



Resolution "Reducing the gender pay gap"

adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee on 25 June 2008

Fifty years following the establishment of the principle of equal pay for men and women in the first European Treaty, a considerable wage gap still exists between women and men – a sign of the persistent inequalities experienced by women and men in the labour market. The origins of the pay gap are to be found beyond the legal framework – legal action alone is therefore not enough. The pay gap is a complex issue with multiple causes and must be addressed by all the relevant stakeholders, in particular Member States and the social partners. However, there is also an urgent need for action to be taken at the EU level.

This resolution sets out the main elements of ETUC's commitment to reduce the gender pay gap, urging European and national stakeholders including employers' organisations to engage in targeted actions and activities, and – recognizing the key role trade unions can play - proposing further actions by ETUC and its affiliates.

- 1) ETUC and its affiliates have a long standing commitment to achieving equality for all, and especially to achieving gender equality. In its Seville congress in 2007, the ETUC and affiliates committed themselves among other things to *'prioritise actions to reduce the gender pay gap with all possible means, and especially in collective bargaining, by combating low pay, upgrading the value of women's work, and fighting for equal pay for work of equal value'*.
- 2) The average gender pay gap in Europe is still 15 % on average, but more than 20 % in several countries. The ETUC has included its reduction as one important goal of its 2008 Fair Wages campaign.
- 3) The negotiation of wages is core business for social partners. Collective bargaining is our key instrument. There is ample evidence that where collective bargaining is strong, wage inequalities are smaller, and this is also true for the gender pay gap. This is one more reason why collective bargaining should be supported and promoted at all relevant levels including the EU level. However, collective bargaining should also be used more specifically to address the gender pay gap and the persistent inequalities women face in the labour market and the workplace.

- 4) The Social Partners at EU level agreed in 2005 on a Framework of Actions on Gender Equality, agreeing on 4 priority areas for action, one of which is equal pay. Although this framework of actions has already played a useful role in a number of areas, it has been difficult to put the issue of equal pay higher on the agenda of employers and their organisations. It will therefore be necessary to increase the pressure on them at every level.
- 5) One area for urgent action is the wage penalty apparently linked to part time working. This requires an evaluation and possible revision of the Part Time Directive, based on an agreement between the European social partners, prescribing equal treatment between full time and part time workers. But it also requires more targeted and effective actions in collective agreements.
- 6) The European Commission published a Communication on “Tackling the pay gap between men and women” in August 2007. The aim of the Communication is to examine the causes of the pay gap and put forward some possible ways of reducing it. Attached is the proposed ETUC position on this Communication, earlier drafts of which were discussed with the ETUC Women’s Committee and the Collective Bargaining Committee. ETUC broadly supports the Commission’s initiative particularly as it proposes improving the legal framework, which presents us with a rare opportunity to obtain important legal reform. In addition, the communication proposes stepping up action in the framework of the European Strategy for Growth and Jobs, encouraging employers and public authorities to play a stronger role in eliminating unequal pay, and supporting exchange of good practice.
- 7) While welcoming the thrust of the Communication, ETUC would like to see more concrete measures proposed by the Commission. The most important ones are:
 - a. further strengthening the legal framework;
 - b. re-introducing a concrete target for reducing the pay gap in the Employment guidelines; adding access to vocational training and recognition of women’s qualifications and skills;
 - c. improving statistics, and add comparable data on the part time gender pay gap, and the gender pension gap;
 - d. supporting collective bargaining as an important instrument for reducing inequalities including the gender pay gap;
 - e. promoting equality clauses in public contracts, and considering making them compulsory.
- 8) In addition, and recognising the key role trade unions can play in reducing the gender pay gap, ETUC and affiliates will:
 - a. develop guidelines on collective bargaining and equal pay, including how to promote gender neutral job evaluation schemes;

- b. develop a train-the-trainers approach, with the support of the European Trade Union Institute ETUI, to raise awareness and support collective bargaining negotiators and committees in addressing the gender pay gap;
- c. ensure that equal pay is high on the priority list of collective bargaining actors at all levels;
- d. consider the advantages of differentiated wage demands that take into account persistent wage differences related to gender patterns in sectors and professions, allowing for specific wage increases in female dominated sectors with often predominant low wages;
- e. demand at least equal access to vocational training and career development for women as an important instrument to reduce the pay gap;
- f. put the part time pay gap on the agenda of collective bargaining negotiators, as well as of the EU social partners, with a view to a possible strengthening of the Part time Directive;
- g. demand a stronger role in the monitoring and enforcement at national and EU level of the Employment guidelines with regard to equal pay.
