



Women in trade unions

Methods and good practices
for gender mainstreaming

Homa Dean

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Preface

This report is based on the seminar ‘Struggling against stereotypes: good practices in gender equality by European trade unions’ which took place on 16 June 2005, Brussels. The seminar was co-organised by the Institut pour L’égalité des Femmes et des Hommes and the European Trade Union Institute – Research Education Health and Safety (ETUI-REHS). The event set out to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices amongst trade unionists on the subject of gender equality. This guide builds on the discussions of the conference with the aim of providing readers with a useful resource document on how to introduce and implement selected gender mainstreaming practices in trade unions. In order to encourage positive experiences and to demonstrate the methods described we have used a number of case studies from the conference and further afield. Whilst this brochure does not set out to provide an encyclopaedia of all things relating to gender equality and mainstreaming, it does aim to provide a good starting point for trade unions on the main concepts and practices that can be implemented.

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Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental right in the European Union. It is also increasingly documented that women are a necessary factor in achieving the EU's objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion. As women begin to make up an increasingly large proportion of the workforce, trade unions are beginning to realise the benefits that women can bring to their structures in terms of increased membership and diversity. However, having an increased proportion of women in areas of public life does not automatically lead to an increase in equality. Achieving gender equality is more complicated, and requires commitment and political will for real progress to be made. For many trade unions achieving gender equality has not been a high priority to date. However, here they have a great opportunity for self-endorsement and to show their relevance by demonstrating that they are an equal opportunities employer and a promoter of equality for all.

This report will focus on what trade unions can do to increase gender equality within their own structures and wider society by using gender mainstreaming. The report is divided into six chapters. As some ambiguity still surrounds some of the concepts of gender equality, in particular gender mainstreaming, Chapter 1 provides a short background on these issues. This chapter covers several policy strategies that have been used to achieve gender equality. We focus on gender mainstreaming because this is widely considered the most far-reaching method. Unlike other strategies mentioned, gender mainstreaming looks at both sexes and involves a transformative, holistic and long-term approach to achieving equality.

Chapter 2 illustrates the current situation concerning women in trade unions, focussing on women in decision-making roles and providing a statistical summary. The third chapter looks at recruiting women into trade unions. The obstacles that prevent women from joining unions are illustrated, along with some useful methods to help with recruitment. Chapter 4 looks at increasing women's participation in decision-making positions, demonstrating what actions unions can use to help increase women's participation and representation. Chapter 5 focuses on collective bargaining, looking at why women should be involved in the bargaining process and at some good examples of 'gender-sensitive' collective agreements. In this section information is also provided on how to complete a gender impact assessment to ensure collective bargaining policies are assessed from a gender perspective. The sixth chapter analyses the type of cultural environment where gender mainstreaming can succeed. Here we show that gender equality needs to be made compulsory and that training needs to be provided for all members.

1 The road to gender equality

The European Union is often seen as a forerunner in the equal opportunities field – taking on board issues long before they become of significance to many member states. In the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the European Economic Community (EEC) enshrined the principle of equal opportunities in terms of equal pay for men and women. Since then the European Union (EU) has continuously been developing legislation and ‘soft’ non-legally binding measures aimed at improving gender equality.

Gender: the social differences between women and men that are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures. (European Commission, 2003)

Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. (Council of Europe, 1998)

The initial policies produced by the EU were based on the idea of ‘equal treatment’ between women and men before the law. Essentially this concept focuses on equal access to opportunities within a given hierarchy. In this context equality is seen as giving women and men equal rights and equal conditions. Anti-discrimination legislation was implemented as a policy strategy to achieve equal treatment.

Box 1: Examples of European directives on equal treatment:

1975 The principle of equal pay for men and women

1976 Equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion

1986 Equal treatment of men and women in occupational social security schemes

Source: Rees (1998).

The equal treatment approach is seen as limited in parts because it does not analyse the causes and underlying reasons for gender inequality. It fails to perceive inequalities in the broader context such as the roles of women and men in the private sphere. It offers equality on male terms, so that only women whose circumstances are similar to those of men as a group (i.e. those without care responsibilities) benefit from equal treatment policies. Thus instead of being excluded from certain areas of public life, women are segregated within it. What equal treatment does is to remove obvious barriers without actually looking at the equality of the outcomes (Rees 1998).

Whilst legislation aimed at alleviating unequal treatment clearly has some capacity to change practices and continues to be developed by the EU, new strategies have evolved to deal with the weaknesses of this approach. The next phase of equality policy that started to emerge was based on an ‘equality of outcomes’. The emphasis moved away from equal access and treatment to creating conditions that were more likely to result in equal outcomes. The aim of these strategies is to formulate a ‘level playing field’ for men and women. Here positive action programmes, positive discrimination programmes and family-friendly policies are implemented in order to secure women’s participation in areas such as the labour market. These measures are used to help women overcome the obstacles they face because of the social role they play in society (i.e. their domestic commitments). Such measures uncover barriers to women’s participation and then provide mechanisms to compensate for these unequal starting positions.

Box 2: Examples of positive action and discrimination programmes

Positive action:

- Special training programmes
- Childcare facilities
- Targeted advertising campaigns for recruitment purposes

Positive discrimination:

- Setting a specific number or quota for women in specific jobs/roles

As with equal treatment, positive action measures mainly focus on adapting women to fit existing structures in society rather than challenge the institutional status quo. Thus this strategy also sees the male situation as being the norm.

The third approach that has come to the fore recently is gender mainstreaming. Over the last decade gender mainstreaming has become much more visible. Whilst it is not incompatible with the other strategies mentioned, it sets itself apart because it is aimed at both men and women, rather than adapting women to fit a male norm. For example, Italian feminist trade unionists have described how, in order to participate in ‘*masculine models of trade union militancy*’, they had to deny their femininity. In attempts to integrate themselves they felt they were being ‘*mutilated*’. They consequently decided it was better to change the unions, rather than change themselves (Rees 1998).

In contrast to the other strategies mentioned, gender mainstreaming emphasises the role of policies and institutions in achieving gender equal-

ity. It is these constructions that shape how society lives (Mazey 2001). As gender mainstreaming involves a system-based approach, its impact on gender equality is seen as having much more potential than other strategies (Rees 1998).

The concept of gender mainstreaming first appeared in international texts in 1985 at the UN Third Conference on Women in Nairobi. It was held up as a way to integrate women and their values into development work. The term was then legitimised by the Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

Here the UN encouraged its members (governments and employer/employee organisations) to include a gender perspective in all policies and programmes to understand the effects on women and men. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) also decided the same year to integrate women's and men's interests into all trade union policies. The European Commission quickly followed suit in 1996 by issuing a communication that formally introduced gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming: the (re) organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making. (Council of Europe, 1998)

This [gender mainstreaming] involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them. (European Commission, 1996)

Gender mainstreaming associates itself with equal visibility, empowerment and participation of men and women in public and private life. Women's priorities and needs should be accorded equal respect with those of men. Men are an integral part of a gender approach. They are thus required, alongside women, to adapt their behaviour in order to reach gender equality. In other words, gender mainstreaming involves an approach that requires both genders to move towards a middle ground and equally share the work in both the public and private spheres (Behning *et al.* 2001).

Whilst the definition of mainstreaming may be clear and political support growing, how it should be implemented is a complicated process. Gender mainstreaming is still a relatively new approach and there exists no template to achieve it. There needs to be a consensus amongst policymakers in

favour of gender mainstreaming policies. This strategy relies on these actors questioning the structures, processes and policies to see their impacts on each gender. For this a considerable amount of awareness-raising and training will be required. Also we have to look at the decision-making bodies themselves. We need women to be represented at the most senior levels of policy-making processes to ensure their interests will be incorporated. A number of tools are needed to provide the information for policy development, to assess the policies and also to monitor/evaluate their implementation (Mazey, 2001).

Box 3: Gender mainstreaming in trade unions: a brief outline

- Use gender-segregated statistics to see where disparities exist. See chapter 3 for more information.
- Ensure equal representation of women and men in trade union bodies, in proportion to membership. See chapter 4.
- Use gender impact assessment methods to detect and assess the differential impact of policies on each gender (i.e. do they take into account needs and interests of women and men?). See chapter 5
- Provide training and educational courses for policymakers and special handbooks/manuals. See chapter 6.
- Follow up policies implemented to see the progress made towards gender equality.

One concern with gender mainstreaming is that it will be used as an excuse to stop or reduce specific actions or budgets for gender equality. Instead a dual approach can be adopted which involves gender mainstreaming (creating equality permanently whilst policy is being drawn up and ensuring the involvement of all actors who have a decision-making role) and also using specific measures/positive actions to make sure earlier inequality is corrected (de Jong *et al.* 2004).

There are many publications that talk about gender equality without looking into the case for and against. Why do we need a gender-equal society? What are the costs and benefits involved? There are both moral and ethical reasons why we should aim for equality with which few would argue today. Having a gender equal society also helps reduce the democratic deficit, while Rubery *et al.* (1995) illustrate several advantages for organisations that provide equality policies: greater worker loyalty, a less distracted workforce, reduced turnover and reduced absenteeism. However, these benefits are more difficult to measure than the costs to organisations of implementing equality measures. Whilst there are clearly costs involved in creating a gender-equal society there is also a real price to pay for failure to implement such actions. Without equality policy costs are privatised and borne mainly by women.

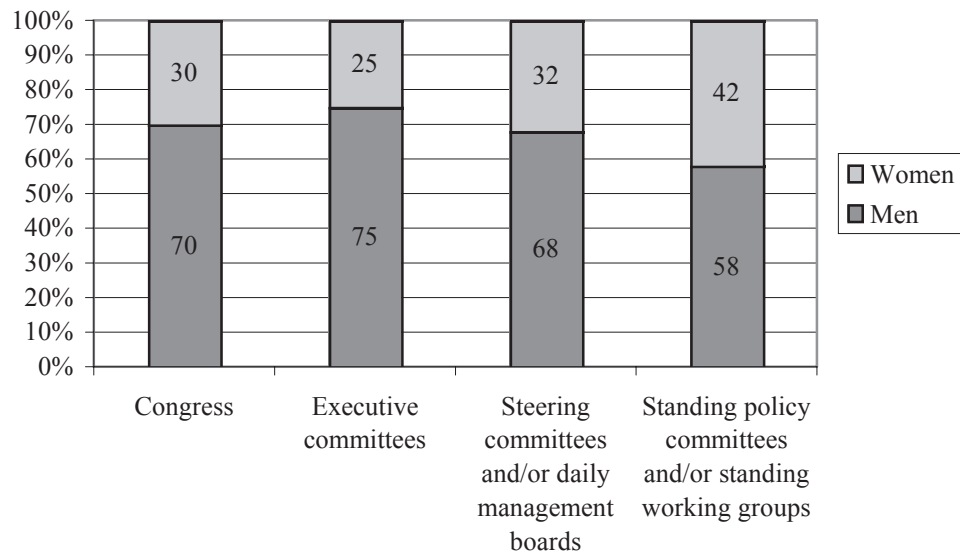
2 Women in trade unions: a statistical summary

Women currently make up approximately 40% of trade union members. However, figures on decision-making and surveys on gender equality issues within collective bargaining show us that major efforts are still needed in order to represent and deal with the interests and needs of women.

The importance of representing women in decision-making processes cannot be neglected. Several studies have shown that despite the entry of women into paid, formal employment and the rise in women's level of education, this has not contributed substantially to eliminating the inequalities between men and women, the main reason for this being that men and women have different jobs, work and pay. As in all other areas of life, the discriminated group should have a voice at the level of decision-making in order to decrease these inequalities. Several studies have pointed to the fact that, as long as there is not a critical mass of women involved in trade union bargaining and decision-making structures, one cannot expect collective bargaining to reflect issues that will promote and favour equal opportunities. Hence, ensuring that a representative group of women are present in the structures of trade unions is one of the main elements in gender mainstreaming (see section 4). There are several studies (Garcia 1999, ETUC 2003, SERTUC 2000 and Hansen 2004) that have looked into the representation of women in trade union structures. Their main conclusions are that while we are observing a positive trend, meaning more women are present in decision-making processes, there still remains a lot to be done before they actually reflect the total number of women in trade unions.

There are several issues at stake: firstly the proportion of women in decision-making bodies in relation to the number of female union members; secondly, it is very important to identify where the post is located in order to assess what status it gives and what degree of power it entails (Garcia 1999, ETUC 2003). The figures we have at our disposal are from 2002 and hence not quite up-to-date; however, they do give us an idea of the main problems at stake and what gender mainstreaming can propose in the form of solutions. Solutions should be found in order for the trade unions to act both as an 'equal opportunities' employer and to enable them to act as a promoter of equal opportunities for all.

Figure 1: Representation of women in congress, executive committees, steering committees and/or daily management board, and standing policy committees and/or standing working groups

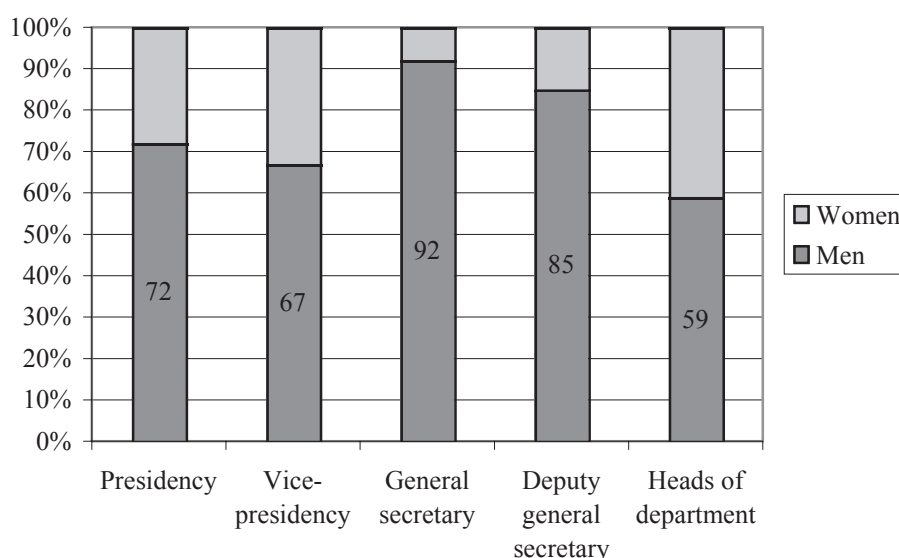


Source: Garcia (2002).

In 2002 the ETUC conducted a survey on the gender dimension in its member organisations. Table 1 displays the results for the presence of women in decision-making bodies. It is obvious that that the confederations' executive committees are far from representative when compared to the proportion of female union members, although there are some confederations that have 40% or more of their executive committee composed of women. When looking at the steering committee or/and daily management board the picture becomes more balanced; about 1 in 2 of the steering committees/daily management board is representative of the female membership rate (Garcia 2002). At the level of standing committees and/or working groups, on an overall level, women are not under-represented, there are, however, wide variations between countries.

Despite being a part of the decision-making structure, not all posts have the same level of power or same impact when it comes to shaping collective bargaining. The 2002 ETUC survey found that 7 out of 23 presidents were women, but only 2 out of 22 general secretaries were women (and they were always co-leaders with a man). On the other hand, women are well represented when it comes to leading departments within the trade unions, 41% of departments being headed by women. However, few collective bargaining departments are led by women who, instead, tend to head departments for health and safety at work and vocational training.

Figure 2: Management by gender



Source: Garcia (2002).

Increasing women’s representation as well as their position in the decision-making bodies remains a major challenge for the trade unions, despite the encouraging signs observed with regard to steering committees/daily management and heads of department. Much still remains to be done in regard to the position of general secretaries and chair-holders in key areas such as economics and collective bargaining. Furthermore, whilst having women in key positions is a necessary condition to deal with the issue of equality, it is not a sufficient condition. This is why gender mainstreaming is not only important as an approach to get women into and up the structure but also important as a tool to deal with day-to-day policymaking in trade unions.

However, the road to gender mainstreaming is fraught with problems, the main ones being that it requires a certain degree of commitment, awareness and training. It also requires an ability to assess the issues adequately and obtain the requisite statistics to this end. This might be the reason why, while 90% of confederations declare that they attempt to gender mainstream trade union policies, much remains to be done in reality (Garcia 2002). LO-Norway and LO-Sweden are good examples of unions where gender mainstreaming has been systematically introduced in all areas; however in the majority of unions this is not the case. The tools most often used to gender mainstream are sex-segregated statistics and those least often used are check-lists and the appointment of a Mainstreaming officer. This is worrying as one does not become an expert overnight (Garcia 2002).

This disparity between intentions and action can also be witnessed in the process of collective bargaining. Here, despite the fact that a majority of trade unions declare they have specific policies for gender equality, very little is translated into the collective bargaining.

Many unions have broad gender mainstreaming and gender equality programmes, as well as campaigns on more specific issues. However, very little of this seems to be reflected in collective agreements. While most countries underline the importance of the issue, most also state that only few collective agreements include important gender-equality measures. (Keune 2005)

There are, however, positive examples to be found in Spain, Sweden, the UK and Belgium with regard to women's pay. Hence, despite the fact that there seems to be a general commitment to bring gender equality to the fore in trade unions, it seems to be more difficult to carry out in practice.

The following chapters of this brochure will highlight this point and give practical examples of how trade unions in the European Union have dealt with the issue of gender mainstreaming and how they have succeeded, as well as the obstacles that might be encountered.

3 Increasing female membership

Women's employment levels are rising. The employment rate for women reached 55.7% in 2004 (Eurostat, 2004). On the other hand, global union membership has long been in decline. Unions are now operating in a global environment and are facing challenges to their existence. The impact of new technology, the shift to cheap-labour countries, anti-union attitudes from employers/governments and the increasing proportion of atypical workers have all played their part in the decline in trade union membership.

While unions are aware that women could help regulate the current crisis in membership, not all countries have been able to capitalise on this fact. Data from the ETUC shows how much female membership varies widely across Europe. Whilst the average female membership is 40%, figures range from 18% in UIL-Italy compared to 68% in STTK-Finland (Garcia 2002).

Several reports have looked at what determines whether women join trade unions. Box 4 summarises data from the ETUC in 2002 and a worldwide study of ICFTU affiliates in 1998.

Box 4: The most frequently cited factors preventing women from becoming union members include:

- Lack of awareness about the advantages of being a trade union member.
- Women are in atypical forms of work and therefore difficult to reach.
- Fear of reprisals from employers
- Conflicting family responsibilities
- Religious/cultural norms and constraints
- Male-dominated culture/activities of union

Source: ILO (2001) and ETUC (2002).

Related to some of these factors, Kirton (2005) has provided research on women's opportunity to unionise. Kirton states women are less likely to be subject to recruitment drives by trade unions and it is often their employment situation that is held responsible for their inaccessibility. Women often work part-time or in sectors that are notorious for low trade union membership (e.g. the service sector). However, feminist theorists instead state that women are not more difficult to organise but that, until recently, trade unions have simply focused on male-dominated occupations and industries.

In order to regulate the obstacles that prevent women from joining, trade unions can use various tactics as part of a wider gender mainstreaming approach:

3.1 Reliable statistics

Firstly unions need to collect gender-segregated statistics so they can analyse the current situation of their members and then record any changes over time. Statistics act as a vital tool in promoting equality. To quote a UNI-EUROPA representative: *'The existence of statistical data broken down by sex is an approach which would enable us to stimulate change'* (Garcia 2002).

Evidence from the Garcia (2002) shows that 90% of the national trade union confederations who responded to their survey encouraged their affiliated organisations to gather statistical data on members by gender. However, on the other hand, one of the main obstacles unions identified when trying to implement gender mainstreaming was the shortage of gender-segregated statistics. This disparity reflects the disadvantage of not making actions compulsory.

Box 5: Sex-segregated statistics

In Italy a proposal has been put to the Parliament on collecting gender-segregated statistics. The proposals calls for:

1. Gender desegregation of all statistics
2. Inclusion of the gender perspectives in population census
3. Survey on gender issues by the National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT)

Source: European Commission (2001).

3.2 Awareness-raising about the benefits of trade unions

Unions need to inform potential female members about the benefits of unionisation. Metcalf (2000) provides evidence that female union members earn 8.7% more than a woman with the same characteristics who is not in a union. This is because unions tend to compress the pay structure of which women are generally toward the bottom. He concluded that: *'Trade unions temper the inequality in pay, reduce the incidence of low pay and narrow pay differentials by race and gender.'* Other benefits unions could publicise include: more job protection, better benefits, legal support, training and the opportunity for collective action.

To attract women, unions must be seen as relevant to women as well as to men.

To achieve this end, unions must identify the needs/concerns of the women targeted through conducting research. For example, this can be done by organising women-only study circles. Unions can then formulate and present messages with which women can identify through debates, training sessions and information kits.

Box 6: Raising awareness to increase membership

In an example from Italy, in order to increase female participation CGIL created strategies such as special campaigns to recruit atypical workers. As a result of this they reported a rise of 27% in the membership of atypical workers.

Source: Garcia 2002.

3.3 Publicise their support for gender equality

Unions need to formalise and publicise their commitment to gender equality to show women that they take it seriously. Mission statements for which objectives are feasible and can be measured are one way to do this.

Box 7: Belgian Charter on Gender Mainstreaming

In September 2004, the representatives from three Belgian trade unions (covering 3 million workers) signed a Charter on gender mainstreaming. The Charter contains 10 articles including the commitment to gender mainstreaming as a principle and recognition of the importance of equality policy. The trade unions agreed on the importance of monitoring gender policy and exchanging gender-related information between confederations and affiliated unions. Steps will also be taken to encourage employers to collect necessary, relevant information. In line with gender mainstreaming the unions will take into account the gender dimension in each agenda point. In order to discuss points in a gender-specific way, training will be provided. The unions agree that an annual report will show progress and improvements in equal opportunities (de Jong *et al.* 2004).

See Annex 6 for full breakdown of the Charter.

Source: http://www.genderlink.com/msu_ENGL.pdf

3.4 Providing relevant services for women workers

Unions must show how they are actively trying to combat gender concerns. Examples involve including atypical work, equal pay and maternity benefits in collective agreements. Here unions also have the opportunity to be innovative and devise services of use to their women members such as childcare provision, cooperatives, and special education/training for women.

Box 8: Making services relevant to women

UNISON UK has run a very successful campaign recruiting part-time workers. The success of UNISON's campaign is based on a strategy of portraying part-time work as a positive choice, and one where workers are entitled to equal treatment and all the rights and benefits of full-time work. Through its Positively Part-Time campaign, the union has achieved numerous victories for part-timers including equal rights for:

- equal pay
- shift allowances
- bank holidays
- maternity rights
- pensions
- sick pay
- redundancy rights
- bonuses and other pay enhancements
- access to quality training and protection
- employment protection

The union uses posters, brochures and other publicity materials to disseminate information about its work and services. UNISON believes that its success in recruiting atypical workers is a result of offering its members who are working part-time the same benefits as its other members, including career training and education, free legal advice for problems at work or outside, reduced insurance rates for homes and cars, lowered mortgage rates, confidential help and financial assistance from its welfare officers, and a range of information from their experts on employment law, social security and bargaining agreements. One of the most effective strategies to encourage membership of the union has been the policy of linking membership fees to earnings, so that, in effect part-time workers may pay less but still receive full benefits.

Source: Taken from ILO Promoting Gender Equality – A Resource Kit for Trade Unions, Booklet 4, quoting UNISON's 'Positively Part-Time' campaign pamphlet.

3.5 Special organising methods

1+1 organising campaigns can be used where each union member is responsible for recruiting another member. Recruitment campaigns where union members are used to recruit new members of a similar demographic and occupational identity. Workers are more likely to see the relevance of becoming union members if they are contacted by someone like themselves in terms of gender, ethnic origin and age.

However, it should be noted that just because more women join a trade union it does not necessarily follow that their needs and concerns will be met. Equality cannot be achieved just through increasing female membership levels. In the next chapter we explore what needs to be done to get women heard and give them more influence in trade unions.

4 Women's participation

The importance of recruiting and retaining women in trade unions is matched by the need for unions to represent these members in their decision-making structures. By reflecting their membership make-up in their internal structures unions show their legitimacy and commitment to democratic principles. Research has shown there is a link between having women involved in the decision-making processes/positions of power and having gender issues promoted within the trade union (Dickens 2000). Thus giving a voice to women at decision-making levels is a vital step towards achieving equality.

Key to gender mainstreaming is the active participation of women in organisations. To encourage more participation by women the following includes some positive actions that unions can implement.

4.1 Specific targets and plans

Specific targets and plans on gender equality show women how the union is committed to improving female participation and encourages them to seek positions of responsibility and representation. Examples include adopting and implementing an equality plan or an affirmative action programme. However, here it should be noted that it is not enough to set goals and write plans. There needs to be support for actions proposed in terms of financial and human resources. Plans must be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that progress is being made.

Box 9: Mission statements

The second ETUC equality plan (adopted 2003) takes a dual approach to gender equality, tackling specific gender issues as well as gender mainstreaming in all other policies. The following three objectives are addressed to all national confederations, industry federations and the ETUC itself:

1. Eliminate the female representation gap in decision-making bodies by using quantified objectives, timetables and follow-up plan.
2. Extend gender mainstreaming to collective bargaining by providing equality/ gender mainstreaming training for negotiators, preparing negotiations in cooperation with equality officers and evaluating the progress made.
3. Strengthen the role of the body responsible for gender equality policy in each confederation so that there is a dual approach to equality and sufficient financial and human resources.

Source: ETUC (2003).

Also see Box 7 for Belgian charter on gender mainstreaming in trade unions

4.2 Statutory reforms

Statutory reforms can provide fast improvements in gender equality by confronting deep-rooted union practices. As plans and statements on their own might not be enough to achieve gender equality some unions have implemented positive actions to increase the participation of women in leadership positions. Examples of measures that have been used to facilitate higher rates of participation include using principles of proportionality. Here the make-up of the decision-making body is reflected by the make-up of union membership. Experiences have shown this is a very successful way of increasing participation (Waddington *et al.* 2005 and McBride 2001).

Quotas are another method to increase participation. Such policies set women's representation in a committee at a minimum level which can be either fixed or proportional. Reserved seats provide a similar method where a fixed number of seats on a committee are reserved for women. Double candidatures or nominations are when organisations can put forward two candidates as long as one of them is a woman. Unions can also establish separate structures for women (women's groups) and then ensure that representatives from these groups sit on mainstream decision-making bodies and negotiation teams.

Box 10: Reserved seats to encourage participation

The Local Government and Health Care service groups of UNISON UK are each allowed 4 representatives on the National Executive Council. These consist of two women's seats, one men's seat and one general seat. A member noted that 'she had always been opposed to reserved seats but it was her perception that there was less competition for women's seats. In her opinion it seemed logical to stand for a women's seat, where she believed she would stand a better chance of getting elected.'

Source: McBride (2001).

4.3 Education and training

Education and training on equality issues can either be general and target both men and women or they can be aimed at women specifically (i.e. giving women negotiating skills for collective bargaining or leadership skills).

Box 11: Training courses that target women

The GMB UK has set up a number of training activities to encourage more women to take an active role in the union in order to promote equal opportunities. The training courses tackled issues of direct relevance to women such as:

Stress management

Sexual harassment

How to ensure better recognition of women working part time

Communication and negotiation in the workplace

The importance of collective agreements

Source: ETUC, UNICE and CEEP (1995) Women and training in Europe. Fifty projects which challenge our traditions. A compendium of good practice.

Giving women special training can help increase their confidence so they can participate more actively in unions. Unions can also encourage other female leaders to act as role models, give talks and raise awareness.

However, unions should consider that women with family responsibilities are often limited in terms of the number of meetings and courses they can attend. Cultures need to be adapted to make sure that activities/meetings take place during office hours to make it easier for women to attend. Also evidence from the ETUC (2002) shows that while many unions may already have education and training facilities in place to deal with equality, less than 50% had a budget for this area. Linked with the lack of financial resources is also a clear human resources problem because equality departments are often understaffed.

4.4 Special women-only structures

We have singled out special structures as one of the key statutory reforms that unions can use because of the ongoing debate on this subject. Here we discuss whether it is best to have separate women's structures to raise female participation through activism and leadership as opposed to integrating women into existing structures within unions. Examples of women's structures include specially formed committees, working groups, commissions, advisory groups and departments. These structures help women engage with the union by letting them express their interests regarding the labour market and the difficulties/situations they encounter in society (Garcia 1999). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest positive effects come from having special women's structures. Parker (2003) surmises that 'women's groups provide a platform from which women can develop their strengths, advance their concerns and access empowering positions'.

Box 12: The role of women-only groups

- Provide women with effective representation within a union
- Give women the chance to raise issues which effect them
- Create wider awareness about women's issues
- Help enhance the visibility of women in unions
- Launch efforts to achieve gender parity in all union activities
- Take responsibility for mobilizing and organising women workers
- Organise conferences for women
- Implement equality policies
- Monitor progress on implementation equality programmes and practices

Source: ILO (2001).

A perceived disadvantage of such structures is their lack of influence because they are separate from mainstream decision-making bodies and collective bargaining processes. Unless the issues raised by these structures spill over into mainstream union bodies, they risk being powerless. Research suggests a number of ways this problem can be overcome. The union could create separate structures for women where they can express themselves whilst also having representatives from these groups in mainstream structures. Women's concerns are more likely to gain mainstream attention when women from specialist structures are also in positions of power to influence the mainstream agenda.

The level of influence women's groups exert can also increase if they show a degree of success (i.e. in terms of recruitment and organising new members). By showing unions that they are a valuable recruitment tool they can gain credence and power. Other strategies to increase the influence of women's groups include getting them to engage with external alliances. By finding similar concerns in different groups, their relevance and authority can be increased (Parker 2003).

However, it is important to include that measures to increase participation are not without their problems. As McBride (2001) notes, efforts taken to increase women's representation can end up dividing the membership. Instead of focusing on facing management, groups can begin to fight each other for power, thus potentially reducing the union's effectiveness. Other obstacles that exist include male resistance when trying to transform trade unions (Dickens 2000). Those who hold the power can place barriers in the way of others who would benefit from changes. Do such difficulties mean we should not aim for fair participation? A level of solidarity must be achieved between groups to ensure that differing perspectives can be heard for democratic purposes.

5 Implementing gender mainstreaming in collective bargaining

Collective bargaining highlights a prime opportunity for promoting equality in several senses. Social partners should realise that collective bargaining can be a more advantageous tool to promote equality than legislation as it can be more flexible whilst offering a more targeted approach to suit each organisation/sector, etc. Furthermore, by promoting support for gender equality concerns through collective bargaining, trade unions could benefit from attracting and retaining more female members.

Collective bargaining, when based on representative structures, helps allow different groups to be heard. If trade unions are to be credible when it comes to promoting gender equality through collective bargaining, they must show that they reflect such equality in their structures and policies. Attention must be paid to how representative the negotiators are and the extent to which women have the ability to influence the agenda (Dickens 2000). As noted in research from Carley (2000) ‘if collective bargaining lacks a gender perspective, it is very likely that agreements will institutionalise discriminatory practice...entrench gender segregation, operate on a male norm of employment, to the disadvantage of women’.

Box 13: Developing a bargaining agenda

Company policies that support women often help men too – for example child-care benefits mothers and fathers (as well as families and the community).

Source: ICFTU CEE & NIS Women’s Network.

Evidence from across Europe shows that women’s level of power (as negotiators and decision makers) in trade unions and the likelihood of the union promoting equality through collective bargaining are linked (Dickens 2000). The current situation in Europe shows that the extent to which women participate in collective bargaining varies considerably. Some trade unions have very high participation rates for women (AC – Denmark, 71%), others, when asked, did not know if they had any women on their bargaining committees at all (Garcia 2002).

Whilst there may be a link between the presence of women and equality issues being raised it is possible to increase this link through education. Women at the negotiating table may not know how to effectively voice female concerns. Training needs to be provided to them on how to repre-

sent women's issues once they are present at the negotiating table. In line with a gender mainstreaming approach all policies subject to collective bargaining should be looked at from an equality perspective.

Box 14: Gender Impact Assessment: What criteria are needed to analyse issues from a gender perspective?

(A) Qualitative involvement

What is the share of women amongst the actors (in decision-making, drafting, composition of various structures) or as the targeted objects of action.

(B) Quantitative division of resources

How are the funds, time, premises, services divided between women and men. Disaggregated statistics relating to current situation are needed to show differences between men and women.

(C) Qualitative assessment

Which standards and values affect gender roles, the division of labour between genders and the attitudes and behaviour of women and men? Do women and men formally enjoy the same rights and responsibilities? How do stereotypes create/reinforce inequality?

Basic questions:

What is the present situation in the area being examined (point A and B)?

Why is the situation as it is (point C)?

What are the obstacles in the way of promoting gender equality?

How can the obstacles be removed and equality promoted?

Source: SAK (2004).

It is not just policies that have an obvious link to women that need to be analysed, such as work life balance and sexual harassment, but also core concerns such as wage policy, working time, restructuring and flexibility that are important in promoting equality. Without guidance and information on gender mainstreaming, negotiators may not be able to analyse policies from a gender perspective.

Box 15: Making equality an issue in all areas

France: 9 May 2001 law and inter-sector agreement on equality.

‘This law makes negotiating equality compulsory at company level (every year) and at sector level (every three years). It also makes it compulsory to incorporate equality in all other compulsory bargaining topics (time, pay and classification, etc.)’

Source: de Jong et al. (2004).

Negotiators need to be aware that some measures meant to increase equality can instead reinforce existing stereotypes. For example, improving maternity leave for women on the one hand helps them continue participation in waged work but may also help reinforce the idea that men should not take responsibility for caring. Instead provisions that focus on men (such as paid paternity leave) or measures which focus on the problems parents encounter related to the organisation (i.e. working time regimes that assume the parent is child-free) may help encourage a better sharing of social responsibilities and offer more in terms of gender equality (Dickens 2000).

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions conducted a five-year study on collective bargaining and equal opportunities. Included below is a summary of innovative practices that they identified in collective agreements across Europe.

Clearly it is not enough just to implement such practices. Measures must be put in place to monitor such policies to see where developments need to be made. Trade unions can help this process by setting up structures to oversee and evaluate the implementation.

Box 16: Monitoring equality agreements

In Belgium it is obligatory to submit an annual report on equality measures to the Enterprise Council.

In Italy, the Equal Opportunities office of CGIL monitors progress in equality by following a mainstreaming policy when collecting information and coordinating with other departments.

SAK Finland, together with the other social partners, makes a joint report on the impact of equality policy.

Source: ICFTU CEE & NIS Women's Network.

6 A cultural environment to enhance equality

The culture of a trade union (as of any organisation) is composed of its norms, values and regular behaviour and traditionally this culture has tended to reflect its male officers and membership. However in today's society and in order to be relevant to the membership as a whole, unions must adapt their culture to better suit both genders. Changing the culture of trade unions is a fundamental ingredient in achieving gender equality as it requires breaking down existing traditions and stereotypes of men and women. By implementing gender mainstreaming we can help kick-start a change by making individuals consider gender concerns throughout their daily work.

When using gender mainstreaming to change the culture, we need to understand where gender concerns are present. The key is that if the policy, decision or process in question affects women and men differently then it needs to be analysed from a gender perspective. The unspoken rules and norms on which the culture is based need to be looked at to see if they create inequalities. For example being a union officer often requires the holder to bear responsibilities that can clash with aspects of social life (e.g. care responsibilities). More and more, women have access to such positions of responsibility but they are expected to behave like men in their working lives (De Jong *et al.* 2004). Such instances need to be looked at to see how changes can be made, for example, letting union officers job-share with other union officers or controlling the times/timetables of meetings.

Box 17: How to break down existing norms and stereotypes. Relevant questions to uncover the gender impact of specific actions:

Does the proposal have one or more target groups?

How does the measure relate to an average female and male member?

Does the action satisfy the needs of both women and men?

What norms, values and starting points predominate the activities?

Do the norms meet the needs and interests of both women and men?

Are the efforts, funds, time, places and services equally distributed between women and men?

Do women and men have equal opportunity to make their voices heard and to participation in the actual decision-making?

Source: SAK (2004) and Palm (2005).

Trade unions must decide to make gender equality a compulsory part of their culture in order for it to have a real impact. As shown previously with the use of sex-segregated statistics, without a concrete requirement or incentive to make these policies necessary, people will not follow through with the implementation.

Box 18: Making gender equality compulsory

The case of the LO in Sweden shows that reports, publications, etc. are not accepted unless they include an equality analysis. For example procedures have been put in place requiring that all officials submitting a resolution to be adopted by the steering committee must include a gender impact assessment in the proposal. This shows how gender equality can be made part of the work and competence of each and every union official. By enforcing this analysis of all work from a gender perspective, both men and women have had to ‘think in an equality way’.

Source: Palm (2005).

Throughout this report we have illustrated examples of practices and measures that can be used to implement gender mainstreaming. In reality gender mainstreaming is a long and hard process that requires financial resources. Without a budget in place to put the actions into practice and to finance the human resources little progress can be made.

Box 19: Providing a budget for gender equality

CFDT France provide a specific budget line called ‘*insertion of women activists*’ to encourage female members to take up trade union posts. Under this budget childcare, domestic expenses or loss of wages can be reimbursed.

LO Norway makes provision for the reimbursement of childcare costs.

Finland has also realised there is a cost in reducing the pay gap so they have earmarked a specific budget to help close the gap.

Solidarnosc Poland is one of a few unions from the new member states that has a fixed budget for gender equality actions and staff.

Trade unions can also write new mission statements to show there is the political will to change behaviour and customs. Good examples include the Belgian Charter on gender mainstreaming mentioned in Box 7. Signed by three representative trade unions the charter sets out ten articles reflecting the importance of, and its commitment to, gender mainstreaming and

equality policies. Also, as stated in Box 8, the ETUC has updated its Equality Plan to include the following objectives: eliminating the women's representation gap in decision-making bodies, extending gender mainstreaming, and strengthening the role of the body responsible for gender equality policy.

However, formalised commitments do not always lead to gender equality. The articles/plans/statements will be interpreted as people see fit. It is very important that the implementation of policy be continuously evaluated and appropriate targets set.

To implement gender mainstreaming requires prior training. Trade unions have a very important role in terms of spreading the concept and educating both men and women members in the principles entailed. Whilst the concept of equal opportunities has been used for decades, gender mainstreaming is still relatively new. Trade unions need to put the terms in an easily comprehensible format as, even when the concept is explained, many find the language too theoretical and some of the technical language is difficult to translate. Without specialist knowledge on gender concerns existing norms and stereotypes could be reinforced (e.g. in collective bargaining).

It is important to note that there is the possibility of a backlash towards gender inequality, with fears that policies are going backwards. For example, people think if they have gender mainstreaming they do not need specific actions as well. Trade unions must provide education and training to tackle any negative views – the use of statistics will also help to show that problems really do exist. To help combat this problem we also need solidarity amongst women AND solidarity between women and men. It will be difficult to go forward without men on board as gender mainstreaming is a long-term strategy that requires men and women to be committed and willing to educate others for decisions to be effective and progress to be made.

Trade unions also need the support from employers' organisations. Positive steps in this field can be seen in the agreement from the social partners on a joint text about gender equality (European Industrial Relations Review 2005). This agreement highlights four priority areas: addressing gender roles, promoting women in decision-making; supporting work–life balance and tackling the gender pay gap.

Other ways of combating the backlash away from equality involve making networks and building alliances with other parties. This way trade unions can communicate with other organisations and spread best practices to show what works and why. By joining forces with other interest groups unions can help increase the legitimacy of the subject matter.

Box 20: Overcoming resistance to gender equality and gender mainstreaming

Education: make sure those involved have sufficient knowledge about equality so they are aware that concerns/issues are valid.

Statistics: use of sex-segregated statistics to show where differences do exist.

Partners: are there external allies such as local authorities who might share a common interest?

Use experts: form expert groups to collect more information and arguments.

Conclusions

It is positive to see that women now account for, on average, 40% of trade union membership and that in some unions women are now in the majority. Achieving the requisite membership levels is an important step towards further developments such as proportional representation on decision-making bodies. However, in contrast, chapter two has illustrated how substantial improvements are needed when it comes to increasing women's levels of participation. This is unsurprising as many unions have not yet considered equality as one of their priorities and those policies that are introduced are generally not implemented systematically. In this context the introduction and implementation of gender mainstreaming could be used to act as a necessary catalyst for change.

Culture is key to bringing about the elusive objective of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming can act as a lever for reform by helping to change mentalities so it is realised that women's issues are also union issues. Policies that create a better working environment for women are good for society as a whole. Progress towards these ideas can be achieved only by actively working towards them. By including women, whether in collective bargaining, leadership positions or other spheres of public life, society benefits from their knowledge, experience, capabilities and education. Once we have women present in these decision-making positions we need to come up with intelligent strategies to make sure they are not only present but also making an impact. For this we need to ensure women are in high positions of power and also provide education and training programmes so that women have the skills necessary to represent others. The unions that capitalise on the diversity that women bring have the means to enhance the quality of their service. Women can act as a medium to promote change that in the end help bring improvements to all.

In this report we have noted the importance of statutory reforms for encouraging higher levels of women's participation. Policies such as quotas have the advantage of making immediate improvements to existing disparities. Other methods such as separate women's groups help ensure concerns are brought out into the open but unions need to build bridges between the specialist and mainstream structures to make them effective. Messengers are needed to carry ideas from the women's groups into the decision-making bodies. On the other hand, these positive discrimination practices may not be suitable in all situations and for all trade unions. Other arrangements such as proportional representation are also successful in raising participation, especially now that women are making an impact on

membership levels. However, in taking these steps it must be borne in mind that policies cannot take place in isolation; a clear framework is required.

Trade unions have a salient role in showing how important gender mainstreaming is and the benefits that gender equality can bring to the world. In this report we have tried to flag up gender equality good practices in organisational and cultural change. Unless we implement a gender dimension to all relevant policies and decisions we risk perpetuating or reinforcing inequalities that already exist. However, throughout the report we have emphasised that it is not enough simply to implement gender equality policies. Objectives, targets and timetables need to be set and followed up in order to evaluate progress and verify that commitments are being translated into actions. Success depends on a commitment to follow through the policies. Gender mainstreaming may be a long process that requires both financial and human resources, but this should be viewed as an investment towards what women can contribute to society.

Annex 1

Sweden – LO

Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions

LO is the central organisation for 16 affiliates, which organise workers within both the private and the public sectors. The 16 affiliates together have about 1,918,800 members of whom about 882,445 are women.

The trade union policy of the LO in terms of gender equality is based on gender mainstreaming. In accordance with the decision taken by the LO Executive Council in the late 1990s, all levels of the trade union structure and all trade union actors involved in decision-making must take into consideration a gender perspective.

In practical terms the LO has initiated several measures and actions:

1. Greater ‘visibility’ of the situation between women and men, in particular by using gender-segregated statistics.
2. Using applied methodology to monitor the application of a gender perspective, including the use of the ‘3Rs method’ – Representation, Resources and Reality (Gertrud Astrom, Mainstreaming in Schweden. Für eine gerechte Localregiereng, 1998).
3. The use of special IMPACT assessment tools to pay particular attention to the respective situation of women and men.
4. Increasing knowledge levels through a systematic ‘information – awareness – education’ policy, including training employees and executives on the issues of equality in order to help them understand the importance of gender issues and how to act on them.
5. Develop networking, particularly within the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), so enabling recourse to the corpus of European social security legislation allowing advances in terms of parental and maternity rights.

LO Sweden homepage: <http://www.lo.se/>

Annex 2

EPSU

European Federation of Public Service Unions

EPSU is a federation of independent trade union organisations for employees in public services in Europe. It is the largest industry Federation with the ETUC. EPSU represents approximately 8 million organised workers of whom more than 50% are women.

The Lisbon General Assembly 2000 established a Gender Equality Committee in EPSU. It consists of one woman and one man from each of the constituencies, who are also titular members of the Executive Committee. It has a consultative role and reports to the Executive Committee and Steering Committee. The committee meets at least once a year with the aim of:

1. Reaching equal representation of women and men within the EPSU decision-making bodies;
2. Gender mainstreaming internal and external EPSU policies.

The internal objectives of EPSU include:

- Equal representation of women and men in the decision-making bodies of EPSU and its affiliates, and
- Mainstreaming of the gender perspective in internal and external EPSU policies

The external priorities are:

- Mainstreaming of collective bargaining. This will primarily involve input to and activities related to the ETUC and PSI campaigns on equal pay for work of equal value, and
- Analysing and disseminating information on relevant European Union policies, taking steps to influence EU policies, and encouraging follow-up of the implementation of such policies nationally.

As noted in the Federation Statute:

1. For congress, each delegation must contain an equal number of men and women.
2. In the executive committee, for each affiliated union, each board must be represented by an additional woman.

3. In the directors committee, one of the representatives nominated must be a woman. Any board not fulfilling this condition of nominating a woman will lose its seat.

EPSU's Gender Equality Committee website: <http://www.epsu.org/r/28>

Annex 3

CGIL – Italy

Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro

CGIL is the oldest labour organisation in Italy and also one of the biggest. CGIL represents over 5 and a half million workers of whom 49% are women.

The CGIL statute foresees different forms of self-organisation for women, with the common aim of experimenting with forms of work in order to achieve ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘empowerment’. The Secretariat of the Confederation has been charged with the assignment of equal opportunities policies using the mainstreaming method. The introduction of equal opportunity policies with the mainstreaming method and the constitution of the Forum represent the instruments for the construction of a ‘women’s policy’. Their gender policy interweaves the proposal for women policies with special actions for promoting women into important positions in trade union. Their starting point is the realization of a gender policy and to bring to life the keywords of Beijing. For this it is necessary that, in the composition of the management board and in decisions and negotiations, women should always be present; at the same time the responsibility of ‘mainstreaming’ must be felt by the organisation as a whole and not just by women.

In 1996 CGIL introduced an article into its statute that stipulated the formation of official bodies, such as the Members’ Committee, Pensioners’ League and the Executive Committee, and the substitutions that may be necessary within these and in external national and international representation. No less than 40% and no more than 60% may consist of either of the two sexes. In practice, should these percentages be exceeded, the switch rule applies. This means that the candidate belonging to the more represented gender gives up his/her place for the candidate belonging to the less represented gender.

In 1998 CGIL set up a women’s forum as a place for devising and discussing gender policies. The forum is made up of women representatives on the CGIL executive committee and representatives of various self-organised women’s groups within CGIL and it is headed by an equal opportunities delegate. The task of the latter is to liaise with the various departments in order to identify possible synergies in ongoing or planned initiatives and to maintain relations with external institutions of an analogous nature.

To show that CGIL recognises the competences of females in the organisation, women elected to the national secretariat have been given positions of high importance. A woman from CGIL has also been nominated as Vice president of the national council dealing with work and economy, the first time a woman has been given this responsibility.

CGIL is, as proposed by its women's forum, undertaking an analysis of policies adopted by the government in employment/welfare matters to see the impact on each gender.

CGIL's Equal Opportunities website (in Italian): <http://www.cgil.it/pariopportunita/>

Annex 4

Solidarność – Poland

Solidarność was founded as a result of worker protests and established on the basis of the Gdańsk Accords signed on 31 August 1980 by the Inter-enterprise Strike Committee and the Government Commission. Solidarność has around 800,000 members of whom 38% are women.

Solidarność has an equality officer at national level who is responsible for coordinating equality policies. Equality officers are found on a regional level as well. Each region has an annual budget of 10,000 euros to use on equality issues (such as meetings, seminars, documentation). This money is provided by the national commission from membership dues. As the money is provided through normal budgetary procedures it cannot be taken away.

Several equality-training programmes have been produced or are in the process of being created.

1. There exists a training programme called Leader that consists of a 2.5-day seminar for educating future leaders. At least 20% of those attending must be women.
2. A previous programme: 'Together in Solidarność' ran from 1998 to 2002 and focused on educating members about equality. The programme aimed at recruiting 50% men and 50% women to the course. The course was free to those who used it in order to encourage organisations to let individuals attend.
3. In the future a new training programme will be implemented on negotiating better working conditions for women. 15 trainers will be hired to train others on how to negotiate, whether it is in collective bargaining or informal situations.

Solidarność's homepage: <http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/eng1.htm>

Annex 5

UNISON – UK

UNISON is the biggest trade union in the UK. UNISON has almost one million women members – accounting for more than two thirds of the union.

UNISON is the first trade union in the UK to take on board an extensive range of strategies relating to the representation and participation of individual women and women as a social group.

At local level, many branches have women's self-organised groups. They provide a forum for women to meet and discuss issues of concern and provide advice to branches on promoting women's equality at work and in the union.

Each region also has a women's group, which meets on a regular basis to develop policies to promote equality and encourage women's participation at regional and branch level. Many of these groups will organise training and other events open to all women in the region. Many produce regular newsletters for women.

At national level, the national women's committee has representatives from each region. There is also an annual national women's conference that sets the agenda for the women's committee.

UNISON aims to achieve fair representation and proportionality for women at all levels in the union including in elected bodies. This means women should be represented on the various UNISON committees and structures at least in proportion to the percentage of women in membership (i.e. two thirds of the members of the national executive council will be women).

A number of positive action/discrimination measures are used to ensure that obstacles to women's participation are broken down. Examples include:

- Women-only training and education
- Provision of childcare/dependent care for those attending conferences
- Election processes to ensure proportional representation of women.

Women in UNISON website: <http://www.unison.org.uk/women/index.asp>

Annex 6

Belgian Charter on Gender mainstreaming in trade unions

Belgium has 3 trade union confederations recognized as representative organisations: the ACV-CSC (Christian) with 1,700,000 affiliates, the ABVV-FGTB (Socialist) with approximately 1,000,000 and the ACLVB-CGSLB (Liberal) with 240,000 members.

In 2004 the three trade unions entered into an agreement about gender mainstreaming in trade unions. Through this they stated their belief that equal opportunities is an essential component of their mission for a democratic society.

The representatives stated that in order to meet the legitimate aspirations of all their members they must adapt their structures, actions, modes of operation and mentalities to the interests and needs of male and female employees. Thus enabling women members to participate in trade union decision-making process. The agreement was expressed in a charter whose 10 articles are summarised below:

Article 1: To strive towards achieving equality between women and men in the union structures in all areas of their competencies (gender mainstreaming).

Article 2: Organisation of standardised, periodical and transparent monitoring at all levels with comparable data.

Article 3: Exchanging information – provision of all gender-related information from the union confederations to affiliated unions who will in turn provide information to the union confederations about their gender policies/information.

Article 4: Designation of a specific body to monitor congress resolutions and policy decisions both at sector and confederation level.

Article 5: Approval of positive actions including specific structures for women that will exist alongside mixed structures.

Article 6: Clearing bottlenecks and fixing priorities in order to adjust to their practical operation to the needs of both women and men.

Article 7: In social dialogue employers are urged to provide information of male/female employees. Unions will insist that all legal instruments are used and promoted (social audits, positive action plan and annual report on equal opportunities). Each item on the agenda of social dialogue meetings will be examined from a gender dimension. To achieve this the necessary training and resources for union members will be provided.

Article 8: Training and awareness raising of gender problems in the general training sessions

Article 9: Promotion of positive interaction with the feminist movement.

Article 10: Production of an annual progress report on improvements in equal opportunities and implementation of gender mainstreaming.

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