

# **WHAT DO TRADE UNION MEMBERS IN EUROPE THINK?**

## **A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS**

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## THE SURVEY AND PARTICIPATING TRADE UNIONS

Throughout 2005 and 2006 several surveys were conducted among members of trade unions from five countries. These surveys are part of a long-term research project comprising a large-scale series of surveys involving trade unions from a range of European countries that is supported by the European Trade Union Confederation and conducted by the European Trade Union Institute. This report presents results from the six trade unions that have participated in the research to date. In terms of membership composition, the participating trade unions are not the same. This point should be taken into account when comparing the results. The participating trade unions and the particular membership groups selected from them are as follows:

**Sif:** Sweden. Sif (Swedish Union of Clerical and and Technical Employees in Industry) is the largest affiliate of Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation (TCO, Swedish Confederation of White-collar Unions) and organises primarily among white-collar workers in manufacturing. The sample of Sif members comprised those employed in metals, chemicals and information technology.

**Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft** (ver.di: United Services Union): Germany. Ver.di is the largest trade union in Germany and is affiliated to the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB). The sample for ver.di was drawn from members employed in the banking and retail trades.

**FNV-Bondgenoten:** Holland. FNV-Bondgenoten is the largest trade union in Holland and is affiliated to the Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (FNV). The sample of members comprises those drawn from workers employed in manufacturing industries (including food, chemicals and IT).

**Norges Ingeniørorganisasjon** (NITO: Norwegian Society of Engineers): Norway. NITO is an independent trade union that does not currently affiliate to a confederation. Previously NITO was affiliated to AF. NITO organises professional engineers with a university education.

**Handel og Kontor i Norge** (HK: Norwegian Commercial and Retail Workers' Union): Norway. HK affiliates to the Norwegian LO and represents workers across significant segments of private sector services with particular emphasis on retail and wholesale industries.

**RestaurationsBranchens Forbund** (RBF: Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union): Denmark. RBF has recently merged with Fagligt Fælles Forbund (3F). The post-merger union is affiliated to LO. The RBF survey was directed towards restaurant and catering workers.

Several other unions have agreed to participate in the survey, but the results have yet to be assembled in a form comparable to the data from the above-mentioned trade unions. If your trade union wishes to participate in the survey, please contact Jeremy Waddington.

## **SOME KEY POLICY QUESTIONS**

Young workers are under-represented within participating trade unions. What features of a recruitment package would be particularly attractive to young workers? Is there a method of delivery of such a recruitment package that would be more attractive to young workers? Could like-best-recruits-like strategies be employed more extensively?

As members of every participating trade union are most likely to stay in the union because of the support it offers should they have a problem at work, how can the quality of support be improved?

The local workplace representative (shop steward or works councillor) is the key figure at the workplace for members. Local representatives will be approached by members if they face disciplinary action, markedly improve the performance of the union at the workplace and ensure that members view the union more positively. But a large proportion of members do not have workplace access to a local workplace representative. How can participating trade unions ensure that more local workplace representatives are elected or appointed for every workplace where members are present?

Where there is no local workplace representative at the workplace how can the union ensure members are supported by the union? This is particularly the case at small workplaces. Is it possible to deploy more full-time officers to support members at small workplaces or to establish shop steward organisation at such workplaces?

Even where local workplace representatives are present, significant numbers of members think that the quality of representation can be improved. Can trade union training agendas be reformed to improve the quality of representation?

How can the visibility of local representatives at the workplace be raised to ensure that members are aware of their presence?

In the light of the reluctance of many members to become local representatives because of the time commitment required, is it possible to divide the role of the local representative into smaller component parts to enable more people to take on the role?

Employment growth is strongest at small workplaces in Europe and there is considerable evidence to show that more industrial relations issues are being handled in the localities as employers decentralise operations. Given that the organisation of participating trade unions is weakest at small workplaces how do the unions respond to these developments? Furthermore, more women are employed at small workplaces. Women request more support from the union. How can participating trade unions intensify support available to women members employed at small workplaces?

**TABLE 1A**  
**WHY DO YOU STAY IN THE UNION?**

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Support should a problem arise at work	59.9	75.0	68.3	59.0	73.4	71.2
To gain access to the union's unemployment insurance scheme	41.2					40.9
I believe in trade unionism and want to take part	27.8	24.4	27.7	21.3	21.8	21.1
To improve my pay and conditions	15.4	51.5	59.4	49.0	58.2	30.8
Industrial and membership benefits	14.6	20.5	17.2	21.6	20.1	13.6
Income insurance	9.3					
Most people at work are members	6.2	0.8	0.8	8.8	4.1	3.5
Union lobbying to influence government decisions	4.2	8.2	11.5	10.2	6.3	2.0
Financial services	2.3	2.3	1.8	6.9	2.4	0.5
Union training courses and career development advice	1.8	2.5	0.6	8.6	4.4	1.5
Another reason	3.6	4.9	1.6	6.2	2.5	1.0
	N=1,428	N=2,078	N=505	N=1,466	N=711	N=198

**Note:** the presence of unemployment insurance schemes (RBF and Sif) and income insurance schemes (Sif) in a small number of participating unions means that comparisons cannot be exact as the number of options available to respondents differed between countries. Table 1A reports the results of the responses ranked at one and two in the ranking, hence the percentage figures add up to more than 100 per cent.

- The primary reason given by most members for staying in a union is ‘support should they have a problem at work’.
- The unemployment insurance schemes offered by Sif and the RBF are the second most important reason for remaining in the union.
- About a quarter of members express a belief in trade unionism as being one of their two primary reasons for remaining in the union. That about a quarter of respondents state such a view indicates that there is a large potential of active members on which the unions can draw.
- Financial services have a marginal effect on membership retention in the unions. These relatively new services are not as influential on membership retention as the more long-standing provision of industrial and membership benefits. Only among NITO members do financial services have a noticeable effect on membership retention.
- Apart from Sif and RBF members ‘improvements in pay and conditions’ appear at position two in the reasons for remaining in the trade union.

TABLE 1B

## WHY DO YOU STAY IN THE UNION: MEN?

	Sif members %	Ver.di members %	FNV Bondgenoten members %	NITO members %	HK members %	RBF members %
Support should a problem arise at work	59.9	69.6	66.7	58.9	76.8	65.5
To gain access to the union's unemployment insurance scheme	41.5					38.2
I believe in trade unionism and want to take part	28.5	33.8	30.9	21.5	23.9	25.5
To improve my pay and conditions	14.5	52.2	60.3	48.3	55.8	30.0
Industrial and membership benefits	14.6	16.9	17.6	21.2	18.8	15.5
Income insurance	9.7					
Most people at work are members	6.3	0.7	0.5	9.0	2.2	5.5
Union lobbying to influence government decisions	4.5	8.5	11.7	10.1	6.0	3.6
Financial services	2.4	1.6	1.3	7.4	1.4	0.9
Union training courses and career development advice	1.8	2.3	0.5	8.4	5.1	0.9
Another reason	3.6	5.2	1.3	6.6	2.9	0.9
	N=1,189	N=866	N=375	N=1,243	N=138	N=109

**Note:** the presence of unemployment insurance schemes (RBF and Sif) and income insurance schemes (Sif) in a small number of participating unions means that comparisons cannot be exact as the number of options available to respondents differed between countries. Table 1B reports the results of the responses ranked at one and two in the ranking, hence the percentage figures add up to more than 100 per cent.

TABLE 1C

## WHY DO YOU STAY IN THE UNION: WOMEN?

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Support should a problem arise at work	62.8	78.9	74.8	59.5	72.9	79.3
To gain access to the union's unemployment insurance scheme	40.2					44.8
I believe in trade unionism and want to take part	24.3	17.7	18.9	20.5	21.3	16.1
To improve my pay and conditions	20.1	51.5	58.3	52.3	58.8	32.2
Industrial and membership benefits	14.6	23.0	16.5	23.5	24.7	11.5
Income insurance	7.5					
Most people at work are members	5.9	0.9	1.6	8.0	4.5	1.1
Union lobbying to influence government decisions	2.9	7.9	11.0	10.2	6.5	/
Financial services	2.1	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.6	/
Union training courses and career development advice	2.0	2.6	3.1	9.5	4.5	2.3
Another reason	3.8	4.6	2.4	4.2	2.4	1.1
	N=239	N=1,212	N=126	N=219	N=573	N=87

**Note:** the presence of unemployment insurance schemes (RBF and Sif) and income insurance schemes (Sif) in a small number of participating unions means that comparisons cannot be exact as the number of options available to respondents differed between countries. Table 1C reports the results of the responses ranked at one and two in the ranking, hence the percentage figures add up to more than 100 per cent.

- The reasons for staying in the unions remain in the same basic order among men and women.
- Apart from women members in HK, women unionists tend to emphasise 'support if I have a problem at work' more than their male counterparts. In contrast, men are more likely to express a belief in trade unionism than are women.
- Although women are paid at relatively lower levels of pay than men there is no consistency in the preferences for improvement in pay and conditions between men and women. For example, women members of ver.di and FNV Bondgenoten do not stress improvements in pay and conditions as much as their male counterparts.

TABLE 2A

## WHAT FORMS OF SUPPORT DO YOU WANT FROM THE UNION?

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Advice and representation on grievances at work	65.7	63.8	56.3	51.6	64.0	47.9
Legal representation in court and tribunals	31.6	45.4	34.3	49.2	34.3	29.4
Advice and representation on disciplinary matters	23.1	44.1	11.3	20.6	19.5	36.1
Advice and representation on pensions and retirement issues	18.4	9.8	25.2	21.5	12.8	16.5
Advice and representation on health and safety issues	15.1	8.4	28.2	15.4	11.0	14.4
Advice and representation on equality issues	12.5	17.6	11.3	11.4	11.9	16.0
Advice and representation on career development issues	11.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Opportunities for training, education and personal development	9.9	4.9	13.3	22.6	14.0	16.0
Advice and representation on environmental issues	2.7	0.8	8.3	18.3	21.8	10.3
Advice and support with filling in tax forms	N/A	N/A	1.6	N/A	N/A	N/A
	N=1,337	N=2,023	N=504	N=1,462	N=733	N=194

**Note:** respondents were asked to rank their preferences for support from the union. Table 2A refers to the reasons at positions one and two in the ranking, hence the percentage figures add up to more than 100 per cent.

- The provision of advice and representation on taking grievances at work is the dominant form of support required by members from all participating trade unions.
- Apart from RBF members legal representation in court and tribunals appears at the second position in the ranking. RBF members prioritise advice and representation on disciplinary matters in preference to legal representation in court and tribunals.
- Norwegian members emphasise advice and representation on environmental issues more than members from any other countries.
- The professional members of NITO emphasise opportunities for training, education and personal development more than members in other grades in other participating trade unions.

**TABLE 2B****WHAT FORMS OF SUPPORT DO YOU WANT FROM THE UNION: MEN?**

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Advice and representation on grievances at work	65.0	60.8	56.5	51.7	64.2	45.8
Legal representation in court and tribunals	32.2	45.5	35.5	50.1	41.2	37.4
Advice and representation on disciplinary matters	21.8	50.9	11.2	21.8	20.9	33.6
Advice and representation on pensions and retirement issues	19.8	11.9	26.4	22.8	12.8	15.9
Advice and representation on health and safety issues	15.0	8.9	27.2	15.5	10.1	19.6
Advice and representation on equality issues	11.8	12.5	5.7	10.4	9.5	15.0
Advice and representation on career development issues	12.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Opportunities for training, education and personal development	9.3	4.7	13.9	22.7	11.5	13.1
Advice and representation on environmental issues	3.2	0.7	6.1	18.3	18.9	7.5
Advice and support with filling in tax forms	N/A	N/A	1.6	N/A	N/A	N/A
	N=1,106	N=835	N=358	N=1,241	N=148	N=107

**Note:** respondents were asked to rank their preferences for support from the union. Table 2B refers to the reasons at positions one and two in the ranking, hence the percentage figures add up to more than 100 per cent.

TABLE 2C

## WHAT FORMS OF SUPPORT DO YOU WANT FROM THE UNION: WOMEN?

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Advice and representation on grievances at work	68.0	65.9	63.2	51.1	63.9	50.6
Legal representation in court and tribunals	28.1	45.3	35.1	44.7	32.7	19.5
Advice and representation on disciplinary matters	29.0	39.4	13.2	14.9	19.2	39.1
Advice and representation on pensions and retirement issues	11.3	8.2	24.6	15.3	12.8	17.2
Advice and representation on health and safety issues	15.2	8.1	35.1	15.3	11.2	8.0
Advice and representation on equality issues	16.0	21.1	2.6	16.4	12.5	17.2
Advice and representation on career development issues	7.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Opportunities for training, education and personal development	12.6	5.1	13.2	22.1	14.6	19.5
Advice and representation on environmental issues	0.4	0.9	4.4	18.3	22.4	13.8
Advice and support with filling in tax forms	N/A	N/A	1.6	N/A	N/A	N/A
	N=231	N=1,188	N=114	N=262	N=615	N=87

**Note:** respondents were asked to rank their preferences for support from the union. Table 2C refers to the reasons at positions one and two in the ranking, hence the percentage figures add up to more than 100 per cent.

- The provision of advice and representation on taking grievances at work is the dominant form of support required by both men and women in all participating trade unions.
- Apart from women members of FNV Bondgenoten and RBF, women are more likely to cite advice and representation on 'equality issues' than are men.
- Men tend to emphasise advice and representation on 'pensions and retirement issues' compared to women.

**TABLE 3**

**IF MANAGEMENT DECIDED TO TAKE DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST YOU, TO WHOM WOULD YOU TURN FOR ADVICE?**

	<b>All %</b>	<b>Men %</b>	<b>Women %</b>
Solicitor	6.4	5.8	7.4
Don't know	0.9	1.0	0.8
I would have no one to turn to	1.0	1.0	1.1
Citizen's Advice Bureau	2.6	2.6	2.5
Union steward	22.7	25.2	18.6
Union branch officer	26.5	26.7	26.2
Union full-time officer	17.7	18.9	15.8
A friend or colleague	6.2	6.3	6.0
Web page or helpline	3.0	2.3	4.1
Works councillor	13.0	10.3	17.2
	N=6,103	N=3,753	N=2,350

- The overwhelming majority of members from participating trade unions would seek advice from within the union if threatened with disciplinary action. This is a very positive result.
- In most participating unions member would initially seek advice from workplace representatives if threatened with disciplinary action. Institutional differences determine whether shop stewards, works councillors or branch officers are the key source of initial advice.

**TABLE 4A****HOW GOOD IS THE UNION WITHIN YOUR WORKPLACE AT?****ALL MEMBERS WITH A SHOP STEWARD OR WORKS COUNCILLOR**

	Good %	Inter-mediate %	Poor %
Keeping everyone up to date about proposed changes	46.8	35.3	17.9
Providing everyone with a chance to comment on proposed changes	37.0	37.8	25.2
Keeping everyone informed about your employer's financial state	22.5	44.5	33.0
Solving disputes between management and employees	38.5	44.2	17.3
Responding to suggestions from members	33.2	50.4	16.4
Dealing with work problems	40.6	44.8	14.6
Treating members fairly	54.5	35.1	10.5
Finding way to produce better results for customers/clients	21.8	59.6	18.6
Ensuring security of employment	29.2	50.2	20.5

**ALL MEMBERS WITHOUT A SHOP STEWARD OR WORKS COUNCILLOR**

	Good %	Inter-mediate %	Poor %
Keeping everyone up to date about proposed changes	20.2	37.5	42.3
Providing everyone with a chance to comment on proposed changes	16.7	38.8	44.5
Keeping everyone informed about your employer's financial state	11.1	38.8	50.2
Solving disputes between management and employees	19.3	43.6	37.1
Responding to suggestions from members	17.8	47.0	35.3
Dealing with work problems	24.0	42.8	33.2
Treating members fairly	28.0	42.7	29.3
Finding way to produce better results for customers/clients	15.5	49.5	35.0
Ensuring security of employment	18.5	42.6	38.9

**Note:** in this context a local representative may be either a shop steward or a works councillor. Responses from those who said that they did not have a local representative at their place of work and those that did not know whether there was a local representative at their place of work are included in the without a local representative category.

**TABLE 4B****HOW WELL ORGANISED IS THE UNION?****ALL MEMBERS WITH A SHOP STEWARD OR WORKS COUNCILLOR**

	Well Organised %	Intermediate %	Improvement required %
Providing information on union matters	40.5	28.9	31.5
Providing information on negotiations about pay, etc.	49.6	20.5	29.9
Contact between members and local representatives	34.7	31.6	33.8
Contact between members and F-T-Os	26.2	39.1	34.8
How well the union listens to my views	32.5	45.6	21.9
How well the union represents members on issues that matter to me	38.3	41.6	20.1

**ALL MEMBERS WITHOUT A SHOP STEWARD OR WORKS COUNCILLOR**

	Well Organised %	Intermediate %	Improvement required %
Providing information on union matters	15.0	30.0	55.0
Providing information on negotiations about pay, etc.	19.9	24.6	55.5
Contact between members and local representatives	10.4	30.1	59.5
Contact between members and F-T-Os	10.9	32.3	56.8
How well the union listens to my views	15.9	44.9	39.2
How well the union represents members on issues that matter to me	26.1	40.1	33.8

**Note:** in this context a local representative may be either a shop steward or a works councillor. Responses from those who said that they did not have a local representative at their place of work and those that did not know whether there was a local representative at their place of work are included in the without a local representative category.

- The importance of the presence of a workplace representative is illustrated by the different sections of Table 4A. On every issue participating trade unions perform better when there is a workplace representative present at the member's place of work. In some instances the difference in the performance of the union is vast.
- Participating trade unions also perform better on every issue when there is a steward present at the member's place of work: this is reflected in a marked decline in the 'well organised' scores and a sharp rise in 'improvement required' scores in the absence of a workplace representative in the different sections of Table 4B.

**TABLE 5**  
**COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN THE UNION**

	<b>All Respondents Received information from %</b>	<b>All Respondents Utility rating %</b>
Union national magazines	62.7	60.2
Contact with my local representative	38.6	82.7
Computer/e-mail/web page	33.7	80.9
Union regional magazines	30.2	49.3
Union circulars, briefings and bulletins	27.8	59.6
From my local union branch	26.6	70.5
TV, radio, newspapers	26.4	43.3
Workplace meetings	25.7	77.0
The 'grapevine'	20.3	36.9
Notice boards	13.9	45.0
Union posters	6.6	24.4
Other	5.6	62.4

**Note:** respondents were asked to specify from which sources they had received information within the union and the three most useful sources of information. The 'utility rating' was calculated by expressing the number of respondents who thought an information source as being among the most useful as a proportion of all those who had received information from that source. For example, 4,059 members had received a national magazine or journal from the union and 2,443 of these members thought the national magazine or journal to be among the three most useful sources of information. The utility rating for the union national magazine or journal is thus 60.2 per cent or 2,443 as a proportion of 4,059.

- National magazines were well in advance of other means of communication in terms of their coverage in most unions. However, the extent of coverage varied enormously from union to union with over 80 per cent of RBF members in receipt of national magazines whereas only 43.6 per cent of HK members received the national magazine.
- Face-to-face contact tended to receive the highest utility rating scores. In particular, contact with local workplace representatives, at workplace meetings and at local branches all received high utility rating scores.
- Computer/e-mail/web page tended to receive the highest utility rating score for non-personal contact and outstrips every other similar form of contact.

**TABLE 6****THE PRESENCE, FREQUENCY AND QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION AT THE WORKPLACE**

	<b>Sif %</b>	<b>Ver.di %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten %</b>	<b>NITO %</b>	<b>HK %</b>	<b>RBF %</b>
Is there a steward or works councillor at your workplace?	73.8	65.2	87.5	72.0	62.1	31.8
If there is a steward or works councillor present, are there enough?	68.1	77.0	77.2	68.3	71.5	79.5
If there is a steward or works councillor present, does s/he adequately represent members	57.6	62.3	60.5	50.8	50.0	74.6
<b>Proportion of members content with workplace representation (1)</b>	42.5	40.6	52.9	36.6	31.1	23.7

**Note (1):** the proportion of members content with workplace representation is calculated by multiplying the proportion of members with a steward or works councillor present at their workplace by the proportion of members that think the workplace representative adequately represents members.

- There is considerable variation in the proportion of members employed at sites where there is a workplace representative. At the two extremes are FNV Bondgenoten within which more than 87 per cent of members report the presence of a workplace representative at their place of work and RBF within which about 32 per cent of members report the presence of a workplace representative.
- Between 68 and 79 per cent of members who have a workplace representative at their workplace think that there are enough representatives.
- The proportion of members who have a workplace representative at their workplace and are satisfied with the quality of representation falls to an average of 60 per cent, with the performance of RBF representatives rated the highest.

**TABLE 7****WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS FOR A UNION BRANCH TO PERFORM?**

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK Members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Representation in grievance and disciplinary cases	69.3	72.4	45.1	71.0	57.4	35.4
Local negotiations on conditions, pay and employment change	66.1	49.3	48.0	78.5	58.0	44.4
Consulting members on matters that affect them at work	63.9	61.6	66.8	44.0	44.8	49.5
Regular communication with members	33.4	54.3	44.5	37.9	50.2	35.4
Representing my interests within the union	32.1	17.1	26.5	37.9	20.5	11.1
Ensuring the health and safety of members	24.8	14.8	20.0	32.8	53.2	36.9
Recruitment, retention & organisation	16.5	11.1	5.1	24.3	35.2	28.8
Education and training of union members and activists	14.9	22.4	22.9	23.5	22.1	23.2
Encouraging participation in the democratic processes of the union	12.3	13.0	6.7	7.6	4.9	18.2
Identifying potential workplace leaders and encouraging them to become active	9.4	9.7	14.8	5.9	9.9	14.1
Social activities for branch members	6.9	14.4	15.2	7.3	6.1	26.8
Campaigning with local community and interest groups	4.0	3.5	/	2.2	2.3	11.6
	N=1,434	N=2,127	N=503	N=1,463	N=739	N=198

**Note:** respondents were asked to specify the four most important functions for their Branch to perform, hence the percentage data add up to more than 100 per cent.

- There is marked variation between participating unions in the functions that members expect branches to perform. In part, this variation reflects different historical traditions and practices; in part it reflects the different emphases of trade union members.
- Among the members of participating trade unions four priorities are apparent:
  - Representation in grievance and disciplinary cases
  - Local negotiations on conditions, pay and employment change
  - Consulting members on matters that affect them at work
  - Regular communication with members
 These priorities are assigned considerably greater importance than other items listed in Table 7.
- Members of FNV Bondgenoten emphasise ‘consulting members on matters that affect them at work’ more than any other single issue. It is ranked almost 20 percentage points ahead of all other items.
- Members from ver.di and HK emphasise ‘regular communication with members’ more than members from other participating trade unions.
- There is no distinctly Nordic response illustrated in Table 7 in so far as Sif, RBF and NITO members expect union branches to perform rather different functions.
- Apart from members of RBF, there was very little interest in establishing wider campaigning links with local community and interest groups.
- ‘Recruitment, retention and organisation’ and identifying potential workplace leaders and encouraging them to become active’ are not major priorities within any other participating trade unions.
- Health and safety is a particular priority within HK and the RBF.

**TABLE 8****LONG-TERM POLICY ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

	<b>Sif members %</b>	<b>Ver.di members %</b>	<b>FNV Bondgenoten members %</b>	<b>NITO members %</b>	<b>HK members %</b>	<b>RBF members %</b>
Improved pensions provisions	+72.3	+87.6	+86.1	+87.7	+91.0	+68.6
Opportunities for earlier retirement	+68.2	+67.7	+81.3	+72.1	+80.7	+63.8
Improvements in work-life balance	+66.1	+80.7	+56.7	+68.2	+69.2	+68.0
Protection of the welfare system	+60.2	+61.9	+92.5	+87.5	+91.3	+84.0
Improved training and personal development opportunities	+58.5	+70.2	+56.1	+70.4	+74.7	+78.0
Reductions in workload/work intensity	+42.8	+70.3	+60.1	+19.6	+51.2	+76.2
Progress towards a shorter working week	+37.5	+13.0	-17.4	-17.7	+20.2	+25.9
More cooperation with and lobbying of political parties	-1.6	+52.7	+48.2	+50.0	+53.5	+44.8
Closer cooperation with members of trade unions from other countries	-1.8	+43.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Closer cooperation with trade unions from other European countries	-9.4	+44.3	+44.9	+14.6	+8.7	+27.8
	N=1,434	N=2,127	N=502	N=1,463	N=741	N=198

**Note:** respondents were asked to indicate whether they thought the issues listed in Table 8 to be ‘very important’, ‘fairly important’, ‘indifferent’, ‘not very important’ or ‘not at all important’. The index figures are calculated by subtracting the sum of those who thought an issue to be either ‘not very important’ or ‘not at all important’ from the sum of those who thought an issue to be either ‘very important’ or ‘fairly important’. Respondents who were ‘indifferent’ to an issue are thus disregarded from Table 8.

- There is a degree of consistency among members from participating trade unions in that pensions/retirement issues, work-life balance, protecting of the welfare system, and improved training and personal development opportunities appear towards the top of the ranking in each country. There are differences in the order in which they appear, but the point remains these issues are generally assigned a greater priority than other issues.
- Among the members of participating trade unions Sif members are the least likely to want cooperation with either members or trade unions from other European countries. Sif members are less likely to express support for cooperation than either the Danes in RBF or the Norwegians in NITO and HK.
- At the time of the distribution of the survey reform of the Dutch welfare system was a key debate in Holland, hence the very high support for protection of the welfare system among FNV Bondgenoten members. Norwegian trade unionists from both NITO and HK are almost as supportive of the welfare system as their Dutch counterparts.
- Sif members are also the least likely to support more cooperation with and lobbying of political parties than are members of other trade unions. Given the development of relations between white-collar trade unions and political parties in Sweden this result is not entirely unexpected. The contrast with NITO members, however, is extreme given similar developments in Norway.