

Equal pay works! Achieving pay equity for women in Europe's public services
PSI / EPSU / EI
Geneva, 7-8 October 2004

Workshop Briefing
Thursday 7 October, 14.00 – 15.30

Group 1: Challenges faced by the unions

Background

This workshop will address the various challenges faced by union in trying to achieve pay equity in practice. A particularly important aspect of this will be to highlight what needs to be done in the unions to address these challenges. The 2004 EPSU/PSI survey on equal pay found that unions were facing a variety of challenges. Here are some of the challenges that unions report:

- Restructuring, liberalisation and privatisation of public services is having a negative impact on women's pay.
- Many of the new member states of the EU and other non-EU countries report that cuts in funding for public services mean that many women are low paid and do not receive living minimum wages.
- Women's work continues to be undervalued and many women work in low paid jobs. To put it simply women's work is not valued.
- Collective bargaining teams do not always address gender equality issues and union internal structures and culture do not facilitate a balanced representation of women on collective bargaining teams.

However, unions are beginning to respond actively to these challenges and issues through specific initiatives and activities on equal pay. The workshop will also focus on what types of activities are being developed and could be developed by unions in the future.

Aims of the workshop

- To discuss the main challenges facing unions in achieving equal pay
- To identify how these challenges can be addressed by unions

Tasks / discussion points

In addressing the challenges facing the unions consider the following:

- a) The impact of public service reforms on women's pay.
- b) The role and coverage of collective bargaining in addressing women's pay.
- c) Commitments within unions to prioritise gender pay issues in union policy and in collective bargaining.

Then go on to identify what needs to be done in the unions to address the challenges that have been identified. Consider the following:

- a) What needs to be done internally within the unions to address the challenges?
- b) How can unions lobby governments or employers to enhance the profile given to equal pay issues?

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Group 2: Sharing examples of how to campaign on pay equity

Background

Campaigning for equal pay has been a major objective of many unions. The PSI's Global Campaign on Pay Equity *Pay Equity Now!* has resulted in campaigns within the affiliates and capacity building measures across the world. Many of these have been instrumental in raising awareness of gender pay inequalities.

Campaigning for equal pay has become a focus for many unions on the basis that pay inequalities and the undervaluing of women's work are fundamental problems that need to be addressed in the labour market.

Unions have been involved in many different types of equal pay campaigns. These range from campaigns to support a living minimum wage in order to remove poverty and low pay, to campaigns to introduce legislation and/or adopt more effective procedures for implementation of existing legislation. Other campaigns have raised the profile of gender pay equity as being essential for effective, efficient, modern and transparent public services or to provide awareness and training for workers, as well as government representatives, employers, lawyers, pay equity advocates, labour inspectorates and women's groups.

Workshop aims

- To share experiences of campaigns to reduce the gender wage gap and achieve equal pay.
- To identify potential future areas for campaigning.

Tasks / discussion points

The discussion will be split into two sections:

- a) What experiences do workshop participants have of campaigning for equal pay? What was the role and purpose of these campaigns? What learning from these experiences can be shared with participants?
- b) What kinds of campaigns can unions develop in the future? What should be the focus and goal of the campaigns? How should they be organised and run by the unions?

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Group 3: Equality plans

Background

The revised EU Equal Treatment Directive makes provision for employers to carry out equality reviews and plans. The objective is to ensure that there is more pro-active work taking place at workplace level to address gender inequalities. Several countries have already put in place legislation and provisions for carrying out equality plans, some of which are required in legislation. Equality plans seek to address the main factors that contribute to gender inequalities in the workplace and cover a range of factors such as the recruitment procedures, the representation of women in different grades, promotion opportunities, training and development, and pay inequalities. The objective is to produce a plan that results in actions to address any identified inequalities.

Equality plans are a relatively new mechanism to assist in the removal of discrimination or inequality at work. They do require that workplace data is made available to highlight any inequalities. The revised Equal Treatment Directive does make provision for workplace information to be made available to the public.

Workshop aims

- To share experiences of union involvement in workplace equality plans.
- To highlight ways in which unions can lobby for workplace equality plans in the future.

Tasks / discussion points

The workshop will be divided into two sections:

- a) Participants will begin by sharing experiences and knowledge of equality plans where they have taken place. What was the content of the plans and were they successful in addressing gender pay inequalities. How effective was union involvement in the equality plans?
- b) How can unions become involved in advocating for the introduction of workplace equality plans? How can unions lobby for the implementation of the provisions on equality plans and equality data under the Equal Treatment Directive?