



## A Toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice - Initiative

# FGTB-ABVV

## Equal Pay Day

### Summary of the initiative

The General Federation of Belgian Labour (FGTB French acronym, ABVV in Flemish) is a national trade union federation in Belgium and has a membership of more than 1.5 million members of which 44% are women.

The union has put equality at the forefront of its action. A brochure published in 2010 “Solidarity against inequalities” details the challenges at stake in the labour market and FGTB-ABVV political views to counteract discriminatory behaviours and practices at the workplace.

Since 2005, the FGTB-ABVV has organised, together with the progressive women’s rights movement, “zijkant” the Equal Pay Day (<http://www.equalpayday.be>), to put an end to pay discrimination between women and men. Public authorities strongly support this initiative. In the same month the Belgian Institute for equality between women and men publishes its annual gender pay gap report with figures that enable the monitoring of the evolution of the pay gap in different sectors of the economy. The union has also developed its own indicator to measure the gender pay gap: it is based on official statistical data of monthly salaries of men and women working full-time and part-time in the private sector.

Awareness raising actions are undertaken throughout Belgium and they involve a large number of trade union activists and civil society organisations. The Belgian Equal Pay Day takes place in March. This date is not chosen randomly: it symbolises the size of the difference in pay between women and men on the Belgian labour market. If this pay gap diminishes, Equal Pay Day shifts to an earlier date in the year. The opposite happens when the gap widens. When the EU Commission set an EU equal pay day, it adopted the same idea.

Various campaign material is published and distributed to mark the day. This includes brochures with statistics on the gender pay gap (21% in 2014, in monthly salaries of full-time and part-time workers in the private sector); examples of unions’ work to fight the gender pay gap; training and/or awareness-raising videos; press releases, posters and gadgets. Slogans and images used are sometimes quite shocking, in order to grab the attention of the media and public. In 2013 the campaign focused on the unbalanced division of housework which impacts work-life balance and thus indirectly impacts the gender pay gap. The slogan chosen was “Extreme housekeeping: sometimes a man’s gotta do what a woman usually does” and a funny short-video was produced. In 2014 Equal Pay Day was organized for the 10th time, but it was not a ‘happy’ celebration. In 10 years of campaigning, the gender pay gap diminished from 28% to 21%. Not bad, but certainly not enough. At this speed, more than 40 years are still needed to close the pay gap. The campaign of 2014 focused therefore on the injustice about this persistent discrimination of women. The slogan on posters, flyers and postcards was: “Black, bald, red-haired or fat men should earn less. You find this scandalous? Why not for women, as they still earn 21% less than men?” A particular attention was paid to part-time work (46% of the female workers), which is often not voluntarily ‘chosen’.





Five main elements have been identified by FGTB-ABVV as effective in tackling the gender pay gap: increasing public (child)care facilities; fighting gender stereotypes; fully applying the new law of 22 April 2012; strengthening collective bargaining; informing workers about their career choices. For example, a survey conducted by the FGTB indicated that 90% of workers are not aware of the rights and the implications of part-time work.

Finally the union pays attention to training negotiators in detecting and advancing meaningful negotiations to fight the gender pay gap and promote gender equality. Several publications have been produced over the years to address both the gender pay gap as well as reconciliation policies, these include (but are not limited to): SOS Griet: Five recipes for women to earn more (2009); Five years of Equal Pay Day campaign (2005-2009); Better combining work and family: time credit possibilities (2011); Part time work: rights, benefits and risks (2012); Possibilities for leave from work for young parents (2012, updated in 2013).

### Priorities

Addressing gender roles, Supporting work-life balance, Tackling the gender pay gap **Sector(s)**

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### Type

Social Partners

### Country

Belgium

### Model of social partnership

Unilateral (Trade Union)

### Launch date

2005-2013

### References

<http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/egalite-femmes-hommes>

[http://www.fgtb.be/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=dafa8b3f-aea1-447a-b127-0ad41b4a39b4&groupId=10134](http://www.fgtb.be/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=dafa8b3f-aea1-447a-b127-0ad41b4a39b4&groupId=10134)

<http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/>

<http://www.equalpayday.be>

### This initiative was submitted by:

FGTB (ETUC)

### Website

<http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/home-fr>