

Trade unions and women

ON THE OFFENSIVE

For: Social Europe
Solidarity Sustainability



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This is one of a series of training modules produced as part of an ambitious European project, *Civil Society Dialogue: Bringing together workers from Turkey and the EU through a shared culture of work*, which aims to ensure better knowledge and understanding of one another and an awareness of the challenges and opportunities of future EU enlargement.

HOW TO USE THIS PUBLICATION

The training modules are intended to offer a short, clear introduction to the subject for a trade union audience, and each will have an educational activity that can be used in the classroom or with groups of members. A list of all the publications in this series can be found below, and copies can be downloaded from the ETUC website www.etuc.org/r/557

PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES

1. Trade unions at the European level
2. Industrial relations at the European level
3. Turkish trade unions and industrial relations
4. Trade unions and industrial relations in EU countries
5. Trade unions and women
6. Trade unions and civil society
7. Trade unions and migration into the European Union
8. Trade unions and freedom of movement of workers in the European Union
9. Working together

ETUC MANIFESTO

At its 11th Congress in Seville, Spain, in May 2007, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) adopted a Manifesto for Action for the next four years. This manifesto highlights five main areas where the ETUC is committed to going 'on the offensive' on behalf of European workers:

- **the European labour market**
- **social dialogue, collective bargaining and worker participation**
- **better European economic, social and environmental governance**
- **a stronger European Union**
- **stronger trade unions and a stronger ETUC.**

FOREWORD

The European Trade Union Confederation at its Congress in 2007 voted in favour of the accession of Turkey to the European Union, 'provided that it meets, in reality and not on paper, the requirements of membership and the provisions of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. A transformation of Turkish society with full rights and freedoms should be sought and completed during the challenging process of negotiations'.

It was on this basis that the ETUC, and its affiliated organisations in Turkey and in the European Union, agreed to step up their cooperation and launch this ambitious project *Civil Society Dialogue: Bringing together workers from Turkey and the EU through a shared culture of work*, which aims to ensure better knowledge and understanding of one another and an awareness of the challenges and opportunities of future EU enlargement.

The central elements of the project are:

- 12 exchange and mutual understanding seminars for trade unionists coming from different regions of Turkey on the one hand and from different Members States of the European Union on the other
- 9 training seminars, in cooperation with European Industry Federations.

The project has also produced this series of training modules which will provide an important tool for building capacity within the ETUC, by enabling other workers and trade unionists from both the EU and Turkey to understand the challenges ahead and to accept cultural, social and political differences more readily.



Thanks are due to:

- ETUC affiliated organisations – European Industry Federations and the national trade union confederations from the EU and Turkey that have carried this project forward
- workers and trade unionists from the national unions in Turkey and the EU who have taken part in the different training activities
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I commend these training modules to trade unionists from the affiliated organisations of the ETUC. I encourage you to use them, so that we are all in a better position to defend workers' interests throughout Turkey and the European Union.

John Monks
General Secretary
European Trade Union Confederation

CONTEXT

Progress has undoubtedly been made in recent years towards the equality of women and men. However, labour market information and statistics suggest that there is still a long way to go to achieve equality at work. Women face important challenges and have to deal with significant problems of segregation and inequality, both in the workplace and in society in general. The work that women do is often not seen as 'real work'. It remains often undervalued, under-qualified and under-paid.

Women are generally less present in the labour market. Figures from the latest European Commission report *'Employment in Europe 2009'* show that in the EU the employment rate (measured as the number of employees divided by the population in the corresponding age bracket) for women has increased over the last ten years. This said however, the employment rate is significantly higher for men than for women; 72.8% for the former and 59.1% for the latter in 2008. The situation varies from one country to another. The gap between male and female employment rates is lower in the North (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Baltic states), but higher in the South. Malta, Italy and Greece, for example, have male employment rates of 72.5%, 75.0% and 75.0%, but considerably lower female employment rates – 37.4%, 47.2% and 48.7% respectively. The gap is even bigger in Turkey; the figures for the same period are 67.7% for men and 24.3% for women.

Moreover women are more likely to be in 'precarious work', such as part-time jobs, fixed-term or temporary work. The recent figures for part-time work are particularly striking; the average for women working part-time in the European Union is 31.1%, but much less for men, 7.9%. The figure for Turkey is 20.8% for women and 5.6% for men. In terms of fixed-term contracts the figures are closer for male and female workers. In the EU 14.9% of women and 13.3% for men are on fixed term contracts; the figures for Turkey are 12.5% for women and 11.6% for men. Although

the difference is less prominent, female workers appear to be more at risk of losing their jobs in times of economic crisis and rising unemployment.

Part-time work may be a reflection of personal preference, but it may also be a sign of an unequal share of domestic and family responsibilities which discourage women from full-time employment. It may also be an indication of the lack of child care and other services to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and private life.

Another key statistic is pay. Female workers performing the same or a similar job as men are still generally paid less. This discrimination is generally referred to as the gender pay gap. The World Economic Forum carried out a study *'The Global Gender Gap Report 2007'* recently. It showed that the remuneration gap, expressed as the ratio of estimated female to male earned income, was considerable in certain EU countries, for example in Austria, Italy, Malta and Luxembourg, where respectively women's income was only 44%, 46%, 48% and 49% of men's income. The variation was less significant in Finland, Denmark and Sweden with figures of 71%, 73% and 81%. The figure for Turkey was 35%.

An exploration of these statistics exposes the place of women in society which is entangled with many disadvantages at work as well as pay, for instance in career advancement, pensions and status. It is often the case that women are paid less for doing the same job as men.

"After the Equal Pay Act, I went to a shoe factory. I said to the manager 'I suppose you have equal pay and that the women here and the men over there running the same machines get the same pay?' And he said "heavens, no! Those men are putting heels on men's shoes and the women are putting heels on women's shoes. It's not the same work!"

Quoted in 'The Changing Status of Women' by Olivia Bennett, 1987 (UK).

However this is just a small part of the pay gap. Often jobs done mainly by women are undervalued compared to equivalent tasks usually performed by men.

Despite women's higher educational attainment in almost all EU Member States, female workers do not enjoy the same position as men in the labour market. According to Eurostat, in all EU countries (with the exception of Germany) more women than men were enrolled in tertiary education in the period 2002 to 2006. During the same period the figures for Turkey show that more men than women were enrolled. However, not all sectors and professions are making use of women's high level of education and skills. In concrete terms this means that women tend to work in 'women's' sectors and professions (i.e. cleaning industry, textiles, services, care, etc.) that attract lower salaries. Women also face more difficulties in their career progression and tend to remain in lower job categories with less access to senior positions. Moreover women are more likely to be unemployed than men with the same level of qualification. In the EU the unemployment rate is higher for women than for men irrespective of qualification levels. The same goes for Turkey for intermediate and higher levels of education, but not for lower levels.

All in all, this discrimination represents a major challenge for trade unions, and the ETUC and its affiliated organisations, from Iceland in the west to Turkey in the East and from Norway in the north to Malta in the south, are strongly committed to achieving equality between women and men.

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS IN EUROPE: BRIDGING THE GAPS

Every four years the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) conducts a major survey of the position of women in its affiliated member organisations. At the end of 2006 it asked them a detailed set of questions covering female membership, the implementation of the gender mainstreaming principle within the trade union policies and the position of women in trade unions' decision-making positions. The last ETUC publication on these topics was '*Women in trade unions in Europe: Bridging the gaps.*'

About three-quarters of the national confederations replied. Overall the proportion of women in trade unions was found to be 42.6%, an increase of about 2.5% on the previous survey carried out in 2002. Even as total union membership has declined, the number of women members has been on the increase in most countries, probably linked to the higher proportion of women now in the European work force. Of the confederations that responded the Baltic and Nordic States generally recorded the biggest percentage, and in five particular confederations there were more female members than male. The survey showed that trade unions in Europe are increasingly monitoring the composition of their membership, by collecting data on a regular basis on their female and male members.

Things to find out

Look through your union website or other union publications to find the percentage of women members of your union.

How does your union ensure that women's interests are represented?

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming seeks to measure the impact of all policies and actions as they affect women and men and to maximise their positive effect on gender equality. All the ETUC affiliated organisations adopted a Charter on Gender Mainstreaming at its last Congress in Seville, in 2007.

A survey found that 95% of union confederations operate some kind of gender mainstreaming, but only one third of them examine all their policies in this way.

Introducing gender mainstreaming in an organisation is a long process, which requires a combination of both bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Experience has shown that the commitment by the top leadership level is key to promoting change and to improving equal opportunities.

In the case of trade union activities, gender mainstreaming has three aspects:

The Gender Mainstreaming Charter affirms the trade unions' commitment to gender equality and binds ETUC affiliated organisations to adopt gender equality plans and appoint a person at the highest level to oversee gender mainstreaming. In discussions with the EU institutions and negotiations with employers the charter calls on the union side to:

- 'gender-proof' all proposals such as on flexible patterns of working
- encourage the participation of women on committees and collective bargaining units
- train negotiators in gender equality issues
- include a gender perspective on all topics
- make efforts to close the gender pay gap by using targets and revision of job evaluation schemes.

1. in the collective bargaining process.

National unions should press issues that are particularly relevant for female workers, such as eliminating pay inequalities, introducing flexible working arrangements, setting up child care facilities, whilst using legislation and government policies on equality to back up their demands.

2. in union policies and structures.

To be effective gender mainstreaming has to be implemented into every stage of the policy. A very high number of ETUC members incorporate gender mainstreaming into their trade unions' policies. Here are some examples – making sure that both men and women are included in negotiating teams, setting up guidelines for collective bargaining with regard to gender equality or running training for male and female leaders about gender issues. Trade unions have also often adopted formal measures to implement gender mainstreaming. For instance they: adopt formal provisions in their statutes or resolutions; set up equality plans, implement measures to increase the numbers of women at senior levels. These policies have achieved mixed results. Among national confederation Presidents 14% are women, 36% of Vice-Presidents are female, 12% of General Secretaries and 20% of Deputy General Secretaries.

3. in the unions' role as employer.

Trade unions may also implement specific measures in order to promote gender equality among their employees. For example, they can introduce flexible working hours, regulate the times and frequency of meetings to cater for family responsibilities, have gender-neutral recruitment and career progression policies, adopt gender-neutral pay schemes, and draw up a code for the protection of dignity at work and for the elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace.

ETUC POLICY AND STRUCTURES

The ETUC works to promote women's rights, as well as equality between women and men in the labour market and society in general. In doing so it tackles issues such as equal pay, job quality, women in decision making, reconciliation of private, family and professional life and working conditions at work-place level, in the home, in society and in the trade unions themselves.

The ETUC Constitution clearly recognises the promotion of equal opportunities and equal treatment between men and women as one of the main aims of action. Gender balance is also taken into account and the Constitution provides that the ETUC Secretariat shall include no less than two women.

Since 1975 an ETUC Women's Committee has been in place, comprising experts working in the field of gender equality from all of the national affiliates, actively pursuing these aims. The Women's Committee has three seats on the ETUC Executive Committee and one on the Steering Committee, to provide expertise and ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into all ETUC policies and activities.

The current President of the Women's Committee is Claudia Menne (DGB, Germany), and the two Vice-Presidents are Karin Enodd (LO, Norway) and France Perez (FO, France). Other prominent women in the European trade union movement are the ETUC President Wanja Lundby-Wedin (LO-S-Sweden); the European Public Services Union (EPSU) General Secretary Carola Fischbach-Pyttel and President Anne-Marie Perret; Edeltraud Glänzer, the Vice-President of the European Mine Chemicals and Energy Federation (EMCEF); Valeria Fedeli, the President of the Textiles, Clothing and Leather Federation (ETUF-TCL); and Bernadette Ségol, Regional Secretary of UNI-Europa.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE: FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality has also been the subject of commitments taken by the ETUC, on behalf of all its affiliated organisations, with employers' organisations:

- the Confederation of European Business (BUSINESSEUROPE), with members organisations in all EU countries and also Turkey (TÜSIAD and TISK)
- the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), with members in all EU countries and an associate member in Turkey (TESK)
- the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP), with members in all EU countries and an associated member in Turkey (TBIK).

They all signed a 'Framework of actions on gender equality' in 2005. This joint text addressed to all national member organisations that are affiliated to the four cross-sectoral social partner organisations at European level. It sets out a series of priorities for action in the context of gender equality between women and men – addressing gender roles (I), promoting women in decision-making (II), supporting work life balance (III) and tackling the gender pay gap (IV).

These goals can be implemented by joint and/or unilateral actions at different levels (within tripartite commission discussions, through bipartite national agreements covering a specific sector, region or company, etc.).

The framework of actions gives concrete examples that have been jointly identified by the European social partner organisations and that have proved to be successful to address gender equality in employment and in society at large. These include measures such as company open days for girls, careers fairs, targets for female apprentices in scientific and technical professions, reviewing job titles and advertisements, training managers in diversity and setting gender percentages for vocational training.

To increase the numbers of women in decision-making posts the framework recommends gender-neutral recruitment methods, discussion of work-life balance needs with employees, interviews with women leaving a company to understand their reasons, mentoring, promotion targets and financial support for female entrepreneurs.

To achieve work-life balance a mixture of work patterns such as part-time, job-sharing, home working can be combined with career breaks and parental leave. These measures should also be publicised to men. Child care facilities can either be provided by companies or by persuading local authorities to do so through lobbying by the social partners. Using practical guides for businesses (especially small and medium-sized ones) on how to discharge their legal obligations on equal pay and similarly enforcing collective agreements are seen as tools to help close the gender pay gap. Collecting clear and up-to-date statistics, screening job descriptions and pay criteria for discrimination, enabling employees to compare salaries and training negotiators in gender issues are also favoured by the framework agreement.

EUROPEAN GENDER EQUALITY LAWS AND CASES

The ETUC has also been active influencing the decision-making process of the European Union in the interests of gender equality.

The EU has taken action over fifty years to achieve equal pay for work of equal value and, in recent years has extended this to employment, vocational training and promotion, working conditions, safety and health at work and the supply of goods and services.

The new Treaty of Lisbon states that the EU 'is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are

common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail'; and the Charter of Fundamental Rights states (article 23) that 'equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay'.

Originally based on article 119 of the Treaty of Rome founding the European Economic Community, the 1975 Equal Pay Directive outlawed simple discrimination on the grounds of sex in all aspects and conditions of pay. It also stipulated that any job classification system used to determine pay must use the same criteria for both men and women and protected complainants from dismissal from their employment. In 1976, as part of the Equal Treatment Directive, this principle was extended to recruitment, promotion, training and working conditions. In 1979 the Social Security Directive required equal treatment between men and women in statutory systems for protection against sickness, invalidity, old age, accidents at work and occupational diseases and unemployment.

Judgements made by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) have however highlighted the difficulties of enforcement in reality. One example of this is the 'Allonby case' from the United Kingdom, where female lecturers paid by an agency working at the Rossendale College could not claim the same level of wages as their male colleagues who were instead directly employed by the College.

In 1992 the Pregnant Workers Directive established a minimum for maternity leave of fourteen weeks and aimed to protect pregnant workers from exposure to harmful chemicals and other dangerous agents, banned night work and protected them from dismissal. This is in the process of being modified, in the light of the case Webb vs Emo Air Cargo (UK) Ltd. Ms Webb was dismissed when she informed her employer that she was pregnant. The ECJ found in

her favour, citing the Pregnant Workers Directive that gives special protection to women by prohibiting dismissal during the period from the beginning of their pregnancy to the end of their maternity leave.

An agreement between ETUC and the European employers' organisations on parental leave was turned into a Directive in 1996 and, after further consultations with the social partners, revised in 2009.

The main changes in the Directive are:

- Longer leave – each parent will be able to take four months off per child (previously three months). The extra month cannot be transferred from one parent to the other, thereby encouraging fathers to take their leave
- No discrimination – an employee applying for or taking parental leave will be protected from any less favourable treatment for doing so
- Work contracts – the new rights will apply to all workers, regardless of their type of contract (e.g. fixed-term, part-time, agency workers); however the possibility of a qualification period of maximum one year is maintained.

Another Directive, the Equal Treatment Directive, was amended in 2002 to include definitions of direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment and required Member States to set up equality bodies to promote, analyse, monitor and support equal treatment between men and women.

All these EU Directives form part of the Community 'acquis', the body of common rights and obligations which bind all the Member States together within the European Union. As part of the accession to the European Union, all applicant countries have had to transpose the 'acquis' into their national legislation and implement it from the moment of their accession.

Activity

What can unions do to achieve gender equality at work?

AIMS

To enable you to:

- find out more about what women in your union or workplace need
- consider what improvements can be made to their work/life balance

TASK

Design a questionnaire to find out the following:

- the numbers of men and women in your workplace
- the numbers of part-time and full-time workers
- the working time arrangements of all workers
- levels of and reasons for absence or sickness leave
- suggestions for improvements people may have.

Discuss the questionnaire with other trade union members and distribute it. Prepare a report on your findings so that it can be turned into an action plan for equality.


FURTHER INFORMATION

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) was set up in 1973 to promote the interests of working people at European level and to represent them in the EU institutions. The ETUC's objective is an EU with a strong social dimension that safeguards the wellbeing of all its citizens. At present, the ETUC has in membership 82 national trade union confederations from 36 European countries, as well as 12 European Industry Federations, plus observer organisations in Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other trade union structures such as EUROCADRES (the Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff) and EFREP/FERPA (European Federation of Retired and Elderly Persons) operate under the auspices of the ETUC. In addition, the ETUC coordinates the activities of the 45 IRTUCs (Interregional Trade Union Councils), which organise trade union cooperation at a cross-border level.

The ETUC is one of the European social partners and is recognised by the European Union, by the Council of Europe and by EFTA as the only representative cross-sectoral trade union organisation at European level.

www.etuc.org

PROJECT PARTNERS

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	European Transport Workers' Federation – ETF	www.itfglobal.org/etf/
	European Trade Union Federation: Textile, Clothing and Leather – ETUF-TCL	www.etuf-tcl.org/
	UNI-Europa	www.uni-europa.org/



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Civil Society Dialogue – Bringing together workers from Turkey and the EU through a shared culture of work

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