

EQUALITY POLICIES IN THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS

1.- *“Gender Policies in the Workers’ Commissions.”*

From the fight for women’s rights to mainstreaming in trade union policies

2.- *“Gender policies in the Workers’ Commissions”*

- We have moved on from the fight for the (political, social, and labour) rights of “working women,” to the current adoption of gender policies and mainstreaming, via positive actions.

3.- 1st Congress of the Workers’ Commissions - 1976

Recognition of the specific problems faced by women in society and in the world of work, that must be broached with the gender criterion; the trade union creates: the WOMEN’S SECRETARIATS.

4.- 1st Conference of Men and women of the Workers’ Commissions (*June 1993*)

- Recognition of the work of the Women’s Secretariats, and the failings and difficulties of the trade union to integrate women in the organisation.
- Plans for *a trade union policy for men and women*. Positive Action and gender mainstreaming as an instrument for equal opportunities are integrated in the trade union’s work.

5.- **Women’s claims on gender policies**

6th and 7th Confederal Congresses

- ◆ Integration of the “sex” variable and the “gender” perspective in the situation analyses, definition of strategies and proposals for action.
- ◆ In-depth examination and acknowledged relevance of issues that affect mostly women (unemployment, job insecurity, deregulation).
- ◆ Adoption of positive action as an instrument in the fight against every form of – and not only gender – discrimination.

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- ◆ Integration of considerations and criteria which until recently were the exclusive purview of the Women’s Secretariats (use of time, division between paid and unpaid work, diversity of the working class, hidden forms of discrimination, the serious differences in pay for the same work).
- ◆ At the 6th congress, trade unionism adopted the mainstreaming of gender policies in the trade union and socio-political action, enshrined it in the Confederation Bylaws and defined the Workers’ Commissions as a trade union of men and women.

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- The 7th Confederal Congress held in 2000, approved that candidates for the Executives and the congressional delegations must include a number of women at least commensurate with their level of affiliation.
- It also adopted an **Equality Plan** with six goals geared to changing the position of women in the trade union and in the labour market.

8.- Equality Plan of the Workers' Commissions

1. Promote the proportional membership representation in all managerial and representation bodies.
2. Promote gender mainstreaming in all trade union policies.
3. Approach a general strategy to eliminate pay discrimination.
4. Promote inter-negotiations for equal opportunities for women in employment and collective bargaining.
5. Boost the circulation of the magazine "Trabajadora" [Woman Worker].

9.- 8th Confederal Congress of the Workers' Commissions – 2004: Development of gender policies:

- The Workers' Commissions evaluated the efficiency of the trade union policies developed and the measures adopted to bolster the presence of women in the decision-making process.
- Priority objectives:
 - Strike a balance in the trade union presence and representation of women.
 - Make progress in implementing the gender perspective in more areas of trade union action.
 - Give visibility to the role of women in trade union activity and social transformation.

10.- Objectives of the Women's Secretariats.

- Encourage and develop an equitable trade union and social awareness, eliminating discrimination based on sex, and making equal opportunities between men and women a reality.
- Project a non-stereotypical image of women to give visibility to their participation in the various social, political and cultural fields, using the trade union's means of communication and in particular the magazine "Trabajadora".
- Submit proposals to employers' organisations and to the government to promote agreements and legislative amendments that guarantee and improve the rights of women.
- Maintain relations and alliances with women's groups and feminist movements that are fighting for equal opportunities for women.

11.- COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen collective bargaining as an instrument for correction labour inequalities between men and women
- Negotiate Equality Plans in companies and include positive action measures.
- Incorporate gender mainstreaming as an integral principle.
- Application of the principle of equality and no discrimination.

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- Provide training on equal opportunities for persons who sit at the negotiating tables.
- Produce studies and materials to improve knowledge of equality.
- Guarantee the presence of women at the negotiating tables. Proceed to study conventions and to monitor negotiations, demands and decisions.

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- Promote **amendments in the legislation** so as to improve it in particular as regards:
 - Access to, and security and promotion of employment;
 - Elimination of pay discrimination;
 - Reconciliation of working and family life;
 - Improvement of other health-related conditions.
- **Participation in the Social Dialogue**, the agreements reached have acquired concrete shape in the:
 - Draft Organic Law for the Effective Equality of Men and Women
 - Draft Disability Act.

14.- The Women's Secretariats of the Workers' Commissions

Activities

- ❖ Advise, train and support workers on equal opportunities between men and women.
- ❖ Engage in ongoing discussions and debates by holding day events, seminars and studies on various topics (employment, health and safety at work, legislation, pay discrimination, underground economy, sexual harassment, etc.).
- ❖ Awareness raising about -- and reporting of -- discriminatory practices.

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- Awareness raising campaigns to improve the knowledge and understanding of the new situations faced by women such as:
 - Laws and regulations about equality;
 - Negotiation of Equality Plans and positive action measures;
 - Access to traditionally male-dominated occupations;
 - Direct and indirect discrimination
 - The distribution of family responsibilities and the reconciliation of personal and working life
 - Sexual harassment and harassment on grounds of gender.

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- ❖ Activities geared to promoting greater participation by women in trade unions and their proportional representation in managerial bodies. Encourage and contribute to maintaining women's networks in the trade union and society.
- ❖ Maintaining a policy of relations with other trade unions, political parties, institutions and organisations, emphasising especially our involvement in the organised women's movement.
- ❖ Special attention to cooperation for the development of and solidarity between women workers, support for the claims of women, and reporting of situation of extreme injustice afflicting many women workers, as in Guatemala and Mexico for instance.

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Organisations in we which are represented:

Among international trade unions:

- ETUC Women's Committee (European Trade Union Confederation);
- ITUC's Women's Committee (International Trade Union Confederation);

Among institutions:

- Board of Governors of the Women's Institute
- Observatory of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Women's Institute.

Women's movement:

- We are part of the Spanish Coordinator of the European Women's Lobby (known by the Spanish acronym CELEM);
- We are cooperating actively in punctual actions with other associations and platforms of the organised women's movement.

18.- Make progress in the membership and representation of women in the Workers' Commissions

- In spite of having to deal with serious labour instability, women are keeping their affiliation in the Workers' Commission, but continue to face enormous difficulties to take part in activities in and outside the work centres, owing to social and cultural factors, to which is added a certain inertia in the way the trade union functions.

19.- Data on membership and representation of women in the Workers' Commissions

- We have noted an increase in membership in the Workers' Commissions in general and of women in particular – especially among younger women
- Women account for about 35.9% of all members.
- Important increase in the representation of women among chosen candidates at the Workers' Commissions. At the last count, the Workers' Commissions had 33,839 women representatives.