



FROM MEMBERSHIP TO LEADERSHIP:

➔ Advancing
women in
trade unions



A resource guide



EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)

Author:
Dr Jane Pillinger
*Independent Researcher
and Policy Advisor, 2010*



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→ Preface

Equality between women and men is a founding principle of the EU. A balanced participation by women and men in society's major political and economic decisions is a key element to developing real democracy and to contribute to economic growth.

The reasons for the under-representation of women in power and decision-making are structural and multifaceted. They include gender stereotypes and discrimination, and segregation in education and on the labour market. There is also a lack of policies to make it easier for women and men to strike the right work-life balance, and the unequal distribution of domestic and family chores. Lastly the political environment, corporate culture (also within trade unions, in their role as "employers") and media attitudes are still unfavourable to women.

I believe that an unbiased division of power between women and men can be achieved only by acting at all levels, involving all stakeholders and focusing on the factors that combine to maintain gender imbalance and/or create gender balance in decision-making.

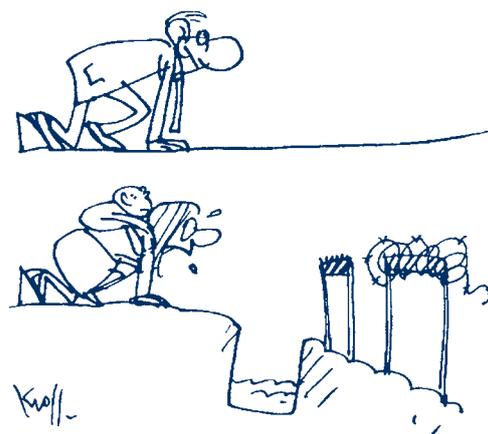
Ensuring a balanced proportion of women in trade unions' bargaining and decision-making bodies continues to be a matter of concern for the European trade union movement. According to the last 8th March Survey realised by the ETUC, women represent about 44% of our trade union membership. Nevertheless, often there is not a proportional representation at the level of the decision-making bodies of national confederations or at the level of the ETUC or of the European Industry Federations. It appears that, over the years, it is only in a few cases that the increase in the number of women in the trade unions' membership has been accompanied by a parallel rise of the number of women in trade unions' governing bodies or in posts of responsibility within the confederations and/or the European Industry Federations. What is called the "glass ceiling", referring to invisible barriers which prevent women from taking up positions of authority in public life and business, therefore also affects the trade union movement.

Nevertheless, several ETUC affiliates have good experience with quantified targets and clear rules that have to be observed, to achieve at least proportional participation and representation, while other members still have to develop coherent measures in order to promote an equal participation of women both at the decision-making levels of the trade unions as well as in bargaining units.

Clearly a combination of measures is needed, and a much more coherent and focussed approach should continue to be promoted in the future by the unions. A key instrument that ETUC members can refer to in this regard is the Charter for Gender Mainstreaming that was adopted at the last Congress in Seville. The Charter not only confirms the political engagement of unions to improve women's position in the labour market and in leadership positions, but also concretely indicates how to achieve these aims.

I am however convinced that more efforts are needed to make progress. For instance, a renewed commitment to collect and disseminate more and better gender disaggregated data, share good practices and put forward coherent strategies to advance gender balance in the trade union movement. The project "From membership to leadership" that the ETUC realised in 2010 and the outcomes that are highlighted in this report intend to contribute to this objective.

I hope that the lessons drawn from this project will be helpful to achieve a more balanced participation of women in decision-making structures and positions and contribute to the development of a more equal society for which trade unionists are struggling every day.





Acknowledgements

My thanks go to all of the trade union leaders, members and experts that contributed such valuable insights, ideas and perspectives on how gender balance can be achieved in trade unions. The participants, experts and speakers at the Luxembourg conference, 11-12 March 2010 and at the Berlin workshop, 28 October 2010, provided a wide range of examples, innovative ideas and new perspectives that form the basis for a new trade union agenda on gender balance. In particular, my thanks go to Catelene Passchier, Cinzia Sechi and Veronica Nilsson from the ETUC who oversaw the project and this publication and gave valuable expertise throughout, and to the members of the ETUC Steering Committee for the Project, Claudia Menne, Viviane Goergen and Gitta Vanpeborgh, who provided invaluable guidance and expertise in the process of preparing this publication.

Dr Jane Pillinger, Dublin

→ Section 1: Introduction

Improving gender balance in union leadership and decision-making structures remains a fundamental challenge for the trade union movement. Despite the feminisation of the labour market and of trade unions, the representation of women in senior level positions remains low in many trade union organisations.

Without gender balance trade unions are at risk of having an image that is outdated and out of touch with their membership, and unrepresentative of women's specific interests. Gender balance is crucial to the modernisation of trade unions and to fulfilling EU objectives for the economic, social and political representation of women in decision-making.

1.1. ETUC policy and activities to improve gender balance

The ETUC believes that gender balance in decision-making needs to be addressed as a key priority in trade unions, particularly because women's representation in decision-making positions has not improved in recent years. Eliminating the gender representation gap was established as one of the objectives under the ETUC's Equality Action Plans agreed in 1999 and 2003; while the ETUC's Mid-Term Review recommended in 2006 that unions should provide more comparable data on women's participation and representation and put in place measures to enable women to take up leadership positions. At the Seville Congress in 2007 a Charter on Gender Mainstreaming, was adopted with requirements for affiliates and European Industry Federations to provide statistics on their membership and representation in decision-making bodies. These statistics are collected annually through the 8th of March Survey. According to the Charter, affiliates' performance in increasing women representation in leadership roles and positions will be assessed prior to the next Congress. In addition, specific actions were recommended to improve gender balance. Similarly a priority to improve the role of women in decision-making exists under the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality agreed by the European social partners in 2005.

It is against this policy background that the project "From Membership to Leadership: Advancing Women in Trade Unions" was developed. The project drew from experts and policy makers in the field and collated examples of different approaches taken by trade unions across Europe in creating gender balance in decision-making, leadership and collective bargaining positions. A conference attended by 80 representatives from 45 union confederations and

European Industry Federations, across 25 European countries, was held in Luxembourg, 11-12 March 2010. A follow up seminar was held in Berlin on 28 October 2010 to discuss the findings and recommendations of the draft resource guide, and was attended by 40 representatives from 34 of union confederations and European Industry Federations from 21 European countries..

The Luxembourg conference concluded that the survival and renewal of trade unions is dependent on attracting larger numbers of younger people and women into trade unions. However, the conference also heard that despite the growth of female union membership, many unions have not yet achieved gender balance in their decision-making structures and that female trade unionists are not adequately represented or visible in trade unions' top positions and departments.

CATELENE PASSCHIER

former ETUC Confederal Secretary, extract of her opening speech at the Luxembourg conference

"The trade union movement still has a long way to go before it can achieve gender balance in its decision-making and collective bargaining structures. Currently a very low number of women are in top trade union leadership roles; this represents a serious democratic deficit, particularly since the growth of trade union membership in the last decade has been of women members. Women represent an important investment for the future of the trade union movement.

We need to have a more colourful and a more female face in internal and external activities and where we represent workers. Equality in the law stands at the centre of any democratic society. Equality at work means also talking about the participation and representation of women and access to positions of power. Even though almost half of trade union members are women there are certain sectors and countries that remain male dominated.

This conference aims to bring us a step further. We have enough charters and policy documents and we know what we want. The Seville Equality Charter sets out what we want for women in decision-making. This conference brings a better idea of the obstacles, of the good practices and what can we do. We need to change our own organisations and ensure that trade union organisations are representative of women. It's about bargaining at the company and sector level and for women to be able to compete for positions of leadership".

1.2 Improving gender balance: a long standing European objective

Improving gender balance in decision-making positions across the economy and in politics has been a long-standing priority of the European Union. It was one of the four objectives of the European Commission's Gender Equality Roadmap (2006-2010) and is a key element of the European Commission's new Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010 – 2015). The European Commission recognises the importance of achieving improved gender balance, particularly because of the substantial growth in the last decade of women's labour market and the fact that women are more highly qualified than ever. However, women are still under-represented in positions of responsibility in all areas of the economy and society.

1.3 The challenges faced by unions in achieving gender balance

Unions across Europe face a diversity of economic, social, political and cultural conditions that impact on their gender balance. There are significant differences between the Nordic countries that have high level of union density and structures for negotiating with employers, compared to other countries and sectors where union organisation and density are lower and where unions struggle to gain influence in negotiating with employers. There are also differences in social policies, for example, in care services provisions and social protection, which impact on women's labour market participation. A male orientated culture is generally viewed as being a major factor impacting on gender balance, which in turn impacts on women's access to positions of power and influence. Accordingly, policies aimed at promoting gender balance need to be multifaceted and tackle the main causes of the problem. This is particularly the case for women's representation in male dominated sectors of the economy, where there is a much greater resistance to women's participation in decision-making.

Addressing gender imbalances in trade union decision-making structures has led many unions to put in place both gender mainstreaming policies and positive action measures and policies. A growing number of unions have also sought to improve the representation of women by introducing statutory changes requiring gender balance or gender parity, while others have introduced measures to build the capacity of women and change the culture of trade unions so that women have greater opportunities to progress into decision-making positions.

Overall the respondents to the ETUC 8th of March Survey, as well as the participants at the Luxembourg conference, were of the view that despite concrete policies requiring gender balance, further measures are needed to change the culture of trade unions and to prepare women for leadership roles, in order to more effectively implement statutory requirements on gender balance.

Rectifying imbalances in trade union and other decision-making structures is not easy to pull off and there is no 'quick fix'.

Often change results in resistance because existing and institutionalised norms and values, and informal rules and privileges are at stake and are challenged. As well, achieving gender balance in practice does imply a financial cost. This is a cost that is not well received in the context of the current economic crisis and male unemployment.

1.4 Overview of this publication

This publication is a practical resource for trade union leaders, officials and women and men in the trade union movement across Europe and beyond to enable them to put in a new and more strategic approach to achieving gender balance in their decision-making structures. It shows how the strategies and proposals made by trade unions to improve gender balance can impact on union culture and the image of unions, can benefit union organising and membership, make unions relevant to women and men and to in enhancing the role of trade unions in advancing gender equality in the economy and society. It will point a way forward for the ETUC affiliated national confederations and European industry federations in taking active measures to ensure that there is gender balance in union policies and structures. The publication draws on the results of the 2010 ETUC 8th of March Survey; discussion, conclusions and recommendations of the ETUC Conference *From Membership to Leadership: Advancing Women in Trade Unions* held in Luxembourg in March 2010, and draws on the examples of and learning from what trade unions have done to date to promote gender balance. It will also be enriched by the contributions of the Berlin workshop.

- **Section 2** discusses why gender balanced decision-making has to be addressed by trade unions today by showing how a proactive approach to balanced gender representation can be beneficial to trade unions. It also discusses EU and national evidence of the gender representation gap.
- **Section 3** describes the barriers that trade unions face to achieve gender balance. It describes in particular common obstacles that organisations face to promote women in decision-making positions and structures.
- **Section 4** looks at the different approaches that can be taken to achieving gender balance, drawing on learning from leadership programmes for women in the business sector, recommendations from participants at the ETUC conferences and methods and tools used by unions to improve gender balance.
- **Section 5** contains a **ten point plan** that has been drawn up for improving gender balance in trade unions, with a multi-faceted approach to addressing the gender representation gap. This points to a positive way forward for trade unions, the benefits for women and men in trade unions and to the future of the trade union movement overall. This section also contains checklists for actions that can be taken by the ETUC, European Industry Federations and national confederations in order to kick-start a new and more concerted approach to addressing gender balance.
- **Section 6** provides further reading, resources and information.



→ Section 2: Gender balanced decision-making: where are we and why is it important?

This section provides an overview of the current situation in trade unions and shows how a proactive approach to balanced gender representation can be beneficial to trade unions. It discusses EU and national evidence of the gender representation gap.

2.1 The benefits of gender balance for trade unions

To start with it is worth reiterating the benefit of gender balance for trade union decision-making and leadership positions. Gender balance is vital to trade unions in order to have:

- A modern image that is representative of women's interests and needs and that is in touch with and relevant its membership;
- Structures that genuinely reflect the diversity of the membership is not only the right thing for trade unions to do, but it can unleash a wave of creativity, innovation and ideas that can greatly benefit trade unions;
- Benefits resulting from diversity in decision-making teams in trade unions and in the workforce;
- A role in fulfilling and implementing their economic, social and political objectives and roles;
- An approach to gender mainstreaming in decision-making and policy-making processes, and in their representative roles in the wider economy and society.

Achieving gender balance in collective bargaining teams can also ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into trade union negotiations. The arguments are that:

- Gender balanced collective bargaining teams, which are a matter of social democracy and a basic value of the trade union movement;
- The involvement of women and men and at all levels of collective bargaining enables new perspectives to be integrated into the bargaining agenda, by drawing on women's experiences, opinions, knowledge and skills;
- It also enables new styles and new approaches to collective bargaining.

2.2 Women and decision-making: the situation in the EU

Despite the benefits of gender diversity, women are still under-represented in economic, social and political decision-making positions across Europe. In fact, it is in those countries where a priority has been given to gender equality and where specific legislation or rule changes have been implemented, that gender balance is more likely to be achieved. The lack of gender balance in many trade unions is often a reflection of the low levels of gender balance in the economy and politics, and the general under-representation of women in managerial and senior decision-making positions. Gender balance in decision-making is a democratic and economic necessity.

"The unbalanced representation of women and men in decision-making positions is another issue of deep inequality. Despite some increase of women in decision-making positions, the under-representation of women in politics is a serious issue of democracy and fundamental rights. There is also a low proportion of women with leadership roles in politics, in public administration, in public and private enterprises, in the media and universities, in employers' organisations, trade unions, etc. Although women are becoming more and more qualified, barriers that prevent the access to decision-making and political representation persist".

"The low representation of women in elected positions creates a democratic deficit and represents one of the key elements of the crisis of credibility of institutions; it also highlights the need to reform and restructure the representation and participation of women and men in all areas of life".

(European Commission 2010a:10)

Women in politics

The low representation of women in politics results in a democratic deficit and is reflected in the representation gap in European, national, regional and local politics.

- Women are only around one in four (24%) of the members of national parliaments (an increase from 16% in 1997)
- Women are more than 40% of those represented in national parliaments in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, and 35% of those in national parliaments in Spain, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. Representation is below 15% in Ireland, Slovenia and Hungary, and below 10% in Malta and Romania.
- On average one out of every four senior Ministers and members of national parliaments are women.
- Only three out of ten members of the current European Parliament (2009-2014) are women (35% women compared to 65% men). This does not achieve the 40% threshold agreed by Member States in the European Council.
- The Commission formed in 2009 is made up of 10 women and 17 men, which represents the best gender balance to date.

In 2009 women across Europe campaigned for a better gender balance in the European Parliament and the European Commission. For example, the European Women's Lobby *50/50 Campaign for Democracy* called for a nomination system whereby each Member State would nominate a woman and a man for the position of Commissioner, which would enable the President to choose a commission based on an equal representation of women and men. This method of double nomination has been used to good effect in a number of EU member states to achieve more balanced gender representation in politics ¹.

BRIGITTE TRIEMS,

President of the European Women's Lobby, speaking at the ETUC Berlin Workshop, 28 October 2010

“Women represent more than half of the population of the European Union. The current under-representation of women in decision-making at all levels in the EU institutions is a serious obstacle to the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. This inequality also undermines all attempts to promote a more inclusive and participatory democracy”.

Gender equality is a condition for modernizing our political systems, so that women and men in their diversity equally share rights, responsibilities, and power. Gender equality should be at the heart of European initiatives to engage citizens in decision-making, to increase the legitimacy of the European Union, and to progress towards policies that reflects the needs and the aspirations of all Europeans.

It is vitally important that the pursuit of substantive equality between women and men is not considered a luxury to be addressed only in times of economic growth. It is a legal and moral imperative and a fundamental right that must be fully and robustly reflected in all European activity in order to safeguard and build upon the gains women and society as a whole have made over the previous decades. Women's rights are human rights”.

Women in the economy and company boards

In the economy women are under-represented in senior positions in both the public and private sectors. This means that the economy is seriously missing out on women's talent and expertise, particularly because there is substantial evidence to show that women's participation in decision-making and at leadership levels of companies and organisations can improve organisational performance and competitiveness, democratic participation and accountability.

¹ - The European Women's Lobby 50/50 Campaign for Democracy, running since September 2008, published on 20 May 2009 a Gender Audit Report of Electoral Lists and Political Programmes, in view of the European elections of 4-7 June 2009. The Gender Audit looks at political programmes and electoral lists for the European elections from a women's rights perspective. It evaluates the political parties' commitment to gender equality in view of the European Parliament elections 2009 and encourages voters to be involved in European politics.

The report concludes that most political parties do not consider equality between women and men as a key priority in light of the European elections 2009, despite the strong competence of the European Union in the area. See: <http://5050campaign.wordpress.com/>

- The number of female managers (directors, chief executives and managers of smaller enterprises) in the EU remains an average of 30%. More than 35% of women in Spain, Italy and France are in these positions, while this is below 25% in Luxembourg, Ireland, Finland, Malta and Cyprus.
- The proportion of women directors of top quoted company boards is 3% across the EU, while only one in ten company board members is a woman.
- In Finland and Sweden women represent more than 20% of these positions; while in Malta, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Portugal, they are less than 5% of Boards. The types of positions held also varies by gender, with only 11% of the top 100 women hold executive board positions compared with 35 per cent of men, and only 8% of the women are heads of committees, compared to 27% of men.
- The current increase in female board membership means that it will take until 2065 to gain gender balance on company boards. There are no female governors of the national Central Banks in the EU and women only account for 16% of the highest decision-making bodies of these institutions.

Despite the low representation of women, there is no doubt that gender equality and gender balance have the potential to improve economic performance and development, and in creating jobs and employment. As a result women's participation in the economy and in decision-making will be critical to economic recovery and growth in Europe. According to the European Economic and Social Committee's 2009 Opinion on *The link between gender equality, economic growth and employment rates*, found that gender equality is critical for jobs and growth. This is because an increase in women's employment rates and a narrowing of the gender pay gap has the potential to provide additional services and spending power for women, which in turn will impact on tax receipts and consumption patterns. Gender equality leading to increased levels of women in political and decision-making positions will also have a positive impact on the performance of businesses, while more female entrepreneurs will have a financial benefit to the economy through more innovation and job creation. The role and contribution of gender equality was also reinforced by the 2009 Swedish Presidency of the EU. The presidency conference: *What does gender equality mean for growth and*

employment, found a strong link between gender equality and economic growth, evidenced by those countries with higher rates of GDP being the ones with better levels of gender equality. In this context gender equality should be seen as a productive factor, rather than a cost, and therefore as a prerequisite for economic growth and prosperity.

Women in trade unions

The ETUC's Charter on Gender Mainstreaming commits the ETUC to carrying out an annual survey of members' roles in gender equality and on the position of women in membership and decision-making positions. The methodology and questions for each survey are consistent, therefore, allowing for trends to be assessed over time. Each survey does, however, focus on a specific theme: the gender pay gap was the focus of the 2008 survey, work-life balance and childcare were a feature of the 2009 survey, while the 2010 survey addressed women in trade union leadership and collective bargaining positions.

At the Luxembourg conference, **Cinzia Sechi**, **ETUC Equality Adviser**, outlined the main findings of the 2010 8th March survey² and pointed to the main trends on the representation of women in decision-making positions:

- Since 2008, when the first survey was carried out, women have been crucial to sustaining trade union membership levels, which the 2010 survey found stood at 43.6%;
- The surveys from 2008 and 2009 show a general trend of a growing number of women in the membership of trade unions, even though there has been a reduction in trade union membership overall.
- The surveys carried out in 2008, 2009 and 2010 show a persistent low level of women in trade union leadership positions (Presidency, Vice-Presidency, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary), with little progress made between 2008 and 2010. It is evident also that women are more likely to be in 'deputy' positions.
- Gender balance is lagging behind at the level of the ETUC standing committees: only 17% of the full members of the ETUC Executive are women. This figure is even lower for the Steering Committee where 13% are women.
- Within the ETUC Secretariat gender balance shall be taken into account and the difference in numbers of members of the Secretariat of either gender shall not be higher than one³;

² - The 2010 survey was completed by 53 out (of 82) confederations from 30 countries responded to the 2010 survey, 3 PERC members (out of 20) and 3 European Industry Federations (out of 12). For further information on the results of the survey see: <http://www.etuc.org/r/1347>

³ - This current formulation is being discussed and is to be approved by the ETUC Executive Committee.

- The 2010 survey did find that most of the unions responding to the survey had adopted concrete measures, including in some cases quotas or reserved seats, to improve gender balance, although in practice many unions had not implemented policies in full.
- In some unions, particularly those representing women in the female dominated sectors of the economy, have achieved gender balance in their decision-making structures.

“The low presence of women in decision level positions is working against the trend of an increasing number of female workers in trade unions and reinforces the need for unions to put in place specific measures to ensure that there is a more representative gender balance in union decision-making structures at national as well as at European level”. **Cinzia Sechi, ETUC Equality Advisor, speaking at the Luxembourg conference**

2.3 EU policy priorities on women in decision-making

The equal participation of women and men in decision-making is one of the priorities of EU policy on gender equality. The EU has aimed to increase awareness about women in decision-making, improve data-collection, the dissemination of information and analysis of trends, and a contribution to the creation of networks and the promotion of good practices.

Women in decision making was a priority under the European Commission’s Gender Equality Roadmap 2005-2010, and continues to be a priority under the Commission’s new Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, 2010 – 2015. The new strategy has four main priorities: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence and gender equality in external actions. The Commission has put forward a number of key actions that can be progressed under the Strategy, including targeted initiatives to improve the gender balance in decision making, monitoring the 25% target for women in top level decision-making positions in research; monitoring progress towards the aim of 40% of members of one sex in committees and expert groups

established by the Commission; and supporting efforts to promote greater participation by women in European Parliament elections including as candidates.

There is some disappointment that the Strategy does not include stronger measures, including positive action measures, as suggested by a number of organisations, including the ETUC and the European Women’s Lobby, in their submissions to the Commission’s consultations for the new Strategy. The Opinion of the Commission’s Advisory Committee on Equality Opportunities (European Commission 2010a) on the future of gender equality policy and the framework for a new gender equality roadmap post-2010, had also recommended a continuing focus on promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making, including positive action measures, the development of mentoring and leadership programmes, funding to support the training and progression of women into leadership positions, and more detailed research and data collection ⁴.

The European Commission established in 2008 a European network of women in economic and political decision-making which provides an EU-level platform for the exchange of good practices. In promoting women in science and technology a target was set for 25% representation of women in leading positions in public sector research. Community law allows Member States to provide for ‘positive action’ to compensate for disadvantages or to encourage certain action.

European Commission Database: women and men in decision-making

The database on women and men in decision-making has been developed by the European Commission as part of its commitment to monitor the numbers of and trends over time of women in key decision-making positions. The database includes positions of power and influence in politics, public administration, the judiciary, and key areas of the economy, and includes European, national and regional level data about women in politics, across 34 countries in Europe. The database and quarterly updates can be found on the EU’s web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=762&newsId=828&furtherNews=yes>

⁴ - The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men assists since 1981 the European Commission in formulating and implementing the EU activities aimed at promoting gender equality. The Committee fosters ongoing exchanges of experiences, policies and practices between Member States and the various parties involved. To achieve these aims the Committee delivers opinions to the Commission on issues of relevance to the promotion of gender equality in the EU. It comprises representatives of Member States, social partners (including ETUC representatives) at EU level and NGOs. See: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?type=o&policyArea=41&subCategory=o&country=o&year=o&advSearchKey=adcopinion&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en>

2.4 The impact of the economic and financial crisis on gender balance

Although the economic crisis initially hit male dominated sectors of the economy, for example, in construction and manufacturing, women have since then become significant victims of job losses and pay cuts. For example, job losses in the retail and hospitality sectors have begun to impact on women, while budgetary cuts in the public sector have particularly hit women as they represent one in three of the public sector workforce. In the public sector women have been victims of job losses, working time reductions, pay cuts and pay freezes. The EU-wide austerity measures introduced to address the economic and financial crisis have resulted in a policy to reduce public deficits, which are impacting disproportionately on women public sector workers. The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) has called for the European Commission to carry out a gender equality impact assessment of the cuts in public services ⁵.

The systematic lack of a gender analysis of the impact of the crisis has led Maria Jepsen and Janine Leschke of the ETUI ⁶ to suggest that:

“there seem to be some worrying trends with regard to the lack of gender assessment of policies implemented and the lack of specific measures that balance out the unequal situation of women and men in regard to the labour market and welfare provision. Hence as governments will enter into the fiscal consolidation period it is vital that they apply effective gender assessment methods in order to prevent that the crisis will have long-lasting negative effects on gender equality”. (p.37)

Similarly, the 2009 Opinion of the European Commission’s Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and men on the need for a *Gender perspective on the response to the economic and financial crisis* ⁷ has highlighted the differential impact that the financial and economic downturn is having on women and men, given that women and men occupy different positions in the economy and in society. It is evident that there has been little attention given to how gender is taken into account in the formulation of national and EU policy and

in relation to the impact of public expenditure cuts on gender equality more generally. The Opinion recommends that giving attention to equality of opportunity and social justice is very important during times of recession:

“While it is important to ensure that policies designed to address the immediate crisis identify differential impacts on vulnerable groups, it is also important to look to the future and identify the world that we want to emerge from the current crisis. We need to act now to challenge inequalities and discrimination, so that in the recovery we draw on the talents, skills and energies of the widest possible cross-section of society” (p. 11).

The Opinion recommends that new policies need to be put in place to ensure that women are not disproportionately affected by the impact of the economic and financial crisis in the labour market and to ensure that equality policies remain visible despite the effects of the economic recession.

These concerns about the impact of the crisis also have implications for women in decision-making. According to the European Commission the recent economic and financial crisis has highlighted the absence of women in economic decision-making positions in Europe. In banking, business, politics and public administrations men continue to outnumber women in senior positions despite the increased number of women among university graduates and in the labour market. The European Commission’s report on women in decision-making *More Women in Senior Positions: key to economic stability and growth* (2010b) looks at how the advancement of women can be supported and progressed to ensure that more women get into senior positions. Speaking at the launch of the report in 2010 Viviane Reding (Vice-President of the European Commission, Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship) said that:

“We have to deplore that women’s talents are not being tapped to their full potential. If Europe is to achieve its goal of becoming a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in a globalised world then we have to make better use of women’s talents and skills”.

⁵ - See for example, EPSU’s open letter to the European Commission, 20 July 2010, on the impact of the economic crisis on women in the public sector <http://www.epsu.org/a/6713>

⁶ - Leschke J and Jepsen M (2010) *Has the economic crisis been a challenge or an opportunity in achieving more gender equality in social policy outcomes? A comparison of Denmark, Germany and the UK*. Paper prepared for 9th European Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA), 28 June to 1 July 2010, University of Copenhagen

⁷ - Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2009) *Opinion on The Gender perspective on the response to the economic and financial crisis*, European Commission: Brussels <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?type=o&policyArea=418&subCategory=o&country=o&year=o&advSearchKey=adcopinion&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en>

“The economic crisis is hitting women very hard; but we can turn the crisis into an opportunity. Where there are more women in management share prices fell less compared to companies with more men. This is a lesson for the future”. **Catelene Passchier, FNV, former ETUC Confederal Secretary**

2.5 Gender balance in decision-making: ETUC objectives

The ETUC has a long-standing commitment to gender balance in decision-making. This was formally established as an objective under the ETUC’s Equality Action Plans agreed in 1999 and 2003, and reinforced by the ETUC’s Mid-Term Review (2006), the Charter on Gender Mainstreaming (2007) and the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality (2005).

“Equality between women and men has developed in recent years in political and trade union campaigns and we can note progress. This is all fine to have actions, declarations and actions plans, but now we need a new approach... I want to say to my young colleagues that inequality between women and men no longer exists and that every young woman has the opportunity to become the General Secretary of their organisation”. **Viviane Goergen, Deputy General Secretary LCGB, former President of the ETUC Women’s Committee, speaking at the Luxembourg conference**

ETUC Charter on Gender Mainstreaming

The Charter on Gender Mainstreaming, adopted by the ETUC Congress in Seville on 23 May 2007, sets out the commitment of the ETUC to ensure that gender equality is integrated into all trade union activities. Under Article 4 of the Charter *Elimination of the Gender Representation Gap*, a number of actions are called for the ETUC and its members:

- To provide good and comparable data, including the requirement on the ETUC to carry out the annual 8th March survey of all affiliates and European Industry Federations, who were required to keep statistics regarding membership and representation in European Works Councils, negotiating teams, Executive Committee and Congress bodies.

- Actions to increase the number of women in decision-making positions through a coherent and focussed approach, as well as evaluation of existing good experiences of trade union activities to develop quantified targets and rules with a view to making recommendations to the ETUC. This also included proposals to provide training and a good practice manual, and to carry out a range of activities including gender audits, mentoring and other forms of support to enable women to take up leadership roles in trade unions.
- Include a gender-dimension in the *State of the European Trade Unions* exercise, and carried out every two years in order to assess the ‘state of women in the trade unions’ by assessing developments in female membership and the reduction of the representation gap.

The Charter also draws a timeline to assess these recommendations and measures and indicates that the ETUC Executive Committee will discuss the adoption of appropriate sanctions, reward good results or penalise bad performance.

Framework of Actions on Gender Equality, 2005 (Business Europe, UEAPME, CEEEP and ETUC)

On 22 March 2005, the European social partners - BUSINESS EUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC, including representatives of the EUROCADRES/CEC Liaison Committee - adopted a Framework of Actions on Gender Equality. This joint text is the culmination of work on gender equality, carried out within the framework of the social partners’ three-year work programme over the period 2003–2005. The framework of actions highlights four priorities on which the European interprofessional social partner organisations want their respective national social partners to focus over the coming five years. These include: addressing gender roles; promoting women in decision-making; supporting work-life balance; and tackling the gender pay gap. These priorities are to be interpreted as interconnected and of equal importance. Any action taken at national, sectoral and/or company level will be most effective if these priorities are tackled in an ‘integrated approach’.

Between 2005 and 2009, the signatory organizations promoted this framework of actions in Member States at all appropriate levels, through joint and separate actions. The national social partners drew up annual reports on the actions carried out in Member States on the four priorities identified. In 2009, after three annual reports, the European social partners evaluated the impact on both companies and workers reiterated:

“Achieving an increase in the proportion of women in decision-making positions is an objective shared by social partners, who regard the promotion of women into senior and managerial positions as an investment for a more productive and stimulating working environment and for a better economic performance. Such developments should in the long run also have an impact on reducing relative income differentials between women and men”⁸.

The evaluation report provides examples of strategies put in place by the social partners to improve the representation of women in decision-making, including:

- Monitoring the representation and participation of women within their organisations (UK, Portugal, Iceland, Denmark)
- Putting in place specific training or mentoring programmes, such as leadership courses to attract and develop more women in leadership roles (Poland, UK);
- Conducting surveys amongst female top and middle management executives to see how they reconcile their professional and private commitments (Norway);
- Promoting women’s careers in managerial positions (Finland);
- Awards to promote those companies that have increased the numbers of women in managerial positions (Austria, Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Slovenia);
- Establishing networks, or ambassadors of women in top leading positions of private companies (Denmark, Finland).
- Cross-industry agreements on gender representation (Italy, Spain);
- A Charter on Gender mainstreaming signed by cross-industry trade unions (Belgium);
- Programmes for increasing the number of women in leadership positions in the Central government sector (Sweden);
- Multi-annual Gender Equality Programmes or projects (Austria, Lithuania, Latvia and Turkey);
- Active participation of trade unions in surveys and working with Gender Equality Commissions to produce new publications and debates on the issue (Belgium, UK);
- Public events and projects on diversity in the workplace and women in leadership (Netherlands, Ireland).

KATRIEN VAN DER HELST

National Secretary CG / FGTB Belgium:
a personal reflection on the need for
gender balance in trade unions

When Katrien took a management position in the FGTB, with responsibility for companies in a male dominated sector of the union, she became aware of the need for a gender perspective and to fight for gender equality in the structures of the union. One of the challenges that she encountered was that gender stereotypes play a significant role in shaping attitudes to women’s role in the workplace. One of the main stereotypes is that women with family responsibilities do not work so hard and are not prepared to work in jobs that are demanding. This creates a negative environment for and an obstacle in working towards equality. A lot of women can and do work in non-traditional sectors; however, many have the skills and capacity, but not the opportunity to progress.

“From my own experience in collective bargaining, women are not taken seriously and are not seen as a serious partner and I was not taken seriously with a lot of sexist comments, even still today. My strategy was to not react and then it stops. Women have to dare to take responsibilities and have to show their skills and capacities more than men do. Women have to work twice as hard and always be well prepared. That’s how women survive in male dominated sectors, particularly if you are the only woman in the decision-making body”.

She recommended that women need to counter the arguments and show why gender issues are important in a bargaining context. First, this means being aware of the fact that male colleagues are often afraid of losing ground, since most negotiations are about money. Second, is the need to convince women and men alike that women have the same opportunities for pay and power. Third, labour market changes are affecting men and it is often the fear of the unknown that has to be overcome.

“During the course of my career I have become more convinced that we have to fight for equality. We need to ensure that there are more women in male dominated sectors that there needs to be more women in senior positions in companies and in trade unions”.

⁸ - To download the final evaluation report of the EU social Partners’ Framework of Actions on Gender Equality: http://www.etic.org/IMG/pdf_Final_Evaluation_Report_Framework_of_Actions_on_gender_equality_2009_EN.pdf

→ Section 3: Barriers to achieving gender balance

3.1 Introduction

Despite EU and ETUC commitments to improve gender balance in decision-making, women continue to experience barriers in taking up leadership and decision-making positions, while organisations, whether they be trade unions, companies or political parties, are not always proactive enough in putting in place measures to improve gender balance.

The 2010 8th March survey found that the three most important barriers preventing women from taking up leadership positions in trade unions are work-life balance and the unequal sharing of family responsibilities; preconceived, stereotyped ideas concerning the role of women leading to attempts to dissuade them; and lack of a specific policy within the trade union organisation. The survey also found that there are four main factors that limit the presence of women in collective bargaining units. These include a lack of time for female trade unionists; lack of a specific policy within the unions addressing the issue of women in bargaining units; discouragement or hostile reactions from male colleagues; and lack of specific knowledge of women in bargaining methods.



Summary of the main barriers faced by women trade unions in gaining gender balance

- The culture of unions values the participation of men and this discourages women's participation;
- Negative stereotypes work against women's union participation;
- The economic crisis has impacted negatively on women's representation;
- Women hold themselves back and often lack the confidence to push themselves forward for leadership roles;
- Women hit the glass ceiling;
- Time constraints impact on women's possibilities for participation;
- Women lack the knowledge about union structures and how to get into decision-making positions;
- Young women are not attracted to union decision-making roles;
- Union structures replicate women's disadvantaged labour market position.

3.2 What do women in trade unions say about the barriers to gender balance?

Workshops held at the Luxembourg conference discussed the wide range of different experiences across Europe of the barriers to achieving gender balance in leadership and decision-making structures.

a) The culture of unions values the participation of men and this discourages women's participation

One of the most important issues raised is that women have to face a union culture that is very male and men have their own social networks, which can exclude women. The organisation and conduct of meetings, and the inappropriate timing of meetings also impacts on women's (and parents) possibilities for participation. However, some trade unionists stressed that even though women have family or other responsibilities, there are significant numbers of women who do not have family responsibilities, and yet they still experience the same barriers. Because the male norm is often replicated in trade union culture, men seek to replicate themselves in leadership positions.

This particularly affects succession planning and impacts on how informal support and encouragement is given to trade union members interested in gaining decision-making positions.

.....
 "Men have their own social networks and unofficial issues are decided before the start of official meetings and decision-making procedures".
.....

 "Issues of time, the male culture and social networks are all linked and women have to tackle this as a multiple problem".
.....

 "Women don't invest in the things that men do – we have to invest in social networking and being in the time and place where decisions are made".
.....

.....
 *“Why is it such a big thing that unions representing teachers and health workers want to see a man in the leadership position of the union. In the last Congress of the Latvian Health and Social Care Employees Union Congress 87% of Congress voted for a man, despite six nominations from women, and the man had never worked in a trade union. Women still think that men will do a better job and we must counter that and give women confidence to vote for women. We need to make sure that women give solidarity to women. But there is still a male dominated culture in the unions and we need to get women into shop steward positions and break the male culture”.*
.....

b) Negative stereotypes work against women’s union participation

The role of gender stereotypes is seen to play a critical role in shaping women’s and men’s attitudes and awareness of gender representation. Gender stereotypes both reinforce and create gender inequality. The social construction of the roles and expectations of boys and girls results in different behaviours and choices that impact on subject choices, learning and achievement. These in turn have an impact on women’s career choices, which are often limited to work in traditionally ‘female’ sectors of the labour market, and on their representation in decision-making roles. Breaking down gender stereotypes in education and in the labour is critical if women’s talents and potential are more effectively utilised. As a result, action to address gender stereotyping requires changes in behaviour, attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society.

It is important to challenge gender stereotypes, particularly regarding trade union leadership roles. This has to be acted upon by trade union leaders since often it is male trade unionists that perpetuate the stereotype that women are not interested in power, and by women themselves. Participants at the workshops also referred to the impact of the media in perpetuating negative or inappropriate stereotypes, which works against women’s representation in the labour market, in trade unions and in politics.

.....
 *“In Romania the media is very negative about the role of women in government. They focus on what women say and why she dresses the way she does”.*
.....

 *“We need to have solidarity amongst women. There is an old boy’s network, and I hope that we are building one now for women and men that is based on equality and social justice”.*
.....

c) The economic crisis has impacted negatively on women’s representation

In some countries the economic crisis has had a huge and negative impact on women in the labour market. In Latvia, for example, according to one participant at the Luxembourg Conference the economic crisis means that women have less time and are having to take on more care responsibilities. One trade union leader referred to the fact that she is no longer able to work full-time as she now has to look after her grandchild, as her daughter no longer can afford to pay for childcare.

.....
 *“In Ireland, the economic crisis has led to cuts in pay and significant job losses. A lot of unions are now focussed on fighting the pay cuts and cuts in services. But we need to be cautious as women’s issues are slipping down the equality agenda”.*
.....

d) Women hold themselves back and often lack the confidence to push themselves forward for leadership roles

In some cases women do not have the self-confidence to take up a trade union position, even if a seat has been provided for a woman. Sometimes it is hostility from male colleagues and the perceived isolation faced by women in decision-making positions that deter women taking up opportunities for promotion and leadership. One trade union delegate to the Luxembourg Conference from Turkey, for example, spoke about how hostility from male colleagues has resulted in women lacking confidence to participate in trade unions. As a result the trade unions are providing training for women so that women can develop their motivation, skills and confidence. A number of women in the trade union movement spoke of the importance of trade union policies on gender balance as being important to enhancing women’s own confidence to take up decision-making positions, and through these to gain confidence in and experience of decision-making roles.

.....
 *“We have to believe in ourselves as women; this is hard because the prevailing view is that trade union leaders should be men. In Lithuania there is only one woman General Secretary. Women don’t want to be in that place, it’s a very difficult job”.*
.....

e) Women hit the glass ceiling

A major barrier is that many women hit the glass ceiling, which is the point where women are unable to progress any further in their careers because of invisible barriers to advancement. It is a barrier that prevents large numbers of women from achieving powerful, prestigious, and highest level positions in the labour market and in trade unions. Many women see these barriers as being insurmountable, as women are led to believe that they are not worthy enough to take up higher level positions, while their male superiors do not take them seriously or actually see them as potential candidates. Even though women hit the glass ceiling at a certain stage in their careers, discrimination takes place at all levels, culminating in a glass ceiling.

.....
 ☞ *“The glass ceiling is there all the time, it’s only when we hit it that we really notice it is there...it is really important that we tackle these problems before we hit the ceiling”*

f) Time constraints impact on women’s possibilities for participation

Women often lack the time to participate in trade union activities, while trade union decision-making structures do not sufficiently take account of parental responsibilities in the structuring of meetings, and there is inflexibility about leadership roles, which means that a male norm of long and irregular working hours become the norm for everyone. It can be said that women experience a triple burden, as mothers or carers, as workers and as trade union activists.

As a result time factors, including measures on work-life balance, need to be factored into policies to encourage women’s representation in trade union leadership and decision-making roles.

.....
 ☞ *“Time is a cultural issue for women. We need to make sure that time is not a barrier to women taking on leadership roles”.*

☞ *“It is time consuming being a leader, and there is a culture that leaders have to work long hours. But why is it necessary for a leadership job to be 80 hours a week; why can this not be shared by two people”.*

g) Women lack knowledge about union structures and how to get into decision-making positions

Many women do not have the knowledge to enable them to progress to the same level as men, this includes knowledge of how union structures work, of union policies, and of how to get elected to decision-making positions. This is a major barrier to women’s participation in decision-making, while knowledge and understanding of how to take up decision-making positions is critically important to trade union transparency and openness.

.....
 ☞ *“Knowledge is the most important thing. If women do not have access to knowledge and information about trade union decision-making systems or how to get into them, this is the biggest barrier”.*

h) Young women are not attracted to union decision-making roles

Many young trade union members lack the time to get involved in their unions as they are often working in low paid jobs with long hours. In the UK, for example, young people under 25 years of age have to work long hours, they receive less assistance from the state, and are affected by the increased casualisation of the workforce. For example, a recent TUC Commission report on vulnerable employment found that that a lack of job security and long hours were major problems faced by young people⁹.

.....
 ☞ *“In central and eastern European countries because trade unions leaders are low paid and because the role has a low status, young women and men are not attracted to work in the trade union movement. We have to find ways to make our unions more attractive to young people as they are our future”.*

The ageing of the trade union movement is also a factor, making it essential for new strategies be put in place to attract young women and men. For example, several participants stressed the fact that the average age of trade union leaders is over 50 years.

.....
☞ *“We have to promote leadership as a model and sustain it. We need to open minds for young people in leadership”.*
.....

☞ *“A key priority is to ensure that younger women participate in unions and are advance into leadership positions. It is crucial that unions are made attractive for young women and they need to know that they can progress into leadership positions, otherwise they will see the union movement as outdated”.*
.....

i) Union structures replicate women’s disadvantaged labour market position

Women are concentrated in under-valued and vulnerable employment; often women in these jobs do not want to risk their jobs by getting involved in their trade union. As a result trade unions need to look strategically at how they transform leadership roles, so that women’s talents and skills can be utilised more effectively. This also means addressing leadership roles and the transferable skills that women hold.

.....
☞ *“We won’t get women into leadership positions until the inverted pyramid is sorted out, there is an ageing membership, and despite the fact that there is an increase in women’s trade union membership women are still not present in leadership positions”.*
.....

☞ *“We need a paradigm shift about what people can do, often skills are transferable and if we only look at what people have done, the pool of potential leaders will be narrowed to those who have not had opportunities”.*
.....

9 - See TUC (2010) Commission on Vulnerable Workers <http://www.vulnerableworkers.org.uk/>

→ Section 4: Bringing gender balance to the centre of union policies and structures

4.1 Introduction

This section provides examples and practical tools for improving gender balance in trade union decision-making structures and sets out a ten point plan for achieving balanced gender representation. It presents different union strategies to achieve gender balance and to bring women into leadership roles, and draws on learning from business and professional women about women's leadership roles.

4.2 Strategies that unions have implemented to improve gender balance

The 2010 8th March survey found that many unions are introducing strategies and policies to improve gender balance, with three-quarters of confederations having a specific policy designed to increase the presence of women in their decision-making bodies. Unions who stated that a policy instrument is necessary highlighted the importance of this for social democracy and for promoting women's issues in trade union agendas. A range of methods have been introduced as part of the policy commitment to increasing the representation of women, including training for women members, research and surveys, action plans, positive actions and quotas. The survey also found that over a third of confederations have introduced measures in their capacity as employers, for example through flexible working time, recruiting women into areas where they are under-represented or through workplace policies on gender equality. Two-thirds of confederations had developed guidelines on integrating gender into collective bargaining, while just over a half had carried out training for union negotiators on how to integrate a gender perspective. Nearly one-half of confederations ensure that women are present in negotiating teams.

Although many unions have introduced statutory rules, quotas or policies to improve gender balance, many have not achieved the objectives set. A key question raised at the Luxembourg conference was how to change the culture and policies of unions so that they actively promote gender balance. The examples and recommendations from

the Luxembourg Conference focussed on the need for a wide range of instruments to improve women's access to leadership and decision-making roles. This is because the issue is multi-faceted and needs to be addressed from several different directions. While participants were of the view that statutory rule changes on the representation of women are necessary, there was widely held view that this had to be part of a range of other actions to improve union visibility, transparency, organisation and equality. This requires also that unions take a wider look at the issue of gender equality and gender representation from the grass roots upwards.

→ EXAMPLE: CGIL, ITALY

Aitanga Giraldi, CGIL, speaking at the Luxembourg conference showed how CGIL's policies on gender representation had had a significant impact on gender balance in the confederation. CGIL has a membership of 5.7 million; approximately 50% of whom are women. The confederation has put in place a number of policies to improve gender balance in the union's decision-making bodies and to ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into union policies and collective bargaining. Specific measures have been introduced to encourage and train women union members to take decision-making roles, training for male and female negotiators on gender issue, and the production of guidelines for collective bargaining on gender issues.

In 1991 CGIL introduced a quota system, with a requirement for 25% representation of women in all of its decision-making bodies. In 1996 changes to the CGIL Statutes laid the foundations for the confederation to address a broad range of equality issues, including as part of the anti-discrimination provision in the union's Statute (Article 6), required a 40/60 representation of women and men. The provision allows for a method of 'slipping down the list', with a voting provision that the men who get the least votes are replaced by women. In 2009 the CGIL Mid-term Conference agreed on a Resolution on 'Organisation for the Promotion and Empowerment of Women in Management', which aims to renew the organisation by ensuring

“the entry and permanency of women at every level in the organisation”. It is based on three inter-related levels:

- To implement policies on equality between women and men by promoting equality in labour market policies, a gender analysis of the organisation of work, welfare and services, and the elimination the gender pay gap.
- To improve the representation of women in the union by implementing the anti-discrimination rule, measures for women to enter management, training for women, quotas for women at all levels including at the grass roots level and limits on the list for elections of joint union representatives in the workplace. The implementation and the monitoring of the 40/60 rule on the representation of women is a key political priority and a mandatory requirement.
- To improve working time policies to enable women and to participate equally and effectively in union meetings through a CGIL working time policy and attention to improving the timing and effectiveness of meetings.

As a result of these measures CGIL has been successful in improving the gender balance in decision-making bodies, from 33% in 1996 to 40% in 2010. The union is now working towards the achievement of 50/50 representation of women and men. In the union’s national secretariat women and men are employed equally, which is a significant change from 1996 when there were only two women out of a national secretariat of ten. Women in CGIL have also achieved a high level of representation on the Boards of companies and governmental bodies, and this is an area where women are showing significant economic and social impact. This impact can be seen in a wide range of areas such as environmental and territorial policies, housing, welfare, migration, health and social assistance, health and safety in the workplace and international cooperation. Although women are having an impact on national economic and social policies, they are not present in those board roles that concern macroeconomic policies and company policies, and they are not represented in equal numbers in negotiating teams, which are largely headed up by men.

The confederation is aware that putting in place specific policies is crucial to changing the organisation, addressing preconceived stereotypes and changing attitudes and awareness of the role and contribution of women to decision-making. One of their recent innovations is the introduction of a gender budget provision in the confederation’s new social budget initiative.

4.3 Gender balance: a political priority

As section 2 showed achieving gender balance in trade union decision-making structures is a political objective for trade unions. A key priority is for trade union leaders to champion and promote gender balance so that the political objectives can be implemented in practice. This is important not only to changing the culture of decision-making, but also to ensuring action is taken to address the barriers faced by women in entering leadership and decision-making roles and in ensuring that gender mainstreaming is brought to the centre of trade union action.

NICOLAS SCHMIT

Minister of Labour Luxembourg, extract from speech at the Luxembourg conference

“The Seville Charter on gender mainstreaming should be a guide for the whole of society so that every year we can carry out an assessment to see what progress has been made. Today women represent half of our population and they have to be properly represented in our trade unions. Women have specific problems; family and maternity policies are so important in our society and those rights must not be handicapped. Women are taking their destiny into their own hands; equality between women and men is not only for society but also for trade union organisations. 8 March 2010 was the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day. If we take stock there is a lot that has been achieved in education and in getting more women into politics and into decision-making positions. But pay inequalities and discrimination continue.

We need a new emphasis and have to work on people’s minds and mentalities, including, including women’s mentalities, to show there is a different approach. Power is still largely masculine; feminising power and bring a new dimension to power will be very positive for politics. For our societies giving more power to women is something that all of society can benefit from. Trade unions have as mission to defend all workers and to ensure there is non discrimination and equal pay for same skills and competences, and the same chances to be promoted”.

At the Luxembourg conference a panel of trade union leaders discussed how women can be promoted into decision-making positions in trade unions. They drew on their own experience of how they came to take up decision-making positions and reflected on what trade unions need to do

to improve the gender balance through binding measures and quotas, gender mainstreaming, leadership training for women, a change in union culture and ensuring gender balance and women's active involvement takes place at all levels of unions.

PROMOTING GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING: PERSPECTIVES OF TRADE UNION LEADERS

CHANTAL DOFFINY

Member of the National Bureau of CSC, Belgium

“Since 2004, along with the two other trade union confederations in Belgium, the union has adopted a gender mainstreaming charter and booklet, and a commitment from the union to integrate gender equality into all levels. The union has a quota system requiring one-third representation of women in all decision-making structures, which needs to be written into every statute and if there is no woman the seat remains empty. At the European level we need more binding measures and we need to effectively integrate gender equality into all of our work. We need a control and assessment tool and trade union training for women so that they can take senior positions. We also need to address the gender pay gap and evaluate progress that is made. Changing trade union culture and how our organisations function will be essential if young women are to be attracted to work for the trade union movement”.

PATRICK DURY

General Secretary of LCGB, Luxembourg

“In 1996 the union drew up a positive action plan in favour of women and decided to give priority to employing women. The action plan led to a training programme for members and staff. A major problem for men is their participation in family life and this is an area where the union needs to work on, to change mentalities. In 2009 Congress passed a new resolution to establish proportional representation in the different federal structures and committees of the union, up to the highest level. The union also set up a coordination unit and are introducing a system to support women through a tutor/mentor to follow progress of new female members and to overcome barriers. European policy needs to work hard to have a more balanced policy at every level and that goes for gender equality policy as full and complete as possible”.

ANDRE ROELTGEN

General Secretary of OGBL, Luxembourg

“In Luxembourg women occupy 33% of jobs in the labour market, in the union they are 34% of affiliated members. The increase in women's trade union membership and the presence of women in trade unions has become a positive development for trade unions in Luxembourg. The lesson from the trade union movement is that the highest ranking members all started at bottom and worked

their way up. Therefore, it is important for active trade union work to take place on the shop floor. Of the 5000 candidates for works councils 26% were women, and in fact they were under-represented in the traditional trade union sectors of construction and transport. In the management of the union it is obligatory to have nine elected women (33%) who are women, which is similar to the overall membership of the union. A female promotion plan, adopted in 1993, stipulated positive action so that women would be favoured over men, so that they would be represented in proportion to their membership. The union wants to promote the role of women and ensure equality in the labour process, for example, regarding equal salaries and work-life balance”.

CAROLA FISCHBACH-PYTTEL

General Secretary of European Public Services Union (EPSU)

“Democracy in the trade union movement does not occur by itself and that much more is needed to ensure full democracy. In EPSU there is a twin track approach to giving incentives to affiliates and in providing leadership. Today there is a female President and a rule that two of EPSU's four Vice-Presidents have to be female: this has resulted in a predominantly female leadership team in EPSU. This is particularly important as EPSU represents a majority of women (68.5%) working in highly feminised sectors. Despite this the leadership of EPSU's affiliated organisations are largely male, and there are variations across Europe north-south and east-west. We need a recipe of mechanisms and we need statutory measures to ensure that we get more women into leadership roles. It is important not to juxtapose women against men and visa-versa. A key issue is how we can share power in trade unions. To do this we need Constitutional support mechanisms in our national and European structures. EPSU has a policy of mainstreaming so that gender is integrated into all of the organisation's policies, and this has been achieved with some success and has helped to change the position of women in the trade union movement. Although to date it has not been the practice of the ETUC to enforce rules on gender balance, a key issue in the run up to the next ETUC Congress to examine the succession of the leadership team and there should have an open and transparent discussion about how to make some inroads. We should be promoting women candidates and although we have a very well respected woman president of the ETUC, the power centre is with the General Secretary”.

4.4 Women and leadership: lessons from the business community

This section looks at learning from other sectors of the economy, including women's leadership in business. This is important also because trade unions are part of the economy and are represented on a wide range of advisory boards and collective bargaining bodies. There are also lessons for trade unions about the 'business case for gender diversity' and how companies can benefit from and gain value from women's leadership roles for their business performance and competitiveness.

a) Preparing women for leadership:

Mirella Visser, (Centre for Inclusive Leadership in the Netherlands and President of the European Professional Women's Network)

“Women have love hate relationship with power; they often think about abuse of power, intimidation and excesses of power. However, power is the tool to create the things that you want. Power can be a way to enable others and power should be embraced by women. Only then you can influence the world. If women do not take up power we will allow men to take the power. Women are also part of the system and by letting others take power we become victims. But women can take a different route, they don't have to follow the pin striped suit behaviour, the way that we lead and want to be leading companies can be very enlightening. Women need to be positive and take their careers in different directions”.

Speaking at the Luxembourg Conference, **Mirella Visser** gave her vision of how women can be represented in all areas of decision-making and leadership, in managerial positions and on the boards of companies. Her experience is that the higher women climb the career ladder, the fewer women there were in leadership positions. Her book 'The Female Leadership Paradox'¹⁰ is about strategic leadership for women and is based on her personal experiences as senior executive. It describes twenty business cases, situations that women encounter in their careers: from being ignored, not being heard when your own excellent proposals are put forward, to missed opportunities in

promotions and networking. The book provides a wide variety of strategies to become successful as a leader in those common situations. Women often have different perspectives on how to advance their careers, and even though women work as hard as the men, they experienced greater barriers than men. She described this as the 'vanishing act of women at the top', where many women leave their jobs, get sidelined in certain types of jobs, which typically lack decision-making power, or get stuck in jobs with low career prospects.

She spoke about the need for women to adopt strategies to gain leadership positions and this includes looking at how women can be persuaded to come forward for leadership positions, how they can be integrated into the social networks that predominate for men, how women can become more visible, and how to keep women on track and prevent them from leaving jobs that potentially could lead to leadership roles. These strategies are relevant to women in the trade union movement and include:

- Connecting yourself to decision makers;
- Becoming part of internal and external networks;
- Preparing yourself for new professional and leadership options;
- Making sure that your professional image is visible and portrays your skills and accomplishments;
- Voicing your ambition and make it known that you are interested to become a leader;
- Becoming invaluable to your organisation;
- Communicating your contributions and take credit for your achievements;
- Assessing how your skills could be transferable to leadership positions;
- Taking part in cross-gender mentoring programmes;
- Supporting other women who are seeking leadership roles.

“Formal and informal networking can be developed strategically. Reciprocity is part of networking and women need to know the power that they have, they need to value the knowledge and contribution that they bring to networking... If women are to be more confident then they have to part of these networks and structures”.

The lessons from the business community are that women need to look at their own leadership skills. This is particularly relevant for trade unions as they are important actors in the workplace and in the economy, and women in trade unions provide important role models for other women.

¹⁰ - 'De Zijderoute naar de top: Strategisch leiderschap voor vrouwen' (The Silk Road to the Top: Strategic leadership for women). ISBN 9789047002604 . The book will be published in English under the title 'The Female Leadership Paradox' early 2011 (Palgrave Macmillan) .

.....
 *“Growing confidence in yourself and a group of women is very important for trade unions – if you don’t believe in it yourself you won’t persuade others... Women need to promote themselves and start acting as leaders before they get into a leadership position, this is crucial if women are to have credibility”*

Leadership styles are changing and some of the best leaders today are those that also display ‘female’ qualities, who connect to their audiences and show empathy. At the Luxembourg conference she gave the examples of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama of this style. She cited the example of Norway where women have become used to being in leadership positions in the public authorities. The introduction of quotas on company boards and in the public authorities has led to many talented women coming forward, resulting in a ‘home grown talent pool’ from which women are recruited.

.....
 *“It is important to use mentoring as a tool and to find the qualities for interacting with the CEO or leader in the company and from this to develop a strategic rather than a personal reaction”.*

The initiatives that have been put in place to improve the representation of women on company boards also have lessons for trade unions. For example, legislation on quotas for board membership in Norway and Spain, the introduction of mentoring programmes in companies for women who are just below board level, websites for board ready women and women’s networking activities.

These along with the exchange of best practices through the EU Commission’s Network for Women in Decision-Making in politics and the economy, are all important to stimulating better understanding of the contribution that women make to decision-making.

.....
 *“As women move up the career ladder they need to consider how they prioritise power, performance and promotion. Many women focus on task driven activities and excelling in their performance, but often loose track of other components – promotion and power – related to leadership. As a leader you need to be able to delegate and put others in charge to guide them to execute tasks. Often women don’t get taught about this”.*

b) Gender diversity and Corporate Social Responsibility

ORSE (Observatoire sur la Responsabilité Sociétale des Entreprises) is a study centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in France. The centre promotes socially responsible investment, corporate social responsibility and sustainable development. It works in partnership with trade unions, employer organisations, companies and NGOs, and collects, analyses and provides information about CSR for companies. At the Luxembourg conference, François Fatoux, illustrated ORSE work to enhance knowledge on the issue of women and decision making within corporate enterprises. ORSE has drawn up a number of good practice guides, including one on improving women’s access to decision-making positions and has a role in collating actions taken by companies, for example, in establishing quotas and in introducing measures to increase women in management. Companies give a much greater profile to professional equality for women and to promoting them into management positions, for example, companies such as France Telecom and Danone have specific agreements on this issue. Although mentoring has not yet become a topic of the negotiations, an increasing number of human resource managers are looking at introducing mentoring programmes for women. More companies are actively examining how to establish the time and resources for women’s networks on the basis that many that existed in the past failed because of a lack of resources and insufficient time. A key problem identified by many women is of time as a result work-life balance has become a key issue for employers. There are a number of specific agreements on work-life balance signed by management and unions in France Telecom and Renault. A practical guide has been drawn up by ORSE on getting men interested in family life, on the basis that attitudes and awareness needs to change so that there is a greater awareness of stereotypical barriers ¹¹.

.....
“Men can sometime feel excluded and that they are loosing out in discussions about equality. Therefore, we need to have a win – win for professional equality. This has implications for working conditions and we need to rethink of working conditions for women and men so that it is possible for work life balance to be achieved through work organisation. There is also a need to address issues of violence, since the workplace is based on models of authoritarianism and a macho environment. We need to see a complementary approach between women and men, since men are also very important to achieving equality”.
(François Fatoux, ORSE General Director)

11 - For more information on ORSE and its work see : <http://www.orse.org/>

→ Section 5: Ten things trade unions can do to achieve gender balanced representation

Drawing on the experience of the business sector, examples of trade union activities and strategies to improve gender balance and the recommendations from the Luxembourg conference, a list of ten things that trade unions can do to promote gender balance has been drawn up. These ten areas are designed to raise awareness of what unions can do, provide examples of different union approaches, and provide guidance to trade unions on how they take the issues forward in concrete ways.

→ Ten things trade unions can do to promote gender balance in union leadership and decision-making roles

The following ten points provide guidance for trade union leaders, decision-makers and members.

1. Make the argument for gender balance as a core union priority.
2. Actively promote gender equality at all levels of the organisation through gender mainstreaming.
3. Introduce statutory rule changes on gender balance.
4. Prepare women for decision-making and leadership roles.
5. Engage men to build a consensus for balanced gender representation.
6. Address the image and culture of unions.
7. Build union organisation so that women's activism, involvement decision-making roles exists at all levels of the union.
8. Ensure that trade union organisations promote gender diversity through their own internal human resources.
9. Provide gender disaggregated data.
10. Take a strategic approach and develop concrete actions plans to improve gender balance, including measures to monitor and assess the outcomes and implementation of actions

5.1 Make the arguments for gender balance as a core union priority

Many trade unions have developed gender equality policies, however, for these policies to have real effect they need to have a focus on gender balance in union decision-making structures. Participants at the Luxembourg conference were clear of the importance of making concrete arguments for gender balance and raising awareness through discussion across all levels of trade unions so that everyone takes ownership of the fight for gender equality. It is important that gender balance is endorsed at all levels of the union and that it is included as a goal in the union's statutes or Constitution.

The arguments are that gender balance can:

- Enhance union democracy and the union's external image;
- Enable unions to be dynamic, relevant and vibrant organisations that are open to new and innovative ideas, and transform union images and roles;
- Bring balance to the decision-making and negotiating table and a more holistic approach to decision-making with perspectives that are relevant to women and men in the workplace and in union membership;
- Ensure that the interests and needs of all members are met, and that unions are in touch with what women and men want in the workplace, for example, on the gender pay gap, leave arrangements and working time;

- Reignite interest in unions, particularly if unions target women and younger members to be active and take up union positions;
- Change the culture of unions and make them more relevant to all members; if women are not present in decision-making positions the union sends out the wrong message that women are not valued and do not have a voice;
- Provide role models for other women, by showing that women can be successful in breaking through the glass ceiling and become inspiring and effective leaders;
- Have a positive impact on recruitment and organising in trade unions, and impact on the active participation of women at all levels, including women members who work part-time or on temporary contracts;
- Ensure that trade unions are at the cutting edge of gender representation so that their roles and actions positively shape gender representation and equality across society.

5.2 Actively promote gender equality at all levels of the organisation through gender mainstreaming

The active promotion of gender equality at all level of trade union organisations is integral to achieving gender balance. Participants at the Luxembourg conference highlighted the importance of unions adopting and implementing gender equality policies, with a specific focus on gender mainstreaming. In doing so gender equality should be at the centre of all union activities and functions:

- Gender equality is a fundamental principle of social democracy and social progress and empowers both male and female workers;
- Through gender mainstreaming unions can achieve equality and solidarity between women and men in the labour market and thereby increase their visibility and relevance;
- Gender equality is an important union value and will help unions to develop and grow, is a tool for driving social progress and can empower male and female workers;
- Gender equality is a way forward for changing the culture of trade unions away from the male norm, to one that reflects the membership of the union.

.....
 *“Gender mainstreaming and gender budgets need to be written into budgets and should be mandatory. This is the only way that unions can effectively and systematically ensure that there is a gender perspective in all of its activities, including the budget”*

The conclusions from the Luxembourg conference were that clear gender mainstreaming policies are an essential part of union action to improve gender balance. This is particularly because there is a need for a more concerted effort by the trade unions to address the structural barriers faced by women and to press for equal opportunities to be written into all agreements, regulations and legislation, so that gender is mainstreamed across all union functions. In addition, some unions are beginning to consider how gender budgeting can be implemented in their budgetary processes.

→ Examples of trade union policies and action to implement gender mainstreaming

FGTB, Belgium. In 2004 FGTB signed the **Charter on Gender Mainstreaming**, along with the other Belgian trade union confederations, which has led to a new approach in the union and a system for integrating gender into all of its activities, including achieving a balanced representation of women and men in its decision-making bodies.

Gender mainstreaming is seen as crucial as the basis for changing trade union culture and therefore to achieving gender balance in decision-making.

The Charter makes the case for gender mainstreaming by stressing that equality between men and women is a principle of social democracy and is a fundamental value that not only drives social progress but is a tool to empower male and female workers: *“As a social actor, the union has a role to play in the elimination of all discrimination and in particular in the promotion of equality between men and women. In addition, for the FGTB gender mainstreaming is necessary for the legitimacy and credibility of trade unions in the future. Indeed, it is about the emancipation of all workers through greater democracy and equality in the labour market and in our own structure”*.

The Charter sets out the benefits of gender equality to union organisations and to women and men on the basis that “the emancipation of all workers, women and men, and at the same time a key to its success”. FGTB translated this charter into statutory changes on gender balance, including the creation of a specific gender department, a yearly equal pay day campaign, yearly action plans and instruments such as a general guide for trade union representations on integrating gender mainstreaming into collective bargain-

ing¹² as well as a equal pay guide¹³. The gender department also organised specific training for negotiators to enable them to develop a gender perspective.

CGIL, Italy: In 2008 CGIL introduced a **social budget** as part of a new accountability culture in the union and to create new spaces of trust and connection to those that they represent. The confederation is aware that putting in place specific policies is crucial to changing the organisation, addressing preconceived stereotypes and changing attitudes and awareness of the role and contribution of women to decision-making. The recently introduced social budget includes a gender budget tool, which implements a gender proofing to enable all budgetary decisions to be assessed from the perspective of gender equality. This is seen as being critical to ensuring that all policies take into account the wider equality agenda and to achieving equality of access to leadership and decision-making positions in CGIL and to taking into consideration the personal, social, working and economic differences between women and men.

“The gender budget is a tool for social justice and equal opportunities. We are very proud of it. The underlying rationale of the gender budget is that the economic policies and choices of CGIL are not gender neutral, in fact they have a different impact on women and men based on their different roles, social positions and power. Analysing the budget from a gender view means realising who are the recipients of the benefits and the effects of the policies and action and, at the same time, enables the integration of CGIL policies with national and European policies”. (Aitanga Giraldi, CGIL)

The arguments about gender equality and gender mainstreaming can be equally applied to collective bargaining. Mainstreaming gender into collective bargaining is viewed as critical to integrating a gender perspective into the negotiating process.

.....
 *“When men are faced with negotiations on wages or working time, they prioritise the money, while women often want working time reductions. It is important to ensure there is a gender lens in the role of negotiating teams. Women should not just be negotiating on women’s issues but general issues, and they can bring a gender lens to the negotiating table”.*
.....

In addition, achieving gender balance in collective bargaining teams is vital to this process. Gender mainstreaming was highlighted as a core trade union objective at the Luxembourg conference.

Some participants highlighted the need to address how gender balance can also assist in reaching agreements by consensus and particularly because a gender perspective can help to shape alternatives.

➔ **Examples of trade union actions on gender mainstreaming and collective bargaining**

MSZOSZ, Hungary has put in place a number of measures to ensure that women’s issues are mainstreamed into the collective bargaining process and to ensure that women are present in negotiating teams. The confederation has put in place **guidelines on gender equality** and the Women’s Board of the confederation draws up annual guidelines on the main issues regulated in collective agreements. The guidelines provide solutions for negotiators and prepare negotiators to ensure that a gender perspective is included in all collective agreements, for example with regarding to working time schedules, reconciliation of work and family life or career planning. The confederation has found that gender mainstreaming is more likely to take place when women are present in collective bargaining teams and has experienced specific problems in getting union negotiators implement gender mainstreaming. The confederation has also put in place some measures to improve the representation of women, including training for women in negotiating skills and to enable them to carry out trade union activities, reserved seats for women with equal voting rights and double candidatures.

LO-Norway has introduced **guidelines and a checklist** on gender mainstreaming and training for negotiating teams on how to engender the collective bargaining process. A particularly important part of this is to ensure that women are present in negotiating teams. Because collective agreements form the basis of the Norwegian negotiations system and the content of wage agreements, it has been important for the confederation to ensure that there is gender balance in the process. Gender mainstreaming has impacted on the content of negotiations and the LO prepares background documents with a special focus on gender equality and equal pay for use in collective bargaining rounds and includes women’s issues on the bargaining agenda. Overall,

11 - See : Guide FGTB for equality between women and men: *Le gender mainstreaming ou l’approche intégrée du genre en 10 points clés*

11 - See www.equalpayday.be

the presence of women and men in bargaining units reflects the membership of both sexes and this has ensured that the interests of women and men are represented. The Confederation is of the view that *“There are no longer arguments used for not including women in the bargaining team, and they are in fact always included. This is sometimes more a question about which strategies to choose and how the chosen strategies can influence on women’s direct involvement”*.

ÖGB, Austria. In 2005 the women’s organisation of ÖGB developed a list of measures to be taken in the field of collective bargaining, which were subsequently updated in 2008. This included the implementation of concrete decisions, the **monitoring of bargaining contracts regarding their gender dimension and other equality aspects**, e.g. the evaluation of salary levels and bonus payments. The union encourages and supports women to take part in negotiating teams through networking, information and the organisation of conferences and open space events for women involved in the bargaining process.

LBAS, Latvia. The Latvian Trade Union Confederation has produced a guide on gender equality in collective bargaining, based on the European Framework of Actions on Gender Equality. The guide, first published in 2007 “Collective Bargaining Agreement in Every Enterprise” is now in its second edition and has been widely used by the trade unions and by the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia in their work.

The guide aims to ensure the integration of gender equality in collective bargaining (through planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring; and includes reference to work-life balance, training, decision-making and anti-discrimination policy), and cover all sectors of the economy.

A second guide has been produced on the role of collective bargaining in labour relations (2009) that sought to build the capacity of trade unions and promote media and awareness of the role of women in leadership positions. A magazine is published in Latvian and Russian and gives a profile and focus to women in decision-making positions and gender equality policies. *“Unions need to build in more specific activities for young women and to build the capacity of trade unions in society and improve their image; specific activities are needed to motivate women to leadership positions; to keep women in these positions to prevent them leaving these positions”*. (Ariadna Albelina, LBAS)

The checklist below provides guidance on how to improve gender balance on collective bargaining teams and to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all negotiations and agreements can be achieved by implementing the following.

Gender mainstreaming and collective bargaining checklist

- ✓ Organise a gender equality training programme for existing, potential and future male and female negotiators.
- ✓ Organise a meeting on equality before the collective bargaining committee meets.
- ✓ Introduce a gender mainstreaming approach so that an equality dimension can be integrated into collective bargaining and so that priorities for action concerning gender equality can be established and discussed.
- ✓ Develop methods for evaluating and following up on the implementation of decisions and agreements regarding gender equality through collective bargaining.
- ✓ Put in place a system for monitoring the numbers of women and men on collective bargaining teams.
- ✓ Create special seats for women on collective bargaining teams or set targets to achieve the representation of women by a certain date; this should be proportional to the representation of women and men in the industry or sector.
- ✓ Ensure that where there is a male representative his alternate is a woman; this can be particularly useful in providing women with experience to participate on the collective bargaining team.

5.3 Introduce statutory rule changes on gender balance

As a consequence of the lack or low level of progress in the area of gender balanced representation in decision making structures, a number of confederations have put in place statutory rule changes in recent years to complement existing policies for achieving gender balance in decision-making structures. There are various ways in which unions have approached the issue of gender balance in their statutes. These include:

- ➔ **A general commitment towards gender equality**, usually placed in the preamble or among the principles for which the Confederation strives.

CGT-France has 735.000 members, of whom 34% are women. The CGT Statutes adopted in 1995 addresses the principle of gender equality as one of the main values that are at the heart of its action: *“The CGT actively promotes equality between women and men, freedoms and trade union rights, the full exercising of citizenship, protection of the environment, peace and disarmament, human rights and friendship between peoples (...). The principles of equality, solidarity, listening, tolerance and fulfillment of diversity for which it works animate its internal democratic life”*.

→ Provisions promoting a fair representation of women, setting out **goals and objectives** (these can be phased over time), and that commit the union to certain targets for representation of women. An important precondition is that the achievement of these targets is regularly monitored and an assessment of improvements made.

ACLVB-CGSL, Belgium has 265,000 members of whom women are 42%. CGSLB Statutes clearly states that the union *“integrates the principle of gender equality in its functioning, its internal organisation as well as in its awareness raising activities. “The CGSLB strives towards a balanced representation of men and women within its own bodies, in organs of workers’ representation and in general in all areas of social dialogue”*¹⁴. The Statutes laid down that the National Bureau is in charge of drawing an annual report in relation to the achievement of this objective within the CGSLB and its members. As a consequence, the confederation monitors and publishes data on gender in the workforce and in decision-making positions in trade union bodies and holds seminars on gender related issues.

The union has put in place a number of gender equality measures designed to improve gender balance. An action plan «Femme & Syndicat», which aims to increase women in decision-making positions, was adopted in 2008. The confederation believes that it is very important to have women in decision-making and collective bargaining positions and this is seen as being essential to wider societal equality and social justice. The union has introduced campaigns to encourage women candidates for union decision-making positions and runs training courses for women to prepare them for union roles.

→ Quotas which require a **certain number** of women to be represented for specific positions or within governing bodies. Quotas are often expressed as a **percentage**.

ICTU, Ireland has a total membership of 812,848, of whom 51% are women. ICTU has a commitment to gender equality in its structures and has introduced flexible working hours and the priority recruitment of women in areas where they are under-represented. The Constitution has been amended to improve gender balance in the election of members to the Executive Council, which requires the selection of **at least eight women members, and that at least one of the Vice-Presidents must be a woman**. In practice, more than eight women are now elected onto the ICTU Executive and there has been a very positive impact of the greater visibility of women and on the culture of the union. It was important from the start to ensure that women could be elected to ordinary as well as reserved seats. The General Secretary and the President are both men, while one man and one woman are in the position of Vice President.

ICTU has introduced a package of measures to support their commitments to gender balance, including the LIFT project which provides training and mentoring for women. A Resolution and action plan on gender representation, adopted at the Biennial Delegate Conference in 2009 commits ICTU to: *“Ensuring that our own structures genuinely reflect the diversity of our membership; that equality is not an optional extra but part of our core work; that during this downturn we promote solidarity between all workers, regardless of gender, race or nationality”*. This also sets out objectives and a system for monitoring the implementation of the objectives by the Congress Women’s Committee and the Executive Council.

ÖGB, Austria has 1,238.590 members, of whom 34% are women. The 2007 Congress implemented a new quota system for the participation of women at all levels of the union, including decision-making bodies. The quota is determined on the basis of the **percentage** of women in each decision-making area at the union level, federal state level and regional level.

Since 2009 the union introduced new regulations in their Statutes to enable them to fill the missing seats, if a quota of women has not been reached, by nominating women through the relevant women’s department. In addition to the quota system the union has carried out training for female trade unionists and is required to monitor data by gender in the workforce and in decision-making positions. Currently the Confederation’s two General Secretaries are men and there are two Vice-Presidents, one male, one female. Only two of the eight Confederal Secretaries are women. Women are 46% of the 24 person Executive Committee, and 40% of the 106 person National Executive Committee

¹⁴ - Art.2 “Dispositions transitoires”, Statuts CGSLB (2007)

→ A certain number of unions have introduced a provision in their Constitutions setting **quotas for their decision-making positions that is proportional to the membership**, i.e. proportional representation. Proportional representation is generally set in relation to delegates to union Congress or elected positions to decision-making bodies so that representation is at least proportional to the membership of the union.

UGT, Spain has a membership of 880,000, 33.36% of whom are women. The union's Statute introduced quotas in 1998 for the participation of women in management and decision-making structures that is proportional to the female membership in the union. This requires a minimum of 20% representation of women and men in UGT decision-making bodies, with an objective of ensuring that there is representation in proportion to male and female members of each of the federations and unions that make up the Confederation. The Confederation has also drawn up an action plan for equality and a campaign to increase the representation and participation of women in the union. The impact of these measures, first introduced in 1998, is that women's representation at all levels of the UGT have improved significantly. Women are currently 46% of the Confederal Executive Commission and 39% of the Confederal Committee, and were 33% of delegates to the last Confederal Congress. The Secretariat is made up of five men and six women

FGTB/ABVV, Belgium has a membership of nearly 1.5 million members, of whom 43% are women. From June 2006 the union introduced a statutory requirement for a minimum representation of 1/3 of women in all decision bodies.

FGTB's General Secretary is a woman and the President is a man. Women are just under 30% of the Confederations' Secretariat and 34% of the Confederations' Bureau. 24% of women were represented at the last Congress of the Confederation in 2010. Although this represents substantial improvements in gender representation, the union is aware that more needs to be done, particularly in the regional organisations and branches of the FGTB. The signing of the FGTB Charter on Gender Mainstreaming provided the union with the political will to move forward to achieve political equality through a better gender balance. Some of these Constitutional changes have aimed to change mentalities, while the majority of the changes aimed to achieve a better balance of women and men in the leadership of the union and to strengthen the participation and action of women through women's offices. The renewed Constitution stresses the will to achieve in the long run gender parity in all his decision-making bodies and ensures a representation of one-third of women or at least a representation of women that is proportional to the female membership at each level. Where this representation is not achieved through the election process a number of corrective measures are required to be put in place.

However, a recent survey carried out by FGTB in these bodies as well as in the decision-making bodies of the branch trade unions found that the union has not achieved the desired gender balance in managerial and leadership positions. The confederation therefore launched an internal discussion paper after the 2010 Congress in order to consider the changes that need to be made to achieve the statutory changes made in 2006.

The data from the survey has formed the basis for a profound discussion in all the decision-making bodies with the objective to develop improvements concerning the representation of women towards the next Congress in 2014 through the development of effective action plans.

LO-Norway has 865,000 members of whom 51% are women. Today 60% of all employed women are unionised. LO-Norway has a specific policy to increase gender balance in decision-making. LO-Norway's Constitution states that, where possible, both women and men shall have a representation of at least 40%, the implementation of which is regularly monitored. The Confederation has also put in place measures to facilitate its female employees including regulating the timing of meetings so that they do not cause problems for people with family responsibilities, as well as flexible working hours and mentoring schemes for women to enter leadership and decision-making positions. The outcome of these measures is that the confederation has a good level of representation of women in senior positions. The General Secretary, one of the Vice Presidents and two of the three Confederal Secretaries and the Treasurer are women. Women were 46.6% of those attending the LO Congress, 40% of the Executive Committee and 57% of the Steering Committee. In the Secretariat four women and six men hold head of department positions. According to Karin Enodd, LO-Norway Senior Advisor: *"Democracy, diversity, decision-making bodies should reflect the composition of the membership, man and women together develop a more coherent policy taking better care of the interests of both women and men"*.

European Metalworkers Federation (EMF) represents 6 million members from 75 union organisations, of whom approximately 20% are women. Women have been traditionally under-represented, in proportion to their membership, in both the EMF decision-making bodies and those of its affiliated unions. On average women are 10% of those represented on the EMF Executive Committee and Steering Committee. To rectify this gender imbalance the EMF has attempted to introduce a proportional representation quota of 20% for women in all EMF decision-making bodies including the EMF Executive Committee and the in the main policy committees (Industrial Policy, Company Policy and Collective Bargaining Policy).

Despite recognition of the importance of improving the role of women in decision-making positions the EMF Executive did not agree to the proposal to ensure 20% representation proportional to the membership of

women on all EMF decision-making bodies. According to the EMF's Equality Adviser *"The EMF represents 20% women. The representation should be proportional. In times of economic crisis we see that the majority of new union members are women. They should be represented accordingly...The work should start at grass root level, not at European level. The aim of women in decision-making is unrealistic, but a cultural change is needed before it can be done"*.

→ In a limited number of observed cases, trade unions have adopted provisions setting **gender parity** in their statutory decision-making bodies.

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) represents nearly 10 million members in public service unions, of whom 68.5% are women. The Federation has put in place a number of strategies to increase the representation of women in negotiating teams and in mainstreaming gender, for example through an equal pay checklist and guidelines on gender equality for collective bargaining.

The EPSU Gender Equality Action plan 2004-2009 set out objectives to improve women's representation in EPSU structures and for a quantified objective on reducing the gender pay gap. The Constitution states that "All affiliates will strive towards the attainment of equal representation of women and men in their own decision-making bodies. EPSU is committed to achieve 50 % women's representation in its own structures."

In addition, since 2009 targets have been introduced for EPSU's Sectoral Committees for the representation of women proportionate to the membership of the sector concerned. There are, however, no sanctions for non-compliance, although delegates' financial assistance can be withdrawn for failing to ensure gender parity at Congress. The EPSU Constitution has strict rules regarding gender balance of the positions of President and three Vice-Presidents, to ensure that two of the four positions are held by women. Currently the General Secretary of EPSU is a woman, the President is a woman and one of the Vice-Presidents is a woman. Women were 46.5% of delegates to the EPSU 2009 Congress and are currently between 40 and 44% of Executive Committee members.

→ Other quota examples are those provisions requiring a **'gender alternate'** in leadership positions, for example, if the union President is a man, then the Vice-President has to be a woman, and vice-versa.

European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) has 2.5 million members of whom 40.5% are women. The Federation has put in place a specific policy and new rules in their Constitution to improve the presence of women in decision-making bodies. This includes reserved seats for women, a policy of proportional representation on EFFAT decision-making bodies and the publication of data on women in the workforce and in union decision-making positions. The EFFAT Constitution states that one of its objectives is to 'strengthen women's participation in decision-making in trade union bodies at all levels' (Art 1.1), and stipulates the need for 'targeted measures to achieve a balanced participation of men and women at all levels' (Art 1.2). In addition to proportional representation, those holding mandates and their substitutes should be of opposite sex. If these conditions are not fulfilled there is a requirement to refer the issue to the Credentials Committee or the Constitution Committee. The Constitution sets out the minimum number of female and male delegates to the Congress and the Executive Committee, a requirement that the President and Deputy President have to be of opposite sex and that each Vice-President has a deputy who is of the opposite sex to the Vice-President and who has voting rights in the absence of the Vice-President. A commitment was made at the 2009 Congress to develop a gender equality action plan in 2010, with a timetable for implementation of measures and a monitoring framework.

→ Provisions for **reserved seats** for women or other target groups on decision-making bodies; in addition to reserved seats, women can also be elected to ordinary seats on decision-making bodies;

DGB, Germany has a membership of 6.2 million, of whom 30% are women. The organisation has put in place a number of methods to enable its affiliated federations to improve the representation of women in decision-making and collective bargaining, and to mainstream gender equality. DGB has introduced a specific policy that is designed to increase the presence of women in decision-making bodies. This has led to reserved seats for women with equal voting rights in decision-making bodies and places reserved for women only in the case of elections. DGB publishes data on gender in the workforce and in union decision-making positions. DGB has introduced procedures for regularising the timing of meetings so that they do not disadvantage parents and to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak at meetings. Claudia Menne, the head of DGB's Gender Equality Department believes that it is important to have a policy on women in decision-making *"Because the total female membership 'share' is not reflected in all positions of the trade union officials. The total number of female employees is higher than 30% but in leading positions women are underrepresented"*. The President of DGB is a man and the Vice-President is a woman. Two women are represented on the Steering Committee of 5 members, and four women are represented on the Executive Committee of 22 members. There are 17 heads of department in the DGB Secretariat of whom 6 are held by women and 11 by men.

➔ In other cases gender balance during elections is ensured through a **'double candidature'** system requiring a man and a woman to stand for all elected positions.

CFDT France has a membership of 814.636, of whom approximately 45% are women. Article 18 of the CFDT Statutes foresees that: "for the elections of the members of the National Bureau of CFDT the cross-industry federations and regional unions may present two candidates, of whom at least one must be a woman".

One of the key priority areas established at the Luxembourg conference is that statutory changes are needed on gender balance, which may or may not include quotas to guarantee women's representation. Clearly the situation is not the same amongst the different ETUC affiliates.

According to a survey realised by the ETUC in 2006 two thirds of the ETUC members' statutes contain a specific provision to promote gender equality between women and men and/or a provision to gender balance in decision-making bodies. So do almost all Industry federations Statutes (8 out of 12). The Statutes of 13 Confederations and of 3 EIFs, on the contrary, do not mention gender equality of any sort ¹⁵.

There was a general agreement amongst delegates at the Luxembourg Conference that the quota system is an important tool, but it has to be part of a package of measures that support the implementation of quotas, since quotas alone will not give gender balance and access to power for women.

It is also relevant as many unions do not effectively enforce quotas, often using the argument that there are insufficient women to take up leadership and decision-making roles;

.....
 ☞ *"We want to get women in power so that our unions and politics is gender balanced and that is right. The quota system is seen as a useful tool that can achieve significant changes overnight. This can make it easier to break the culture and traditions. But we have to have an active gender equality policy taking place alongside a quota system"*.

Quotas or no quotas?

At the Luxembourg conference some conference participants expressed a preference for quotas based on principle of proportionality and also that they should be binding. For others there was no consensus regarding the need for quotas, since alone they are not sufficient to improve gender balance. As a result quotas were only seen to be relevant if they included a range of support measures to ensure balanced gender representation.

It was suggested that the ETUC introduces a control mechanism for the follow up of actions amongst its members and to put in place stronger measures to ensure an improved gender balance on its decision-making bodies and those of affiliates.

There was significant debate in the workshops about how quotas have worked in some countries.

For example, in Norway legislation in 2003 introduced quotas for women's representation on company boards, and since then legislation has been passed in Spain and the Netherlands, and legislation is being debated in the

¹⁵ - "Women in trade unions: bridging the gaps", ETUC (2007), pp.26. According to this study, the confederation statutes that appear do not contain a reference to gender equality amongst their constitutions' provisions are: UATUC-Croatia, CMKOS-Check Republic, FTF-Denmark, CFTC and FO-France, GSEE-Greece, MOSz and MszOSz-Hungary, LDF-Lithuania, GWU-Malta, MHP-Netherlands, OPZZ and SOLIDARNOSC Poland.

French senate with a view to introducing a similar quota, while Britain, Germany and Sweden are also considering introducing similar legislation.

.....
 *“Today women are over 40% of those sitting on Boards. Companies were given three years to implement the quota. And they did, by 1 January 2006 not one company closed because they couldn’t find women. Wise people from the beginning saw that we needed to do something to ease people into positions, this avoids discussions about time, family responsibilities, culture etc. We have to take the hard discussions in the union movement to take the issue forward”.*
.....

In Norway 80% of women are in paid work, half of all government ministers are female, and the country has achieved over 40% representation of women on company Boards. The Labour Party and the Social Left Party first introduced a 40% quota for the political representation of women in the latter part of the 1970s. The trade unions adopted this framework into their statutes in the mid-1980s. The Norwegian Equality Act was amended in 1981 to include a provision on quotas, while a quota system for company boards was introduced in legislation in 2003, requiring state-owned companies to appoint 40% women to company boards by 2006 and publicly listed companies by 2008. At the time business leaders were of the view that Norway did not have sufficient women with experience to meet the 40% quota and at the time women were only 7% of those represented on boards. Companies could be closed down with they did not meet the quota. However, since the implementation of the legislation the numbers of female directors in Norway’s 400 companies has grown above 40% and more than a quarter of the board seats in the 65 largest private companies are held by women. Having a more balanced gender representation on boards has not just been about social justice and gender equality. It has been part of the business case for diversity in Norway, where quotas are seen important to achieving a competitive edge by tapping into female talent and ensuring that the best people are employed. This is on the basis that having diversity in the workforce at all levels, for example, by age, gender and ethnic background, can result in better business decisions and choices.

5.4 Prepare women for decision-making and leadership roles: training and mentoring

Many of the participants at the Luxembourg conference reiterated the importance of ensuring that women are trained and prepared for decision-making and leadership roles, particularly because they may face a hostile male culture or a lack of confidence to take up these roles. A key issue raised is the need to demystify union policies and procedures and provide targeted information about union decision-making structures. This is seen to be good for both women and men in the trade union movement, as it can help to promote more openness and transparency of union policies and structures. A number of examples were given of specific training course run for women to prepare them for leadership. One example is the ‘Women Can’ training run by LO-S and the Social Democratic Party. It is an interactive course that aims to build women’s capacity to take up leadership positions in Sweden. Another is the LIFT programme in Ireland (described below).

Unions can also use and develop the expertise of their own education and training departments to provide training on gender equality. A very useful tool is to undertake training of trainers programmes on gender equality in order to filter this expertise and knowledge to trainers at all levels.

.....
 *“Awareness and training for women and men is the key to achieving our goal”.*
.....

 *“Women need training in how to participate in union workshops, negotiating teams and in how to get into leadership positions”.*
.....

 *“We need this knowledge for good networking – otherwise women have the skills and competencies”.*
.....



LIFT

(Leadership Initiative for Females in Trade Unions) programme, Ireland

The LIFT programme is a good example of how women's roles can be promoted in the trade union movement by raising awareness of women as well as of trade union leaders and men in the trade union movement. LIFT a partnership between social partner bodies in Ireland and was funded under the EUs EQUAL programme. LIFT was launched following the ICTU Congress in 2005 which recognised the challenge of 'proportionality' of women's representation, especially at senior levels of trade union organisation. The overall aim of the LIFT Programme was to support organisational change and facilitate women's empowerment and skills for their participation in union leadership. This has included training, mentoring and coaching to build capacity within the movement. The learning from LIFT is now being mainstreaming across unions in Ireland and there is evidence that the programme has contributed to some women's progression to leadership positions in trade unions and has helped to bring a collective focus to recruitment, modernisation, sustainability and revitalisation of the trade union movement. LIFT shows the potential for leadership development and a new set of leadership tools are now in place, which include networking, coaching and mentoring¹⁶.

"In Ireland women's networks are very important and have been promoted through the LIFT programme. As well as the actions carried out under LIFT, ICTU has recently also run a 10 week course for women in leadership in unions to get specific skills to go into leadership. Preparing women for leadership roles is very important". (Pauline Buchanan, ICTU Northern Ireland)

Mentoring programmes

Mentoring can be very important part of preparation for leadership roles, helping to build women's capacity and knowledge of leadership and decision-making roles, and supporting them in the process. It was suggested that mentoring can be provided by older experienced women for younger women and is seen as a concrete and realistic way to achieve leadership. This could be developed with retired members who often want to continue to make a contribution to women in trade unions.



UGT

"Women Leaders School"

In 2006 UGT launched a project entitled «Women Leaders School», with the aim to: facilitate meetings, training, and deliberations in connection with leadership from a gender perspective within trade union organisations; analyse the situation of women in positions of responsibility within trade union organisations; provide the keys to understanding what obstacles hamper women's access to positions of responsibility; share the experiences of women who have exercised leadership in positions of responsibility, from a gender perspective, and who have helped to enhance equality in various contexts; identify the variables in new forms of leadership, positive measures and the introduction of a gender perspective into trade union organisations; identify the achievements of the past thirty years, since the introduction of legislation to promote equality; train in various leadership skills from a gender perspective and finally encourage the establishment of networks for exchanging knowledge and experiences.

The School consists in an annual happening which gathers together women trade unionists belonging to UGT España throughout the country, who already occupy positions of responsibility and decision-making posts in various trade union spheres, from executive committees to industrial trade union sections, and is organised on a rotating basis. The average attendance each year is of 150 women. An increase in attendance has been registered since the launching of the initiative. During the course of the three days participants take part in focused discussions, roundtables, workshops and leisure activities. The School has a dedicated webpage in UGT-E website as well a facebook page which enables participants to keep in regular contact¹⁷.

Female networking to build confidence and knowledge

Female networking is seen as being very important to provide a supporting environment for women entering decision-making and leadership positions. It can also help to break down the isolation faced by women in senior positions and keep them in touch with women's issues on the ground. Women's networking has been introduced in a number of countries and often takes place through women's committees or other designated structures.

¹⁶ - See : <http://www.ictu.ie/projects/lift/>

¹⁷ - Website: www.ugt.es/Mujer/Escuela_Mujeres/escuelademujeres.html and <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Escuela-de-Mujeres-Dirigentes-de-UGT/147826359522>

The Irish LIFT project is a good example of a project that promoted female networking; while LO Norway did have an active female network, which ended after women came into the union leadership.



Eurocadres FEMANET Network

FEMANET is a European network of female professional and managerial staff and women who belong to trade unions in European Union Member States whose goal is to promote female P&MS in the corporate world. The network was launched by Eurocadres in 2000 and it consist today of over 100 members, primarily female managers (members of EUROCADRES affiliates) and trade union officers working with related issues in their unions.

FEMANET works on the following subjects in particular: facilitating access for women to professional and managerial functions; reconciliation of professional and family life; negotiations on professional equality in companies; corporate culture. The priorities of FEMANET are to: promote contacts between the members, helping them to build their personal networks; facilitate exchanges of experiences, best practices and information in the network. Femanet members have also initiated various transnational projects that focus on improving female leadership roles and women in decision making¹⁸.

5.5 Engage men to build a consensus for balanced gender representation

There was a broad consensus at the Luxembourg conference that it is important to engage men and ensure that men understand the value of balanced gender representation, and provide support for it. In addition, work life balance is critical as this requires an equal responsibility borne by men, which in turn should be taken up in legislation and practice.

.....
 ☞ *“Men need to be encouraged to support gender balanced representation; men can be trapped in gender roles in the same way as women and it is essential that men realise the great potential and advantage for unions if unions are more gender balanced”*

There are strong arguments that can be used about how gender equality benefits men as well as women:

- Most men are not always aware of belonging to a gender because society has been shaped by male norms and values;
- Men should be actively involved in the process of improving gender balance, because they too are prisoners of role models that limit their actions;
- Gender mainstreaming is not a question of women it is an issue of empowerment and involvement of all workers: women and men;
- There are links for both genders; there will be no change for and with women without changing the reality for and with men.

5.6 Address the image and culture of unions

Participants at the Luxembourg conference were in consensus about the need to address gender stereotypes and the image of trade unions. While the media do sometimes present very positive images of women in trade unions, unions have a general image of being ‘male’. Gender balance will help to ensure that unions have a modern outward image and a culture of openness. A key issue linked to the culture of unions is the way that time issues, the location of meetings and work-life balance are addressed for women and men.

Breaking down gender stereotypes is not just the responsibility of trade unions, action needs to take place at all levels starting with the way that girls and boys are socialised and educated from a very young age. However, trade unions can play a leading role in shaping and influencing gender stereotypes, particularly through equality practices and actions that address issues such as the undervaluing of women’s work and skills and the valuing of women’s talents and leadership styles. Participants in the Luxembourg conference shared their views that unions need to provide gender sensitisation and awareness courses for both women and men in the trade union membership, and promote a discussion about union culture and gender equality.

¹⁸ - Website : <http://www.eurocadres.org/spip.php?rubrique67>

.....
 ☞ *“We need to address the image of trade unions in people’s minds and in the media. Trade unions need to put in place external communications strategies and develop relationships with journalists in order to help us improve our image and culture and show that unions are for women”.*

☞ *“This also means addressing cultural issues and pushing for changes in the education system so that stereotypes are addressed at a young age. Girls and young women need to be educated in the same way as boys and men so that they have a career plan and confidence to take leadership roles”.*

☞ *“We also need more transparency in election procedures. If we want to change union culture we have to do networking and to change union culture. Transparency is crucial to this”.*

Addressing gender stereotypes and prejudices can be part of a union’s gender equality strategy and policy. This is crucial to achieving gender balance because:

- Stereotypes are based on a set of prejudices which are collectively internalised. They depend on the environment and society and are rooted in habits, education, culture and the media. However, stereotypes are not immutable, they can be modified;
- Stereotypes exist for both men and women and other groups within society. They ascribe social roles to men and women roles in all stages of their lives, both in professional and private life. They act as barriers to achieving gender equality and gender balance in organisations;
- Men are generally less aware of gender stereotypes since the male gender is considered the ‘norm’, whereas women are often more aware of their gender because they do not belong to the ‘norm’. This can also mean that women reproduce and implement, in the same way as men, stereotypes about themselves or others.

The FGTB’s general guide on gender mainstreaming, referred to above, highlights the centrality of addressing gender stereotypes and the impact they have on women taking up decision-making roles.



CSC, Belgium Campaign “Together, let’s wipe out clichés and get to work for equality!”

In March 2010 CSC Belgium launched the awareness raising campaign « together, let’s wipe out clichés and get to work for equality! ». The Campaign consisted in a number of coordinated measures and activities with both a humorous but symbolic spirit. During the month of the Campaign, trade union leaders and officers met with policy and company representatives to raise awareness on gender stereotypes still affecting work places. Gadgets were produced, such as sponges and aprons with the slogan of the campaign. The Campaign got large attention from media and the general public and it has been positively assessed by the promoters, which see the trade union role as key to change gender stereotypes at work and in the society at large. *“Sex is a biologically determined attribute. Gender, on the other hand, indicates the social and/or cultural context in which men and women evolve as individuals.*

In many social environments, and especially in the world of labour, technical, practical and management tasks are perceived as typically masculine. Family tasks seem, for their part, to be more left to women. This is a situation that the union can change. An egalitarian approach, devoid of prejudices, will allow many clichés to be eradicated. If men and women are treated as equals, they will be offered the same opportunities, as well as the same salary.”

5.7 Build union organisation so that women’s activism, decision-making and involvement exists at all levels of the union

Building union organisation so that women’s activism, decision-making and involvement exists at all levels of the union is crucial if women are to take up leadership and decision-making roles in the future. In addition, unions need to ensure that strategies are in place to target women promotion and progression into leadership roles. Unions can adopt pro-active strategies to encourage, nurture and target women for leadership positions. This work needs to start at the grass roots of trade union organisations so that women can be encouraged to become active in trade union work. Participants at the Luxembourg Conference were of the view that these pro-active strategies should include:

- Active nomination and recruitment strategies to target women who have the potential for leadership and decision-making roles;
- Implement rules to ensure that there is transparency in the process of nominating candidates for elected and senior positions;
- Carry out equality audits in order to identify specific wage and gender gaps in trade union organisations. Carrying out an internal equality audit can be very important to providing the leadership of trade unions with evidence of the barriers that exist in the workforce that work against unions achieving gender balance.
- Make trade union leaders and the membership aware that addressing inequalities in the labour market is core union business, and that action is needed within trade unions as employers to redress gender gaps.

Increasing the visibility of women in senior positions will be vital to improving gender balance and providing role models. The following checklist gives some suggestions about how this visibility can be promoted and women targeted through pro-active actions:

Improving women's visibility checklist

- ✓ Present positive images of women in senior positions, for example, in union reports, newsletter and publicity.
- ✓ Show senior level commitment to women in decision-making positions.
- ✓ Identify and support women who have potential for leadership positions.
- ✓ Provide professional coaching for women with potential to enable them to realise their goals and to support them through the process of applying for senior and decision-making positions.
- ✓ Consult with women to identify what barriers exist and develop policies and procedures to address these problems.
- ✓ Develop women's networks to enable women to share experiences, identify goals and gain experience.

Supporting and targeting women to take up decision-making and leadership positions checklist

- ✓ Encourage women and other under-represented groups to apply for promotion to senior management and leadership positions in trade unions.
- ✓ Provide career development and management training and development programmes for women and men who have identified potential. Consider putting in place targets to ensure that there is gender balance in these programmes.
- ✓ Put in place targeted programmes for women, including assertiveness training and confidence building, support in job application and interview skills.
- ✓ Develop a systematic approach to mapping career paths and progression through annual career progression interviews, training needs assessments and individual plans.
- ✓ Develop women's networks to provide support for and overcome isolation experienced by some women in senior positions.

5.8 Ensure that trade union organisations promote gender diversity in their own internal human resources

Having gender diversity in trade unions can help the organisation to make use of the talent of its internal human resources and thereby contribute to a more modern organisation. Carrying out an internal gender equality audit can be very useful as a means of highlighting factors that lead to gender gaps, including the gender pay gap. These factors are crucial to identifying the barriers that impact on gender diversity and gender balanced decision-making within trade unions. Gender equality audits can cover the following issues: the wage gap between women and men employees, gender differences in employment, recruitment, training and internal mobility, access to staff training, work organisation and communications. The audits should also highlight vertical segregation with regard to the difficulties that women have in gaining executive, managerial and leadership roles; and horizontal discrimination to identify which services or occupations are female dominated and where women are under-represented. Other factors include working time and the balance of full-time and part-time work. The results of an equality audit can be very helpful in identifying where there are barriers and gender gaps and thereby enabling organisations to identify a successful strategy and actions to improve access to leadership roles and remove gender gaps. Some of the strategies that unions can put in place include are included in the checklist below.

ICTU, Ireland Equality Audit: ICTU recently carried out an equality audit, which showed a significant gender divide at senior and leadership levels of the union, with a pattern of men holding the higher decision-making roles and women occupying administrative roles. There is currently only one female General Secretary of all of the affiliated unions and a low number of women represented as union Presidents. Overall women are only 15% of general secretaries and regional secretaries, only 22% of deputy general secretaries, and 33% of trade union officials. In contrast women are 85% of those providing administrative support to trade unions across the country.

TUC, UK Equality audit: the TUC carries out a bi-annual equality audit on progress on bargaining for equality at work. The audits have been important to revealing the work carried out by TUC affiliates in the area of equality. The audit covers twelve equality areas and details how unions have integrated equality into collective bargaining, with examples of some of the most important collective agreements that have been reached on equality. The most recent audit carried out in 2009 shows that many unions provide guidance on how to integrate equality into collective bargaining, with key areas including work and work-life balance, women's pay and women's employment. Despite this only around one-third of unions report that they have achieved success in bargaining with employers in the areas of women's pay and employment. The audit contains some information on women's representation in unions, but does not specifically cover women in decision-making positions.

monitored. This data can also be very useful in showing how female membership is central to future union policies and strategies on gender equality and to ensuring trade unions are recognised as being unions that promote and champion equality.

LO-Denmark Equal Opportunities Account

At its Congress in 2003, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) adopted a radical resolution on equal opportunities which focused on gender representation and mainstreaming of its organisational and political efforts. The Confederation committed itself to submit annual equal opportunities accounts, consisting in figures on affiliated members and female presence in trade-union decision making bodies.

The account, which is issued annually, also includes a gender equality audit of LO policies. The account is submitted to the LO General Council and its results are regularly assessed and spread. According to the last LO account the union has 1,300,000 members of which 49% are women.

It is important to note that even today not all ETUC members have put in place a system that provides gender disaggregated data on membership, although a commitment in this regard is endorsed in the Gender Mainstreaming Charter adopted at the Seville Congress as well in ETUC Action plans. As a result the checklist below will be valuable for trade unions in putting in place measures to provide gender data on membership and the representation of women in decision-making positions.

Checklist of actions to improve access to leadership roles within trade union organisations

- ✓ Open up vacancies and encourage women to apply for management positions;
- ✓ Create more leadership positions to enable women to gain experience;
- ✓ Establish clearly defined levels of responsibility and criteria required to achieve promotion;
- ✓ Establish a system of mentorship;
- ✓ Encourage internal mobility by providing opportunities for experience in different sections of the organisation, for example, through temporary internships;
- ✓ Provide opportunities for workers who want to develop their skills and gain higher qualifications;
- ✓ Change the corporate culture of the organisation so that it reflects and values women's roles and contributions.

Data checklist

- ✓ Develop data management systems for collecting data on the position of women and men across the organisation, and carry out an analysis on an annual basis at least.
- ✓ Provide data on the numbers of women and men in elected, leadership and decision-making bodies, including the union's Executive and Congress, as well as gender balance at the level of the Branch / Works Council, regional structure and in collective bargaining teams.
- ✓ Ensure that data is comprehensive and covers all aspects levels of union membership and employment.
- ✓ Update your data on a regular basis and track it over time so that progress to achieving equality can be monitored.
- ✓ Disseminate the data widely so as to ensure that it can be used as a tool to promote equality in the union.
- ✓ Put in place realistic timescales for data collection and reporting.

5.9 Provide gender disaggregated data

Providing gender disaggregated statistics on the representation of women and men at all levels of trade unions is crucial if gender equality is to be effectively

5.10 Develop concrete and wide-ranging actions plans to improve the visibility of gender equality

A number of workshop participants at the Luxembourg conference identified the need for concrete, strategic and wide ranging action plans to improve the visibility of gender equality and the need for gender balance. However, it was stressed that action plans need to be effectively monitored and that reporting procedures should be put in place to ensure that the leadership of unions acts on any regression from proposed actions. Women's and Equality Committees and Councils should also have a direct responsibility for monitoring progress and keeping the issues 'alive'.

Examples of union actions plans to improve gender balance from union confederations

ZSSS, Slovenia introduced, in 2007, a specific policy and action plan to improve gender balance in decision-making to redress the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies. Women make up 44.8% of the union's membership. The policy and action plan have introduced reserved seats for women in elected positions alongside training for women trade unionists to enable them to get elected. The union has also put in place a system for monitoring the outcome of the action plan. Alongside this the union has aimed to give a higher profile to gender equality through an annual trade union award for achievement in the area of equal opportunities.

FNV, Netherlands has nearly 1.4 million members, of whom 37% are women. The confederation has introduced a range of strategies to improve gender balance, including campaigns to encourage women candidates and training to prepare women for union roles. The organisation monitors women's representation in decision-making positions and publishes data on gender in the workforce and in union decision-making positions. In 2009 the FNV adopted an action plan to increase the presence of women in decision-making bodies. The action plan sets out objectives, a method for monitoring the objectives and for assessing the implementation of the plan. However, the action plan was not endorsed by the leaders of the affiliates of the FNV, the learning from which is that it is critical to have the endorsement from the senior levels of confederations. The FNV believe that a lack of training and a lack of confidence among women of their abilities, along with preconceived stereotypes dissuade women from taking leadership positions, and are key barriers faced by women.

Measures introduced by the FNV include regulating the time of meetings so that they do not have an adverse impact on people with family responsibilities, flexible working hours and ensuring that everyone can speak at meetings.

LCGB, Luxembourg has 36,000 members of whom 29% are women. The union first addressed equality between women and men in its 1996 55th Congress by adopting an action plan in favour of a balanced representation of women and men. By 2008 little progress had been achieved and the unions 58th Congress adopted a Resolution on equality between women and men and the representation of women in the structures of LCGB. The Resolution set the objective to create a more equal society by ensuring an equal balance of women and men in all union structures, to be achieved through proportional representation and the mainstreaming of gender in all actions and policies of the Confederation. The lessons are that despite the 1996 resolution, many resolutions, programmes and plans, it became necessary to have a strengthened position on gender balance. The confederation is also aware of the need for very clear policies and objectives that lead to a quantified result and the Resolution provides for a multi-faceted approach to improving gender balance at all levels based on proportional representation. The 2008 Resolution set out nine areas for action:

- i. Proportional representation of women and men in all union structures;
- ii. Coordination unit established through the Executive Committee and Heads of Women and Equality, to develop an action plan for achieving proportional representation, with annual reports to the Central Committee;
- iii. Appointment of contact persons responsible for equality in all union structures as part of the union's Equality Network;
- iv. Proportional representation on the executive committee and central committee to be achieved by the next Congress and affiliates are urged to engage in their own bodies to achieve this;
- v. Commitment of the Executive Committee to pursuing policies of diversity, especially at the staff level in recruitment and training.
- vi. Recruitment plans and measures for under-represented groups;
- vii. Training plans to enable women to have access to union leadership positions;
- viii. Executive Committee is committed to provide mandatory training in gender equality for all employees, union secretaries and union negotiators, in particular to address the gender wage gap;
- ix. Evaluation of the training to be in close collaboration with those responsible for women and equality policies.

LO-Norway's Programme of Action on women's position in society (adopted at the 32nd Ordinary Congress, May, 2009) states that "All professions and positions at all levels in the world of work must be made attractive to both sexes. LO will push for enlarging the scope of Section 21 in the Act Relating to Gender Equality so that the obligation of having both sexes represented on all public committees etc. is extended to private companies and non-governmental organisations. Women must gain a stronger standing in the labour movement. Proper training and motivation to have women elected and stand for election may be conducive to a better gender balance in our own organisations. Gender quotas must be used whenever possible. Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all of LO and affiliates will draw attention to various challenges. LO will strengthen women's presence in the governing bodies of companies and institutions, as workers' delegates and among the owners".

Union actions to address specific gender equality is crucial to improving gender balance. The following checklist of issues provides suggestions for trade unions in putting in place a strategy and action plan to improved gender balance in union decision-making bodies:

 **Improving gender balance:
checklist of areas to cover in an action plan**

- ✓ Set out the union's goals for gender balance;
- ✓ Consider and discuss how gender balance can be achieved in the leadership and decision-making structures of the union and in collective bargaining teams;
- ✓ Collect, monitor and analyse data on the gender representation at all levels of the organisation (federal, regional and sectoral) and in internal trade union structures;
- ✓ Discuss amongst union members and officers of the barriers and solutions to improving gender balance, so that they can take ownership of and responsibility for implementing the action plan on gender balance;
- ✓ Ensure that quotas or other methods for gender balance are enforced and backed up by a range of other measures;
- ✓ Put in place leadership training and mentoring for women, and monitor the outcomes regularly;
- ✓ Increase the visibility of women in leadership and decision-making roles;
- ✓ Introduce measures on working time and the timing and organisation of meetings;
- ✓ Ensure that this union wide discussion is carried out with the objective of preparing a concrete action plan to actively promote gender balance in union structures;
- ✓ Develop a range of integrated strategies to promote gender balance. If quotas are introduced these should be introduced alongside other measures;
- ✓ Promote union visibility and senior commitment to gender equality. This is essential to the success of the action plan and to ensuring that women and men at all levels of trade unions have information and awareness about the benefits of and commitment to gender balanced decision-making;
- ✓ Set out how gender balance is an essential element of the ETUC's Gender Mainstreaming Charter

→ Conclusion

This publication has made a strong case for a renewed and strategic approach to achieving gender balance in decision-making and leadership structures, as a basis for union democracy and for realising gender equality at societal, economic and political levels. Using the knowledge and examples from this publication and implementing strategies on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, unions can achieve gender balance and reap long-term benefits. Progressing gender balance requires that the ETUC, European Industry Federations and union confederations take a lead role in adopting new approaches and strategies in order to change union cultures and the way that women and men progress into leadership and decision-making roles.



→ Section 6: Further information and resources

6.1 ETUC publications and links

- ETUC (2007) Charter on Gender Mainstreaming http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_gender_mainstreaming_charter1_EN.pdf
- ETUC Resolution Mid-term review of the ETUC equality plan 2003–2007 <http://www.etuc.org/a/2479>
- BusinessEurope, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC (2005) Framework of Actions on gender equality <http://www.etuc.org/r/704>
- BusinessEurope, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC (2009) Framework of Actions on Gender Equality: Evaluation Report <http://www.etuc.org/a/6709>
- ETUC (2010) 3rd Annual ETUC 8th March Survey: Executive Summary <http://www.etuc.org/a/7167>
- ETUC (2007) Women in Trade Unions in Europe: bridging the gaps http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_English_complet.pdf

6.2 European Commission publications and links

- European Commission (2010d) A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men: A Women's Charter Declaration by the European Commission on the occasion of the 2010 International Women's Day <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0078:FIN:EN:DOC>
- European Commission (2010e) Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Equality between women and men (COM/2009/0694 final) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52009DCo694:EN:NOT>
- European Commission (2009) Women in European Politics: Time for Action http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/booklets/equality/pdf/ke8109543_en.pdf
- European Commission (2008) Women and men in decision-making 2007: analysis of situation and trends <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=762&langId=en&furtherPubs=yes>
- European Commission (2007) Decision-making: exchange of good practice <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=762&langId=en&furtherPubs=yes>
- The European Commission's database on women and decision-making: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=764&langId=en>
- European Economic and Social Committee (2009) Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Links between gender equality, economic growth and employment rates, Brussels 1 October 2010, SOC 338 http://www.se2009.eu/polopoly_fs/1.17995!menu/standard/file/ces1472-2009_ac_en_clean.pdf
- Swedish Presidency of the European Union (2009) Conference report: "What does gender equality mean for growth and employment" http://www.se2009.eu/polopoly_fs/1.28945!menu/standard/file/Conference%20report%20Gender%20Equality%20Econ%20growth%20FINAL3.pdf
- European Commission (2010a) Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=890&furtherNews=yes#>
- European Commission (2010b) Opinion on the Future of Gender Equality after 2010 and on the priorities for a possible future framework for equality between women and men, European Commission Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=418>
- European Commission (2010c) More women in senior positions: Key to economic stability and growth <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=762&langId=en&pubId=476&type=2&furtherPubs=yes>

6.3 Other relevant reading and resources

- Mirella Visser (2009) 'De Zijderoute naar de top: Strategisch leiderschap voor vrouwen' (The Silk Road to the Top: Strategic leadership for women). ISBN-13: 9789047002604 . The book will be published in English under the title 'The Female Leadership Paradox' in early 2011 (Palgrave Macmillan)
- Herminia Ibarra and Otilia Obodaru 'Women and the Vision Thing', Harvard Business Review, January 2009
- Alice H. Eagly and Linda A. Carti. 'Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership', Harvard Business Review. <http://pds.hccfl.edu/pds/Newsletters/NewsletterID1.pdf>
- Mirella Visser and Annalisa Gigante (2007) 'Women on Boards Moving Mountains', (European Professional Women's Network), ISBN 978-2-9522703-7-3
- EPSU (2010) Gender mainstreaming audit, report for EPSU by Dr Jane Pillinger, EPSU: Brussels www.epsu.org/

6.4 Links to relevant organisations

- European Trade Union Confederation www.etuc.org
- European Commission Gender Equality Webpage: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=418>
- European Women's Lobby www.womenlobby.org
- European Professional Women's Network www.europeanpwn.net

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5
1210 Brussels
Tel + 32 2 224 04 11
Fax + 32 2 224 04 54/55
E-mail : etuc@etuc.org

www.etuc.org



EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)