

BRING MORE COLOUR TO THE WORKPLACE

“More colour in the workplace” nicely summarises the goal of the Equal project Colourful Workshop, which between 2003 and 2005 united the three main Belgian trade unions in the fight against ethnic discrimination and for diversity.

The FGTB (General Labour Federation of Belgium) trade union was reacting to a particularly high unemployment rate among ethnic minorities and to a certain “chromatic uniformity” when it proposed the **Colourful Workshop** project. For Frédéric Fiore, project leader at the FGTB, the goal was to use the position of employee representatives within companies: *“They represent their colleagues and can influence them, but their strength is to be able to convince the bosses to change their approach to staff management in order to fight discrimination.”*

The project was broadened to include the CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) and the CGSLB (General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium). The three trade unions set up a joint work programme whose goal was to produce concrete tools to help the unions fight discrimination better.

At first, the project examined 15 firms in order to draw up a diagnosis of the situation: *“We collected the experiences of several employee representatives who were already involved in the fight against discrimination on the job.”* Delving into these real experiences was necessary in order to *“bring to light the strong points and the difficulties employee representatives had to overcome before getting any results. That allowed us to identify the factors that encourage good trade union practices of diversity.”*

This information was then transformed into a guidebook, a kind of basic user’s manual for employee representatives who are fighting discrimination. This guidebook also reviews the diversity training Colourful Workshop offered to employee representatives and activists. The goal of these training courses was to promote positive attitudes towards diversity: *“The idea is to use multiple approaches in order to find new solutions to problems that arise; the solution is all the richer when it combines different responses.”* For the three representative Belgium trade unions, the fight against discrimination is also, or perhaps primarily, about taking action in favour of diversity.

[Extract from the [Portraits of Experience](#) that were provided as resource material for the EQUAL conference on [Acting against Ethnic Discrimination in Employment](#), in November 2007.]

See also: [Building on Diversity - Colourful workshop](#).

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