



Diversity-oriented organising and communication

- A guide containing advice and tips for union representatives





Introduction

This guide contains advice and tips for union representatives who want to target diversity and equality in their work of organising colleagues in the workplace. The guide focuses in particular on how organising and communication can include both men and women and both ethnic-Danish and ethnic-minority¹ colleagues. The aim is to prevent gender and ethnicity blindness in organising work and thereby achieve a larger, more diverse organised community.

Organising is not just about having a large number of members or a high degree of organisation. Organising is also about strengthening solidarity in the workplace and elsewhere in the union organisation. A high union membership rate in your workplace is not therefore a reason to disregard organising work. By creating strong solidarity and standing together, colleagues can help each other to obtain maximum influence over their working lives and conditions. It is this that will safeguard the Danish model going forward.

Organising is also about union representatives not being the only persons in the workplace who are active unionists. The whole body of colleagues should be involved in formulating needs and wants for the development of the workplace. Similarly, more colleagues should be involved in determining how the challenges that are being faced as a workplace and as a community of colleagues are to be resolved. It is vital that all groups in the workplace should join in this process of formulating needs and wants for the future of the workplace: night-shift and day-shift workers; representatives of different job functions; ethnic-Danish and ethnic-minority workers; women and men; and young and old.

It takes attention and an active effort to create a community that is diverse and free from direct or indirect discrimination. This guide presents ideas and tools that you can use in your organising work to strengthen and develop an inclusive and diverse community in your workplace.

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Mapping your workplace



What is the challenge and what can you do?

Mapping your workplace gives you an overview of whether everyone is organised and whether there is a pattern in who is and is not organised. Ideally, your mapping should take account of ethnic background and gender. It may also make sense to introduce further subdivisions, e.g. day-shift/night-shift workers. People are often amazed when the facts are allowed to speak for themselves. Mapping makes it possible to focus on how you should target your organising work and union-related activities and discussions at different groups.

The following are examples of tables that can be compiled and used to systematise and provide an overview of your mapping taking into consideration ethnic background and gender.

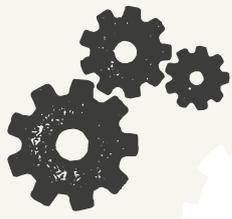
Employees and managers by ethnic background and gender	Ethnic-Danish		Ethnic-minority	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
No. of employees				
No. of apprentices				
No. of temps/freelancers/ casuals				
No. of managers				

Purpose: To identify any patterns in ethnic background and gender in different groups of employees and in management.

If relevant, the group “Ethnic-minority” can be subdivided into e.g. “Turkish”, “Polish” or “Indian” as the different nationalities may have differing background knowledge and opinions of unions.

Questions to consider:

- ★ Is there a group that comprises a clear minority among the employees? If so, how can you work to ensure that this particular group feels included? What needs and interests should you make sure to address?
- ★ Does management reflect the employees in terms of ethnic background and gender? If not, the managers’ background(s) could mean that they do not appreciate how those groups with a different background to their own are faring and what needs they have. As a union representative, you should be a spokesperson for minorities vis-à-vis management. In so doing, you can make union membership meaningful for these groups.
- ★ Are there ethnic differences between permanent employees and temps/ freelancers/casuals? If so, you could consider whether there is any indirect discrimination involved. Are ethnic-minority workers given temping jobs more often than ethnic-Danish workers? Is this justifiable? Can you take the initiative in implementing HR policies that facilitate communication with temps/freelancers/casuals?



Organised employees by ethnic background and gender	Ethnic-Danish		Ethnic-minority	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
No. of members of an LO ¹ union (if relevant, can be broken down into different unions)				
No. of apprentices who are members of an LO union				
No. of temps/freelancers/ casuals who are members of an LO union				
No. of employees who are members of an autonomous union				

Purpose: To identify whether there are patterns in union membership in relation to ethnic background, gender and conditions of employment.

Questions to consider:

- ★ Is there a different pattern in this table to the one in the previous table? Are there groups with fewer union members than others? If so, give special consideration to these groups' interests and needs. As a result, they will feel that union membership is also beneficial for them.



Employees engaged in union work by ethnic background and gender (insert Xs)	Ethnic-Danish		Ethnic-minority		None
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Union representative					
Health & safety representative					
Union club (board)					
Apprentices' club (board)					
Opinion leader*					
Spokesperson					

Purpose: To identify whether union representatives and spokespersons reflect the employees in terms of ethnic background and gender.

* See section 3 "Opinion leaders"

Questions to consider:

- ★ Do the union representatives and others engaged in union work reflect the employees in terms of ethnic background and gender? If not, should you pay special attention to ensuring that everyone's interests are considered and included in the organised community. An unconscious blindness could mean that some groups do not feel that the community and the union have any relevance for them.
- ★ Consider whether you have identified the right opinion leaders. If there are a lot of employees with e.g. a Turkish background and you have not found an opinion leader with a Turkish background, it may well be that you have overlooked someone.

Recommendation:

Find a colleague who is keen to help and who you enjoy spending time with and compile the tables together on a regular basis, e.g. monthly. Discuss the results and consider whether you are satisfied with how things are developing.





Involving your colleagues



What is the challenge?

A skilful union representative can achieve a lot. But a union representative working together with colleagues can achieve even more! By involving your colleagues in the discussion on the direction in which the workplace should be headed, more voices, attitudes and opinions will be brought into play. More people will get to experience being an active part of the organised community and more people will be able to have an influence in resolving the union-related challenges.

What can you do?

- ★ Conduct one-to-one interviews with your colleagues (see section 5 “One-to-one interviews”). Set a goal for how many colleagues you want to interview over a period of e.g. 1-2 weeks. Ask your colleagues what they would change in the workplace if they could change just one thing. Record everyone’s answers so that you gradually build up a list of the topics that most concern your colleagues. Do not disregard small issues that may seem unimportant; small issues that are easy to do something about can be a good starting point for implementing a general change project. Be aware of whether a pattern emerges in what ethnic Danes and various ethnic-minority groups are saying, and make sure that you interview everyone. It is important to identify and discuss whether the pattern in the responses indicates differing needs in the various groups and to ensure that the needs of ethnic-minority groups are also addressed by the organised community.
- ★ If there is a group in the workplace with which you do not have such good contact, it is important to establish contact with an opinion leader in this group (see section 3 “Opinion leaders”). The opinion leader can then conduct a one-to-one interview with the employees in that group. This could be a group in which the majority of the employees have a different ethnic background to your own. If you establish contact with opinion leaders in all employee groups, they can help you to engage with and involve everyone.
- ★ Hold a meeting with your colleagues focusing on the issues that emerge in the one-to-one interviews. Facilitate an open discussion of what your colleagues think about the current working conditions. What is working well and what could be better? What problems are they experiencing on a day-to-day basis? How would they like things to be in future? Record everything so that you can put together a list of the topics that most concern your colleagues. Draw up priorities together and be positive about the fact that colleagues with different backgrounds will have different requirements. “You don’t treat people equally by treating them the same!”
- ★ Involve your colleagues in the work you are doing in the Works Committee. Ask for suggestions and input on solutions to the challenges and changes on which you are working. Set your priorities together!



Opinion leaders



What is the challenge and what can you do?

An opinion leader is a person who is important for what other colleagues are thinking and believing. An opinion leader is recognised by having “supporters” who listen to him/her. Opinion leaders often have the power to determine what is perceived as a problem and what is perceived as useful. An opinion leader is not necessarily someone who agrees with you, but it is important to establish good contact with opinion leaders because they exercise a lot of influence. If an opinion leader has a negative view of the union, it is still important that you listen to what he/she has to say in order to understand the background to the opposition. In the long run, if you persuade that person of the benefit of being part of the organised community, e.g. through a successful collective action, he/she will probably influence the views of a large group of colleagues. Opinion

leaders are important allies in organising work. In large workplaces, it can be particularly difficult to maintain close contact with all colleagues. It is therefore important that you have a good network of opinion leaders who can help you to put out feelers to different groups.

- ★ You can identify opinion leaders by determining who different people listen to. One-to-one interviews can be extremely useful in this process.
- ★ There may be cultural differences in how opinion leaders act. Some can be outspoken, while others can be subdued and almost invisible to those who are not part of their group. One way of identifying opinion leaders is to take note of who the different groups listen to when e.g. they are eating in the canteen.
- ★ Once you have identified those colleagues who you believe to be opinion leaders, it can be a good idea to determine whether the group of opinion leaders reflects your colleagues in terms of ethnic background and gender, perhaps by using mapping table presented earlier. If e.g. there is a big group of Polishspeaking employees in the workplace and you have not identified a Polish opinion leader, you have probably overlooked someone. If all the opinion leaders are e.g. men (in a mixed-gender workplace), something is wrong. Are women being given the opportunity to be opinion leaders? Or have you failed to identify them?
- ★ You can use opinion leaders to make contact with colleagues with whom you do not normally have a close relationship. For example, there may be a group of colleagues with a particular ethnic background with which you are finding it difficult to establish contact due to language issues. In this case, an opinion leader who also speaks Danish or English can help you to determine the interests and needs of this particular group. In a highly gender-divided workplace, you may also find it difficult establishing contact with a group of colleagues of a different gender to your own. Here too, an opinion leader can be a bridgebuilder. In the sections “Cultural understanding” and “Gender-inclusive communication”, you will find inspiration for how to improve communication across gender, ethnicity and culture.



- 
- ★ Opinion leaders can also be an important element in creating a community that embraces day-shift and night-shift workers, representatives of different job functions, ethnic-Danish and ethnic-minority workers, women and men, young and old. Bringing together the opinion leaders of different groups allows them to share the challenges of their respective groups, which can give them a greater mutual understanding.
 - ★ An example: A hotel receptionist has a problem with a guest complaining that his room has not been cleaned. The receptionist is irritated with the maid. For her part, the maid is unhappy with the receptionist's attitude as she has been unable to clean the room because the guest was in the room for the entire period that she was on duty. Here, it could help if the opinion leaders from the different employee groups talked in order to get an insight into each other's work situations. The receptionist could then inform the guest that the room is not cleaned if he does not leave the room during the maid's working hours. If the solidarity of the organised community is strengthened, colleagues can be teammates rather than opponents.







Minority interests



What is the challenge and what can you do?

Studies of organising efforts in England show that minority interests are routinely forgotten in organising processes, albeit not intentionally. Rather, the interests of minorities are overlooked when the community is identifying the problems encountered by colleagues in the workplace and prioritising its actions. Given that one of the principles of organising is to identify a problem or challenge that concerns the most possible people, there is a risk that interests that only concern a minority of colleagues are sidelined. It could be e.g. that Muslim colleagues or some of the younger colleagues who are vegetarians consider it a serious issue that the daily hot meal in the canteen always contains meat, and often pork, and that there is never a vegetarian option. Minority interests thus require extra attention in organising work if they are not to become lost in the process.

You can carry out a check by ethnic background and gender of the challenges that are formally adopted into e.g. an organising programme and assess whether the interest of any particular group(s) are not being addressed.

What is the problem/challenge?	Important for the majority		Important for young colleagues		Important for ethnic-minority colleagues	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Example: More varied food options in the canteen, including more vegetarian dishes and less pork *	?	X	X	X	X*	X*

*The crosses signify ethnic-minority colleagues who are Muslims and do not eat pork.

Questions to consider:

Are any groups being overlooked? Are the interests, problems or challenges of a particular group not receiving any attention? If so, how can you ensure that colleagues in this group are given a voice?



One-to-one interviews



What is the challenge?

As a union representative, you may have a clear picture of the situation in your workplace and the issues that are important for your colleagues. But have you actually talked to ALL your colleagues about what is relevant for them and what is problematic for them in the workplace? The reality may be different to how you imagine it?

What can you do?

One-to-one interviews are an extremely good tool both for organising and for turning the focus onto equality and diversity. The aim of conducting one-to-one interviews with ALL your colleagues is to establish contact with those with whom you do not normally talk and to gain insight and information about what your colleagues, with all their differences, regard as the biggest challenges in the workplace. You will also find out what your quiet, shy colleagues think, which you would be unlikely to at a big meeting. In a one-to-one interview, the most important thing is that you listen to your colleagues. This is not a situation where you should defend or seek to impose your own views. As a starting point, it is advisable to listen 70% of the time and talk 30% of the time.

As a rule, one-to-one interviews are better than asking questions at a general meeting, where it is often those who shout loudest or are the first to take the floor who get their views heard. Most men have generally been brought up to do this, so there is a risk that women will be ignored. A one-to-one interview gives you the opportunity to identify what everyone wants and needs. In this way, you help to ensure a community where everyone feels included, irrespective of ethnic background and gender.

Here are some ideas for what to ask:

- ★ If you could change one thing in the workplace, what would it be?
- ★ With regard to working conditions or problems in the workplace, what would you say is the biggest difference between ethnic-minority and ethnic-Danish employees?
- ★ With regard to working conditions, what would you say is the biggest difference between women and men?
- ★ What is the most obvious opportunity for creating job satisfaction and solidarity in the workplace?
- ★ What is the biggest challenge for creating solidarity in the workplace?



Be aware of your questioning technique. If the colleague you are interviewing says that everything is fine and there are no issues, you could ask: but if you were to point out one thing you think could be better anyway, what would it be?

Here, it is also useful to have a good understanding of cultural differences; colleagues from certain ethnic groups may traditionally not openly express dissatisfaction or may feel uncertain or impolite doing so. This can be due to the experiences these colleagues have brought with them from their home countries or their original culture, or to the fact that they feel particularly vulnerable. You need to make it safe for them to speak up and let them know that in Denmark people are expected to voice their opinions in a constructive way.







Create change together and strengthen solidarity



What is the challenge?

Once the organising pattern in your workplace has been mapped and you have identified through one-to-one interviews and meetings which problems and challenges your colleagues consider to be most pressing, it is time to look at how you can tackle the issues in question. The first objective is obviously to solve any problems. The second objective is to create solidarity and a strong sense of standing together to solve problems, which in the long term also strengthens the degree of organising.

What can you do?

- ★ As a rule, it makes sense to start by addressing just one or two problems. It is better to create a small success than launch a big project that fails. Examples of problems could be: proper work clothing, better food in the canteen, better safety, codetermination in restructuring, holiday planning etc. In choosing which problems to tackle, it is important that you are particularly aware of who is affected by the various problems. Consider using the table in the section “Minority interests”. It is a good idea to choose a problem that is relevant for as many colleagues as possible. But even then there will still be some colleagues, e.g. ethnic-minority colleagues, for whom it is not relevant and who have much bigger problems than the one you have chosen. One solution could be to draw up a plan for the next six months or year concerning the problems you want to address. In so doing, every-body’s interests can be taken into consideration over a period of time.
- ★ Once you have decided, together with the opinion leaders of all groups in the workplace, which problem you want to address, the next step is to establish what needs to be done. How will you bring the problem to the attention of your employer? How can you show that there are many of you who are unhappy and want to see changes, and that it is important? Here, you need to be creative. How can you show in an objective, striking and fun way that a change is desirable? You can go a long way with humour. It is a matter of finding a method that involves as many people as possible. Perhaps you could get T-shirts printed with the message that you want to communicate? There are endless possibilities. It is important that you find a method with which everyone is happy and comfortable, and that you draw up a good action plan and agree who is going to do what. It may take a number of meetings before you can all agree on a good process and before the action is planned. This also gives the opinion leaders the opportunity to check whether they have the backing of their supporters and to ensure a common understanding of what is to be done.
- ★ It is important that the information on the planned action is communicated to all colleagues, including those who are not organised, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate. Here, you can perhaps get the opinion leaders to help you spread the message. It may be that some colleagues have concerns or critical questions that you as a union representative can help to answer. It may also be that some of your non-organised colleagues want to join the union before or during the action.



Equal pay and pensions



What is the challenge?

As we have already said, when carrying out organising work, it is important to be aware of the interests of different groups. Pay and pensions are examples of areas where men and women are still treated very differently in society. The pay gap between men and women averages 18% in Denmark. Similarly, on average women only accumulate around half of what men accumulate in pensions, partly due to the fact that women take more parental leave and work part-time for more periods. These topics are thus examples of problems that affect women more than men. It can therefore be assumed that women are motivated to be part of an organised community that works to bring about equal pay.

What can you do?

- ★ Investigate whether there is equal pay in your workplace. You will find an “equal pay calculator” on several of the big union’s websites.
- ★ Focus on equal pay. Talk about pay. Women should contact their union representative or union if they are receiving less pay than their male colleagues; any difference in pay based on gender is illegal.
- ★ As a union representative, be aware of whether you are negotiating equal pay for male and female members, and take action if this is not the case. Are you selling men’s and women’s skills equally?
- ★ Focus on the fight for equal pay. An after-work meeting can be held for employees to discuss the company’s equal pay statistics.
- ★ Hold an after-work meeting about pensions. Here, you can brief employees on e.g. the pay gap, and hence women’s lack of pension contributions. This is relevant for both men and women because many employees who are part of a family are affected by the problem.
- ★ Check whether ethnic background is a factor in pay. Are ethnic-minority colleagues getting the same pay as their ethnic-Danish colleagues for work of the same value?





Work-life balance



What is the challenge?

Work-life balance is also a topic that concerns many women and men. Society's traditional gender roles mean that many women take on a bigger responsibility with regard to family and other social relations, and this can mean that they assign high priority to these topics. Consequently, initiatives that make it easier to improve work-life balance are particularly appreciated by women, as well as ethnic-minority colleagues, and can make it easier for men and women to involve themselves more equally in family life.

What can you do?

- ★ Carry out activities for the whole family within the union or club framework.
- ★ Carry out activities relating to e.g. family life, health and finances.
- ★ Conduct meetings on different forms of family and cohabitation in today's Denmark.
- ★ Remember that a family is not necessarily a father, mother and two children. When you negotiate HR policies focusing on work-life balance, make sure they also cover e.g. families with same-sex parents or single parents. Collective bargaining negotiations offer the possibility of improved parental leave where same-sex couples are treated equally with other couples.
- ★ Focus on good parental leave schemes – for both men and women – that help to create equality in the family.
- ★ Support your male colleagues in making use of their rights to parental leave and achieving a better work-life balance.
- ★ Focus on flexi-time and other schemes that make it easier for parents to achieve a better work-life balance. Ethnic-minority colleagues with family in their home country often benefit from being able to take time off for funerals in those countries. Colleagues with a religious conviction other than Christian may benefit from the flexibility of being able to take time off to celebrate their particular religious holidays and instead work at Christmas, Easter etc. These sorts of inclusive initiative can help ethnic-minority colleagues to feel that union membership is valuable.





Importance of spouses



What is the challenge?

In many families, the finances are a shared affair, which means that union fees are also a shared affair. You may well therefore have a colleague who wants to be a union member but has a spouse/partner who is sceptical about it. It may be that the family's finances are tight due to unemployment; it may be that the spouse has a political conviction that is antiunion; or it may be that the spouse is in doubt about what union membership involves and is therefore reluctant for some of the family's income to be spent on union membership. There may also be families with a patriarchal family pattern where the man does not allow the woman to take her own decisions, or vice versa. Or a combination of the various possibilities.

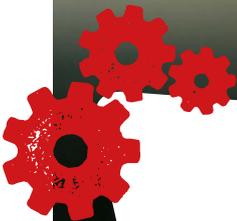
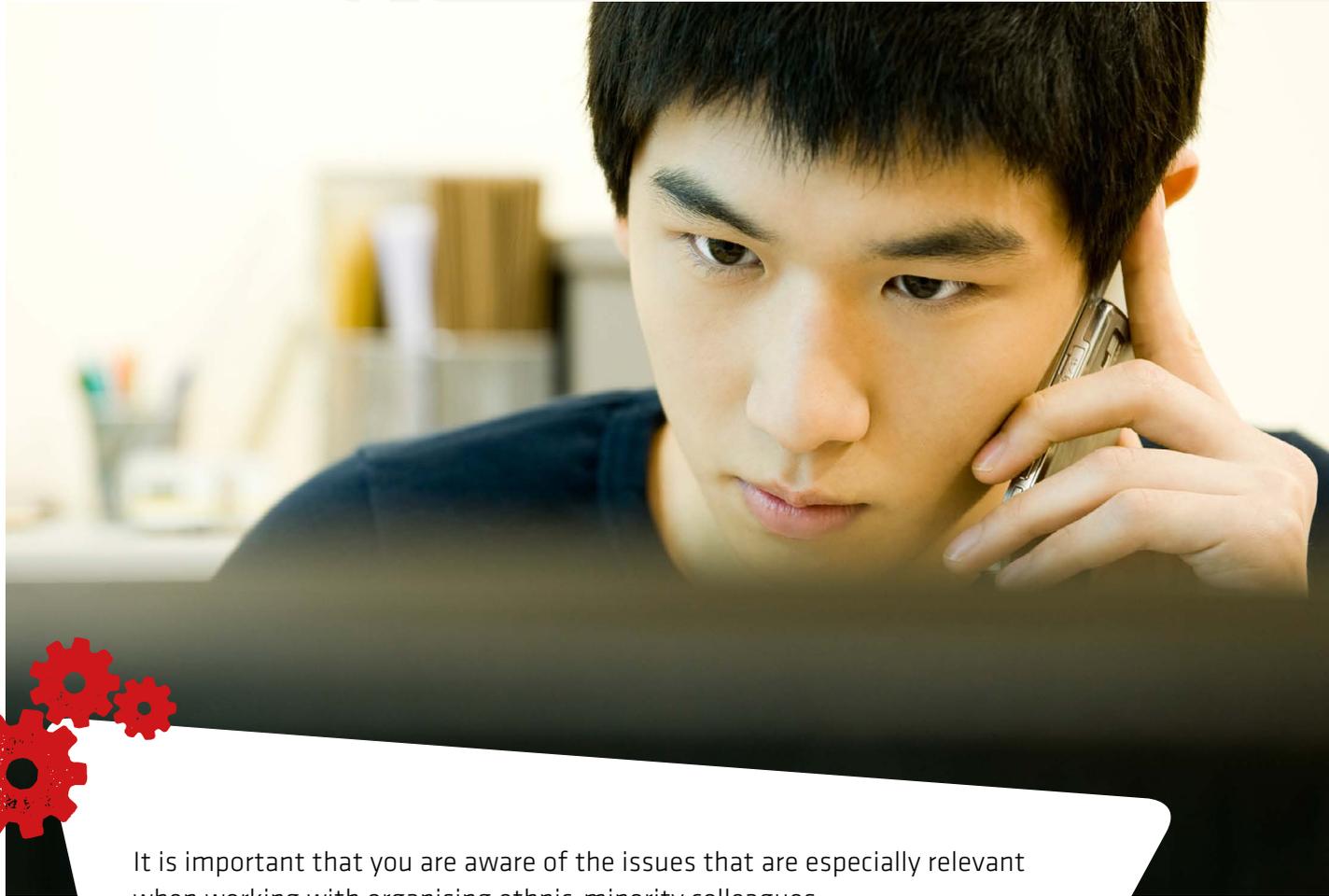
What can you do?

- ★ Offer to talk to your colleague's spouse/partner about what it means to be a union member and what benefits it brings for the family.
- ★ You can also help your colleague to prepare for a discussion with his/her partner and run through the arguments for membership that he/she can use.
- ★ You can also ask your colleague whether there are other ways that you can support him/her in expressing his/her views and opinions to his/her partner.
- ★ If there is a problem that you think applies to a large number of colleagues in your work-place or union branch, you could plan an event that involves spouses.





Ethnic-minority colleagues



It is important that you are aware of the issues that are especially relevant when working with organising ethnic-minority colleagues.



Challenge: Lack of a common language

The lack of a common language can be a barrier to communication, and hence also organising.

What can you do?

- ★ Get help with interpreting from colleagues who speak both Danish or English and the language of the colleagues with whom you want to make contact. You may be able to establish good contact with an opinion leader, who can then serve as a link between you and the group in question.
- ★ If you want to hold a big meeting or a campaign aimed at a large number of colleagues who speak a language other than Danish, your branch may be able to help with interpreting resources. Furthermore, many federations and unions also have printed materials in various languages that can help when you need to communicate concerning membership, workers' rights etc.
- ★ You may well have colleagues who speak just a little Danish. If so, remember to speak slowly and clearly, be patient and give them time to express themselves. Do not use abbreviations and company jargon.

Challenge: Lack of contact points

Another barrier can be a lack of contact points, i.e. you do not know where and how to make contact with potential members with an ethnic-minority background.

What can you do?

One way of making contact with some ethnic-minority groups is to engage them through the associations or networks where they socialise. You could ask whether they would like you to go along and talk about the union and the Danish labour market.

Challenge: New to Denmark

If you have colleagues who are newly arrived in Denmark, there are probably many things about the Danish labour market and unions that they do not know. It may also be that some have had bad experiences of e.g. corrupt unions in their (previous) home countries.

What can you do?

- ★ Explain to your new colleague how the Danish labour market works, what rights he/she has and what role the unions play. Explain what a Danish union is. This can be brand-new and valuable information.
- ★ There are various websites that can help, e.g. <http://www.kollegahjaelp.dk/> This website has e.g. a film with facts about conditions in the Danish labour market plus interactive games that can generate debate about culture and unwritten codes of practice in Danish workplaces. There are also glossaries and games that can help with language learning. The website is in Danish, English, German and Polish. It was created by the Danish Metalworkers' Union but can be used by all LO² members.
- ★ You can also team up with a colleague with the same ethnic background as the newly arrived colleague who is already a union member and get him/her to explain the labour market and the union, if necessary in the newly arrived colleague's mother tongue.
- ★ In general, it is good for the newly arrived colleague to know who he/she should contact with any queries. He/she may have a lot of questions on the labour market or the work-place culture (why do you do this or that). You can either take on the role of contact person yourself or ask one of your colleagues to act as a link.
- ★ If you acquire a lot of new non-Danish colleagues at the same time, you can ask the branch whether they can help you to conduct an introductory meeting on the Danish labour market.

- ★ FIU-Equality occasionally offers courses on the Danish Model (in Danish) aimed at ethnic-minority employees.
Check the website www.fiu-ligestilling.dk to see what courses are currently on offer.
- ★ Also read the next section: “Cultural understanding”.





Cultural understanding



What is the challenge?

According to a study carried out by the Danish Ministry of Education in 2005 , Danes are somewhat lacking when it comes to intercultural skills. Having intercultural skills means being able to get by in culturally mixed social situations and being able to communicate with people from other cultures without letting your own world view dominate. The study concludes that only 5% of Danes have a high level of cultural skills, while 29% have a moderate level and 66% a low level. However, there are many at the boundary between low and moderate, and the report therefore concludes that there is huge potential for Danes to improve at getting by when working or socialising with people who have different cultural backgrounds.

What can you do?

- ★ Take a look at yourself and try to understand the prejudices that you have about people from cultures other than your own. Try to put these prejudices to one side when you are talking and working with other people.
- ★ In general, it is important to listen empathetically to the person with whom you are conversing irrespective of language or cultural differences.
- ★ Seek insight into the culture and background of your colleagues. This can help you to overcome your prejudices and understand your colleagues' mindset and way of acting.
- ★ Do you understand your own cultural background and what it means for the way you view the world? It is important to understand that it is not just others who have a culture – you have one yourself. Having a good understanding of your own cultural background can help you to understand and perhaps avoid some of the issues that can arise in a cross-cultural encounter.
- ★ FIU-Equality has many courses that can prepare you to handle diversity and cultural differences. Among other things, you can take so-called “diversity driving lessons”, a course comprising several different modules; see more at www.fiu-ligestilling.dk
- ★ Also, read the previous section “Ethnic-minority colleagues”.





Non-organised colleagues



What is the challenge?

There can be many reasons why a colleague is not a member of a union. You cannot, as in the past when the level of organisation in Denmark was at its peak, assume that everyone who is not a union member is opposed to the union ideal or has taken an active decision not to be a member.

What can you do?

- ★ When a new colleague starts in your workplace, it is a good idea for you and other union representatives, e.g. health & safety representatives, to welcome him/her and introduce him/her to the workplace. If you do not already have a procedure for this, you can recommend implementing one in the Works Committee.
- ★ Both in day-to-day union work and when carrying out organising work, it is important to listen to the colleague with whom you are conversing, whether or not he/she is organised. It is sometimes said that you should listen 70% and talk 30%. By listening, you identify the needs, wants and issues of the person in question and, as a union representative, you learn about the needs and challenges your colleagues are experiencing. Subsequently, it is also much easier to introduce the union and the opportunities connected with being a member in a way that speaks to the individual.
- ★ If your colleague does not have any experience of what it means to be part of a union, it is important to give him/her the opportunity to gain some experiences of the organised community. Look at section 2 and 6 in this guide for inspiration.
- ★ Sometimes, you may encounter a question such as why a worker from Eastern Europe should spend money joining a union if they are only in Denmark for a short time. Here, it makes sense to explain, among other things, that the relatively high pay that is attractive to foreign workers is high because the unions have fought for it, not because Danish bosses are more generous than their counterparts in other countries. Consequently, their union membership is important, not least for maintaining pay levels. At the same time, it is also a way of ensuring that they themselves get the pay and working conditions that they deserve.
- ★ If colleagues are not familiar with it, give yourself time to explain the Danish model and how the unions ensure fair pay and working conditions.
- ★ YouTube has various films presenting a humorous explanation of the difference between a traditional union and an autonomous union:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZBowKXz2eg>.



Temps and casuals



What is the challenge?

Two groups that many people find it difficult to organise are temps and casuals. These might be either externally or internally employed temps, students who are “just passing through” or people employed on other types of short-term contract. The fact that you do not know how long a colleague will be in the workplace or that he/she may only be there for a short period sometimes means that the colleague in question is not integrated into the organised community.

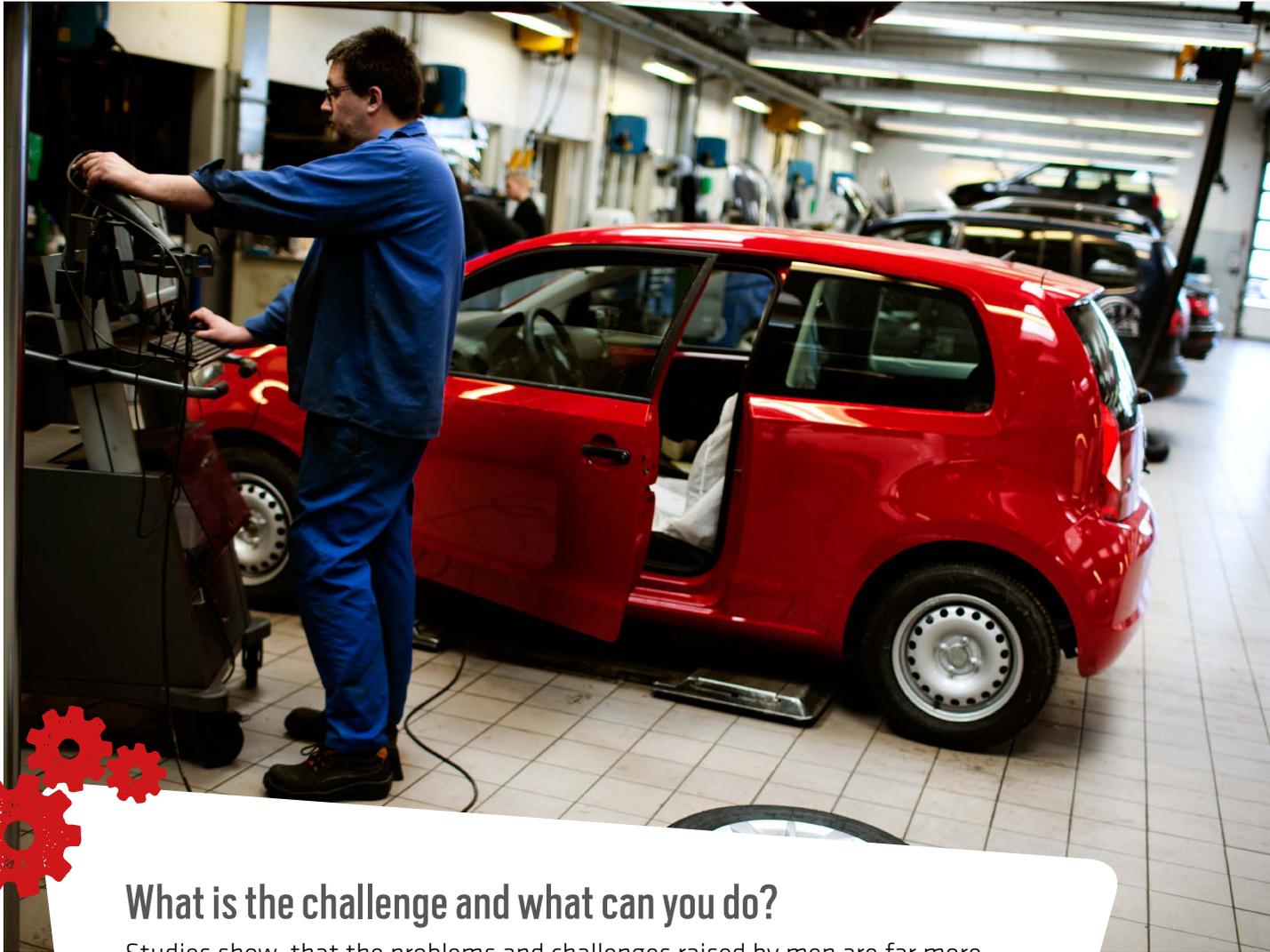
What can you do?

- ★ It is important that you consider casuals when carrying out activities to strengthen the organised community. This could be when holding social events, but also when working to involve colleagues in the discussion on the future of the workplace or carrying out collective actions . Even though a casual may only be there for a short time, he/she will be followed by other casuals.
- ★ It may also be that the workplace community can help to strengthen the casual's employment and working conditions. By making sure that casuals are not working under less favourable conditions than permanent employees, you are also safeguarding the working conditions of permanent employees.
- ★ In some workplaces where the management supports the union, there is an agreement that the workplace will only use organised temps. This is implemented by the management, who instruct the temping agencies with which they work that they will only accept organised workers. If the temps are not already union members, they enrol before starting work. If you enjoy good cooperation with the management, there may be an opportunity to introduce a similar agreement in your workplace.





Whose cases get priority?



What is the challenge and what can you do?

Studies show that the problems and challenges raised by men are far more likely to be taken seriously than those of women. It is not that what women say is rejected out of hand, but the possibilities for action are rarely discussed. To a large extent, this is allowed to persist, and the same can be true for ethnic minorities and young workers.

You can get an indication of whether this trend is prevalent in your workplace by reviewing “resolved issues” in the past year.

Resolved issues brought by women in the past year

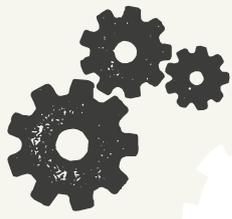
Issue	Start/finish dates	How many colleagues took part in the discussions	
		Men	Women

Resolved issues brought by men in the past year

Issue	Start/finish dates	How many colleagues took part in the discussions	
		Men	Women

Resolved issues brought by ethnic-minority colleagues in the past year

Issue	Start/finish dates	How many colleagues took part in the discussions	
		Men	Women



Resolved issues brought by young workers in the past year			
Issue	Start/finish dates	How many colleagues took part in the discussions	
		Men	Women

Once you have completed the tables, ask yourself:

- ★ Does one gender have relatively more influence/success in getting its issues resolved?
- ★ Do ethnic-Danish colleagues have relatively more influence/success than ethnic-minority colleagues?
- ★ Is it possible that one particular gender or one or more ethnic groups are having their issues prioritised?
- ★ Are the issues of one particular gender or one or more ethnic group being processed quicker than other issues?

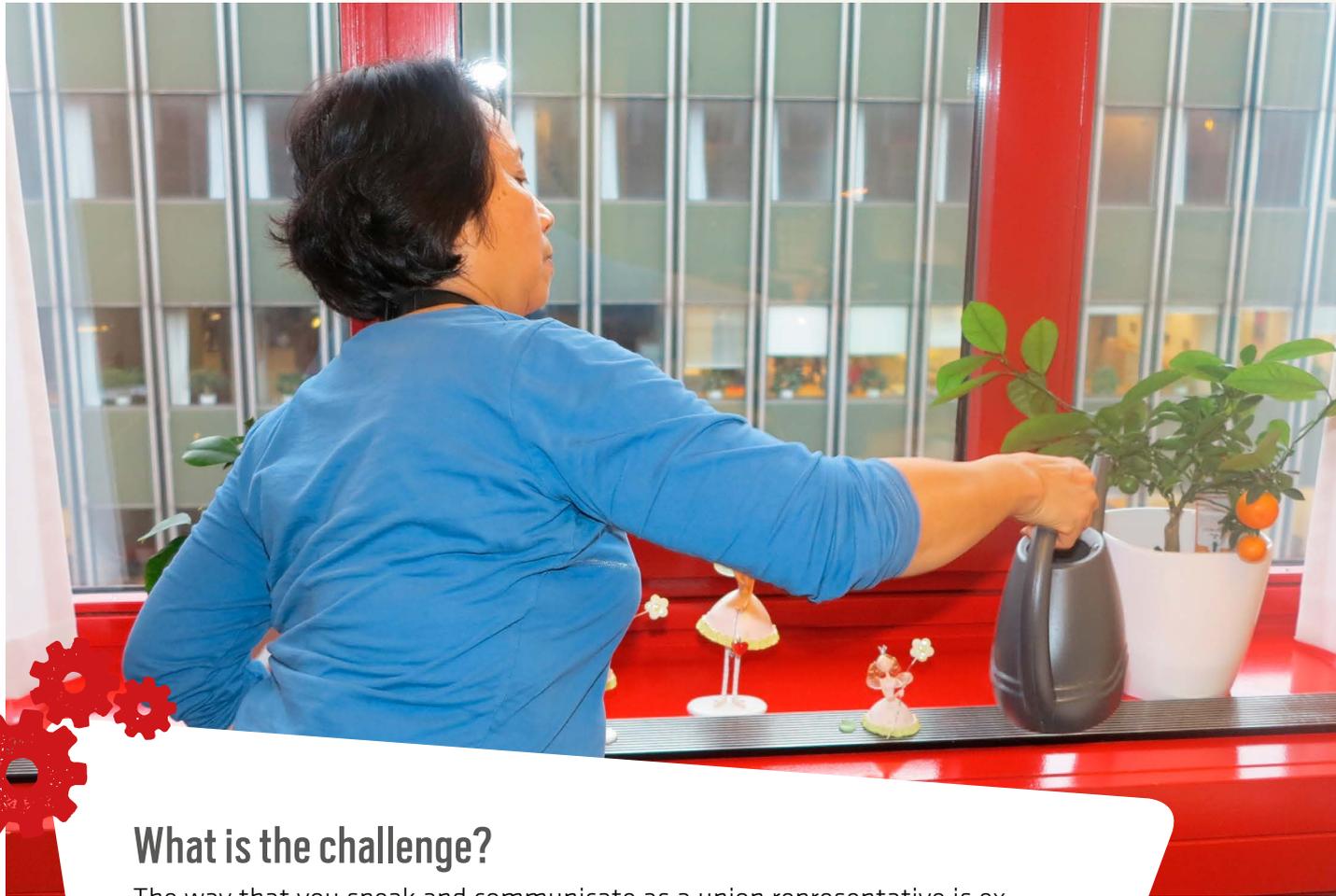
If you identify a bias, you should resolve to give the underrepresented gender or group(s) special attention, e.g. by discussing their perception of job satisfaction in the workplace. The bias should also be highlighted and discussed within the organised community. There may be good reasons for the particular bias, and this might be what could make union membership meaningful for the colleagues in question. When using the tables, they should obviously be studied in relation to the workplace's overall composition in terms of ethnic background and gender.







Inclusive communication



What is the challenge?

The way that you speak and communicate as a union representative is extremely important for whether both men and women feel “spoken to” and included in the organised community. Women and men can also be attracted to different forms of expression. It is therefore worth considering the way that you yourself work and communicate.

What can you do?

- ★ If you are preparing written materials or invitations, you should consider whether the layout that you choose unintentionally appeals more to one gender than the other or more to ethnic-Danish colleagues than ethnic-minority colleagues (in terms of colours, images etc.). Try out the materials on both male and female test persons with both ethnic-Danish and ethnic-minority backgrounds.
- ★ If you are preparing meeting invitations or written materials containing images that are intended to have a broad receivership, make sure that there are young people, old people, men, women, ethnic Danes and ethnic minorities in the images.
- ★ There may be a difference in the “tone” that is attractive to men and women respectively: is it e.g. negative and confrontational or positive and appreciative? Studies of internet discussions suggest that many women do not like taking part in negative personal power struggles, which some men find fascinating. An appreciative tone will probably be most inclusive.
- ★ Be aware of job ads. How do the company’s job ads come across? Make sure that job ads relate to men and women and to all ethnic groups in the way they are written.
- ★ Humour in the workplace and in union work can have a major impact on who is regarded as fun to be with in the organised community. Assess whether the humour appeals to everyone. Ask various colleagues if you are unsure.





Meetings



What is the challenge?

- ★ Studies show that in large meetings it is usually men who are first to take the floor and it is men's suggestions and ideas that receive most attention. This happens unconsciously, and both men and women are part of this dynamic. Consequently, a meeting format where you ask questions in a large group and ask people to put their hands up will be a way of giving men positive special treatment. It also emerges that there is a tendency for women's professional wishes not to be taken as seriously, e.g. they are labelled "soft" and therefore disregarded. It is a good idea to experiment with new ways of holding meetings as this can give new people the desire to participate.

Hvad kan man gøre på et møde?

- ★ Consciously observe whether men and women are saying different things and acknowledge everyone's wishes.
- ★ Specifically give women and ethnic minorities the opportunity to speak by addressing them directly.
- ★ Take what is being said seriously, irrespective of whether the suggestions come from men or women, or whether they initially seem "soft". Do not sit in judgement over what is important for other people.
- ★ Go around and talk with all colleagues one by one.
- ★ Ask questions of women when they come up with suggestions. They may have solutions that you have not considered yourself. Also ask questions of women and men with different ethnic backgrounds, even if it requires a little extra effort to overcome language difficulties.
- ★ Use different meeting formats so that there is something to suit everyone. Examples: Invite all the participants at a meeting to speak one at a time. Use music. Do groupwork where you discuss the theme of a meeting before taking up the discussion in plenum. You can select people to prepare contributions, e.g. two men, two women and representatives of different ethnic-minority groups.
- ★ Hold morning or lunchtime meetings instead of afternoon meetings. It can be difficult for parents who have to collect children from school to attend afternoon meetings.
- ★ Hold meetings specifically for groups whose members do not normally put up their hands and ask what they consider to be the opportunities and challenges in the workplace. Alternatively, conduct one-to-one interviews with these colleagues; see section 5 "One-to-one interviews".



Discrimination and barriers to equality



What is the challenge?

As a union representative, you should help to promote the involvement of female and ethnic-minority colleagues in union work and in the union movement in general, and in so doing break down the barriers to their involvement. The traditional male-dominated culture that still prevails in some parts of LO³ is an obstacle to female and ethnic-minority colleagues moving up the hierarchy of the union movement. This is often not a conscious matter, but a century-long tradition has created cultures and structures that mean it is still generally men who are elected as foremen or appointed to other important positions.

The union movement's history is one of the triumph of men, while the women in the same movement have been rather more invisible. The management style is hierarchical, and important positions are well remunerated and filled following election campaigns. Studies suggest that many women prefer to organise themselves in terms of grassroots and networking with a flat management structure. This can mean that women are less visible in the union movement, and it is therefore more difficult for potential female members to identify with the union movement.

What can you do?

- ★ Be aware of whether you are unintentionally perpetuating a culture that unconsciously favours men.
- ★ Set clear requirements in your branch, in your federation and in your workplace that equality and diversity work should be prioritised. Make it clear that this is a topic that is extremely important for job satisfaction and democracy.
- ★ Ensure variation in the way you hold meetings; set up groups, meetings where everyone is invited to speak in turn etc. so that as many people as possible have the opportunity to say something in a discussion.
- ★ Introduce various small and large divisions of responsibility into your work. Delegate so that everyone gets jobs and helps out. This strengthens solidarity and prevents union representatives and others engaged in union work becoming overburdened.
- ★ Hold idea meetings and brainstorming sessions concerning what needs to be prioritised in the internal union work. Make it legitimate to have lots of different opinions and inputs.
- ★ Encourage female and ethnic-minority members to stand as union representatives. It motivates female and ethnic-minority colleagues to be active or become union members if they meet someone with whom they can identify, which is all to the benefit of the organised community.

- 
- ★ Earmark vacant influential board positions for members who promote representation in terms of ethnic background, gender and age, possibly with speaking rights but without voting rights. This means that new people can be inspired to stand and at the same time makes the board aware of new candidates.
 - ★ Team up with ethnic-minority members, who are often good at communicating with other ethnic-minority colleagues, including about the union. Experience suggests that ethnic-minority colleagues will become members if a colleague with the same ethnic background communicates positively about union membership.
 - ★ If you would like to know more about representation in the union movement and barriers for female and ethnic-minority colleagues, you can read a study by LO at www.lo.dk.







Finance: it can pay to join a union



What is the challenge?

A natural element of being a union representative is to try to get everyone to join the organised community, and thus to get all employees to take part in the union and democracy. It is therefore always important to be prepared to advocate the financial benefits of union membership. Not because they are the primary benefits, but because for some people this is a very important issue. Member surveys show that cost can be one of the reasons for colleagues leaving or not wanting to join the union.

It is well known that on average women's pay levels are lower than men's, which may partly explain their rejection of union membership. Many probably do not know what is included in the membership and are scared off by the inroad into their monthly income. You should therefore be ready to communicate what members get for their fees, including the benefits of membership – both in the event of crises such as redundancies and on a day-to-day basis in the form of e.g. discounts on holiday homes and cheap offers through wholesale societies.

What can you do?

- ★ *"A cheap union can be costly"* was a slogan in the LO⁴ campaign of summer 2012. It can be costly not getting the right payments. It can be costly not receiving help in the event of occupational injuries, redundancies or other problems. It can be costly not being paid during parental leave or on a child's first sick day.
- ★ Tell people the specific benefits of your union. Children's Christmas party? Holiday offers? Discounts? Courses?
- ★ The union movement wins compensation for its members for unjustified dismissal, industrial injuries etc. in sums so large that, on average, it definitely pays to be a member.
- ★ If you need specific details, many federations provide information on their websites on how membership fees are spent.





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Page 22 – photographer Hanne Loop

Page 37 – photographer Lene Esthave

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Other: Colourbox



Notes and references:

- 1 “Ethnic-minority” is an umbrella term signifying that a person is not part of the ethnic-Danish majority population, irrespective of how long that person has lived in Denmark. In FIU-Equality, we have mainly worked with ethnic-minority colleagues with non-western backgrounds and Eastern European backgrounds, so it is therefore these target groups, in all their diversity, that we have in mind when we use the term ethnic-minority. We specify in the guide when we are referring to a particular ethnic-minority group.
- 2 Melanie Simms (2012), Imagined solidarities: Where is class in union organising? *Capital & Class* 2012, 36(1) and Raunkjær and Rohde (2012), Stuepigerne og de nye uniformer - et casestudie af organiseringsarbejdet i 3F Hotel og Restauration København.
- 3 The National Competence Accounts 2005 (chapter 9: Intercultural competence), Danish Ministry of Education 2005. Read the chapter here: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2005/NKRrapport/kap09.html>
- 4+5 Among others, Elisabeth Flensted-Jensen: ”Køn, kommunikation og graviditeter. Et eksempel fra en undervisningssituation i fagbevægelsen i Dametur”, Håndbibliotekets Veninder, Aarhus universitetsforlag 1986 and Deborah Tannen: ”Kvindesnak og mands tale”, Munksgaard 1992