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un salaire de min 14 euros est une nécessité !

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EQUAL PAY NEEDS TRADE UNIONS.

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CONFEDERATION
**SYNDICAT
EUROPEAN
TRADE UNION**

18 June 2021
12h30-13h30
Place du Luxembourg,
Brussels

Trade union strategies to close the gender pay gap: framing gender & collective bargaining

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SEIN
Identity, Diversity &
Inequality Research

▶▶ **UHASSELT**

Trade unions & gender equality framing

- Extension of 'class' frame towards **gender inclusive frames** (Heery & Conley 2007, Kirton 2021, Tsarouhas 2011, Yates 2010)
 - 'Specific interests' of women → 'Gender Mainstreaming'

Trade unions & gender equality framing

- Extension of 'class' frame towards **gender inclusive frames** (Heery & Conley 2007, Kirton 2021, Tsarouhas 2011, Yates 2010)
 - 'Specific interests' of women → 'Gender Mainstreaming'
- BUT: renewal less visible in **collective bargaining**
 - continued male norms
 - unfavorable political & economic context
 - opposed gender and class interests (non-recognition of gender interests)
 - TU oscillate between social movement & institutional role

Research questions

How are trade unions' gender equality frames

- '**translated**' in the collective bargaining process
- anchored in the **logic of collective bargaining** which is based on labour-capital

Belgian case

- **Coordinated** collective bargaining & **social partnership**
- National-level **intersectoral agreements**
- Wage moderation through **wage norm** (Law of 1996)

Belgian case

- **Coordinated** collective bargaining & **social partnership**
- National **intersectoral agreements** (Group of 10)
- Wage moderation through **wage norm** (Law of 1996)
- **Equal Pay Day** campaigns since 2005
 - Equal Pay Law of 2012: mandatory equality bargaining
 - In practice unsuccessful
 - **Minimum wage campaign (FF14)**: in intersectoral agreement 2021-2022 (June 2021)

Data

- **17 interviews** in 2017 with TU-negotiators, employers, state actors
- **Trade union documents:** e.g. Equal Pay Day campaigns, collective bargaining agenda's

Findings 1:

Building a power balance

Awareness campaigns, each year returning to this topic, present the figures, ... this technique of almost harassment that we did on equal pay for men and women, so that they [the employers] were embarrassed about it. ... So, the negotiations as such can only be the outcome of a serious preparation, and serious preparation also means influencing **the public opinion**.

Former trade union negotiator (w)

Findings 1:

Building a power balance

The pressure has to come **either from the government or from us, the trade unions**. But that also means an intense preparation **within** the trade unions to obtain such **a mandate** from a part of the **workers' [blue-collar] unions**, which have a lot of weight on a mandate.

Trade union negotiator (w)

Findings 2:

Common gender awareness, contrasting gender analyses

It's not because you are going to decide something about the pay gap within the framework of the wage norm that you will change so much in the field. **I think it is mainly by working on the image, role patterns, education, social choices that are made**, the fact that women still easily choose certain jobs and sectors because they feel better about it and because they sometimes set other priorities than men.

... so, sorry, **I don't know what we in the Group of 10 could decide to get rid of this in one go.**

Employer negotiator (m)

Findings 3:

Wage cost of gender pay equality

This point [the gender pay gap] was put on the table, was swept away. Why? Because employers tell us: 'there is no problem. We put it in the [wage] norm, and therefore, **we remove x% of the [wage] norm for all the points you want to discuss**, no worries.' Afterwards, we get into internal discussions in the [trade union]structure, where some are saying: '**it is better to discuss a global [wage] norm, which will affect everyone**, rather than to cut off part of the [wage] norm.'

Trade union negotiator (m)

Finding 3:

Wage cost of gender pay equality

Within the [wage] norm of **1.1%**, what must be paid from it? The discrimination on the basis of blue-collar and white-collar workers in the second pillar [of pensions], [must be paid] of that little piece, the job classification has to be paid with it, the wage increases have to be paid with it. **Those tensions are back there, even more than before.**

President of the National Labour Council (m)

Finding 4:

'something for everyone'

Result of recent intersectoral negotiations (08/06):

- TU obtained a **minimum wage rise**:
 - From 9.87€ to 10,53€
 - + trajectory for further increases (+0.20€/2y)
- Employers obtained **more flexibility**:
 - **120h extra overtime**, without overtime pay & social security contributions (until 2022)
 - **180h 'normal' overtime**, fiscally advantageous (until 2023)

Discussion of the Belgian case

1. Gender campaigns have been integrated in negotiation strategy
2. Gender awareness not sufficient, also how gender inequalities are interpreted (individual vs structural explanations)
3. Wage moderation severely hampers equality claims
4. Gains in pay in exchange for more flexibility, however with possible negative gender effects