

## Foreword

The 8th Euro-FIET Conference took place in March 1998 in Cardiff, under the theme *Visions for a New Europe*.

The Conference was the most representative in the 26 year history of Euro-FIET and assembled 600 participants from 132 unions in 35 countries.

One of the four themes of the Conference was *The Organising Challenge in Europe*. This publication contains the background report and strategy adopted by the Conference on this issue.

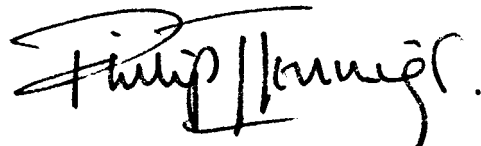
The organising challenge has to be met by affiliates. The report looks at a changing job market in a fast changing society.

The demographics of union membership have been changing and the influx of new blood is required. The report rightly emphasises the need for unions to "break the barriers" to the participation of young people in union activities.

We hope that our "breaking the barriers" campaign will lead many unions to give a fresh opportunity to young workers.

Equally our initiative to create a Euro-FIET women's network and our continuing involvement in Eurocadres should give new stimulus to union organising initiatives.

The emphasis by Euro-FIET and its affiliates has brought trade union recruitment much more into the mainstream of trade union life, where it belongs.



Philip J. Jennings  
Euro-FIET Regional Secretary

# The Organising Challenge in Europe

## Euro-FIET's Strategy

1. If the European trade union movement is to maintain and develop its relevance in the 21st century, Euro-FIET and its affiliates must consider and implement new initiatives in order to build the power and influence of the union movement in the services and industry sectors. A strong and representative trade union movement is an essential pillar for a Social Europe.
2. FIET and its regional organisations will incorporate the issue of organising in all regional, trade section, inter-professional and educational activities, encouraging exchanges of information and experiences between affiliates and offering assistance and advice where relevant. This initiative will include the organisation of regional meetings on the specific theme of organising. It will also include building the issue of organising into its work with European Works Councils and the Social Dialogue.
3. FIET will build on the results of the discussion on The Challenge of Organising at the 1991 World Congress held in San Francisco. The report recognised the growing importance of the services sector in terms of employment and the changing world of work. For unions to maintain their own development and relevance in the 1990s would require meeting the challenges of organising head on and promoting a significant organising campaign in their relevant sectors.
4. *Euro-FIET will:*
  - a) Consider and develop the theme of organising and recruitment strategies within the Regional Executive Committee, including the preparation of a regional conference to discuss the issue.
  - b) Ensure the elaboration of the organising and recruitment debate within the work of its trade sections: Financial Services, Commerce, Industry, Business and Information Technology Services, Property Maintenance and Security Services. The debate will look in particular at the impact of new technologies and divisions of labour on workers in the relevant sectors and how to maintain and improve levels of membership. Trade sections are the backbone of the organisation's structure and it is through their work that Euro-FIET will tackle the challenge of organising in the 21st century head on.

- c) Particular attention will be accorded to the issue of organising in the activities of the Industry, Business and Information Technology Services trade section. The sectors covered by this section are areas of significant job growth in Europe and it is imperative that Euro-FIST and its affiliates concentrate organising efforts in these sectors.
- d) Concentrate its work on women's activities through the new Euro-FIET Women's Network. Over 50 per cent of Euro-FIET's membership are women and this figure will continue to grow as the services sector develops. Euro-FIET is particularly concerned at the impact of new technologies and divisions of labour on women's employment and will co-ordinate and develop appropriate responses to these changes through the Network.
- e) Develop its work on youth activities through the Euro-FIET Youth Working Group. Basing its undertakings on the slogan "Breaking The Barriers", the Group will focus on the issue of organising and in discussing and developing union responses to the needs of young workers in today's services and industry sectors.
- t) Continue to develop its activities on organising professional and managerial staff. This particular group requires special attention in terms of communications and services. The FIET Passport is an example of the development and research that will be required to respond to the needs of these workers in today's mobile and flexible European labour market. Eurocadres facilitates access for professional and managerial staff to different areas of interest to them at the European level. Disseminating information about the activities undertaken and the results achieved is a persuasive trade union recruitment argument. Eurocadres also provides a useful forum to compare trade union recruitment methods.
- g) Elaborate its work on organising through European Works Councils (EWC). EWCs have provided the European trade union movement with new opportunities and a new environment in which to develop union structures, membership and profile within multinational companies.
- h) Encourage support for its activities through the promotion of its achievements in Europe through the Social Dialogue.
- i) Continue to research and develop membership services through information technology, in particular the Internet. The impact of new technologies on our membership demands a trade union response and Euro-FIET will expand its role in this field.
- j) Expand its role in Central and Eastern Europe where unions are being marginalised in rapidly developing free market economies. It is imperative for the European trade union movement that support and assistance are provided

for trade unions in these countries to establish strong union structures in an appropriate environment and to develop focused organising campaigns.

- k) Consider the setting up of a new Trade Section for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector, which has become a major growth area, but bearing in mind existing structures at the national level.

**5. *Euro-FIET invites affiliates:***

- a) To study and review the implications of this report and initiate a review of its organising and recruitment policies and programmes in terms of effectiveness and long-term planning.
- b) To consider new orientation, training, leadership development, and communications programmes designed to increase the participation of the membership in the union and its organising and political activities.
- c) To study structural changes and partnerships that will enable the co-ordination of organising, political action, bargaining and other activities.
- d) To ensure that the rank and file membership is engaged in any organising process, in particular, women, youth, ethnic minorities and part-time workers.
- e) To give priority to unionisation policies targeted at young people by developing activities that bind them to the unions while they are still in training so that they recognise the importance of trade union work and its contribution to democracy.
- f) To take account of the diversity of circumstances affecting professional categories so as to adapt policy on trade union activities and recruitment.
- g) To keep in mind that organising requires resources, particularly financial. Organising expenditure should no longer lose out in the allocation of resources. Meeting the challenge of organising may require a substantial increase in spending. Unions may consider reallocating existing resources and finding ways to raise new income.
- h) To consider the establishment of organising committees to effect long-term organising plans.
- i) To consider developing trade union membership capacity in terms of organising. Member-organising is extremely cost effective and is critical to meeting the organising challenge in the face of restricted union budgets.

- j) To look at increasing efforts to train organisers.
- k) To study possibilities of exploiting information and communications developments. The media should be integrated into organising programmes. Unions should promote themselves through traditional and electronic media and, in particular, should publicise successful campaigns in terms of defending the interests of their members to attract the attention and interest of other workers in the same sector. Unions should research and develop their own publishing and promotional capacity using new information technology, especially the Internet.
- l) To develop collective bargaining capacity in the promotion of good working conditions for their membership. Collective bargaining remains one of the most effective organising tools in promoting the image and profile of trade unions and attracting new members influenced by the activities of unions in their sector of work. Collective bargaining must also be refined and improved to meet the needs and the requirements expressed by different groups of workers.
- m) To explore how greater awareness of European and global trade union activity can stimulate trade union recruitment.
- n) To keep the Euro-FIET Secretariat fully informed of developments in the field of organising to ensure the most effective elaboration of a European database on this vital issue and to encourage an active exchange of information between the European trade unions.

# **The Organising Challenge In Europe**

## **Background Report**

### **Introduction**

For the past decade, the services sector has seen a significant leap in employment opportunities - a situation further accelerated by the continued globalisation of the world's economy, deregulation of markets world-wide and the introduction of new technologies. In this respect, FIET and its affiliates have studied and discussed at length the impact of these developments on membership and how best to adapt to these challenges in terms of maintaining and improving membership levels and organising workers in new areas of employment.

The challenge of organising in the 1990s was debated at length at the 22nd FIET World Congress held in San Francisco in 1991. The debate was followed up at the 23rd World Congress in Vienna in 1995 where delegates called upon FIET to launch initiatives in all regions, trade sections and interprofessional groups "to exchange experiences and develop strategies on trade union organising". The issue has become a priority for the organisation as a whole and will be an integral part of the agenda of the 8th Euro-FIET Regional Conference in Cardiff in March 1998.

Organising is the lifeblood of the democratic trade union movement. The 1980s saw the rise of right-wing governments world-wide and the rapid development of anti-trade union legislation and practices. The situation in the USA under President Reagan and in Great Britain under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher provides two glaring examples of the level of destruction these governments sought to wreak upon the labour movement.

A changing work-force, a more competitive economic environment, a steady rise in unemployment and increased use of new technologies have forced unions to rethink and relearn how to organise and deliver services to members. The subsequent widespread liberalisation of the world's markets has brought with it new work divisions and organisation that are forcing unions again to look closely at strategies for the future.

The need for increased union organising is particularly acute in the services sector where there are enormous opportunities for increased unionisation of the work-force but also significant dangers of membership changing their work patterns which has an impact on their contact with unions. Euro-FIET's affiliates are on the cutting edge of where jobs are being created and transformed in the economy.

Business services, financial services, information technology and commerce have seen significant changes in the last several years. Jobs have been transformed through restructure and the introduction of new technology and new jobs have appeared in the rapidly expanding business services sector. It is essential that unions keep pace with change and in this respect a new trade section has been launched within the Euro-FIET structure. The Industry, Business and Information Technology Services department (IBITS) will be able to better respond to these new challenges.

The key to creating more effective unions is to build organising strategies that can significantly increase union density in the services sector and maintain contact, communications and services for all members. Unions should look at building a membership that can exert collective power with the employer as well as the political power necessary to deliver improved living and working standards. Above all else, trade unions in the services sector need to set priorities for organising that best help build unions that can effect real change for their membership.

It also has to be kept in mind that there is a wealth of trade union cultures and traditions in Europe. The diversity of trade union structures within Euro-FIET's membership is such that nearly every union in each country has a different way of doing things, including servicing members and organising. This report respects the necessity for different trade union cultures and traditions to continue to flourish in Europe - it is part of our heritage. Its aim therefore is to encourage Euro-FIET's affiliates to adopt their own interpretation of what is required to take on the organising challenge and to mobilise accordingly to set the process in motion.

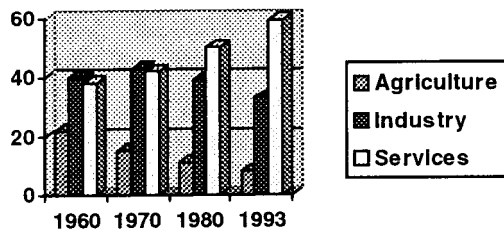
Today, trade unions must build an agenda for the future. The role of the movement is key for workers' security and prosperity in the global economy.

## **Employment in services in Europe**

Double digit unemployment is the gravest crisis that Europe currently faces. To resolve it, it is essential that the services sector plays its role in delivering its full economic and employment potential.

Increasingly, we live in a services economy. The services sector accounts for more jobs in Europe than industry and agriculture combined (see table 1). A long-term trend towards services is common to all advanced economies. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the services sector has contributed most to job growth in Europe. The main growth has been in finance and business services, commerce and distribution, hotels and catering. Overall, eighteen million new jobs have been created in services over the past fifteen years. This compares with a reduction of around thirteen million jobs in industry and agriculture.

### Services dominate European economy



#### *Target-group management*

*What we understand by target-group management is better communication with our members. The project group came up with a concept that allows us to avoid inundating our members with information, but rather opens up channels of dialogue with them so that we provide them with the services and information they need at a particular point in their lives. The idea behind all these measures is to make our slogan "There are many reasons why it is worthwhile joining" a reality.*

*In 1995 the GPA launched a major advertising campaign that was based on the results of our marketing concept. We began with a broad-based information and motivation phase which ran, from February to June 1995. The goal was to recruit 7,000 more members than in the same period the previous year. In absolute figures that meant attracting 13,820 new members into the union.*

*Our goal was intentionally set at a high level. We nevertheless achieved it to the extent of 82.5%, and recruited 11,403 new members.*

*Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten (GPA), Austria*

### **Continued deregulation of the services sector**

There are still many national barriers and restrictions, created to protect national services providers, which are having a significant impact on the European and wider global services sector markets. In this respect, Euro-FIET participated in a meeting at the OECD in early 1997 where consideration was given to how restrictions to market access and on foreign ownership could be abolished and how mutual recognition of qualifications and levels of competence could be guaranteed.

The interests of consumers, the professions and the general public must be taken into account in the process of the deregulation of the business services market. It is also extremely important to take into account the impact of this deregulation on employees.



The dismantling of regulatory barriers leads to increased mobility of professional services providers, greater competition and less job security. There is also a strong need for efficient regulation of business services in order to protect the interests of employees and consumers alike. The World Trade Organisation and the International Labour Organisation have a key role to play in developing adequate regulations to guarantee fair competition, quality of professional services and safeguarding the interests of employees.

### **Technology and the Information Society**

The impact of technological change differs markedly between sectors of the economy. Companies and organisations are adapting to reap the benefits of technological change. This change has increased the importance of knowledge-based activities, bringing about a steady decline in jobs for manual occupations and a steady increase in managerial, professional and technical jobs.

Perhaps the greatest long-term challenge for all sectors of European economy, government and society, including the trade union movement, is to exploit to the full the rapidly developing Information Society. As information and communication technology develops, new technological opportunities emerge that were undreamed of a decade ago. Electronic business will be a *sine qua non* for a modern digital economy in the 21st century. It spans a wide range of activities including the promotion of goods or services, the contracts and payments for them and the on-line supply of services and is a key concern for Euro-FIET and its affiliates.

Electronic business offers ways of transforming manufacturing and the provision of traditional services, for example in financial services with home-banking and on-line trading of securities. As both the single currency takes hold and the ease and speed of communication increases, small enterprises will be able to have quick, cost-effective access to a potential market of 370 million consumers with all the inevitable consequences this will have on Euro-FIET members.

### **The challenge of changing work profiles**

The introduction of new technologies throughout the services sector, and its growing influence in financial and business services and the commerce sector, presents a significant challenge to Euro-FIET and its affiliates. Euro-FIET trade sections for Financial Services, Commerce and Industry, Business and Information Technology Services are considering the impact of new technology on employment and union membership.

The growth of outsourcing, direct sales operations, telework, contracting out and part-time work have radically changed the face of work in these sectors of the economy. Unions are faced with a two-fold problem: how to reach the new membership potential in the new work divisions, for example, teleworkers; and how to maintain contact,

communications and services for members whose job environment changes, for example, an outsourced unit.

European unions should adapt to the new flexibility in labour markets and the possibility of increased flexibility in the future. The issue of telework is of particular concern and, on the basis of its activities with workers in the IT sector, Euro-FIET has published a comprehensive report on teleworking and trade union strategies to deal with this new challenge. It is an essential reference tool for Euro-FIET affiliates looking at the development of strategies in this field. The problem of access to workplaces is just one significant example of the issues unions face.

In respect of outsourcing and contracting out, a number of employers, for example, Digital Corporation and Olivetti, have made extensive use of these downsizing management methods in restructuring exercises. Self-contained units in the manufacturing process or offering company services are turned into companies themselves - employees become employers and entrepreneurs. Trade unions have to reconsider communications and servicing policies in terms of the impact this will have on their members, as well as how to target organising campaigns at workers in the growing number of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

## **The rapid growth of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises**

SMEs are the engines of job growth in the services sector and it is essential that trade unions adapt accordingly. SMEs are the firms, it is argued, that are best able to adapt quickly to exploit the potential of technological change as described above. They are the main beneficiaries of the growth in business services. In Europe, nine out of ten SMEs in services are micro-enterprises that employ less than ten people. Micro-enterprises account for over 40 per cent of total employment in services, compared with less than 2 per cent in the energy industry and around ten per cent in manufacturing.

European trade unions must develop new strategies to organise workers in SMEs and adapt new services and forms of communication to retain membership levels.

### **"It Pays"**

*In January 1995, Svenska Industritjänstemannaförbundet (SIF) launched a recruitment project called "It Pays". Recruitment of young people and people with a university or college education was given priority. The project aims are to increase the benefits of membership for the members and to strengthen the union's marketing efforts and its recruitment work.*

*The project is structured on the basis of local needs and conditions. This means that every regional division formulates goals for how the degree of unionisation should increase, and describes how the local branches should*

*be involved in this work. Recruitment plays a considerably more important role in current action plans than in plans from previous years.*

*Work has commenced on combining the marketing of SIF's material and services on employment, contracts, advice on pay and so on under the concept of "SIF's Job Service". The project plan attempts to divide the sub-projects into three different areas:*

- issues in favour of membership;*
- improved recruitment work;*
- it should be easy to join!*

*Svenska Industritjänstemannaförbundet (SIF), Sweden*

## **Globalisation and regional integration**

With the onset of the globalisation of the world's economy, and particularly regional economic integration, it is vitally important that Euro-FIET and its affiliates begin to look at the international dimension of organising and the development of services. The need for cross-border initiatives has become stronger than ever, particularly within Europe. Greater mobility for workers means that national unions will need to develop appropriate services and communications for members working abroad. The structure and network available through Euro-FIET will play key roles in this development.

Furthermore, as multinational enterprises flourish, there will be a greater need for international solidarity and corporate campaigns co-ordinated by Euro-FIET. This need is particularly acute in Central and Eastern Europe which is rapidly developing into a union-free zone. Multinational enterprises are flooding the market transition economies in order to exploit the possibility of cheaper labour, low social costs and a marginalised trade union movement. Unions in these countries need urgent assistance and support to develop strong and capable structures to adequately defend workers' rights and conditions.

## **Organising for the future**

The fundamental challenge before European unions therefore is the need to change priority to organising. Unions need to strike a balance between servicing existing members and recruiting new ones. They face the difficulty of maintaining existing membership levels, staunching the flow of departures as much as possible, and taking offensive action to encourage union membership.

*Liikealan Ammattihitto ry. (LA) is running a special recruitment campaign which involves the union visiting 600 work places, particularly in the Helsinki region. The campaign is designed to strengthen trade union*

*education, improve the work of the shop stewards and improve the contact between the union and its members.*

*In 1995, LA launched a campaign in major cities involving the use of local media, particularly radio commercials, and maintained a continuous presence in the union offices to receive calls from the public. The slogan used was "The best in services". Around 500 people called the union head office on top of all the calls directed to the local branch offices.*

*The union has also introduced a series of incentives for members who recruit new members and will develop this initiative for future organising campaigns.*

*Liikealan Ammattiliitto ry. (LA), Finland*

## **Trade union models**

The use of models is somewhat arbitrary but is useful to distinguish between different approaches to recruitment activity. The aim of trade unions is to improve the quality of life of their members in a social and democratic Europe.

The document will look at two models: the professional servicing model and the organising model.

In the classic professional servicing union model, union members look to and rely upon full-time union officials to service their needs. This relationship is characterised by a reliance on professional negotiators. Essentially, in this widespread model, union officials, rather than rank and file members, participate in the industrial relations system.

The professional servicing model, while oversimplified for the purposes of this document, may no longer be the most appropriate in the new labour market characterised by new work profiles and a changing work environment. For those unions prepared to change to meet the new challenges, the new labour market may require a very different relationship between the union and its membership.

The organising model of trade unions, on the other hand, states that if trade unions are to recruit, retain and effectively represent their members in the new market environment, then they will need to consider their workplace structures and organisation, empower members to set their own agenda and resolve many of their own problems, and provide resolute support through its full-time officials as the need arises.

This union model attempts to connect with and develop workers' collective experiences at the workplace and then empower them to solve their own problems through collective action. In many ways, this model reflects the best traditions of the labour movement in terms of collective action.

Trade unions must still service their members, and new members are often recruited by the offer of a wide range of union benefits such as legal, financial or tax advice, credit union, discounted travel and even MBA programmes. There is a wide array of services offered by unions and FIET has published a comprehensive review of those offered by its affiliates world-wide. These services in isolation will not in themselves be the answer to trade union organising difficulties.

<b>Professional servicing model</b>	<b>Organising model</b>	
The union is seen as a third party. It enters the workplace to increase membership and solve problems.	Members own the campaign to unionise their workplace.	
Unions tell members how they can solve their problems.	Members generate their own issues and organise to solve them together.	
Relying on employers to provide lists of names and workers for union officials.	Mapping the workplace and staff attitudes are crucial - names and information are provided by the workers.	
Relying on workplace access and employer co-operation.	Initial organising can be done outside work, in workers' homes and elsewhere.	
Cold selling union membership by organisers.	Establishing initial contacts and finding natural leaders to help recruit.	
Selling the union for services and insurance protection.	Workers empowered to do it for themselves through education and support.	
Relying on full-time officials to recruit and solve problems.	An internal organising committee is formed and workers are encouraged to build the union through one-on-one organising.	
Recruiting is seen as a separate activity.	Recruitment and organising are integrated.	
Results are achieved, but they are likely to be short-term.	Results are obtained through sustained efforts and are more likely to be permanent.	
The union is blamed when it cannot get results.	Members share decisions and solve problems together with union leaders: shared responsibility for failures and successes.	
Members complain they pay fees and the union does nothing.	Members make a real contribution to union struggles and identify with the union. An attack on the union is an attack on themselves.	

	Organisers resent members for not coming to meetings or not actively participating.	The image of the union is positive and active.	
	Management acts, while the union reacts and is always on the defensive.	The union has its own agenda with members involved and it keeps management off balance.	

Source: "Organising Works ", Peter Turnbull, University of Leeds, December 1995

## Principles of the organising model

Three guiding principles can be identified for the organising model:

Unions must "organise or die". Unions can blame adverse economic conditions and the changing composition of the labour force for the decline in membership, but these factors are essentially beyond the control of the union movement. Unions must accept that the desire and capacity to organise is fundamental to reversing the decline.

Within the organised labour movement, trade unions should encourage their members from different groups to recruit new members from within those groups, for example, women recruiting women, young people recruiting their peers, and so on.

Rank and file members are the union and as such they should be empowered to recruit other workers, on a one-to-one basis, generate their own agenda, and resolve as many of their own problems as practicable.

Increasing membership and leadership support for organising should be the first priority for unions. Member education about the importance of organising should be part of all union activities, especially new member education, shop steward training, and lifelong trade union education programmes. More members, leaders and staff should participate in union organising efforts and thus underline the importance of organising. Every union at every level needs to develop a culture of organising appropriate to its national context that permeates all activities.

*The efficiency of our system of recruitment is affected by the conditions surrounding the growth of our organisation. An increasing number of companies are starting to pay more attention to the issue of "staff motivation". A company that offers quality projects and efficiency will succeed in involving employees in those projects. In such cases, the newer generation of employees has begun to question the usefulness of joining a union.*

*What we want to do is to improve our ability to recruit by ensuring that the union's decision-making centres are fully aware of employees' real problems. We have to accept that circumstances have changed and that the*

*new forms of work organisation are causing an increasing number of problems for our grass roots members.*

*The new technologies and new forms of work organisation are having a profound effect on interpersonal relationships.*

*When work is made subservient to the needs of technology, efficiency and results, basic solidarity goes by the board. What trade unions have to do, therefore, is re-invent themselves. This will require recreating those bands of solidarity, even at the lowest level, and re-establishing a form of minimal democracy.*

*What, we intend to do is to try and motivate our activists to recruit new members. A trade unionist who feels that he/she enjoys the respect of colleagues and is seen as a reliable social councillor will no doubt see his/her own work in a positive light.*

***Federazione Italiana Bancari e Assicurativi (FIBA), Italy***

## **Revitalising the union movement**

Successful organising is only possible if the resources are available to support the work, if necessary by re-directing resources from other activities. The great spun-off of allocating resources to organising is that the union movement receives an injection of vitamins at the same tune - a boost to its energy levels and a revitalisation of its membership.

Euro-FIET is concerned that union membership is lowest in those sectors where employment growth is most rapid, i.e. the services sector. Another significant factor is that women constitute a large percentage of the labour force in the services sector, many working part-time. Union membership among women is low in a number of European countries and this figure is lower still among part-time workers.

Trade unions should also focus on young workers in their organising campaigns. Young people have their own particular culture, needs and aspirations. They are the generation of the 21st century and it is vital for the future of the European trade union movement that they attract young people into membership. This will require appropriate research and development to respond to the needs and aspirations of this group of workers.

Similar efforts should be made in respect of professional and managerial staff. Special attention needs to be paid to this group of highly qualified workers. The challenge is two-fold in terms of organising professional and managerial staff and then developing appropriate services and communications to respond to their special needs.

Since the 1980s, trade unions in a number of European countries have devoted considerable time and resources to recruitment activities in an attempt to stem the fall in membership figures. Unions have had to learn that recruitment policies should be synchronised with the resources allocated to achieve them. Information from two British affiliates, GMB and MSF, indicate that some trade union officials are constrained by their existing workload and might attach a low priority to recruitment. This indicates a need for trade unions to look closely at the role and functions of their officials in future structures.

*The 1995 GMB Congress adopted a report which laid out a clear strategy for recruitment and organisation in the future. The report identified:*

- *allocation. of resources;*
- *target groups Of workers;*
- *target employers;*
- *key employment issues;*
- *workplace organisation.*

*All regions and sections identified key recruitment targets and all service departments transferred support and resources from servicing members to organising members and non-members. Similarly, a code of practice for all GMB officials was implemented - re-enforcing their role in organising and recruitment.*

*The union. then implemented a workplace health. check which officers complete on a monthly basis. This checklist identifies:*

- *total work-force;*
- *union members;*
- *access to information;*
- *lay representatives;*
- *workplace issues;*
- *action. plan.*

*These plans have been implemented in. all GMB workplaces and consolidation of membership has improved. The 1996 GMB Congress adopted a further report "Sign 'em up" on the issue of recruitment. This, together with a video, an intensive training programme and improved communications in. the union has been the basis of the union's recruitment activities over the last twelve months.*

*GMB/APEX, UK*



## **The need for focused research**

Part of the problem facing trade unions in the new labour market is that often they are less than fully aware of the extent or growth of non-union companies within certain areas, particularly in today's services sector with its growth of SMEs, and their knowledge of the organisational and work-force characteristics of these companies is extremely limited. Add to this the problems facing full-time officials, including heavy workloads, conflicting goals and priorities, and insufficient training in recruitment skills, and it becomes evident that union recruitment campaigns often commence with a significant handicap.

## **Building new networks**

Organising should lead to the development of widespread and strong networks of union organisers and activists. These people share both information and experience which is invaluable to the trade union movement. In the information society, where to be powerful increasingly means being information rich, trade unions should encourage these networks. Their significance should not be overlooked, especially in the context of decentralised bargaining and the emergence of new management practices which attempt to isolate and erode collectivist traditions in industrial relations.

Networks also facilitate what is perhaps the most important objective of all, namely the attempt to infuse both the workplace and the union movement with a new "organising culture". The organising model could change the very culture of trade unionism in those countries which embrace it.

## **The role of Euro-FIET**

The introduction of European Works Councils has presented a new and challenging means of looking more closely at the issue of organising on a multinational level through the development of strong international networks. Bringing together worker representatives from within a multinational company, the council infrastructure will enable a much more detailed and comprehensive exchange of information and experiences between members. One of the primary objectives of European Works Councils should be to improve trade union penetration and recognition within their company. Organising should be given priority on agendas of all works council meetings. This strategy will be most effective in those councils where there is a strong trade union representation. In this respect, Euro-FIET and its affiliates should identify those councils most likely to benefit and to develop appropriate strategies for these targeted councils.

Organising is a priority item for all Euro-FIET's trade section work. With the development of new technologies and the subsequent impact on employment and work organisation, Euro-FIET and its members have begun to explore new forms of communication and information dissemination that can both reduce the negative impact

of these developments and investigate new organising tools. For example, in the information technology sector, where the impact of new technology has a more rapid and exaggerated effect, Euro-FIST affiliates are investigating the use of internal company electronic mail and the Internet to maintain efficient communication links with members and to recruit new members.

A similar experience has been discussed at meetings of FIET's Professional and Managerial Staff Committee as well as the recently formed Engineers' Forum. These groups of professionals are inevitably highly skilled in the IT field, and electronic communication and information are their daily tools of work. In order to reach these members and increase membership among professional and managerial staff, we must explore new ways of providing the services and information they require.

In terms of women's activities, the highly successful Global Equality Project is based on two overall objectives, one being collective bargaining and the other being to improve the organising of women into trade unions. The same issue is applied to young people in the discussions at the meetings of Euro-FIET's Youth Committee. It is essential that trade unions identify the needs and aspirations of these groups of workers and develop appropriate responses. Unions should analyse the image they project on these groups of workers and apply marketing techniques to adapt their images where necessary.

## **Conclusion**

The trade union movement needs to revitalise. It also needs to revitalise members' willingness to act, as opposed to simply re-calculating their willingness to pay for a range of new union services. Given that the key principle of organising is self-organisation, based on worker to worker recruiting and empowering members to generate their own agenda and resolve as many of their own problems as is practicable, putting organising to the top of the priorities' list could well provide a catalyst for trade union renewal throughout Europe.

In many European countries, trade unions have taken a long, hard look at their own structures and divisions. The deregulation of markets and the ensuing reorganisation of work has led to a blurring of traditional demarcation lines between trade union membership. Accordingly, trade unions have also reviewed their own structures and a number of significant trade union mergers have already taken place. These mergers are vital for the survival of the trade union movement in the 21st century. They are also a logical progression in view of the restructuring of European economies. In carrying out these mergers, trade unions have made a positive statement to both members and employers alike and will enable an appropriate evolution of the movement in a rapidly changing environment.

Increased co-operation is equally important at the international level. In this respect, Euro-FIET has established closer working relationships with a number of International Trade Secretariats (ITSs) in order to co-operate at the level of European Works

Councils or in terms of sectoral activities, for example tourism. These areas of co-operation arrangements will become even more significant and necessary in future.

One of the great writers of the 19th century, Oscar Wilde, once wrote "Every man of ambition has to fight his century with its own weapons. What this century worships is wealth. The God of this century is wealth." The God of the 21st century is not much different. The all consuming need for enterprise to make the biggest profit possible or ensure the greatest return on investment is the altar upon which the workers of the world are sacrificed. However, what has changed between the centuries is the level of weaponry available. The weapons of the 21st century are powerful, particularly information technology, and it is with these weapons that the labour movement must fight the battles of this century.