



Exchange of Good practices on gender equality

Equal Pay Day

Estonia, 18-19 June 2013

Discussion Paper - Belgium



The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

This publication is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

Equal Pay Day as a good practice in Belgium - How to pay the gap?

Saskia C.I. Ravesloot

RHEA (VUB's Center for Gender and Diversity in Flanders)

Abstract

The Equal Pay Days, organised by the Belgian trade unions since 2006, convinced together with the Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men, the Parliament to pass a new law on Equal Pay in 2012. While the Institute provided finances, studies, data and instruments, the trade union campaigns raised public awareness in different forms and mobilised trade union representatives, employers and governments to put the pay gap on the agenda. The attention given to this issue in the media, strengthened the academic research and generated numerous scientific studies, focusing on the explanation and the evolution of the gender pay gap. Between 1999 and 2010 the gap declined by 9 percentage points. In this respect, Belgium is one of the better performing countries in Europe. However progress is slow. The Gender Pay Gap Report 2013 of the Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men depicts a growth in decimals. On the basis of the conclusions of my own research on gender mainstreaming within the Belgian trade unions, I argue that efforts can be more effective if trade unions representatives unite and push for a stronger joint position during negotiations with employers organisations. The next opportunity to make this happen is in 2014, when a new intersectoral agreement should be signed.

In the first section of this paper I will discuss the diversity of the good practices of the Socialist, the Christian and the Liberal equal pay day initiatives. In the second section I will deal with the results and the impact of these good practices in terms of gender equality in the labour market. In the third section I will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the good practices and provide some indications for further strategies to reduce the gap. In the last section I will suggest some questions for debate.

1. Main elements of the Belgian good practice

The fight for equal pay has been anchored in the history of the Belgian trade unions. Referring to the Article 119 in the Treaty of Rome (1957), Belgians' landmark for equal pay was the women's strike in the FN factories in Herstal in 1966, a plant manufacturing weapons. Solidarity crossed not only sex, trade union positions and branches, but also national borders, since trade unionists from other countries supported the strike. Finally, the employer was forced to provide women with better working conditions, opportunities for promotion and to a certain degree also with a pay increase.¹ Since then, the 'historical Loch Ness monster'², as Éliane Gubin a Belgian historian pictures it, never left the scene.

¹ See the Film 'Made in Dagenham'

² Éliane Gubin, *Eliane Vogel-Polsky, A women with conviction, Institute for the equality of women and men*, Brussels, 2007.

Over the last eight years there has even been a strong synergy between trade unions' initiatives and governments' efforts to close the gender gap. Governments have made official statements³, organised conferences⁴ and ordered studies⁵. Parliamentarians have introduced multiple legislative proposals, while the social partners have taken various initiatives regarding equal pay. Before going into these initiatives, I provide first a short overview of the related legal and policy context, the industrial relations and institutional framework, followed by the details of the trade unions' good practices on the equal pay day.

1.1. Background and general policy context⁶

1.1.1. Legal and policy context

There are five fundamental legal provisions imposing equal pay in Belgium. Articles 10 and 11 of the Belgian constitution state that women and men are equal before the law, that equality between women and men is guaranteed and that 'Enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised for Belgians must be provided without discrimination.' The law of 7th of May 1999 enacts equal treatment in employment. The law of 10th of May 2007 fights against discrimination. The law of 12th of January 2007 urges for gender mainstreaming, while the new law of the 22nd of April 2012, focuses explicitly on equal pay.

Numerous political intentions have paved the way to adopt the 2012 law on equal pay, several of them are policy notes from different Ministers, encouraging to use all talents and devices to close the gender gap.⁷ In 2005, a proposition for a new law was introduced to stimulate equal opportunities policies in enterprises.⁸ At that time, a proposition of a resolution regarding equal pay of women and men was introduced, requesting the government to oblige the social partners to eradicate discrimination regarding job classifications before 2008.⁹ In 2006 the link was made with diversity in the legislative proposal for assimilation of pay between individuals with an immigrant background and nationals as well as between individuals with and without a disability.¹⁰ This proposal imposes employers to systematically collect data and facilitate access to this information for trade unions and inspection. The policy note 'equal opportunities on the labour market' of the Ministry of Employment stressed the application of sex-neutral job classifications, for which a checklist is available (see bibliography). This policy note also stresses the importance of an

³ For example the governments' Action Plan 2006-2007 – 10 Projects.

⁴ For example, Equal Pay was on the programme during the Conference on Women and Pensions in 2006.

⁵ See for example the EVA-project (2001-2006), a study on the gender neutrality of classifications and the impact of analytical classification on equal pay, conducted by the Institute for the equality of women and men in cooperation with the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, the trade unions and the employers' organisations. See all results on www.iefh.be.

⁶ See <http://www.loonkloof.be/en/history> (05.07.2013).

⁷ Note de Politique Générale du ministre de la Fonction publique, de l'Intégration sociale, de la Politique des grandes villes et de l'Égalité des chances (*), partie intégration sociale, Doc 51 2045/011 du 10 octobre 2005 et Partie Égalité des Chances, Doc 51-2706/014 du 31 octobre 2006, Note de Politique Générale du ministre de l'Emploi, partie emploi, Doc 51-2706/010 du 6 novembre 2006.

⁸ Introduced by Fatma Pehlivan, 18/11/05, Senate 3-1439/1.

⁹ Introduced by Margriet Hermans and Stéphanie Anseeuw, 4/05/2005, Senate 3-1180.

¹⁰ Introduced by Inga Verhaert e.o., 14/06/2006, the Second Chamber DOC 51 2550/001.

equality-diversity label¹¹ for companies and the collaboration with the Institute for the equality of women and men concerning the effectiveness of the existing legislation on equal pay. The Ministry of Pensions introduced in the same year a website, calculating future pensions. The Council of Ministers seized the opportunity of the second Equal Pay Day on the 31st of March 2006 to announce new actions. This led to a set of measures¹² and the first Gender Equal Pay Report (March 2007). In 2007 a proposition for a resolution in the Senate¹³ and a new initiative on M/W United¹⁴ to promote the representation of women in management boards, called for more efforts tackling the gender pay gap.

Belgians' permanent support for equal pay has been shared with other European countries. In 2005 Belgium contributed to the final Conference of a European comparative study on gender mainstreaming and trade unions. Belgian took the lead for the report on the equal pay gap.¹⁵ The Belgian Equal Pay Day has been promoted at several occasions, during the European Conference in May 2006 "Closing the gender pay-gap", in reports¹⁶ and awareness raising campaigns of the European Commission.¹⁷ Under the Belgian Presidency of the European Union in 2010, a number of important initiatives were taken. The Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men drafted two reports: the guide 'How to close the gender pay gap: Strategies and good practices of States and social partners in Europe'¹⁸ and the European pay gap report 'The gender pay gap in the Member States of the European Union: Quantitative and qualitative indicators'.¹⁹

1.1.2. Industrial relations framework

The pioneering initiative of the social partners regarding equal pay in Belgium was the adoption of the collective labour agreement (CLA) number 25 of 15th of October 1975 "concerning the equal compensation of male and female employees"²⁰, eradicating gender discrimination based on job classifications. The government is charged to screen all CLAs and to draft assessment reports with detailed statistics and indicators.²¹ Already in the intersectoral agreement of 1999-2000, social partners agreed to review the historically skewed pay systems in branches where

¹¹ A pilot project started in 2006 with fifteen companies. After integrating equality and diversity within their organisation, they received a label in 2007. For more information see <http://www.werk.belgie.be/defaultTab.aspx?id=8138> (05.07.2013).

¹² See Note to the Council of Ministers (19.05.2006) on 'Diversity on the labour market: using talents'.

¹³ Proposition de résolution visant à établir l'égalité de rémunération entre les femmes et les hommes, Séance au Sénat, 14 décembre 2006, O. Zrihen et S. de Bethune (3-1180/2).

¹⁴ Introduced by Kathleen Van Brempt, see <http://guberna.efficacy.com/efficacy.dll/quest?app=guberna&cont=&page=guberna/infoproject.htm&lang=en> (05.07.2013).

¹⁵ See MSU - Gender mainstreaming and Europe's Trade Unions http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/076_en.html (05.07.2013).

¹⁶ Expert Report of the EC and the Report 'Equality between women and men, 2008'.

¹⁷ For example in 2007, the Equal Pay Action Day on the 22nd of February, organised by the women's organisation of the European Socialist Parties (PES) and in 2009 the EC awareness campaign on Equal Pay <http://ec.europa.eu/equalpay>.

¹⁸ http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/45%20-%20Gender%20pay%20gap_tcm336-112122.pdf (05.07.2013).

¹⁹ http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/53%20-%20Gender%20pay%20gap%20in%20the%20member%20states%20of%20the%20EU_ENG_tcm336-146113.pdf (05.07.2013).

²⁰ Modified by the CLA 25bis, 2001 (articles 3 and 5), focusing on information and raising awareness on this subject and the CLA 25ter, 2008, obliging to review job classifications regarding their gender neutrality.

²¹ Policy Note 2006, Diversity on the labour market, p. 9, Minister of Employment, Van Velthoven.

inequalities are detected and to adjust these systems if necessary²² by means of analytical job classification systems. These commitments were confirmed during following intersectoral agreements. Another important step was taken by the three main trade unions in Belgium, by signing on the 23rd of September 2004, the Charter on gender mainstreaming.²³

1.1.3. The institutional framework

The Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men was created in December 2002. In conformity with its mission, the Institute fights "against any form of discrimination and inequality based on gender in all aspects of life through the development and implementation of an adequate legal framework, appropriate structures, strategies, instruments and actions." It undertakes, develops, supports and co-ordinates studies and research in the field of gender and equality, including equal pay. It issues an annual Gender Pay Gap Report since 2007, including recommendations for political decision-makers. The Institute assesses the impact in terms of gender, of policies, programmes and measures; addresses recommendations to public authorities, individuals and private institutions. The Institute launched a new website²⁴ on equal pay in March 2013. Since 2002, it has set up a network with various stakeholders (women's organisations, trade unions and other Ministries), especially with the Belgian trade unions, and is present at numerous international fora.²⁵ Regarding equal pay, the Institute for the equality of women and men is strongly engaged. Since its function as a public administration is neutral from an ideological point of view, there is some kind of understanding between their role, in particular data collection, research and support for (the respect and implementation of) legislation and the role of the civil society – in particular the trade unions – which is awareness-raising and campaigning. These activities are in many cases financed by the Institute for the equality of women and men.

1.2. The trade unions' Equal Pay Days

The three main trade union confederations in Belgium introduced the Equal Pay Day eight years ago. I will first provide an overview of the Socialist Confederation's Equal Pay Day, since they were the first to claim Equal Pay Day in Belgium as a brand. Second, I will present the initiatives of the Christian trade union confederation and then I will present the main points of the initiatives of the Liberal trade union regarding equal pay. All three push for the application of the new law on equal pay. It is important to notice that the provided information is not an exhaustive overview of all campaigning material. This would be a study on its own. However, it gives an indication of the kind of actions Belgian trade unions have been organising regarding the pay gap.

²² Tools to help employers and employees to screen their own job classifications for possible hidden discriminations are available at <http://www.loonkloof.be/en/how-calculate-gender-pay-gap-ones-own-company> (22.04.2013, not yet approved by Royal Decree) and at http://www.iefh.be/eva/index.php?fr_tools (for the tools developed in the EVA-project) (05.07.2013).

²³ See S. Ravesloot and M. Stroobant, Charter Gender mainstreaming in the trade unions, VUBPress, Brussels, 2008.

²⁴ See <http://www.loonkloof.be/en> (05.07.2013).

²⁵ See <http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be> (05.07.2013).

1.2.1. Actions of the Socialist Union Confederation

The Equal Pay Day (EPD) aims to eliminate pay inequalities between women and men through raising awareness, providing facts and figures, restoring confidence in social control and change, empowering and motivating social actors, promoting measures for pay equity, underscoring the importance of education as a starting point for careers, promoting work/life balance (reduction of barriers for full time work, promotion of collective care facilities, more fathers taking on care responsibilities, improved information about part-time work and the negative impact on careers and a family friendly labour organisation), valuing women's work and rewarding it in a more equitable way.

On the 31st of March 2005, the socialist trade union ABVV/FGTB organised the first equal pay day together with the political women's organisation 'Zij-kant' of the Flemish Socialist Party.²⁶ In 2006, since no new data existed, the second campaign was launched on the same day with the same pay gap as in 2005 (31st of March). The campaigning poster depicted a woman with 'stupid cow' on her name badge and the according web ad was called 'Executive Cow' (see the links in the bibliography). The purpose was to tackle the disregarding remarks that women undergo constantly by earning less than men.²⁷

On the 30th of March 2007, more humour was used in the third campaign with the slogan "It's not hormones, it's the difference in pay", showing a woman in tears and clearly upset.²⁸ This EPD was organised one day earlier than in 2006, indicating a slight correction, notwithstanding the fact that the 24% pay gap remained, this time supported by official figures from the first Belgian Pay Gap Report. This gap is based on the monthly gross salaries of women and men in the private sector, part-time work included and differs from the data of the EU, where the unadjusted pay gap is the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.²⁹

The fourth EPD on the 31st of March 2008, advocated closing the gap and improving women's wages. Posters were distributed with the slogan "Women are still on sale" and a web commercial of men running at offices' opening hour, for women as bargains with a 25% discount, was broadcasted via television during prime time as a short message of general interest.

Selected progress was suggested in 2009, when the fifth edition ran on the 27th of March. However the pay gap was again 24% (gross monthly wage). Several media published the message that "Women work for free from 3:05 pm", on a 9-to-5 working day. A radio commercial urged women to stop working at the stroke of the clock at 3:05 and a Facebook application interacted with users about the message.

In 2010, data started to change with a pay gap of 23% and a campaign on the 26th of March, calling upon men to join the efforts to close the gap. As long as women earn less, women and men have to manage their households together. Posters and a web ad indicated that not only women, but also men suffer the consequences of

²⁶ The poster mentions: 'Louise finally earns as much as a man', with a photo of a woman, who became Louis, bold and with a beard. The pay gap in gross monthly wage at that time was 24%.

²⁷ This illustration won the Bronze Lion in the category 'Public Awareness Messages' at the Cannes Advertising Festival" (ABVV/FGTB website).

²⁸ Four YouTube clips completed the message, see the links at the end of this contribution.

²⁹ See <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/web/table/description.jsp> (25.05.2013).

the pay gap in their private sphere. Getting rid of the gap benefits all family members.

A similar gap of 23% was used during the 2011 campaign on the 25th of March, linking wages with pensions. A new group was targeted via posters showing senior women in typical male functions, committed to work longer than their male colleagues for similar pensionable rights. A YouTube clip was viewed more than two million times, won a professional praise, with a Golden Cub for the best Belgian commercial of 2011 and received three nominations at the Cannes Advertising Festival.

The EPD on the 20th of March 2012 reported a pay gap in gross monthly wage of 22%. The central question for the French speaking part was work/life balance, with specific recommendations, flyers, animation and publicity on how to manage their household responsibilities.³⁰ The Flemish wing continued with new provocations using the slogan “Close the pay gap. Become a porn actress”. A brochure ‘Your studies now also determine your pay later’³¹ addressed students expounding the link between study, career and pay, emphasising the importance of a work-life balance, and underlining the impact of family decisions on pay and one's further career.

The latest EPD on the 20th of March 2013, notifies a gap of 22%, but stresses the status quo, mainly due to women working more part-time (in Belgium 44% women versus 9% of men). The Ministers of Employment and Equal Opportunities have been visited by the chairs of the trade union to discuss the importance of keeping the purchasing power and closing the gender pay gap, even in times of crisis.³² The Flemish wing continued their campaigns. Under the motto of “Extreme housekeeping, Sometimes a man gotta do what a woman usually does”, press releases, banners, buttons, flyers, posters and a video clip, promoted housekeeping in ‘Rambo-style’. The ABVV/FGTB website³³ was updated, making an overview of all campaigns up to 2013 and other social media as Twitter³⁴ and Facebook³⁵ were featured to spread the messages.

1.2.2. Actions of the Christian Union Confederation

The Christian trade union ACV/CSC started their equal pay days *strictu sensu* in 2007. They requested, together with the KAV (Catholic Women's Association, since 2012 called Femma) that the government obliges the enterprises to measure and discuss the gender pay gap. In 2007 a brochure was published on equal pay (see bibliography).

The ACV-CSC organised a second equal pay day on the 17th of March in 2008³⁶, referring to a gap of 21%, a figure they collected through a study. Salaries can be calculated on a new website.³⁷ A public awareness raising campaign was organised in all the main train stations, with special gifts and a ludic event, claiming to make

³⁰ <http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/egalite-femmes-hommes> (05.07.2013).

³¹ Equal Opportunities Flanders and the Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men.

³² http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/news-fr/-/article/1341830/&pager=3&p_l_id=10624#inegalites (05.07.2013)

³³ www.equalpayday.be (05.07.2013).

³⁴ #EPD2013

³⁵ www.facebook.com/equalpaydaybelgium (05.07.2013)

³⁶ http://www.acv-online.be/Images/visienr09_tcm9-147525.pdf (05.07.2013)

³⁷ www.loonwijzer.be. (05.07.2013)

the pay gap more transparent in enterprises and to find means to close the gap. A new brochure on equal pay was published in 2008.³⁸

They also requested action for promoting women's careers, minimum wages in some vulnerable branches, a more equal distribution of extra-legal benefits, more accurate legislation, a gender sensitive employment policy (taking into account the Lisbon objectives), a more effective policy to harmonise work/family and leisure, an improved framework for part-time work, more attention for those who want to reintegrate in employment and strengthen the role of the Institute for the equality of women and men.³⁹

In March 2009⁴⁰, the whole month was proclaimed to be the month of equal pay and on the 16th an awareness raising campaign was organised in the central railway station, followed by a visit to the Ministry of Employment. ACV-CSC requested the Ministry to support new initiatives, such as the promotion of multiple annual action plans on equal pay, aiming neutral job classifications, in line with the collective labour agreement 25 making gender neutral jobs compulsory for enterprises in all branches. The message during this month of equal pay was that legislation alone is not enough to fight for equal pay. Flyers and a brochure⁴¹ on the causes of the pay gap were distributed and the ACV-CSC website to calculate your salary was promoted.⁴² ACV/CSC urged the Institute for the equality of women and men to provide more budgets for action on equal pay. In addition ACV/CSC organised in December 2009 a seminar for trade unionists to raise awareness on equal pay.⁴³

The 2010 edition⁴⁴, focused on stereotypes and inequalities within the labour market. Dressed like cleaning persons and armed with a sponge, ACV/CSC militants symbolically wiped out all stereotypes in public places. A brochure was published on that occasion.⁴⁵

The equal pay day campaign of 2011 challenged women to stop ironing until the pay gap has disappeared. Several video clips⁴⁶ have been posted on Facebook and a specific website to teach men to iron. As such it focused on the difficulties to combine work and domestic tasks and urged men to share the responsibilities.

In 2012, on the second European Equal Pay Day⁴⁷, a delegation of ACV/CSC visited the Ministry of Employment with some concrete discussion points: the flexibility that employers demand from their workers and employees, the improvement of the statute of part-time workers and the assimilation of maternity leave and parental leave with normal working time, so that pensions do not suffer from career interruptions. Attention was given to the crisis that limits the opportunities to correct inequalities and to spend financial means on measures to close the gap. ACV/CSC organised on the 6th of December 2012 a study day 'Mind the gap – close the gap'. Material used during four workshops where women and men were welcome,

³⁸ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/ecart_salarial_tcm22-188399.pdf

³⁹ http://www.acv-online.be/Images/080317_dag%20van%20gelijk%20loon_tcm9-151235.PDF (05.07.2013)

⁴⁰ http://www.acv-online.be/Images/visienr09_tcm9-195231.pdf (05.07.2013).

⁴¹ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/090101%20brochure%20EcartSalarial_tcm22-224016.pdf

⁴² www.loonwijzer.be. (05.07.2013).

⁴³ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/rapport_genre_tcm22-217517.pdf (05.07.2013)

⁴⁴ http://www.acv-online.be/Images/visie_nr07_dd0503_tcm9-216905.pdf (05.07.2013).

⁴⁵ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/carnet_bord_genre_tcm22-233062.pdf (05.07.2013)

⁴⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RddqM6sjl6U> (05.07.2013)

⁴⁷ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-165_en.htm (05.07.2013).

contained a number of checklists, other tools, several video clips (used during the Equal Pay Day)⁴⁸ and some PowerPoint presentations.

During the 2013 campaign⁴⁹, titled 'Rent-a-man', ACV/CSC sent out the message that the fight for equal pay starts at home, with an equitable share in domestic tasks. ACV/CSC created a website⁵⁰, published a brochure⁵¹, launched a poll for the most caring man on Facebook⁵² and consulted the public in the street. Concrete requests concerned the extension of 'birth leave' (former fathers leave) and the proposal to make it compulsory, higher social security for new parents and qualitative and affordable childcare with flexible hours. ACV/CSC also published in May 2013 an online survey to compare salaries.⁵³

1.2.3. Actions of the Liberal Union Confederation

ACLVB/CGSLB, the liberal and smallest trade union paid attention to equal pay in a more distinct manner than the other two main trade unions.⁵⁴ The effects of part-time work on pensions were stressed, which explains the need for detailed information on women's individual careers since a part of them have a-typical career paths.

Instead of working on the legislative side, ACLVB/CGSLB proposes to focus on the unequal positions of women and men in the labour market. The liberal trade unions, together with the two others discussed this issue during four conferences on pensions in 2006 and forwarded a unanimous advice on the importance of minimum pensions and to extend its application on part-timers.

Another issue which is regularly on the liberal agenda concerns the gender neutral job classification system. ACLVB/CGSLB participated together with ABVV/FGTB and ACV/CSC, in the EVA-project financed by the Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men and promoted the new classification system among its representatives.⁵⁵

At numerous occasions, causes of unequal pay have been tackled and analysed. Studies show that reasons for the gender pay gap are distinguished as objective or discriminatory. The labour market participation of women and men differ, mainly because women have to combine work in the labour market and in the household, and this may lead to more absenteeism, part-time work or it even may impulse women to abandon the labour market. The segregation in the labour market is another important reason for women having lower pay than men and is, following liberal interpretations, mainly rooted in individual choices. The horizontal segregation separates women in soft (welfare) and men in hard (industrial,

⁴⁸ http://www.acv-online.be/Actualiteit/Stuedag_gender/Stuedaggender.asp (25.05.2013).

⁴⁹ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/droit_social/travail/toutsurmonsalaire/egalite_salariale/ecart_salarial/ecart_salarial.asp (05.07.2013).

⁵⁰ www.rent-a-man-now.be (05.07.2013).

⁵¹ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/ECART%20SALAIRE_LR_tcm22-283511.pdf (05.07.2013).

⁵² www.g-magazine.be and www.facebook.com/gendermagazine (05.07.2013).

⁵³ http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/droit_social/travail/toutsurmonsalaire/egalite_salariale/action_syndicale/agir_pour_egalite_salariale.asp#ecart%20salarial (05.07.2013).

⁵⁴ <http://www.cgslb.be/femmes/themes/salaire-egal/> (05.07.2013).

⁵⁵ See http://www.iefh.be/eva/index.php?fr_intro (05.07.2013).

innovative) sectors, respectively less and better remunerated. The vertical segregation positions men at the top and women at the bottom, in the same branches. However not all differences can be sorted out, there is still a part of the gap that needs clarification. This is why the issue remains on the liberal agenda.

In 2012, ACLVB/CGSLB organised an Equal Pay Day on the 2nd of March, with a focus on the effects on women's pensions. The women's organisation of the liberal trade union requested the use of 'gender glasses' each time new blueprints of social and economic reforms are proposed. ACLVB/CGSLB motivates companies to focus more on equal opportunities policies, equal pay, work/life balance and (as the two other trade unions did) empower women to stand for candidate during the social elections of trade unionist representatives in private enterprises. Different local actions and collaboration with women's organisations have been undertaken on the international women's day, to stress the importance of solidarity among women.⁵⁶

On the international women's day in 2013, ACLVB/CGSLB argued that the crisis is not a valid reason for suspending the fight for equal pay. It should be an incentive to proceed the efforts. The liberal trade union claims that despite the fact that the government has frozen all salaries (except for automatic increases due to indexes and scales) equal pay should be kept out of these discussions and should be tackled as stated earlier.

1.2.4. Equal pay days: a comparison

A comparison of institutional arrangements and procedures for the implementation of the equal pay days is only possible between the ABVV/FGTB and the ACV/CSC. We detected four similarities.

- First regarding the form, equal pay day is for both symbolic, referring to the date in the year until which women have to work in order to earn the same salary as men did in the previous year.
- Second, with respect to the objectives, the Socialist and the Christian trade union both have the same goals in particular the eradication of the gender pay gap, tackle the same causes (unequal distribution of domestic tasks, part-time work, vertical and horizontal segregation, stereotypes, ...) and difficulties (the work/life balance, childcare, pensions, ...).
- Third, concerning periodicity, the equal pay days have a recurring character, each trade union organises these events on an annual basis.
- A final similarity concerns the ICT devices and social media used: both trade unions produce video clips which they publish on the net and YouTube and interact via Facebook with their members.

Dissimilarities can also be identified at four levels:

- First with respect to the target groups, different preferences can be detected. The ABVV/FGTB addresses their EPD towards more distinct groups (senior women or youngsters,...), while ACV/CSC targets more often militants and employers.

⁵⁶ World march for women

- Second, the duration is different, being a one day event for the ABVV/FGTB and lasting one month for ACV/SCS.
- Third, we noticed a difference in the contents used to mobilise these audiences: The ABVV/FGTB uses more provocative material, whereas the ACV/CSC raises awareness by means of less controversial material and concentrates more on the equal pay calculator website.
- Finally, there is a difference in ownership. For the ABVV/FGTB, the Equal Pay Day has become a new brand, which is registered as 'EqualPayDay' by Zij-Kant VZW.

2. Results of the good practice and its impact on achieving gender equality

Despite the fact that no monitoring data exist on the effectiveness of the equal pay campaigns, I will focus in this section on the evolution of the pay gap, followed by some results in relation to the target groups, in order to identify a number of obstacles and challenges.

2.1. Evolution of the gender pay gap

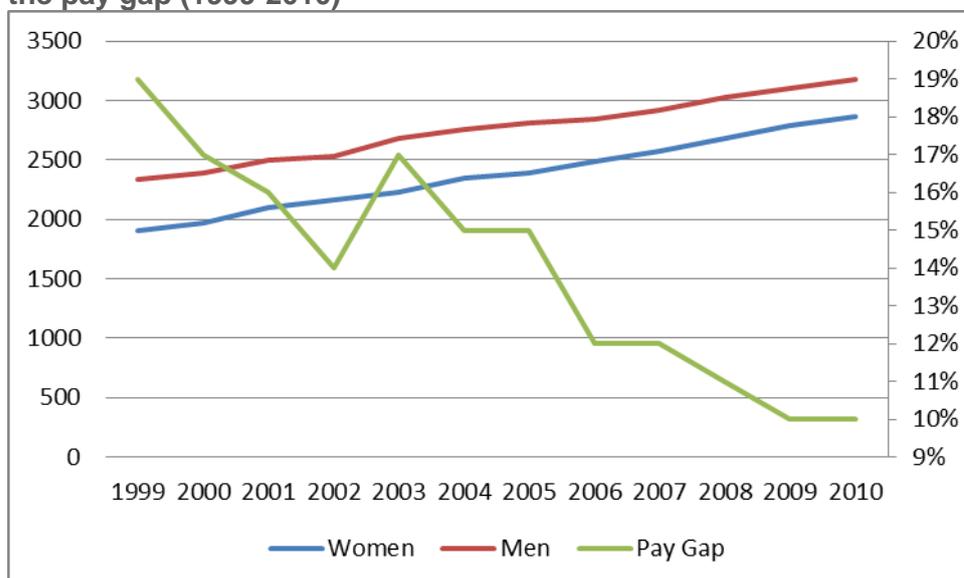
The Pay Gap Report 2013 indicates that women in Belgium earn on average 10% less than men. This finding is based on data from 2010. By taking part-time work into account this gap runs up to 23% on a yearly basis.⁵⁷ In recent years the data show a descending trend, except for civil servants. Additional benefits (for example social assurance schemes or a company car) make the gap even more important, but due to the economic crisis, these benefits are less likely to be attributed. The gap hits single parents and single women more than others. This is also true for individuals who do not have the Belgian nationality and individuals born outside Belgium. The most vulnerable are "last hired, first fired".⁵⁸

The calculation of the pay gap is based on the Structure of Earnings Survey, providing reliable data on enterprises with at least 10 employees in the industry and market services. (IEWM 2013: 6) The evolution of the average pay gap in gross monthly wages of full-time employees, is presented in Graph 1. The most recent data showed here are from 2010 and do not include the public administration, neither health nor the socio-cultural sector. These data show a slight progress over the last three years, from 11% (2008) to 10% (2010). However, we notice a decrease of 9% since 1999. Women are more and longer present on the labour market and start their career with a similar or even higher education profile than men.

⁵⁷ Institute for the equality of women and men, The Gender Pay Gap in Belgium, Report 2013, p. 5, see http://iqvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/63%20-%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Report%202013_tcm336-218027.pdf (05.07.2013).

⁵⁸ Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et de hommes, L'écart salarial entre les femmes et les hommes en Belgique, Rapport 2012, p. 6, see http://iqvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/59%20-%20Rapport%20Ecart%20salarial%202012_FR_tcm336-168234.pdf (05.07.2013).

Graph 1. Average gross monthly wages of full-time employees (in euro) and the pay gap (1999-2010)



Source: DGSEI, Structure of Earnings Survey, IEWM 2013, p. 10.

Measuring the effect and impact of the Equal Pay Days on the reduction of the gender pay gap is unfortunately not possible in the present context. Different ways of calculation complicate comparisons over time. The above mentioned pay gap is calculated for full-time employees and compares average gross monthly wages. When part-time employees (positions mainly occupied by women) are taken into account, the pay gap rises to 22% in 2010. (IEWM 2013: 13) In order to get a clear picture of the situation, attention should also be given to differences in hourly wages. Comparing the average gross hourly earnings of women and men working full-time and part-time is estimated at 13% in 2010. (IEWM 2013: 13). Depending on the variables, percentages can indicate a higher or lower gap. However, regardless the method used to calculate the pay gap, we find differences between women and men. There is no doubt that the pay gap exists.

2.2. Result in relation to the initial goal and target groups

The series of Equal Pay Days initiated a process of public awareness that influenced decision-makers. Several governments responded to the requests of the trade unions and the Institute for the equality of women and men, to pay more attention to equal pay. Without presuming a causal link between the equal pay days and the adoption of the law on Equal Pay in 2012, I do want to stress the importance of awareness raising actions. The new law was adopted in the Chamber on the 8th of March 2012 and was published officially on the 28th of August 2012. Though it still has to be implemented by regulations, it is an important step in structurally eradicating the gender pay gap. The new legislation introduces for example measures to monitor and address pay gaps at both company and sectoral level.⁵⁹ Enterprises, in charge of reporting each year officially about the status of their company – including Human Resources issues – are obliged to differentiate several sections of their reporting sheet by sex and to report biannually on the structure of

⁵⁹ Caroline Vermandere, HIVA - KU Leuven

earnings within the company. This will make the gaps more visible.⁶⁰ Important is also that this law makes companies more accountable for reducing the gender gap.

2.3. Obstacles and challenges

Certain causes of the pay gap are difficult to address. Stereotypes, vertical and horizontal segregation, division of labour in the household and traditional gender roles are persistent constraints. This explains why all Equal Pay Days have continuously focused on raising public awareness. Since all trade unions encountered the same constraints, one could have expected more shared action, unfortunately this was not the case, which counts for me as a first obstacle for efficient action.

Another obstacle that reduces efficiency of the Equal Pay Days is the fact that data are calculated differently, with different formulas, references and baselines. For example the Structure of Earnings Survey, conducted annually in Belgium is used for analysing the gender pay gap, but does not include all sectors for the calculations before 2010. It is only after 2010 that data from the education, health and socio-cultural branches and therefore women who are the majority in these sectors are considered in the calculations.

A final obstacle that I want to point out here and that touches efficiency, is that sometimes organisers of the Equal Pay Day get the impression that they are preaching in the desert. Legislation on equal pay exists, but no clear sanctions can be imposed on those companies who violate the rules. On the other side, individuals who experience discriminations have few opportunities to claim their rights. The Institute for the equality of women and men supports and helps any person requesting advice or information. It takes legal action in the case of disputes concerning the equality of women and men, it provides and gathers information and makes inventories of jurisdictional decisions related to gender equality. Since the Institute collects statistics on claims regarding pay discrimination, an in-depth study of the relationship between the evolution of these claims and the Equal Pay Days, could give more insight on their real impact.

These three obstacles, separate trade union actions, different approaches for calculating the pay gap and the absence of sanctions in case of pay gaps, are at the same time challenges for future action, preferably conducted by all stakeholders together in order to be more efficient.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of the good practices

3.1. Innovativeness

Assessing the innovativeness of the Equal Pay Day in Belgium is only relevant within the national context. Its innovative character – manifest in form and content – has been able to convince a large part of the public and the main stakeholders

⁶⁰ See law:
http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2012042229&table_name=loi

(Members of Government and Parliament and trade unionists). Since Equal Pay Days adopt innovative ways for mobilisation (ITC, internet, social media) it addresses new (young) target groups. New is also the challenge to come up with fresh ideas, each time more provocative. This has led in certain cases to questions about effectiveness. While trade unions try to be as innovative as possible, they strengthen the competitiveness among the trade unions, risking losing sight of the Equal Pay Days. Equal Pay Days are a means, not an aim in itself. The question arises how far one should go to get the attention from the 'big audience'.

3.2. Effectiveness

Questioning the effectiveness, without any in-depth study can only illustrate a tendency. If we refer to the quantitative data (see table in annex 3), we notice that the pay gap declined from 28% in 1999 to 25% in 2005, even without any equal pay day, that is 3% in total. When we compare this with the period after the introduction of equal pay days, we register that the pay gap decreased from 25% in 2005 to 22% in 2010, that is again a reduction of 3%. This means that generally speaking no effect can be recorded. As already mentioned, research is needed to verify this statement and to take all different variables into account (job classifications, branches, profession, education, part-time, companies actions, ...).

3.3. Partnership approach

Trade unions and employers' organisations are diametrical opposites with respect to the question 'How to close the pay gap'. The former spur the latter to take their responsibility, while the employers' organisations feel that trade unions should make use of the margins agreed upon during negotiations.⁶¹ While trade unions welcome the new law on equal pay, employers' organisations and more specifically the Federation of Belgian Enterprises, are more critical, pointing at the additional administrative burden and its lack of focus on the causes of the pay gap.⁶² This lack of consensus and focus on both sides is critical for the success of the equal pay day. Only if trade unions unite, share the same goals and support the same claims with regard to equal pay, a stronger position can be reached. More partnership and solidarity is expected from women themselves.

3.4. Transferability and sustainability

Are equal pay days transferable? Several practices show that similar actions have been reproduced elsewhere, not at least at European level, where this year the third equal pay day has been organised.

When sustainability is at stake, we should notice that this is not the purpose of these equal pay days. They are meant to be awareness raising instruments, stressing the reasons explaining the equal pay gap. They are intended to be 'temporary' until the pay gap is closed. However there is a risk that equal pay days become a goal, when milestones and targets continue to be missed. If the focus remains on the reasons behind the gender pay gap and does not shift to a focus on the allocation of a

⁶¹ http://acv-csc-metea.acv-online.be/Images/visienr10_tcm140-118061.pdf (10.04.2013)

⁶² <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2012/05/articles/be1205021i.htm>

sufficient budget to close the gap, stakeholders will not consider themselves accountable for reducing the pay gap. We should address the employers and call for their 'corporate social responsibility' in order to tackle the problem in a structural way.

4. Main questions and issues for debate at the seminar

The above mentioned analysis provides two questions for further debate.

How can women at the top make a difference? Considering the under representation of women in decision-making positions (in trade unions and employers' organisations), I wonder if this is an obstacle for negotiating equal pay within the companies. More specifically, will there be any solidarity between female representatives of employers' organisations and women trade unionists sitting at the other side of the table, defending the rights of all their members? Will women support women? Will women at the top of employers' organisations, those who take part in decision-making processes, take into account, together with the female top levels of the trade unions, the needs and interests of the female workers and employees?

A second question, already touched above, regards the focus of the equal pay days. How can we shift from a focus on awareness raising to a focus on finding solutions for closing the gap? This includes studies calculating the costs of reducing the gender pay gap. Last but not least, once we have estimated the cost of reducing the gender pay gap, we should ask who will be willing to pay for it. Where will the money come from? Are trade unions or employers willing to contribute to reduce the gap or will the government introduce new taxes in order to pay the difference? These questions have not been addressed until now, but merit some reflections.

As long as trade unions fight individually for equal pay, these questions will remain unanswered. I suggest that they stand together, unite and form a common front when new negotiations are on the agenda.

5. Bibliography

ACV/CSC (2013), "Agissez sur l'écart salarial dans votre entreprise", mars 2013 , http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/brochureecart_tcm22-283459.pdf (05.07.2013).

ACV/CSC (2007), "L'égalité, on a tout à y gagner", janvier 2007, http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/egalite%20hf_tcm22-133940.pdf (05.07.2013).

CSC (2010), "Efface les clichés, bosse pour l'égalité", l'Info, n° 10, mars 2010. http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/info_10-2010_special_tcm22-217038.pdf (05.07.2013).

BEVERS, T., COLLARD, A., DE SPIEGELEIRE, M., DE VOS, D., GILBERT, V. en VAN HOVE, H., (2010) "De loonkloof tussen mannen en vrouwen in België - Rapport 2010", Brussel, Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010, 88 p.

CHUBB, C., MELIS, S., POTTER, L. and STORRY, R., (2008) "The global gender pay gap", Londen, Incomes Data Services, 2008, 54 p.

DESCHACHT, N., BAERTS, A. en GUERRY, M., (2009) "De loonkloof en het glazen plafond in België: een onderzoek op basis van de panelstudie van Belgische huishoudens", Working Paper MOSI/38, VUB, april 2009, 12 p.
<http://www.vub.ac.be/MOSI/papers/DescachtBeartsGuerryMOSI38.pdf>
(05.07.2013).

IEFH, (2007) "La classification de fonctions analytiques: une base pour une politique salariale sexuellement neutre, Guide pratique", Bruxelles, 32 p, http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/classification%20de%20fontions%20analytique_tcm336-39886.pdf (05.07.2013).

IEFH, (2012) "L'écart salarial entre les femmes et les hommes en Belgique, Rapport 2012", Bruxelles, 87 p, http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/59%20-%20Rapport%20Ecart%20salarial%202012_FR_tcm336-168234.pdf (05.07.2013).

IEWM, (2013) "The Gender Pay Gap in Belgium, Report 2013", Brussels, 91 p, http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/63%20-%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Report%202013_tcm336-218027.pdf (05.07.2013).

PARDON, D., VERGEYLEN, Y., VAN EEGHEM, J. and RIJMENANS, C., (2006) "Checklist, Gender neutrality in job evaluation and classification", Brussels, Institute for the equality of women and men, 2006, 20p, http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/39%20-%20Checklist_ENG_tcm336-99809.pdf (05.07.2013).

PYCK, H., (2008) "Het M/V rapport van de Universiteit Gent: Verslag van het project Ugender", Gent, Centrum voor genderstudies, 2008, 121 p.

SELS, L., VANDERBRANDE, T., VANDERKERCKHOVE, S., VANDERMANDERE, C., DERMOTTE, J., (2011) "Naar een verklaring van de loonkloof", Rapport final – partie « Synthèse de l'étude », Programme « Société et Avenir », 2011, 10 p.

DEWACHTER, D., VERGAEREN, E., DE WINTER, T., KOELET, S., HENDRICKX, K., DE BIOLLEY, I., REYMNANTS, G., VAN HOVE, H., (2012) "Femmes au Sommet 2012", Bruxelles, Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes, 2013, 132 p. http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/binaries/65%20-%20Femmes-au-Sommet_FR_tcm336-224820.pdf (05.07.2013)

VANDERMANDERE, C., VANDERKERCKHOVE, S., VANDERBRANDE, T., DERMOTTE, J., SELS, L., (2011) "Eindverslag WAGEGAP, Naar een verklaring van de loonkloof", HIVA, 2012.

Links to campaign material and videos

ABVV/FGTB

General information:

<http://www.equalpayday.be/NL/documenten/dossier2013EN.pdf>

http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/files-fr?p_l_id=10621&p_l_id=10621&themes=structtheme10
<http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/files-fr/-/file/159997/>

Video clips:

2013

<http://www.equalpayday.be/>

"Campagnes pour l'égalité salariale" (2012 - 2006):

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

<http://equalpayday.be/NL/index.aspx?Id=Archief&Archief=2012>

2012

<http://equalpayday.be/NL/index.aspx?Id=Archief&Archief=2012>

2011

<http://equalpayday.be/NL/index.aspx?Id=Archief&Archief=2011>

2010

<http://equalpayday.be/NL/index.aspx?Id=Archief&Archief=2010>

2008

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ms8kbD5sX2c&feature=related>

2007

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNmOp7ED3As&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9N5CnCoDrE&NR=1>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0rrj08GQgg&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXplAd0P2ok&feature=related>

2006

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba5F7NoHqVQ>

ACV/CSC

General information :

http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Actualite/Campagnes/egalite/egalite_hf.asp

Video clips :

2013

<http://www.rent-a-man-now.be/>

2011

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RddqM6sjl6U>

Annex 1. Overview of the EPD 2005 - 2013

| ABVV/FGTB | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year | Slogan | Goals | Target groups | Media |
| 31.03.2005 – 24% | Louise finally earns as much as a man' | General message about the significance of the pay gap, stereotypes | Women, large public | Posters, animation |
| 31.03.2006 – 24% | Stupidcow | Stereotypes | Women, large public | Posters, web ad, budgets, animation |
| 30.03.2007 – 24% | It's not hormones, it's the difference in pay | Stereotypes | Women's environment, large public | YouTubes clips, animation |
| 31.03.2008 – 25% | Women are still on sale | General message about the significance of the pay gap | Men, large public | Posters, commercial, tv broadcasting, animation |
| 27.03.2009 – 24% | Women work for free from 3:05 pm | General message about the significance of the pay gap | Women, Large public | Radio commercial, Facebookapplication, animation |
| 26.03.2010 – 23% | You'll have to manage as long as your wife earns 23% too little | Benefits for the whole family if women earn more | Family members, men | Posters, web ad, animation |
| 25.03.2011 – 23% | To earn less, is to work longer | Link wages and pensions | Senior women, enterprises | YouTube clip, animation |
| 20.03.2012 – 22% | Close the pay gap. Become a porn actress | Link study, career and pay, work/life balance | Youth | Brochure, posters, clip, animation |
| 20.03.2013 – 22% | Extreme house-keeping. Sometimes a man gotta do what a woman usually does. | Awareness raising work/life balance | Fathers, part-timers, enterprises | Press release, banners, buttons, flyers, posters, video clip, Website, Facebook, Twitter, animation |

Annex 2. Overview of the ACV/CSC initiatives on equal pay

| ACV/CSC | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Year | Slogan | Goals | Target groups | Media |
| 30.03.2007 – 24,3% | Women deserve better, but they do not get it | Awareness raising | Government, enterprises, | Animation, promotion website |
| 17.03.2008 – 21% | Because women deserve better | Link between pay gap and career gap, segregation, work/life balance, | Women and men | Animation in train stations, flyers, website (calculator) |
| 16.03.2009 – 21% | She works until march 2009 to earn as much as he does in 2008 (March = month of equal pay) | General information and awareness raising, legislation is not enough | Large public | Flyer, Brochure and website, animation in train station |
| 26.03.2010 – 21% | Get rid of the clichés, promote equality | Stereotypes, analysis within the enterprises | Militants, enterprises | Animation in the streets |
| 25.03.2011 – 21% | We stop ironing | Link between part-time and equal pay, awareness raising regarding work/lif balance | Women and men at home | Website, Facebook, video clips, animation |
| 20.03.2012 – 22% | Equal Pay Day | Flexibility, work/life balance, social security | Ministry, women and men, militants, employers | Visit to Ministry of labour, study day, animation |
| 02.03.2013 – 22% | Rent-a-man, caring, cooking, cleaning | Link between equal pay and sharing domestic tasks | Fathers, militants | Facebook, websites, publication, animation |

Annex 3. Evolution of the pay gap in gross monthly salary (1999 – 2010)

| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Women | 1639 | 1719 | 1806 | 1834 | 1932 | 2003 | 2049 | 2106 | 2130 | 2242 | 2343 | 2405 |
| Men | 2283 | 2338 | 2440 | 2462 | 2592 | 2677 | 2720 | 2756 | 2783 | 2909 | 2999 | 3071 |
| Pay Gap | 28% | 26% | 26% | 26% | 25% | 25% | 25% | 24% | 23% | 23% | 22% | 22% |

Source: "Enquête over de structuur en verdeling van de lonen," FOD Economie-ADSEI 2012

Annex 4. Evolution of the average gross salary / hour, women/men (full-time, private sector), 2004-2010

| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Women | 14,15 | 14,38 | 15,00 | 15,48 | 16,11 | 16,60 | 17,10 |
| Men | 16,25 | 16,68 | 16,93 | 17,36 | 18,00 | 18,38 | 18,81 |
| Pay Gap | 13% | 14% | 11% | 11% | 11% | 10% | 9% |

Source: "Enquête over de structuur en verdeling van de lonen," FOD Economie-ADSEI 2012

Note: these figures are different from the data used at EU level

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc340>