

**TRADE UNIONS**  
**AGAINST**  
**DISCRIMINATION**

**INTERSECTIONALITY**  
**TOOLKIT**



# PREAMBLE

This toolkit was developed through the **TUAD project (Trade Union Against Discrimination)** to support trade unions recognise and tackle intersectional discrimination, where different aspects of identity combine to shape unique forms of exclusion.

The project draws on union members' **experiences** to promote inclusive approaches to collective bargaining, workplace representation and union practices. It shifts the perspective from seeing discrimination as isolated incidents to recognising it as a structural issue that requires systemic responses.

TUAD also aims to **strengthen trade unions' capacity** at workplace and beyond, fostering collaboration with societal actors to influence policy and defend human values.

**Discrimination can occur in various grounds, often intersecting in complex ways.** The TUAD project focused intersections between disability, racism, gender, ageism and LGBTQI+ identity. However, other factors like like religion, nationality, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status can also lead to exclusion and unequal treatment. People's experiences of discrimination depend on how these factors combine in their lives. **Recognising this diversity of experience is essential for building inclusive trade union strategies and effective responses to inequality.**

This toolkit offers practical tools, strategies, and examples to help unions build fairer, more inclusive workplaces and societies.



# EMPOWERING TRADE UNIONS TOWARDS INTERSECTIONAL EQUALITY

The primary goal of this toolkit is to serve as a practical resource for trade union training on how to **recognise, address, and prevent discrimination** in an **intersectional perspective**. It offers clear concepts, real-life examples and actionable tools to help union representatives and activists develop **more inclusive equality practices**.

In fact, discrimination does not occur in isolated incidents, but represents a structural issue, **affecting individuals in multiple, overlapping and intertwined forms**.

This knowledge empowers trade unions and **strengthens capacity to promote equality** in all areas of their action.



This **TOOLKIT** is designed for trade union actors working to promote equality and inclusion in an **enhanced intersectional dimension**.

Whether negotiating agreements, supporting members, or shaping practices within and outside trade union structures, here one can find practical guidance to recognise and address intersectional discrimination more effectively.

# INTERSECTIONALITY

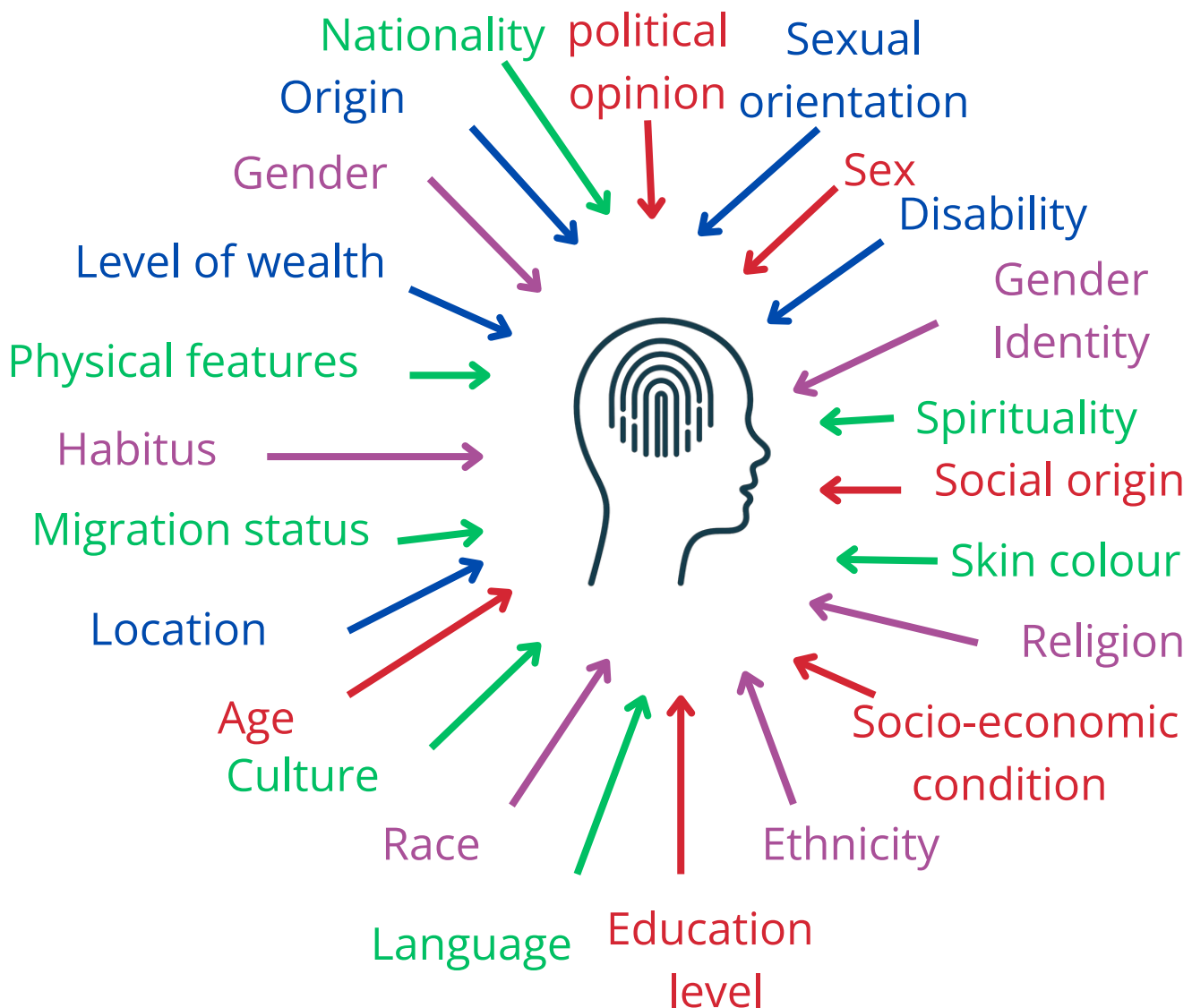
...is rooted in feminist studies  
in the late 20th century

...challenges

one-dimensional approaches to discrimination  
by revealing how social hierarchies do **NOT** operate in isolation

...refers

to intertwined forms of inequality that individuals  
experience when multiple aspects of their **identity**  
interact within **systems of power and exclusion**



# EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

Gender-based pay discrimination is where a victim's sex plays a crucial role can take many different forms in practice.

A migrant woman who wears a veil may encounter gender, class and also race and religion-based disadvantages, that together may produce a unique and more entrenched form of marginalisation.

A 45 year old migrant woman with a disability may face compounded disadvantages in finding a job that that are not captured looking at a single factor alone

A young migrant LGBTQI+ will face discrimination at work and in society not only because his/her sexual orientation but also because of his/her age and origin.

Roma LGBTQI+ young people experience more difficulties when seeking a job and in accessing recruitment procedures.



# INTERSECTIONALITY

...identifies a perspective where  
**forms of oppression are not separate**  
but often **work together** impacting daily life both in the  
**workplace** and in **society**

“... is a lens through which you  
can see where power comes  
and collides, where it interlocks  
and intersects.”

Kimberlé Crenshaw  
(Legal Scholar and Originator of the Term)



“... is necessary to achieving  
meaningful substantive  
equality for all.”

Equal Rights Trust

“... is a way of understanding  
and analysing the complexity of  
the world, in people, human  
experiences and society.

EIGE





# INTERSECTIONALITY

“It may involve an intersection of various axes of discrimination or inequality where the worker is a member of one or several groups protected against discrimination on the basis of sex, on the one hand, and racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.”

EU Pay transparency directive

“The theory that various forms of **discrimination** centred on race, gender, class, disability, sexuality, and other forms of **identity**, do not work independently but **interact** to produce **particularised forms of social oppression**”

United Nations

“A way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power.” UN Women

“The understanding that the interaction of two or more grounds of discrimination can produce a disadvantage which is qualitatively different to the operation of those grounds separately.”

The Council of Europe

## Intersectionality

helps understand how **different forms of discrimination** can overlap and create **unique forms of disadvantage**.

“The concept of intersectionality identifies that **multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage shape people's lives**, experiences and opportunities, including gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, and other characteristics.”

EIGE

Roma skin ethnic colour origin sexual orientation gender Identity

More than half of respondents say there is **widespread discrimination** in their country on the basis of being Roma (65%), of skin colour (61%), of ethnic origin (60%), of gender identity (being transgender, 57%) or sexual orientation (54%).

EUROBAROMETER Discrimination in the European Union

socio-economic situation appearance political opinion gender age

Around one in five respondents say they have personally felt discriminated against or experienced **harassment** in the past 12 months (+4 percentage point since 2019). The most mentioned forms of discrimination or harassment are based on age, gender, “political opinions”, “socio-economic situation” and “general physical appearance”

EUROBAROMETER Discrimination in the European Union

disability women youth

Share of workers with a disability that are in **paid employment**- EU27, 51.3%. this **figure drops** to 49% for women and 47.4% for young people.

European Disability Forum

The **unadjusted gender pay gap** (2023) between women and men was 12%, rates are much higher if we consider adjusted **gender pay gap**.

Eurostat





migrant

gender

age

migrant

The shares of **part-time** employment were considerably higher for females than for males among all categories of citizenship ranging from 27.1% for nationals to 36.5% for non-EU citizens, whereas the shares for males ranged from 7.4% for nationals to 12.2% for non-EU citizens.

Eurostat

gender

**Unemployment rates** by sex, age, and citizenship (2023), from 25-54yrs: males from EU27 countries, 5.5%; males from non-EU27 countries, 9.8%; females from EU27 countries, 7.8%; females from non-EU27 countries, 13.9%.

Eurostat

Rising **inflation and cost of living** have put more people of African descent at higher **risk of poverty**, compared to the general population. Some 33% face **difficulties to make ends meet** and 14% cannot afford to keep their **house warm**, compared with 18% and 7% of people generally. Simply finding **a place to live** is a struggle for many, with 31% saying they were racially discriminated against when trying to find accommodation

FRA Black people in the EU face ever more racism]

migrant

ethnic origin

skin

colour

gender identity

sexual orientation

sex

trans

women

When **looking for a job or at work**, 43% of trans women and 35% of trans men reported discrimination due to their being LGBTQI+, rates which are twice as much as their cisgender counterparts (16% and 19%, respectively).

FRA, LGBTQI+ Survey III]



## WORKER

Pay attention: any discrimination/  
bullying around?

It is probably intersectional...

Document it

Show solidarity and support if you can

Talk to your shop steward Or  
give voice to discriminated colleagues  
through anonymous reporting and  
complaints channels

Involve the local Trade Union office

Get informed, know what are the workers'  
rights

Use the right communication  
channels

Push for change and be part of the  
change by becoming a member or  
even an activist! - within a Union

**Contribute to fair and  
inclusive workplaces**



Discrimination is widespread  
in every social area, not just  
in the workplace; for  
example, combating  
discrimination can also take  
place in contexts such as  
sports

## COMPANY TU REP

Take part to training opportunities  
provided by your TU organisation  
Or ask for some

Learn how to recognise intersectional  
discrimination

Listen carefully to workers/members  
and take it seriously

Try to make the trade union time and  
office in the company a safe space for  
discriminated people to tell their  
stories and get moral support.

Document and clarify

Know the policies

Inform and empower workers

Act as an advocate

Escalate when needed

Promote structural change

Build connections with colleagues in  
other companies/sites

**A more holistic  
approach to combating  
discrimination**



An intersectional approach  
should not only address  
discrimination within the  
workplace but also consider  
the broader socio-economic  
context and how external  
factors influence workers'  
experiences

## TRADE UNIONISTS ENGAGED IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Integrate intersectionality in bargaining agendas

Refer to researchers, TU experts, academia to be fully aware of intersectional discrimination matters

Check examples of intersectionality in existing CAs

Ensure diverse representation in bargaining teams

Use/ask for intersectional overall data to expose intersectional inequality  
And

Look for/demand data on workers in your sector relevant in an intersectional dimension

Negotiate clauses that are inclusive in an intersectional dimension

Consult with colleagues who work with people at risk of intersectional discrimination

Promote sectoral agreements inclusive in an intersectional dimension

Propose joint monitoring and training measures focusing on intersectionality

Push for broader policy alignments

**More effective inclusiveness to fighting discrimination at sectoral/company level**



Challenging companies on potential intersectional discrimination in hiring, recognition, and skills assessment

## TRADE UNIONISTS ENGAGED WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Build and nurture alliances with NGOs and local communities

Give a voice to marginalised people also as workers

Promote workers' rights awareness

Recall that human and civil rights are also workers rights

Promote trade union membership outside the workplace

Co-design local solutions

Build alliances with CSOs

Consider joint campaigns

**Together we are stronger to drive a culture of equality and diversity!**



Far right within the society may work for fragmentation of interests and against solidarity and unity! Trade unions are drivers of solidarity, collective rights and visions, a mission for all people and workers!

## TRADE UNION LEADERS

Acknowledge diversity in an intersectional approach in your organisation and membership

Invest in internal and external awareness raising campaigns on intersectionality

Ensure intersectional equality is on your organisation's agenda

Invest in adequate training on intersectional equality in the organisation at all levels

Ensure that the Trade Union structure is inclusive at all levels

Ensure connection and coordination among the internal depts working on various discrimination grounds

Ensure that intersectional equality is mainstreamed across all internal depts and areas of actions

Be ready to raise intersectional equality and discrimination and discuss it in bipartite and tripartite social dialogue

**An intersectional approach to leading the trade union. Strengthening inclusiveness and internal coherence among areas of action**



Think now on building inclusive and diverse leadership in an intersectional perspective for the future!

## SOCIAL PARTNERS

Acknowledge and recognise the intersectional approach

Be aware of the cost of exclusion and discrimination

Collect data and practices on intersectional equality in all sectors and companies

Engage in joint trainings at all levels

Mainstream intersectional equality and inclusiveness in all negotiating frameworks

Strengthen social dialogue including all voices

Say NO to marginalisation

**Intersectional approach building at all levels across all companies and a greater labour market pool.**



Export and expand intersectional equality practices across companies of all dimensions and everywhere – equal rights must be for ALL!

# CHECK LIST

## FOR TRADE UNIONS

### Awareness & Understanding

- ☐ We understand what intersectionality means and how it applies to our members.
- ☐ We recognise that discrimination can occur at the intersection of multiple identities (e.g. race, gender, class, disability, age, sexual orientation).
- ☐ We actively discuss intersectionality in union meetings, campaigns, and training sessions.

### Assessment & Reflection

- ☐ We have assessed how inclusive our current practices and structures are.
- ☐ We have identified where intersectional discrimination may exist in our sector or workplaces.
- ☐ We collect or reflect on data and feedback from members who face multiple forms of discrimination.

### Union Structures & Representation

- ☐ Our leadership and decision-making bodies reflect the diversity of our membership. Marginalised voices (e.g. migrant workers, disabled workers, LGBTQI+ members) are represented and heard.
- ☐ We have strategies in place to promote inclusive participation and leadership.

### Training & Capacity Building

- ☐ We provide regular training for union reps on intersectional discrimination.
- ☐ We use accessible materials and real-life examples that reflect diverse worker experiences.
- ☐ We encourage peer learning between unionists working on different equality strands.

### Partnerships & Outreach

- ☐ We work with civil society organisations and grassroots groups on issues of inclusion and rights.
- ☐ We support and amplify initiatives led by workers facing multiple forms of discrimination.
- ☐ We are visible and vocal on intersectional issues in our public advocacy and communications.

### Collective Bargaining & Policy

- ☐ We include intersectional equality goals in our bargaining strategies.
- ☐ We negotiate for inclusive policies (e.g. anti-harassment clauses, flexible work, inclusive benefits).
- ☐ We raise intersectionality in social dialogue and institutional discussions.

### Legal support to workers

- ☐ We offer legal support to workers who have experienced (intersectional) discrimination and wish to file a claim before national or European courts.

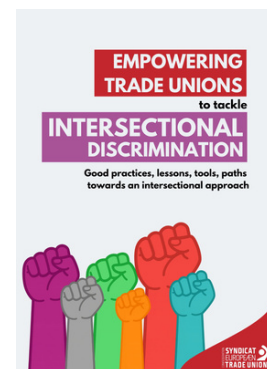
# RESOURCES

# AND SUPPORT

More information and best practices for addressing intersectional discrimination:

[TUAD webpage](#)

[TUAD compendium](#)



Links to important resources:

European Commission ([DG Justice](#))

European Trade Union Confederation ([ETUC](#))

European Trade Union Institute ([ETUI](#))

European Network of Equality Bodies ([Equinet](#))

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ([FRA](#))

European Institute For Gender Equality ([EIGE](#))



# **TRADE UNIONS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION**

## **Contacts**

**Names of contact people within ETUC:  
[Equality and non-discrimination](#) | [ETUC](#)**

**More information available here:**

**[Trade Unions Against Discrimination](#) | [ETUC](#)**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**