



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

ETUC Resolution on Recommendations for improving gender balance in trade unions

Adopted at the Executive Committee on 9 March 2011

FROM MEMBERSHIP TO LEADERSHIP: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE IN TRADE UNIONS

Introduction

Equality between women and men is a founding principle of the European Union and a long standing commitment of the ETUC. A balanced participation by women and men in society's major political and economic decisions is a key element to developing real democracy and it has also proved to be an essential factor contributing to economic growth.

Despite the feminisation of the labour market and the high educational attainments of female students in most of the European countries, women encounter difficulties in achieving roles of responsibility at many levels: in economy, politics and often also within trade unions.

The reasons for the under-representation of women in power and decision-making are structural and multifaceted. They include gender stereotypes, 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 the trade union movement - and media attitudes are still unfavourable to women.

Taking stock of ETUC policy measures and activities to ensure gender balance

The under-representation of women in leadership positions and decision making structures has been a matter of concern for the ETUC for many 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 comparable data on women's participation and representation and put in place measures to enable women to take up leadership positions. 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. At the Seville Congress in 2007 a Charter on Gender Mainstreaming was adopted with requirements for national

affiliates and European Industry Federations to urgently take action to improve their performance in the forthcoming years to close the representation gap between women and men at all levels. Specific recommendations were provided of measures to close the gender gap, including the obligation to provide statistics on the membership and representation in decision-making bodies. The Charter on Gender Mainstreaming stated that affiliates' performance in improving women's representation in leadership roles and positions had to be assessed prior to the ETUC Congress in 2011 and adequate measures put forward.

Since the Seville Congress, gender disaggregated data on affiliates' membership and decision making positions are collected by the Secretariat through the « 8th of March Survey » and its outcomes are presented and regularly discussed by the Women's Committee.

According to the last 8th March Survey, women represent about 44% of the ETUC membership¹. The following trends emerge from the survey results of the last 4 years:

- Since the first survey was carried out, women have been crucial to sustaining trade union membership levels: in particular, 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 (President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary), with little progress made between 2008 and 2010. Women are more likely to be in 'deputy' positions.
- As to 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. However, gender balance has been taken into account within the ETUC Secretariat.
- The 2010 survey did find that most of the unions had adopted concrete measures to improve gender balance, such as quotas or reserved seats, , although in practice many unions had not implemented policies fully.
- Some unions, particularly those representing women in the female dominated sectors of the economy, have achieved a better gender balance in their decision-making structures.

The survey also identified barriers that prevent women from taking up leadership positions. Some of these barriers are structural and can be tackled at organisational level while others are more related to individuals' behaviours. Structural barriers include negative stereotypes within organisations that work against women's participation; the fact that in some cases union structures replicate women's disadvantaged labour market position; the organisation of meetings and time constraints that negatively impact on women's possibilities for their full

1 For more information see: ETUC Report of 8th of March Survey 2011

participation. Other obstacles that were mentioned include the fact that women hold themselves back and often lack the confidence to push themselves forward for leadership roles, that they lack the knowledge about union structures and how to get into decision-making positions.

It is against this background that the ETUC conducted the project “*From Membership to Leadership: Advancing Women in Trade Unions*” during 2010. The aim of the project was to discuss how to improve gender balance in trade unions. The ETUC organised one conference in Luxembourg in March 2010 and a follow-up workshop in Berlin in October 2010 to address this issue. One of the outcomes was a resource guide to support efforts to achieve gender balance in trade unions.².

A strong case for a renewed and strategic approach to achieving gender balance in trade unions' decision-making and leadership structures as a basis for union democracy and for realising gender equality at societal, economic and political levels was made at both events.

Gender balance in trade unions is vital in order to have:

- Structures that genuinely reflect the diversity of the membership;
- A modern image that is representative of women's interests and needs and that is in touch and relevant with its membership;
- A stronger role in fulfilling and implementing women's economic, social and political objectives;
- An approach to gender mainstreaming in decision-making and policy-making processes, and in their representative roles in the wider economy and society.

The importance of achieving gender balance in collective bargaining teams was also confirmed. The arguments put forward were that:

- Gender balanced collective bargaining teams 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;
- Gender balanced collective bargaining teams also enable new styles and new approaches to collective bargaining methods.

2 See: <http://www.etuc.org/r/1368>

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.

An equal 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.

A combination of measures is needed, and a much more coherent and focussed approach should be promoted by the ETUC and its affiliates. Improving gender balance in union leadership and decision-making structures remains a fundamental challenge for the trade union movement in the next years and the following recommendations have been developed to meet this challenge.

The recommendations

The recommendations for improving gender balance in the ETUC and its affiliates have been drafted on the basis of the findings of the 8th of March Survey of 2010, the cases and discussions held at the Luxembourg Conference and the conclusions of the policy workshop in Berlin. In addition, they have benefited from previous ETUC gender equality action plans as well as the Charter on gender mainstreaming, especially with respect to those provisions addressing the issue of gender balance.

The recommendations were finally discussed and adopted by the ETUC Women's Committee on 14 December 2010.

With regard to the structure of the recommendations, they are divided into two parts: one deals with recommendations addressed to the ETUC itself and the other is aimed at ETUC affiliates (national confederations and European Industry Federations). They are not the same but follow a similar pattern to tackle remaining challenges to achieve gender balance both within the organization and its policies. Each section is further divided into actions to be taken prior to and after the next ETUC Congress that will take place in Athens in May 2011.

I. Recommendations for the ETUC

Before the 2011 Congress the ETUC should:

1. Highlight gender equality issues in the Congress Preparatory Committee discussions. Ensure that the Congress preparatory documents, debates and speakers are gender mainstreamed. Ensure that national delegations at the Congress are gender balanced;
2. Gender mainstream Congress final document in all its parts and make sure that it contains a specific part dealing with equality between women and men with recommendations for ETUC work in this field for the 4 years to come;
3. Make the argument for gender balance a core union priority by presenting the results of the project “From membership to leadership”, by engaging women and men in the debates and seeking agreement from affiliates to ensure a gender balanced representation, and by adopting concrete measures in this regard;
4. Address gender balance at the level of the Executive Committee. Consider introducing quantified objectives to achieve gender balance such as an anti-discriminatory provision that says that each gender should be represented between 40% and 60% in ETUC statutory bodies;
5. Gender disaggregate the composition of the following ETUC decision-making bodies: Congress of 2007; Executive Committee; Steering Committee and Secretariat. Figures should be made available in order to evaluate whether or not there is an adequate gender balance therein;
6. Draft a policy instrument for the 2011-2015 period setting out requirements, actions and targets for gender balance for the European and national level trade union decision-making structures. The instrument should draw lessons from the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Charter and include:
 - A time frame, monitoring and assessment system for the next Congress period, providing an integrated and multi-faceted approach to achieving gender balance;
 - Guidelines that build on the content of the ETUC’s Charter on Gender Mainstreaming, with practical tools to implement gender mainstreaming;
 - Appropriate measures to reward good performance, such as a trade union “gender equality” award to be given at each Congress;

- Appropriate sanctions to discourage poor performance.
- The policy instrument should be revised every year by the Executive Committee to assess its implementation at appropriate levels.

After the 2011 Congress the ETUC should:

7. Each gender should be represented between 40% and 60% in ETUC decision-making bodies, therefore it is essential to regularly monitor the gender statistics as well as the composition of : Congress of Athens, mid-term conference, Executive Committee, Steering Committee and Secretariat. The Executive and the Womens' Committee should be regularly informed of the data collected;
8. Ensure balanced participation of female trade unionists in ETUC meetings both as speakers and participants;
9. Set up a mechanism to gender mainstream ETUC policies. As a first step it is recommended to introduce a policy that every document presented at the Executive Committee as well as the Congress contains a gender impact assessment and indicate if and how the gender perspective has been included. The ETUC should ensure that its decision making bodies have knowledge about and experience in equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming.
10. Carry out an internal equality audit to identify the barriers that exist for gender progression within the ETUC as an organization itself;
11. Develop, through the ETUI (European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety):
 - Training programmes that foresee gender parity participation. ETUI current young leaders programme is key in this respect and should also foresee a specific part on gender equality;
 - A programme of tutorship and mentoring for young female leaders;
 - Training manuals for trainers on gender mainstreaming and gender balance;
 - A study, to be issued at least every two years, on the 'state of the art' of barriers and measures adopted by unions to improve gender equality in the trade union movement and at work place level.

The ETUI will be invited to regularly inform the Women's' Committee of how gender mainstreaming is applied in its activities and programme;

12. Continue to run the 8th of March Survey and work closely with those members that still do not collect gender disaggregate data of their membership and/or decision making bodies and examine together with them the solutions to overcome it. Draft a template for gender disaggregated data collection that can be used by national and EU affiliates;
13. Consider the following issues as new ETUC publications:
 - Situation of women in the crisis and after the crisis;
 - A leaflet with 10 steps to achieve gender balance.
14. Address the image and culture of unions, looking at its visual outputs;
15. Reinforce the exchange of practices and views between the ETUC Youth Committee and Women's' Committee;
16. Provide adequate staff levels and resources to follow-up the gender equality policies within the ETUC and adopt a gender budget to cover campaigns and activities aiming at promoting gender balance and gender equality;
17. Develop a mechanism, through the ETUC Executive Committee and in cooperation with the Women's Committee, for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the above recommendations. Evaluate progress achieved at the mid-term conference;
18. Carry out a gender mainstreaming audit of the ETUC 2011-2015 activity report to be submitted to the 2015 Congress with a twofold objective:
 - To make sure that the activity report is appropriately gender mainstreamed in all its parts;
 - To identify areas where a gender perspective needs to be further developed in all ETUC policies and structures.

II. Recommendations for affiliated organisations (National confederations and European Industry Federations)

For the Congress ETUC members should...

1. Make the argument for gender balance as a core union priority and seek to ensure a balanced gender representation by adopting concrete measures in this regard;
2. Support ETUC actions to improve gender balance and to overcome barriers to achieve this;
3. Monitor and gender mainstream the work of the Congress Preparatory Committee, by working together with the national/EIF representative taking part in its work;
4. Ensure a gender balanced delegation at the ETUC Congress;

After the Congress the ETUC members should:

5. Develop an internal action plan on gender balance at national/sectoral level and ensure that this is monitored regularly and endorsed by affiliates;
6. Examine the gender balance composition of organisations' existing governing bodies and evolution over the last years. On this basis discuss how the organisation can introduce changes in the statutes, adopt targets and actions for balanced gender representation;
7. Ensure that systems of collecting disaggregated data on gender representation at all levels of the union are in place, and that this is reviewed on an annual basis;
8. Contribute to the 8th of March Survey by providing the ETUC with all the necessary data. Failure to do so will be publicly addressed at the Executive Committee and the next Congress;
9. Work through the organisation's training departments and/or national training organisations to put in place measures for the training and mentoring of women in order to prepare women for leadership and decision-making roles;
10. Put in place gender audits, mentoring programmes and other forms of support for women to take up leadership roles in unions;

11. Produce guidelines on gender mainstreaming with practical tools for their implementation, in areas such as: collective bargaining; organising; social dialogue, policy making etc.;
12. Ensure that the organisation promotes gender diversity through its own internal human resources;
13. Carry out a gender mainstreaming audit in order to identify areas where a gender perspective needs to be further developed in union policies and structures;
14. Address the image and culture of unions, looking at its visual outputs;
15. Provide adequate staff levels and resources to follow-up the gender equality policies within the organization and adopt a gender budget to cover campaigns and activity aiming at promoting gender balance and gender equality;
16. Consider the appointment of somebody at the political leadership level to be in charge for monitoring gender mainstreaming within the organization. The person would preferably not be the same person as the one being responsible for gender equality;
17. Promote a “sense of ownership” of gender mainstreaming and gender balance instruments and shared responsibility among all relevant trade union actors;
18. Introduce a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the recommendations listed above;
19. Regularly inform the ETUC of the measures adopted and the improvements achieved.