's history, traditions and environment create a different context. Concepts can have different meanings for different unions, but it is important to make them clear and to set out the priorities about intended results for a certain period, as contexts change over time. The political context will influence the possibilities, which exist in bargaining procedures. Tripartite models, which exist in various forms in Denmark and the Netherlands, have undergone major political changes, which tend to jeopardise this kind of social

compromise. The economic context challenges trade unions when it comes to deciding upon feasible objectives. For example, industrial restructuring, development of the service sector or small economic units, globalisation, relocation and sub-contracting are factors, which trade unions should take into account whenever mission statements are formulated.

Socio-demographic factors will force trade unions to consider, for example, the growth of “new” groups in the labour market with weak union traditions (ethnic minorities, young employees and part-timers) or changes in the labour market (proportion of employees with higher education, increase of unemployed and older employees), when defining the target groups of the mission statement. Other factors will also influence the scope of the mission statement, as for example the development of flexibility and job insecurity in working relations or new forms of participation in work organisation and greater labour market mobility.

Finally, trade unions consider cultural and ideological factors as an important ingredient for the content of the mission statement. The rise of individualism and the position, which trade unions take regarding the places of women and men in society and politics, influence the mission statement. It is important to identify the norms and values, which trade unions pursue regarding equal opportunities as a goal, and the means to achieve them. Likewise, measures for monitoring and assessing the impact of the commitments are essential.

A mission statement should become an important document for any employee and (elected) union officer, who is developing or evaluating a strategic decision, to consider. The statement can range from a very simple to a very complex set of ideas. A good mission statement provides vision and direction for the organisation for many years and should not have to be revised every few years with changes in the trade union's environment. However, the mission statement must be revised if it is no longer appropriate or has lost significance or relevance.

■ GOOD PRACTICES

Belgium: Charter on gender mainstreaming

The Charter, signed in Belgium on 23 September 2004 by the three representative trade union confederations, is a good example of making a clear statement to all trade union members in Belgium (over 3,000,000 members). The Charter first points out the context – it thus outlines the state of mind, in which the commitments were made. In a second part, the Charter has 10 articles, starting with the autonomous commitment to the gender mainstreaming principle, as well as recognition of the importance of equality policy. The trade unions agree on the importance of monitoring and checking gender policy, for which they will closely cooperate with the sector-level structures. Exchange of information (gender analysis and gender statistics) will be developed. In order to enable monitoring and checking, the unions agree on identifying monitoring and checking bodies and giving them statutory competencies. As for the employers, trade unions will urge them to deliver the necessary information, in order to check on inequalities and to analyse gender specific problems in an adequate way. The unions also declared that they will take into account the gender dimension in relation to each agenda point. Training will be provided, in order to be able to discuss all agenda points in a gender specific way. Positive interaction with the feminist movement will be promoted. In the last article, the trade unions agree on making an annual report, which will be analysed by the structures concerned and made available to all members.

France: gender balance charters

In the 1980s, all CFDT union structures (sector unions and regional structures) adopted the principle of gender balance charters at their respective congresses. The aims of these charters are to commit these structures to various points, for instance:

- develop demands regarding gender balance, which especially concern women (childcare and part-time work) and gradually extend these demands to men (parental leave);
- foster the place of women in structures (by developing a policy of replacing officers who leave by bringing in women via training and suitable recruitment measures, which “make it possible to gradually take on responsibility”). In order to do this, specific methods are used (quotas, creation of a gender balance working group and ideas for changing ways of operating, namely timing of meetings and also “avoiding aggressiveness and ideological discussions that are not related to the real situation”, etc.).

However, during the MSU survey of certain sector unions, it was observed that most of these charters had become obsolete – when the “resource” people

(often women, who initiated the approach) left their positions of responsibility, the charter became a dead letter. CGT included in its Charter on Trade Union Life (adopted at its congress in 2003), the will “to promote the presence of more women union members in positions of responsibility, with the aim of respecting gender balance everywhere – and beyond that, parity – in union working groups and leadership on all levels.”

The Netherlands: variety of written intentions

FNV affiliated unions use a variety of written intentions and instruments to set out and monitor clear aims on greater participation of women in the whole organisation. Each union tackles the issue in its own way. The large FNV sector union for employees in industry, transport and services, for instance, has written down its intention to improve the representativeness of its National Union Council, by ensuring that it reflects membership in that sector (not only in relation to men and women, but also to age and ethnic origins); to develop a profile of all sector-level councils in the context of a policy aiming at achieving diversity (regarding gender, age, ethnicity); and to propose equal numbers of men and women candidates for the Executive Committee. The FNV union for the printing and media sector has created a working group aimed at transforming the union and its structures, thus reflecting more appropriately the working population in the different sectors covered by the union. In the public employees’ union – which is the union, where developments towards equal representation of women have progressed quite steadily over the years - ‘management by speech and letter’ emphasises the importance of nominating women, black and migrant members and young members as representatives to Congress, as well as the Executive Committee and National Union Council. Since 1986, overall monitoring of developments has been carried out by the FNV Women’s Department, which collects facts and figures on the position of women in membership and as active members, leadership or employees at various levels within FNV and its affiliated unions. Each year, the main results are made public on the 8th of March, International Women’s Day.

ETUC: Equality Plan

The ETUC adopted a new “Equality Plan” at its last congress (Prague, 2003). It includes three objectives – and differs from the first one in 1999, in that it includes measures for achieving them. The objectives are: eliminating the women’s representation gap in decision-making bodies; extending gender mainstreaming; and strengthening the role of the body responsible for gender equality policy. The first objective is based on the intention to reduce by half the representation gap in decision-making bodies by an equality plan with quantified objectives, a timetable and a clear indication of the need for follow-up and evaluation.

The second objective aims at including the gender dimension in collective bargaining by training in equality issues for negotiators, preparing negotiations in cooperation with equality officers and ensuring follow-up and evaluation. The last objective involves the body responsible for gender equality policy in each trade union confederation (women's committee or gender balance committee, etc.) ensuring that there is a dual approach to equality and adequate human and financial resources. The links between these bodies and the European Industry Federations and the ETUC' Women's Committee will be strengthened.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep the mission statement clear and succinct, presenting the trade union's purpose with respect to gender mainstreaming policy.
- Incorporate socially meaningful and measurable criteria and consider approaching it on a large-scale.
- Include some or all of the following concepts: moral/ethical position of the trade union, desired public image and description of the target and expectations.
- Incorporate statements on the political will of the trade union to undertake changes in trade union structures, organisation and ways of operating, in order to achieve equal opportunities.
- Make clear statements on the access on an equal footing of women to bargaining and decision-making structures.
- Envisage all necessary resources, in order to be able to achieve the goals (statistical data, financial means, human resources, etc.).
- Envisage not only commitments, but also assessment possibilities and structures, in order to evaluate the implementation of the policies.
- Ensure that the mission statement is introduced to new union employees, leaders and active members.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Trade unions are debating – as one of the elements of the decision-making process – the effectiveness of separate women’s structures, aimed at achieving equal opportunities on the shop floor and in trade unions themselves. Some people regard separate structures as vital to achieving equality; others believe that general structures are sufficiently capable of attaining the same goal, provided that women are fairly represented in them, so that their voices can be heard. It is, however, a task for all trade union structures to consider the most appropriate way in which gender equality can be obtained. Most trade unions need to make improvements, breaking up the barriers for women to take part in bargaining and decision-making processes, on an equal basis with their men colleagues.

■ BACKGROUND

Our study emphasises the systematic under-representation of women in trade union bargaining and decision-making structures. Since the late 90s, however, numerous measures have increased the participation of women in these structures. Although the trend is positive, the existence of a critical mass of 30% of women in these structures has not yet been reached in many places. Studies point out that, once this threshold is reached, women are considered as a significant group in bargaining and decision-making processes.

There is still a significant gap between the rate of unionisation of women and the proportion of women with union responsibilities. About 40% of union members in Europe are women, whereas, only 30% of those, who are elected to go to National Congresses, are women. Only a quarter of the members of nation-

nal commissions and committees are women – with great differences from one country to another.

Gender mainstreaming promotes synergy between women’s structures and general structures, in order to achieve equal opportunities. A precondition for the success of this approach is that general structures are composed of a representative number of women. Whether trade unions opt for an interpretation of “fair representation” in terms of proportionality or in terms of parity, they have to decide upon which kinds of intervention (positive action, optional or compulsory rules, etc.) and instruments (quotas, parity, reserved seats, target figures, etc.) they will use. In addition, gender mainstreaming stresses the use of measures, which increase the pool of eligible and qualified women through instruments, such as mentoring and training.

Given the fact, that women’s structures are often considered to be “women’s strongholds”, their views and recommendations are sometimes considered to be partial and are, therefore, not taken into account by general structures. Women’s structures are less contested, however, as their degree of influence increases: those with a very restricted advisory role are most vulnerable to being disregarded; whereas those with bargaining powers are less likely to be ignored. The right to participate in decision-making bodies, via one or more representatives, is also a way of influencing decision-making processes. It is also important for women’s committees to be firmly grounded in union membership. Women’s committees, which do not have the possibility of actively gaining input from (active) women – and also perhaps men – members – are in danger of becoming ‘narrow-minded’.

The dual orientation of trade unions in some countries, notably the Netherlands – on the one hand, in relation to their own staff/officers; on the other, in relation

to the employees they represent on the shop floor – commits them to take into account the common and specific needs and interests of both groups, both of which are made up of women and men. In order to ensure that this happens, women should participate throughout the union. The gates of power should be opened for women and serious organisational changes worked out. But this can only succeed if mentalities change and if women are actively involved in the trade union workforce. Women’s working groups, committees and commissions can guide these processes of change, by discussing the issues in depth and providing researched proposals for policy-making. Moreover, they will point out specific forms of inequality or indicate problem-areas regarding topics, which are normally handled by unions in a gender-neutral way.

In order to achieve these changes, goals – which are often formulated as resolutions, official statements, actions plans or rules – should be set and planned. Details of these goals are still often neglected, thus the list of good intentions becomes longer and the list of good practices shorter. Therefore, when planning goals, trade unions should also consider developing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. All trade union structures should play an important role in these processes – each at its own level and in its own domain – by drawing up data collection tools, setting up M&E and reporting systems and providing feedback to all union members and trade union bodies.

Organisational changes can meet with great opposition – especially from those, who feel a loss of power, when women enter collective bargaining and decision-making structures. Others will welcome such changes as an opportunity for the whole of the union to benefit from their skills and experience. Therefore, it is important – when introducing a gender mainstreaming process – to anticipate these obstacles and to propose changes in power relations. Trade unions should analyse any such obstacles, identify risks, search for opportunities and draw up acceptable alternatives for all parties concerned. One of the main challenges will be to change basic member structures into a more modern, open, less bureaucratic and more living system which, on all levels, makes room for more people than only the ‘die-hards’.

Increasing the number of women in bargaining and decision-making structures is only one aspect of the reorganisation, which needs to be made, even though it is an essential one. Women’s participation in union structures influences policy processes and produces major side-effects, such as changing informal procedures (attitudes and timing of meetings, etc.), amending formal procedu-

res without actually changing official rules (agenda setting and attribution of mandates, etc.). This, in turn, will facilitate women’s access and render trade unions more attractive, while also expanding the number of role models for women activists. Reorganisation also requires changes in forms of communications and recruitment, selection and training procedures. Women’s structures can be helpful where there is great under-representation of women.

■ GOOD PRACTICES

France: fair representation and parity

Already in 1982, CFDT in France introduced the principle of quotas (a third) within its two main leadership bodies. In CFDT’s views, deliberate policy is the only way of fostering the presence of women in leadership bodies of all organisations. But one can observe that there are only 20% of women union members in decision-making positions. At its 2002 congress, measures were voted upon with a view to developing real gender balance in inter-sector structures and fair representation of women leaders, depending on the sector unions. CGT adopted more recently – at its 1999 congress – the principle of parity in the same leadership bodies. It maintained this policy at its 2003 congress, even though the leadership bodies were reduced in size. Parity has involved re-examining the composition of the executive committee, especially in terms of limiting the number of mandates each person can have. However, besides changes made in both leadership bodies (executive commission and confederal bureau), parity has not been widely introduced elsewhere in the union – other structures reflect rather the proportion of women members in CGT (about a third).

Italy: standard for gender representation

In Italy, we have observed that, although there are many women members in the CGIL, they are poorly represented in leadership bodies. This situation led in 1991 to the introduction of a minimum quota of women amongst union officers. In CGIL’s constitution, a new article was adopted: “In the composition of leadership bodies – from membership committees and pensioners’ leagues to national and international representative leadership -, it is established that neither sex can have less than 40% or more than 60% representation”. Likewise, an “anti-discrimination standard” has established better representation of women in leaderships with a rate of 30% to 40%. This standard has positive effects, above all in affiliated unions, where jobs are feminised.

Belgium: binding internal plans for inflow and promotion

In Belgium, according to the latest ACV-CSC congress resolutions, trade unions must draw up binding internal action plans concerning the inflow, promotion and outflow of women. Statistical collection mechanisms, M&E reporting systems, training, as well as planning and evaluation units, have all been introduced. Moreover, in each organisation, a “person with responsibilities for equal opportunities” will be recruited. ABVV-FGTB disposes of several women structures at national, sector, regional and local levels, of which the federal (confederation) women’s bureau has statutory competencies since 1997. Besides responsibility for establishing gender policy within the union along with drawing up action plans, the bureau has advisory competencies, which are respected by the federal leadership.

Austria: mentoring new women

In Austria, GPA started an interesting project on breaking up trade union structures rooted in prejudices, by ‘mentoring’ new women activists in the trade union. Mentoring is seen as a process, in which an experienced person – woman or man – (mentor) guides the “career” of another person, outside the scope of hierarchical relations. The relationship between these two people is based on learning and experiencing in a secure environment. The whole project should last at least 1 year, but the relationship, which is developed, can be continued. GPA has drawn up a guide for this mentoring process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Whenever goals are set, one should take into consideration SMART indicators (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).
- Try to involve as many people as possible – men and women – in the implementation of gender mainstreaming, thus preventing the situation that tasks – and therefore information and knowledge – are located in one place (for instance the women’s bureau).
- Urge for reduction of cumulating posts, since women get the less significant positions and men take on the interesting duties.
- Promote interaction between national, sectoral, regional and local levels and form synergies, which enhance the gender mainstreaming process.
- Organise internal debate on the meaning of quotas, reserved seats, target values and other instruments and communicate these principles to trade union members.

- Introduce adequate monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems and urge for regular checking of commitments.
- Propose alternatives to traditional succession procedures and give priority to women in replacing outgoing men. Plan the reorganisation.
- Try to introduce positive action at lower levels, in order to influence the composition of higher level trade union structures.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Traditional trade union culture - with one-sided 'corporate body language' and the norms and values, which correspond with the needs of (men) union officers and members, which have been passed down over the generations – still dominates trade unions in Europe. Organisational culture within unions has, however, gradually begun to shift in a direction, which is more conducive to gender mainstreaming. This is due largely to the intensification of the debate on the issue of reconciling career and private needs in recent years. A shift in values – of both men and women – and an increasing dissatisfaction with traditional gender roles indicate that society, as a whole, and the business community in particular must take action now.

■ BACKGROUND

The culture of any organisation – including trade unions – is a composite of the norms, rituals and rules of behaviour prevalent within the organisation. This culture is structured according to gendered hierarchical principles. In organisations, which represent employees' interests in the workplace and at sector level, "gendered organisational forms" are at work. The way trade unions operate is still often characterised by a model of "men activists". Trade union officers and activists have to be extremely available and mobile in a context, which does not sufficiently take into account family responsibilities and other aspects of life – sometimes even more so, than what companies may demand of their managers. This way of operating obviously has a negative influence on the presence and participation of women in trade union life and positions of responsibility, especially as recruitment criteria for officers are often related to closed co-option networks. More women than ever have now access to "male" responsibilities, but what has stayed the same is that women are expected to behave like men, as far as their private life is concerned.

Unions, which plan to implement new internal culture along the lines of gender mainstreaming, must question these implicit norms, values and unspoken rules and actively change the conditions which lead to their remaining in existence.

According to our study, factors such as relations between leadership and grass roots, autonomy of affiliated sector unions, size of unions, existence and effectiveness of women's commissions, the way unions operate (timing of meetings, systems of delegation of mandates, systems of communication, etc.) are all factors that contribute to promoting or holding up gender mainstreaming. Changing culture is, therefore, one of the most difficult things to do.

Ways in which trade unions operate, which clearly have unquestioned discriminatory effects, can be located in following points.

The timing and length of meetings is one key point. When the timing of meetings (e.g., late afternoon, evenings or weekends) is determined, it is often the case that the needs of some participants are ignored, i.e. those with family responsibilities, who are less flexible and thus more limited. Also questions can be put forward as to whether meetings are always organised in the most efficient way. This approach is characteristic of the attitude, according to which trade unionists must always be available, mobile and flexible. An overall high level of availability and flexibility is especially expected of those, who hold union leadership positions. This stance makes it difficult for all those with family responsibilities to take on union responsibilities in many different positions.

Another key barrier to participating in higher levels in unions is the fact that union rules and elections require officials to be members of specific committees, as a prerequisite to being members of committees higher in the hierarchy. For example, the (informal) practice of delegating members to the collective

bargaining groups in Austria, according to criteria based on the strength of representation, favours men. Thus, along with union officers, normally the heads of works councils in large companies are chosen, i.e. those who represent the strength of their organisation, and are thereby considered to be valuable delegates. However, there are few women amongst them, and therefore this form can be seen as a form of hidden discrimination.

Thus, many careers in trade unions are influenced by the fact that if one accepts a new mandate, this often leads to having to take on additional mandates. Sometimes, this can be necessary in terms of the mandate or required knowledge, but one can frequently question the necessity of this. In most cases, the real required knowledge is not questioned nor tested: tradition and rules prevail.

In any case, it leads to low representation of a great variety of members higher in the trade union hierarchy, as it prevents those with family or other responsibilities and interests from putting themselves forward as candidates for these positions.

Another aspect concerns “accepting a new position and the length of mandates”. It is a common saying in organisations, including trade unions, that there are enough qualified staff/officers, including women, but they are not interested in higher union positions. This fact cannot be explained simply by individual people’s lack of interest and commitment, but shows that it is necessary to examine the time and organisational conditions of these positions. Many people want to be active and take on union responsibilities, but with other time conditions and not for a long period of time. The situation is exacerbated by the length of mandates, which – depending on the particular trade union structure – can last for many years. The responsibilities, which a mandate entails, including a large number of meetings, requires flexibility of action, as well as a high degree of mobility.

However, in fact, trade unions do not only have long term projects, but also shorter tasks that need to be done. Another solution is to share responsibilities

by delegating to others or working in pairs. Therefore, trade unions should take more into account the trends of women’s and men’s new life models, which manifest themselves in an understanding of work as not necessarily being continuous, but more adapted or even temporarily interrupted due to specific needs in different phases in life. This means that it is important to achieve greater flexibility in the handling of activism and, thereby, open the organisation up to more people.

Another aspect is “informality and lack of transparency”. Our study shows that the way trade unions operate is based on a high degree of informality. This means, among others, that decisions are not always taken in a transparent way. Informality and the “old boys network” – which also exists in trade unions – are a problem when considering the wide variety of exclusionary mechanisms facing women and minorities, which still explains the existence of the glass ceiling for these groups. Informality has an effect on the selection of candidates, which is often an informal process in which men activists play a decisive role. In spite of the fact that such ways of operating die hard, some improvements have been made, for instance, by exposing informal mechanisms and replacing them by openly-discussed processes with clear conditions for making decisions.

Language and images are yet another important aspect of organisational culture. Is the language used addressed to both men and women? Are they equally represented in union publications? Are specific issues, which are considered to be especially important to women, properly addressed in policies and collective bargaining? And are they reflected in trade union presentations and publications?

The degree to which these aspects are taken into consideration shows the willingness of an organisation to initiate cultural change and address a larger

variety of members. There are some important initiatives concerning gendering language in publications and collective agreements, in order to make women more visible.

Many union officers still seem unable to understand why they are having difficulties in recruiting women to union responsibilities. They blame this on women's attitudes or the strong influence of traditional models. Initiatives and resolutions within trade unions, which are geared to deal with this dilemma, are characteristically still coming up against a strong gap between theory and practice. Measures taken with the intention of changing this situation are headed in the direction of harmonising the timing of meetings with the needs of all participants, respecting time limits, introducing childcare facilities during the meetings and introducing part-time or shared leadership positions. Also some unions have creatively started to scrutinize internal procedures and recruitment processes, and to analyse for instance trade union activists' career paths and are step by step changing these elements of cultural barriers.

■ GOOD PRACTICES

Austria: tackling gender-sensitive language

GMT is tackling the use of gender-sensitive language in collective agreements as they use – as is generally the case in Austria – male-oriented terminology. Within a European project on equal pay, a gender-specific checklist for collective agreements for the metal and textile sector was developed. One of the points of the checklist involves examining the language used in collective agreements. Proposals for achieving a gendered collective agreement were made on the basis of how to make women visible.

Denmark: promoting participation of women by education and mentoring

Especially LO in Denmark has started several innovative educational experiences, which aim at fostering women's access to leadership positions in unions. In the "Starlet" programme, young women, who are new to the union, received intensive training with the aim of expanding women's representation in union, and of focusing on the expectations of the younger women in the union policies. The "Victoria" programme – for women trade union members, who have been in the union longer – aims at providing them with sufficient political and personal knowledge to improve their activities in the union. The "feminist leadership" programme for union experts and leaders aims at creating a professional network for organisational development, personal development and life-long learning. The idea of this programme is to break glass ceilings and raise awareness of equality amongst all actors. The aim of the ongoing training is to put concrete daily work in an equality perspective, thus helping the union to find new ways on equal terms. FLUK is LO's new leadership training for younger women on their way to a career in the trade union. FLUK is based on a combination of training, networking and mentoring (i.e. personal help for new members by a mentor). The aim is to entice leadership roles based on knowledge about gender. The training provides the possibility of having a degree on 'gender and welfare'. LO also trains people to become "ambassadors for mainstreaming". These are networks of knowledgeable women and men, qualified and supported by the local and national network, to bring mainstreaming into companies. They can be invited by shop stewards to help them.

Austria: organising a Gender Sensitive Labour Union Conference

The "Pilot project Bundesforum" (National Forum) enabled GPA to illustrate convincingly how the implementation of a gender sensitive high-ranking trade union conference should look. In an initial step, a project group first located the essen-

tial elements of a national forum. Using the “5 R method” (questions concerning Representation, Resources, Rights, current Reality and Results), the second step listed the following aspects of a gender-specific design (invitation policy, participation criteria, the form of taking minutes and reporting, the content of debates, forming a consensus (resolutions, project presentations, discussion groups). Thus, for example, the criteria for participation were studied, based on for instance the following questions: what is the personal situation and the resulting time budget of each respective woman/man delegate, (e.g. the role of the family and care needs), which legal possibilities do men and women delegates enjoy in order to participate (right to take time off - or not -, time off regulations for shop stewards, etc.). Furthermore, a checklist for resolutions was developed based on gender criteria, such as: how are men/women affected by the content of the resolutions, does the resolution deal with the needs of both women and men?

Austria: gendering of Trade Union Journals

In order to design the GPA journal in a way that is equally attractive for both women and men, it was “gendered” during a special project. First, questions based on the “5Rs” (Representation, Resources, Rights, current Reality and Results) were used in the development phase, followed by the creation of a checklist of qualitative and quantitative criteria for use in analysis. The next step was to carry out interviews with editors responsible for the content of the journal. Finally, the results of this analysis were published in the GPA journal. Also a gender workshop was organised for the journal’s editors. As a result of this project, the agenda at each editorial meeting includes a topic dealing with gender mainstreaming. The analysis phase will be repeated after one year and the results evaluated.

Netherlands: positive action in the trade union workforce

FNV has developed an effective positive action approach to changing the balance between men and women in its workforce. From only 7% women overall in the

workforce some fifteen years ago (apart from secretarial jobs), the percentage of women has risen to 33% amongst trade union officers, 60 % amongst policy advisors, staff and trainers and 33% amongst management. Two joint elements were of importance to create this result. On the one hand, an active approach in recruitment policies, for instance by deciding on recruitment rounds only for women or the obligation to recruit at least 50% women candidates. This required putting an end to recruiting only amongst trade union activists. The second element was adapting employment culture and policies. Not only new terms of employment were introduced (such as restrictions on required mobility, childcare and leave provisions, policies against sexual harassment, new training programmes), also working time policies were changed to enable employees to combine work and private life – examples of changes are the creation of the possibility to work 4 days instead of 5 and the development of ‘real’ working time models (replacing the concept of ‘total availability’). These changes applied (and still apply) to all employees: both women and men in FNV. Currently some unions are working on a variety of aims: continuing in recruitment procedures positive action for women, people with other ethnic origins and the disabled until all positions and all levels reflect the workforce; creating greater diversity among trade union officers, who are involved in bargaining the so-called ‘co-ordination agreements’; intentions to start a management development project for women.

France: management of activist resources

The question of the future of full-time union activists is increasingly posed in unions. CFDT has started discussions on this and are examining, on the one hand, the problem of the increase in the average age of union officers and the future of the older ones and, on the other, new attitudes, which the younger generation and women have of union involvement. A confederation officer is thus responsible for developing a new approach to human resources management

of activists – and implementing it – in order to make it easier to find other jobs for trade union officers by winning recognition for their union experience and, thereby, also make it possible to bring more young people and women into union structures.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify unquestioned norms, habits and rules in one's organisation/department/works council concerning, for example:
 - union meeting times and places: do they respect the needs of persons with family responsibilities? Are they organised in the most efficient way?
 - the degree of informality in decision-making;
 - the representation of women and men in decision-making bodies;
 - the system of delegation of mandates and other rules in structures.
- Question traditional role stereotypes of women and men in behaviour, images in trade union media and daily communication.
- Investigate the structures of communication and the flow of information, if participation and transparency is given for all, independently of gender and ethnicity.
- Examine language usage (gender-neutral / gender-sensitive) (for instance in collective bargaining agreements, official trade union documents and magazines) and initiate discussions on a gender-sensitive use of language.
- Encourage adapting internal employment policies (introducing active recruitment of women in a positive action strategy, changes in working time

policies, training and coaching policies etc.), in order to launch a change in organisational culture.

- Systematically introduce the theme of equality in all trade union education, in addition to specific training on equality.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Apart from changes, which are needed within trade union organisations themselves, incorporating a gender mainstreaming approach in trade union action and collective bargaining is of great importance.

■ BACKGROUND

Incorporating gender mainstreaming in trade union action and bargaining is not something that comes about without explicit effort.

Apart from tackling the issue of greater representation of women, also as regards collective bargaining, rethinking of several issues, such as working time and work-life balance, equal pay, health and safety issues and social security, has to be put prominently on the agenda.

This can lead to adjusted plans for action and negotiations.

It is important that unions realise that both elements of activity are relevant and each issue can be addressed differently, depending on national contexts. Trade union action and negotiations can lead to extra results, when combined in a sensible and strategic way.

Trade union action, such as active lobbying, campaigns to influence public opinion, strikes or legal action, can sometimes be more effective than negotiations: it demonstrates the independence and power of trade unions. As these kinds of actions – when they are related to issues on a gendered agenda – are not always highly valued by men members, trade unions are sometimes reluctant to undertake them. This can, however, in some cases be more effective than engaging in negotiations immediately, also in terms of visibility of trade union goals in this field.

Negotiations with employers and governments are, of course, of great importance and should in many situations be used to reach goals within a gender mainstreaming approach. To really achieve these goals, concrete targets should be decided upon. Unions should also actively reflect on how to reach these targets. All trade union staff/officers, policy advisors and union negotiators have their own responsibility in this field. However, unions, which actively promote such a line of approach, provide negotiators with guides on how to handle issues and even how to discuss them properly, whilst giving them all the relevant information. They also appoint people within the organisation with coordinating tasks on this specific issue. The role of women's structures (women's committees, etc.) is also decisive. Monitoring the results after the negotiating rounds and readjusting goals and ways to reach them is of equal importance. An important element of course is also to generate publicity about the outcome.

■ GOOD PRACTICES

France: 9 May 2001 law and inter-sector agreement on equality

The 9 May 2001 law makes negotiating equality compulsory at company level (every year) and at sector level (every 3 years). It also makes it compulsory to incorporate equality in all other compulsory bargaining topics (time, pay and classification, etc.). Moreover, a national inter-sector agreement (1 March 2004), on "gender balance and occupational equality between men and women" was signed by the employers and all trade union confederations. It covers many areas of human resources: educational guidance, recruitment, vocational training, promotion, mobility and equal pay, etc. One of the unquestionable steps forward of the agreement is the criticism of so-called "women's skills", which are considered to be natural and are thus used to block women's access to

ACTION

prestigious jobs and conversely to refuse to recognise certain skills in jobs where women predominate. This agreement is especially important, because it was signed by all representative trade union confederations and should lead to the 9 May 2001 law really being implemented.

The Netherlands: the referendum

Traditionally important trade union decisions are taken in meetings attended by active members – mostly men. Because of the imbalance between the influence of women and men on important decisions in trade unions, FNV and its affiliates are experimenting with new ways of consulting the membership. Apart from panels and polls amongst a variety of members, during negotiations on collective bargaining agreements, e-mail and the Internet are used to sound out more employees. In 2003, for the first time, another type of consultation was used. The subject of the consultation was the outcome of negotiations at national level between the trade union confederations, the central employers' organisations and the (right-wing) government in the autumn of 2003. All 1.2 million members of the FNV-unions were able to take part in a postal vote on the the provisional agreement. A little more 200.000 members did so, which is 18,2% of the membership. The participation of women in this ballot was a little more than proportional: 31% (29,1% of the membership were women in 2003). This means that more women than ever participated in the 'decisionmaking process'. The next FNV Congress is due in 2005. It will provide the first opportunity for giving the referendum procedure a place in union rules.

Denmark: The Cooperation Agreement and Equal Treatment

In June 1986 an agreement was signed by the Danish Employers' Federation (DA) and the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), which set the framework for

cooperation between management and employees on all levels in all enterprises within DA/LO areas. In enterprises with 35 employees or more, day-to-day cooperation is promoted and observed by a cooperation committee composed of representatives of management and employees. This agreement was added to in 1991 by an agreement on equal treatment for women and men. In 1999, it was improved to include equal treatment for native Danish employees and employees from different ethnic backgrounds. Works councils have access to expertise in the Central Cooperation Board Consultancy Services, notably in the area of equality. LO's Equality Committee – which is highly involved in equal pay issues and the parental fund, and is also initiating training for the regional mainstreaming ambassadors - is also a source of support for works councils.



■ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure fair representation of women in all collective bargaining teams and all preparatory and monitoring meetings on all bargaining topics.
- Introduce in all training for both men and women trade union members, awareness-raising and information sessions on negotiating occupational equality.
- Offer awareness-raising training on gender and gender mainstreaming for all those in leadership positions in the union and in works councils.
- Introduce occupational equality in all topics of collective bargaining and areas of action.
- Support trade union negotiators by drawing up manuals and guidelines on relevant issues, providing them with information, tools and checklists.
- Monitor frequently the results obtained in negotiations and ensure that good examples are distributed amongst all negotiators and incorporated in updated manuals and guidelines. Promote good examples actively by pressing them forward in publicity.

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■ INTRODUCTION

It is commonly known that men and women must receive “equal pay for equal work and work of equal value”. Nevertheless a gendered pay gap to the detriment of women has persisted. The pattern of unequal pay differs, depending on the sector and country.

The principle of equal pay is laid down in international conventions, as well as in EU and national legislation. Dealing with equal pay is very demanding for unions, as it is a very complex and conflictual issue. There is however little awareness about the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and, therefore, this has not yet been effectively implemented. Striving for equal pay is an important goal as such, and it can also have an indirect effect: challenging the horizontal and vertical segregation of jobs along gender-lines and overcoming the gender division at work.

■ BACKGROUND

Pay discrimination exists, when women and men do not receive the same pay for the same or a similar job, but also when women are being paid less than men for doing ‘work of equal value’. This means that for a job, which is different, but which requires the same level of skills, knowledge, effort and responsibility, the same pay has to be given. According to EU legislation pay includes the usual basic and/or minimum pay, as well as all other payments, which the employer makes to employees either directly or indirectly, in cash or in kind. Thus pay includes all present or further additional compensations, such as premiums (for instance for pension schemes) and bonuses. Each pay component as such must observe the principle of equal pay.

According to the European Court of Justice, pay equality guidelines prohibit not only direct, but also “hidden” or indirect, discrimination: “Indirect discrimination

is the case if apparently neutral regulations, criteria or procedures place a significantly higher proportion of one gender at a disadvantage”. If women do not have equal access as men to every element of the pay system, there is an element of unequal pay. Indirect discrimination, for instance, often occurs in part-time work, where not only pay, but also employers’ contributions to various pay-related elements, differ from what full-timers receive.

EU law states that the national legislator has to ensure that laws and regulations correspond to the principle of equal pay for men and women. Many key equal pay principles have been established by the European Court of Justice. This jurisdiction has interpreted the scope of European equality law and, as a result, the principle “equal pay for work of equal value” has been stated more precisely. From these rulings, general guidelines can be inferred:

- pay systems must be transparent and examinable;
- objective differentiation criteria must be used and interpreted in a non-discriminatory way;
- selected criteria must correspond to the type of activity being performed;
- each pay component and the grading system must not discriminate.

In the MSU research project, we found that many pay agreements do not meet these European requirements.

The causes of unequal pay are complex. Different studies in various European countries found that three main factors contribute to the gender pay gap:

- Occupational segregation between men and women, i.e., the fact that women and men tend to carry out different jobs, not only in different sectors, but also within the internal hierarchy of an organisation. Women also hold the majority of casual and part-time jobs, where pay and entitlements lag behind the male-dominated full-time standard.
- The unequal impact of family responsibilities. Here again, inequality in the

treatment of part-time employees must be mentioned, but also, for instance, the impact of career breaks for women, who frequently lose their occupational status when they return to work.

- Discrimination in pay and grading systems. Here problems occur such as the undervaluing women's skills, which are regarded as "natural female attributes" and different evaluation criteria for "men's" and "women's" work, which are taken into account for classification into a pay bracket. Due to the lack of awareness about pay discrimination, this undervaluing is reproduced in pay bargaining, in developing job evaluation systems and when pay systems are actually implemented in the workplace. Implementation is, therefore, a major factor leading to pay differences.

Pay differences may be further aggravated by discriminatory recruitment, selection and promotion. Also career advancement has an impact on the gendered pay gap and has to do with access to all occupational levels, including access to training etc. This may lead to limitations in the scope of positions available to one gender, which leads to being 'trapped' in low paid positions.

The last factor, which has to be mentioned, is the absence of women in the collective bargaining process. Women are hardly represented in negotiating committees and, therefore, not involved in decision-making policies. This can lead to undervaluation of pay aspects which have to do with 'women's work'. The key players for achieving the goal of equal pay are employers, trade unions and the state/government. Solutions for the structural problem of the gendered pay gap have to be found mainly in concerted action. Many employers think that there is no gendered pay gap within their organisation, and likewise this is often the case for trade union officers, who are responsible for collective bargaining.

Those trade unions, which have engaged in tackling unequal pay between men and women, have developed some instruments and strategies for

implementing equal pay in practice:

- Awareness-raising regarding unequal pay: The better our understanding of the factors currently shaping unequal pay, the easier it will be to think strategically how to tackle unequal pay. The historical undervaluing of work predominantly done by women is so widespread and "common understanding", that quite often there is no "gender" questioning about pay and grading structures. The best way to raise awareness is to combine fact-finding with campaigning on this issue, so that everyone knows what is meant by equal pay.
- Proactive legislation: As unequal pay of women's and men's work is a structural problem, it is necessary to implement proactive measures, in order to close the gendered pay gap. This would be greatly supported if national governments imposed specific obligations on the social partners, for example, to carry out pay audits and make plans to close the pay gap (if there is potential discrimination).
- Statistical data: One of the difficulties in really measuring the pay gap is that, in most countries, the basis for comparing data is very poor or does not exist. Sometimes, information on overtime pay and other allowances – for part-time and casual work, for example - are left out and often the data are not detailed enough to detect 'work of equal value'.
- Equal pay reviews (pay audits) at company and sector level compare the pay of men and women, explaining any equal pay gaps and closing those gaps, which cannot be explained satisfactorily on grounds other than gender. In the opinion of international experts on equal pay, a proportional comparison of men's jobs and work predominantly done by women should also be

carried out. Data collection should be across the workforce and include all forms of remuneration, including performance pay and allowances. With equal pay reviews, transparency in pay policies is enhanced, which is the basis for the implementation of equal pay in practice.

- **Collective bargaining:** In order to facilitate the bargaining process on the issue of equal pay, it is considered necessary to have balanced participation of women and men. All the actors involved should have special training on the issue of equal pay and should be aware of how pay discrimination can occur. They also should have basic information on the principles of less discriminatory job evaluation schemes.
- **Job evaluation schemes:** The principle of equal value requires a comparison of jobs, which breaks them down into their various components (factors). Rating a job, factor by factor, instead of as an entity, reduces the risk of stereotyping men's and women's work. Transparency and objective justification is most important, as is consideration of all relevant job demands (such as emotional demands and communication skills). Many job evaluation schemes in use are not checked as to whether they are free of discrimination. However many checklists do exist, which make it possible to question one's current pay and grading scheme.

Be aware that equal pay is not only a question of methods and legislation, but also of political will. The gender mainstreaming approach will strengthen the commitments towards equal pay for men and women.

■ GOOD PRACTICES

Austria: testing discrimination-free job evaluation.

The principal item of an action-research project in Austria was the development and testing of discrimination-free job evaluation in two companies. The practical

examples made it clear how less discriminatory job evaluation could be designed. Examples of different jobs, which in practice were of equal value, were very helpful to clarify the principle of equal pay to all activists. This rekindled discussion on equal pay. The women's departments of GPA and GMT, which were greatly involved in the preparatory work for the collective agreement in industry, started union discussions on how the selection of criteria, which form the basis of job evaluation and classification, can affect women negatively or in a discriminating way. A result of the ongoing process is that the metal and textile unions published a manual called "Gender mainstreaming in the Collective Bargaining Process".

France: pro-active legislation

France provides a good example of pro-active legislation and pay audits. In firms of more than 50 employees, it is compulsory (since 1983) to make annual reports on the comparative situation of women and men. The 9 May 2001 law now specifies that these annual reports should include relevant indicators, providing data, which makes it possible to measure gaps. 21 indicators are thus presented regarding employment conditions, training, working conditions and pay: quantitative data by gender and categories of employment according to grading grids or types of occupations. If these indicators are well adapted to the company, they can be the basis for negotiations (notably regarding pay). Often, however, at company level these indicators are seen as an additional obligation and a formality, rather than as a subject of dialogue and negotiation with employees' representative organisations. Many companies, in fact, do not provide the required data.

The Netherlands: equal pay checklist

Combating unequal pay has quite a long history in the Netherlands. Job evaluation systems have been screened for gender bias; a start has been made to abolish the discrimination of part-time employees; equal pay cases have been taken to court. FNV was especially active in this field, also because legislation on equal treatment allows class actions.

Several initiatives have been taken to check pay systems and job evaluation systems regarding gender bias. In some sectors – cleaning, health care and home helps for instance – critical research found that pay of men and women was unequal, either because of discrimination of part-timers or because job evaluation systems were not valuing women’s jobs sufficiently. In all cases agreements were made between trade unions and employers that employers would make financial reserves to tackle these discrepancies.

Mention must be made of a special good practice example of cooperation between the social partners. Social partners jointly developed a checklist on equal pay, which is intended for collective bargaining at company and sector levels. It gives insight as to how gender bias in pay can occur and points out ways to find solutions.

Austria, France and the Netherlands: awareness training

Putting equal pay at the heart of the bargaining agenda is a focus of GPA’s women’s department in Austria and FNV’s women’s department in the Netherlands. In recent years, both departments started special training courses to raise awareness about equal pay. In the Netherlands, these were not only to inform active members or trade union negotiators, but also for staff involved in legal advice. In Austria, the aim was to inform especially the trade unionists involved in collective bargaining. In France, the new law on occupational equality makes it compulsory to negotiate equality (both specifically and also incorporated in usual bargaining topics, such as pay). Therefore, all unions have started training on the equality law and negotiating equality. In all three countries these efforts, however, have not yet led to major results, partly because not many men (who constitute the majority of negotiators) attend the training and also because equal pay is a complex issue to tackle.

Denmark: education on equal pay

In August 2003, LO and the Danish employers’ organisation DA published an analysis called ‘Women’s and Men’s Pay. It was the first in a row of publications

analysing pay differences between men and women. This is important as in the sectors covered by these organisations pay is based on collective agreements, which create a framework, which is added to by individual negotiations in companies. Many people are not aware of the dilemmas and the consequences of their choices in the long run. For LO, this is a reason for promoting education of shop stewards on this issue. This would lead to more shopstewards on the shop-floor, who can assist employees to ensure that they have real and fair negotiations and who can also secure openness of the criteria of pay distribution and non-discrimination by focusing on reconciling family responsibilities for both men and women. Not only LO, but also HK, has started negotiation courses on this issue in several companies. If this is a success, it will be introduced more widely.

Austria and the Netherlands: collecting data and statistics

Good practice regarding collecting data and statistics is to be found in Austria and the Netherlands. In Austria, GPA has started a project called “Pilotprojekt KV net” to collect data via the Internet. A specific password is given to the chairperson of the works councils, who is requested to fill in a computerised form for collecting data across the workforce on a gendered basis. The results for the enterprise level are immediately processed. The results at sector level will be available to union members. The aim is to get precise figures on the gendered pay gap in order to have a respectable basis for collective bargaining on pay and also in order to raise awareness about this issue. In the Netherlands, statistical data have been gathered and analysed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. These are macro-figures, useful for policymakers. In order to find figures within sectors and companies, FNV opened a website in 2002 for women and men, who could fill in information regarding different elements of their pay. For some sectors the computer compares their pay components with those, which should be paid in their sector. The information, which is provided by thousands of people each year, is then (anonymously) analysed and provides data on pay differences between men and women in the sector. The ‘wage-indicator’ as it is called, can now be used in 8 other European countries.

■ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make sure that all trade unionists and shop stewards know what is meant by equal pay, have a basic knowledge of the legislation and understand the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Train all actors about the many different reasons why unequal pay can occur and provide good information on the issue of “equal pay”.
- Collect information on pay by gender. Check if the access to pay supplements is equal for men and women and whether the criteria are free of gender-bias. Investigate carrying out equal pay audits. Reconstitute women’s and men’s careers for equivalent positions.
- Stimulate discussions on equal pay in companies, works councils and trade union meetings (thus increasing the public awareness).
- Provide special training on the issue of equal pay for all activists involved in collective bargaining.
- Involve union experts in discussions on new job and grading schemes (classification). Many pay and grading schemes – as well as collective agreements – appear to be outdated, therefore they are being reformed. Addressing classification/grading schemes is a crucial point, in order to implement equal pay in practice. Clear suggestions must be made and it is necessary to be well prepared for negotiations with the employers.
- Use existing legislation and call upon legal experts, in order to envisage equal pay claims at court level. Screen the current legislation and promote more pro-active legislation in those areas where gaps can be found (for instance enabling class action).

- Determine financial resources in order to pay for the reduction of observed pay gaps (whilst preventing pay-gaps between men and women from increasing again during the process).

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■ INTRODUCTION

The demand for shorter working hours appeared as soon as trade unions came into being. All European unions have turned this measure into an important demand and bargaining topic; in order to improve working conditions, develop the idea of the right to free time and combat unemployment. More recently, the issue of work-life balance – linked to the objective of gender equality – has also been promoted. In fact, the issue of work-life balance has become one of the major aspects of European policy through the adoption of important directives and recommendations. But this theme should be part of the objective of gender equality and leave behind the traditional trap, which assumes that women alone take on all family responsibilities. Given this context, trade unions are increasingly involved in this issue, which concerns much more than just the workplace.

■ BACKGROUND

The issue of working time has been, and still is, different for men and women, although rapid changes are occurring, leading to a great diversification within the whole workforce.

In general, men work full-time, earn full-time pay and work on full-time working schedules. The majority of the men have a permanent contract, even though the situation varies depending on the sector – and job insecurity in some sectors is great. Men still more often use their free time for leisure and education, but are gradually more involved in household chores and childminding, especially young men.

The full-time job is, in all countries, in actual fact still considered as the most ‘important’ from the point of view of breadwinning and is the ‘standard’ for social security systems and pensions.

Women have more diverse working patterns, when one looks at working time. Apart from those increasingly few women, who work only a short time in their life (usually before they raise a family), women work full-time or part-time in many different variations and with many different kinds of insecure contracts, such as temping, etc. Research on the way time is spent points out that women use their free time for taking care of the family and other caring responsibilities.

Changes in these stereotype patterns are occurring rapidly, largely as result of demographic changes (more single-parent families and more single people, for instance, elderly people). This challenges traditional working patterns, for women and men.

Several aspects can be identified, when studying the issue of working time in various countries:

■ Reduction of working hours

Already in 1976, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) advocated the reduction of working time to 35 hours per week. But, today, this objective has been achieved in few European countries. In 2002, according to the European Industrial Relations Observatory, the average working week in Europe stabilised at about 38 hours. It would even appear, in recent years, that the process of the collective reduction of working time is being challenged. At the same time, the development of policies on flexible working time is tending to diversify working hours and rhythms – atypical working hours, shift work, part-time work, annualisation and variation of working hours.

■ Part-time work

In most European countries, part-time work has increased over the last decade – except in Scandinavian countries, where part-time work has declined, notably

for women. Everywhere, part-time work is essentially a women's phenomenon – it represents, on average, a third of their jobs (this is the case for 4 of the countries covered by our study) and more than 70% of women's employment in the Netherlands, which is an exception. Despite the fact that many women choose part-time employment, because it enables them to combine work and family life, in many cases this is not a voluntary choice. In all countries, barriers exist for part-timers to increase their number of hours. This fact influences women's economic dependence and many aspects like social security and pension provisions.

■ Flexible working hours

The development of policies on flexible working time results essentially from economic factors (increased competitiveness and improved productivity, etc.). These elements are amplified by trends of individualisation, which create complex problems for trade unions to solve.

Social and cultural changes also partly contribute to these developments – the large-scale participation of women in the labour market fosters a new configuration of working time and explains the increase in part-time work. Likewise, everyone's aspirations for more free time and a better balance between social times are becoming stronger.

The last issue is closely linked to the possibilities employees have of influencing their work schedules in favour of time out of work – and also to the issue of flexibility of the workforce (part-time and marginal contracts).

In all countries, covered by our study, unions have different combinations of strategies on working time:

- In general, the struggle on lowering the general standard number of working hours (full-time equivalent) is still continuing, but each country is approaching this differently. Currently, the objective of sharing work and improving

living conditions is being pushed into the background and leaving the way open to flexibility.

- Issues of 'internal flexibility' are also sometimes being negotiated. Examples are increasing different working-time and roster patterns and greater possibilities for self-management of time.
- The specific issue of work-life balance is taken up everywhere, for instance in aims regarding leave and collective services (child care, etc.), as well as part-time work. Also time-saving systems are introduced in various countries to enable employees to vary their working time, in line with individual needs (time credit systems, time banks). Thus unions are seeking new (collective) solutions to individual needs.
- Part-time work is an issue, which is taken up in very different ways by unions in different countries. Some unions are very much opposed to part-time work, because of the inferior position part-time employees have and the fact that women are 'locked' into it with all the various consequences for their social and economic position. Others, like in the Netherlands, are, on the contrary, 'promoting' qualified longer part-time jobs for women and men whilst trying to narrow the gap between part-time and full-time employees, by improving the conditions (e.g., by gaining equal rights and the right to request more hours), thus trying to create more mobility between part-time and full-time jobs (for instance for family reasons) and making part-time work fully-fledged work, which can be also attractive for men.
- Trade unions in all countries have taken up various strategies to tackle the insecurity related to the growing existence of a flexible workforce with many forms of part-time work and insecure contracts. A notable example is the Law on flexibility and security in the Netherlands.

The MSU study shows that, in general, when trade unions take steps to link the issue of working time to gender mainstreaming, the emphasis is put on the

aspect of work-life balance for women only. This reflects the idea that the major problem of women in relation to working time is the problem of how to combine work with family responsibilities. And it suggests that work-life balance is an issue of women alone, and not of men.

It, in fact, reveals a specific approach to women, which needs 'extra/special' attention, i.e., a positive action approach. Only in some countries (such as the Netherlands and Denmark), a broader approach is taken, which focuses not only on women, but envisages employees as a diversified workforce, who have varying needs, depending on individual situations, which may even change throughout one's lifetime. This is the essence of a gender mainstreaming approach.

■ GOOD PRACTICES

France: 35-hour week and equality

In France, given the failure of collective bargaining on this issue, the government adopted two laws on a 35-hour working week in 1998 and 2000 for enterprises with more than 20 employees. Some unions widely supported and contributed to this movement. The laws envisage a link between working time and equality, by promoting family-friendly measures in agreements. Overall, women – and especially those in higher grades – have been most satisfied with shorter working hours, as it has made it possible to free up some time and reduce time constraints related to workloads and family responsibilities. This led to additional negotiations at company level. The presence of women in negotiations has contributed to taking this dimension more into account. Moreover, in some agreements, part-timers have had their hours extended and sometimes come close to a full-time position. However, this is offset by the fact that the reduction of working hours is accompanied by greater flexibility in working hours, such as annual calculations of hours, a greater range of opening hours (commerce and

public services) and 'asocial' hours being considered as 'normal' (e.g., Saturdays). In many firms, timely notice by the employer of changes in working hours often is not respected. Especially in commerce – one of the three studied sectors – for part-timers, daily availability is the only way of getting a few more hours' work. The new government has since rendered the law more flexible, thus making it easier for employers to have recourse to overtime.

Denmark: the general Parental Leave Fund

One of the most important proposals for greater equality in Denmark, has been Den Centrale Barselsfond, the general Parental Leave Fund, introduced by collective agreements in 2004 by LO and DA, and to be implemented in 2005. Until then, only employees in the public sector were fully covered for parental leave. Local agreements in private companies assured full pay for employees on leave. The employers are reimbursed by the State with a daily allowance for the leave period (maternity leave 28 weeks, paternity leave 2 weeks and in addition 32 weeks of parental leave, which can be divided between the parents. 8 – 13 weeks of this period can be saved until the child reaches the age of 9. With the agreement on the Parental Leave Fund, the majority of employees in the private sector will now also receive full pay for up to half a year per child. Each employer has to contribute to the Fund, by paying a yearly contribution per employee. In return employers are refunded the major part of the expenses they have, when an employee takes parental leave. Each employer – both in sectors, which are dominated by men or women – has to contribute to the Fund by paying a yearly contribution per employee – thus the Fund will act as an equalizer.

Italy: check-out pools

In Italy, an interesting experience of flexibilisation of working time is the use of 'check-out pools', which have been experimented by unions in the retail sector. The check-out pool is a system of working time organisation, which enables

hypermarket cashiers to manage their own work shifts. The project was introduced in Italy in two hypermarkets on the initiative of the employers, but with union backing - both at national and local levels, aiming at achieving better work-life balance. Part-time cashiers of the hypermarket decide upon and manage their own shifts collectively, while guaranteeing the total quota of presence set by the enterprise, on the basis of working hours dictated by business requirements. A co-ordinator is appointed to pull together the various working hour requirements of all the cashiers in the group. Management proposes the composition of the groups, choosing people of various ages and family situations, but with an identical individual number of working hours. Three years into the experiment, the project has produced positive results: a study carried out of the employees, involved in the project, reveals a very high level of satisfaction amongst cashiers in the check-out pool, the work pace has become less stressful and there is less absenteeism. The 'check-out pool' is a positive instrument to balance work and life times, as long as the objectives pursued are shared by both parties involved. Other examples show that mostly negative aspects occur when this aspect is not adequately respected.

The Netherlands: two-fold strategy on part-time work

The Netherlands being the 'champion' country with great numbers of part-time employees and a strong family culture, FNV's strategies towards part-time work are two-fold. On the one hand active negotiations have taken place to gain equality for part-time employees in the field of pay, social security and training/promotion. This has led to equal treatment legislation and close monitoring of unequal treatment of part-timers in collective bargaining, with many improvements throughout the years. On the other hand, FNV has promoted large part-time jobs in those sectors and for those jobs and level of jobs, where women are under-represented, as many women - and also men - put forward explicit wishes to work for instance 4 days instead of 5, so choosing both to look after

the family and have a proper career. This has become quite common, for instance, in many middle management jobs in several sectors. A few years ago - a law was adopted. It was supported by FNV and enables employees to ask an employer for more hours (in case of part-time work) or less hours (in case of full-time). Employers can only refuse to comply on severe grounds. This has encouraged many companies to propose policy on part-time work, which is negotiated with the works councils. In industry, for instance, many companies - also those with nearly only men employees - now have company policies, enabling their employees to change their working times within a certain bandwidth. Even some large companies, with many shift-workers have seriously looked into their shift policies in order to enable more of them to combine work and family life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take into account the different situations in social and personal life amongst employees and think through what the consequences of working time policies for these various groups are. Involve more views of various people - via websites, questionnaires or research - to feed into internal discussions in unions.
- Make clear distinctions between aims concerning more free time and aims enabling employees - both men and women - to fulfil their social responsibilities. Put demands for high quality childcare and leave provisions higher on the agenda and link them to strategies on working time.
- Put the influence of employees on their working time rosters more prominently on the agenda: influence on rosters and predictability in the rosters are very important for many employees with other (family, social, political, etc.) responsibilities - not only to do the job, but also to keep it.



- Create more possibilities of time-sharing, time-saving banks in combination with possibilities of career breaks.
- Involve more women in the collective bargaining processes on working time, for instance by involving more of them in the preliminary stages.
- When working hours are reduced (by law or collective bargaining agreement), create possibilities for part-timers to keep the same number of hours and also give them priority for changing to a full-time job.
- Create possibilities for employees with small part-time jobs to increase their number of working hours – this improves their position in the labour market and their pay, thus contributing to their economic independence.
- Strive to arrange and guarantee equal rights for all employees – irrespective of the number of hours they work and the kind of contract they have – regarding pay, social security provisions and training.
- Encourage the creation of long part-time jobs (28 hours and more) in those sectors and those positions, where no part-time work exists, so as to enable more women and men to balance working life and family life, while earning an income, which guarantees their economic independence. This principle of chosen time should offer collective guarantees to beneficiaries, avoiding or removing negative aspects of the part-time position (e.g. pay, social security, promotion and career opportunities). This could be part of legislation or a collective agreement.
- Conversely, combat forms of imposed part-time work, atypical working hours and split shifts. Consolidate the rights of employees concerned (e.g.,

bonuses for those with insecure jobs, possibilities for mobility and lengthening of short part-time hours etc).

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GLOSSARY – GLOSSAIRE: ACRONYM(E)S

Acronym(e) (country/pays)	Full title / titre en entier	English	Français
ABVV-FGTB (B)	Algemeen Belgisch VakVerbond	Belgian General Federation of labour	Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique
ACV-CSC (B)	Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond	Confederation of Christian Unions	Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens
BIT	Bureau International du Travail	International Labour Office	
CES	Confédération Européenne Syndicale	European Trade Union Confederation	
CFDT (F)	Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail	French Democratic confederation of labour	
CGIL (I)	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro	Italian General Confederation of Labour	Confédération Générale Italienne du Travail
CGSLB	La Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique	Belgian Centre of Liberal Unions	
CGT (F)	Confédération Générale du Travail	General Confederation of Labour	
CJCE	Cour de Justice des Communautés Européennes	European Court of Justice	
CSC (B)	Cf ACV-CSC (Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens)	Confederation of Christian Unions	
DA (D)	Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening	Federation of Danish Employers	Fédération des employeurs danois
ECJ	European Court of Justice		Cf CJCE
EIRO	European Industrial Relations Observatory		Observatoire Européen des Relations Industrielles
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation		Confédération Européenne Syndicale
FGTB (B)	Cf ABVV-FGTB (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique)	Belgian General Federation of Labour	
FNV (NL)	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging	Netherlands Trade Union Confederation	Confédération syndicale hollandaise
GMT (A)	Gewerkschaft Metall-Textil	Metal Industry and Textile Union	Fédération de la Métallurgie et du Textile
GPA (A)	Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten	Trade Union for Private Employees	Fédération des Employés Privés
HK (D)	Handels-og kontorforbundet	Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees in Denmark	Union des employés du bureau et commerciaux
IISA (B)	Interuniversitair Instituut voor de Studie van de Arbeid	Inter-university Institute for Labour Studies	Institut Interuniversitaire pour l'Etude du Travail
ILO	International Labour Organisation (or Office)		Organisation Internationale du Travail (ou BIT, voir ci-dessus)
IRES (I)	Istituto Ricerche Economiche e Sociali	Economic and Social Research Institute	Institut de Recherches Economiques et Sociales
ISE	Institut syndical européen (CES)	European Trade Union Institute (ETUI-ETUC)	
ISERES (F)	Institut Syndical d'Etudes et de Recherches Economiques et Sociales	Trade Union Economic and Social Research Institute	
LO (D)	Landsorganisationen I Danmark	Confederation of Danish Trade Unions	Confédération des syndicats danois

APPENDIX: BASIC LEGISLATION.¹

AUSTRIA www.bmgf.gv.at

1930 Federal Constitutional Law Art. 7 (1) (Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz) Equal rights for all citizens

1979 Equal Treatment Law for the private sector/Antidiscrimination (Bundesgesetz über die Gleichbehandlung von Frau und Mann im Arbeitsleben (Gleichbehandlungsgesetz); last amendment 2004

1993 Equal Treatment Law for the public sector/Antidiscrimination and Positive Action (Bundes-Gleichbehandlungsgesetz); last amendment 2002

1998 Amendment to the Constitutional Law, Art 7 (2) Federation, Länder and municipalities subscribe to the de facto equality of men and women

BELGIUM www.staatsblad.be

Constitution:

- articles 10 and 11bis: Gender equality guaranteed in all areas
- article 11: general principle of non-discrimination
- article 23: right for everyone to a life in line with human dignity

1975 Collective agreement N° 25, National Council of Labour: equal pay

1981 Law on gender equality concerning employees' social security

1983 Collective agreement N° 38, National Council of Labour – Equality concerning access to employment

1999 Law on equal treatment of women and men concerning working conditions and supplementary social security (public and private sectors)

2004 Charter: trade unions' commitment to apply the principle of gender mainstreaming

DENMARK www.lige.dk

1986 NOW the Cooperation Agreement concluded between the Danish employers' confederation (DA) and the Danish confederation of trade unions (LO). Amended 1992 regarding equal treatment of men and women and in 1999 regarding equal treatment of ethnic minorities

1998 Act on equal treatment of men and women in respect of employment and maternity leave etc. Cf Consolidation Act N°. 213

1998 Act N° 134 on equal treatment of men and women in relation to occupational social security schemes

2002 Act N° 553 Gender equality (Consolidation)

2003 Act N°. 358 on equal pay for men and women

2003 Act N°. 159 on the changes of municipal government and the act of equal treatment of men and women

FRANCE www.legifrance.gouv.fr

1946 Preamble of the Constitution: guarantees equal rights for women and men in all areas

1972 Law on equal pay for the same work or work of equal value

1983 Law on occupational gender equality

2001 Law on occupational gender equality: obligation to negotiate equality; generalisation of night work; specific rules for the civil and public services

2004 National inter-sector agreement on gender balance and occupational equality

ITALY www.pariopportunita.gov.it

Constitution:

- art.3: guarantee of equal social dignity and equality before the law
- art.37: equality of women at work

1977 Law No. 9, No. 903 Equal treatment of both men and women in the workplace

1990 Law No. 22, No. 164 Institution of the National Commission for Equality and Equal Opportunities for men and women by the Cabinet

1991 Law No. 125 Positive actions for the realisation of equality between men and women in the labour market

THE NETHERLANDS www.cgb.nl

Civil Code (Burgerlijk Wetboek), articles 7: 646 through 7: 649 General principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination

Civil Servants Law (Ambtenarenwet), Article 125 g General principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination

1980 Equal Opportunities Act (Wet Gelijke Behandeling mannen en vrouwen, WGB). Articles 7–12 for equal pay

1994 Equal Treatment Act (Algemene Wet Gelijke Behandeling)

1996 Law against Discrimination on the basis of Working Hours (Wet verbod op onderscheid naar arbeidsduur)

2002 Law on Equal Treatment Temporary and Permanent employees (Wet Onderscheid Bepaalde en Onbepaalde Tijd)

¹ The appendix only contains basic legislation concerning gender equality in the six countries covered by the MSU project – existing on 1-10-2004.

