

**The spoken word goes!**

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**Deputy Chair**

**of the German Trade Union Confederation**

**ETUC Conference in Berlin**

**'Tools, mechanisms and instruments for the establishment of  
gender mainstreaming at the heart of the ETUC'**

5/6 March 2007

Dear Viviane,  
Dear Catelene Passchier,  
Dear Merja,

Dear colleagues from all around Europe,

I wish you a very good morning, and welcome to Berlin.

This message also comes on behalf of Michael Sommer, the Chair of the DGB, and the whole Board of the DGB.

The ETUC Secretariat has chosen Berlin as the venue for this meeting because Germany currently holds the Presidency of the European Council.

As you can imagine, there are lots of political meetings and activities taking place in Germany round about now.

Four weeks ago, the European year of Equal Opportunities 2007 was also launched, very close to where we are meeting today here in Berlin.

Catelene Passchier was in attendance there, representing the European trade unions.

This introductory conference had at its heart the theme of Diversity, and the question of how the European Union can apply this political concept.

This topic will be something that we will all be dealing with increasingly in the future. The European Commission is banking on the idea that Europe's strength lies in its diversity. Demographic change must be considered as an opportunity, and equal opportunities for all in both employment and society as a whole are to be promoted.

Ladies,

our Europe should be free of discrimination, with gender and social equality. None of us women would dispute that!

Ladies,

it is good that this conference is taking place within a short time of International Women's Day.

Many of you are involved yourselves in the national preparations for 8 March, which makes it especially satisfying and encouraging that so many women from the European trade unions are taking the time today and tomorrow to get together and exchange views about the progress on the road towards greater gender equality in trade unions.

'Putting gender at the heart of the ETUC' is the motto for this project, and I really like that image of gender equality as the heart's desire of European trade unionism.

However, in that context, 'Tools, mechanisms and instruments' conjures up more the association of open-heart surgery.

I would rather see this highly mechanically-oriented image replaced by a picture which shines the spotlight more on the processes. Maybe by the end of this conference we might be able to come up with a fresh image for it.

But I am also convinced that we do need certain instruments if we are to achieve measurable progress.

That will be discussed over the coming days.

We particularly need progress in terms of the participation of women in the political decision-making bodies – in the interfaces of power, as the expression goes.

Here in Germany, we have achieved a milestone by having our first woman chancellor heading up our government.

We are keenly monitoring the no-holds-barred presidential election campaign in France.

A study on the representativeness of men and women was published for the German trade unions in 2004. A string of factors were identified which continue to make women's participation difficult.

There were seven in all:

1. Problems in reconciling family with work
2. Lower involvement in business life
3. Inadequate information
4. (Allegedly) insufficient professional skills
5. Specific branch and enterprise structures
6. Cultural exclusion mechanisms
7. Male-dominated organisational structure and politics

You will be exploring these factors in the first forum after my speech.

Dear ETUC women,

Something which is just as important: a clear commitment by everyone – including the men – to the fundamental issue of gender mainstreaming, to re-examine all policies and then to ask what effects those policies have on men and women.

This is a hell of a demanding task, and one which can be tedious and difficult depending on the policy fields.

Let's take the example of the continued restrictions in young girls' attitudes when choosing a career. This phenomenon has been known about for many years, and is one of the reasons why women are at a disadvantage on the labour market despite good qualifications.

Many political initiatives have already been undertaken – but actual measurable changes continue to be marginal.

Nevertheless, a political initiative like the Girls' Day, which we have been actively supporting for six years now, helps to keep the issue on the political agenda and in the public eye.

The Girls' Day is a national day of action on which businesses open their doors and showcase their training opportunities. The focus is on technology-oriented professions.

If we are to achieve a fundamental change, we need even more such initiatives, many different strategies and players working together.

Ladies,

what is discussed over these two days will feed into the preparations for the ETUC Congress in Seville. But we also do not want to forget to celebrate our successes so far.

This evening, we will have the opportunity to join forces with women trade unionists from Berlin and Brandenburg, women from businesses and women from federal politics, to celebrate 8 March.

With the British Embassy as the venue, we will be doing this in the heart of Berlin and in the political heart of the Republic.

The DGB motto for this year's Women's Day is:

Keep on going. Two steps forward, no steps back!

I'd like you all to keep this motto in mind. Not just for this conference – but for your whole commitment.

I invite you very warmly to be the DGB's guests.

I look forward to meeting you all again this evening.