Concluding remarks and recommendations

Irrespective of these strategic and political challenges and issues, this aspect of trade union intervention has been one of the most significant in the UK. We have seen how the development of community-based facing union and community-based social action has been an important development in this area. However, the movement towards a more radical and inclusive view of support to migrant workers is becoming important. The provision of facilities and services in the community is an important aspect of union intervention in this area. It is important that interventions in the workplace and the community are linked and that there is a wider perspective on how these two areas are related. The need for trade unions to develop facilities and services in the community is an important aspect of union intervention in this area.

Although the current political context has put much pressure on the ability of trade unions and other social organisations to develop these resources, there are still examples of good practice in Spain and Italian cases. We need to reflect on these.

Visibility is a key important aspect. Organisations have an accessible and visible presence and building that are more accessible to points in the workforce.

Among traditional spaces using established spaces such as union administrative offices, but modelling them in use and accessibility. The use of traditional union offices (CUD and GMB) are beginning to do so in some cases.

Opportunities: These offices are available during times when workers can visit and access resources.

Engagement: They should have a space for criminal activity and not just aimed at serving prison demands (but involve cultural), social and political activities.

Development: These spaces can engage with the learning needs of workers linking to union strategies and resources on education and development.

Networking: The spaces should be used for broader organizational activity and meetings with workers and community groups, becoming a resource for the development of a more radical view of participation.

Further materials, links and references

We are grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council and the Leverhulme Trust for funding many aspects of the research used in this Research Briefing.

The project, titled “Social inclusion, unions and migration”, was a comparative project (2008–2011) funded by the Leverhulme Trust and aimed at analysing trade union strategies towards vulnerable and migrant workers in the UK, Spain and Italy. The project was led by Prof. Miguel Martinez Lucio and involved Dr Heather Connolly and Dr Stefania Marino.

The second project, titled “Migration and Trade Union Responses: An Analysis of the UK in a Comparative Perspective” is an on-going three year project (2012–2015) funded by the ESRC and aimed at analysing trade union strategies towards migrant workers in the UK, the Netherlands, and Italy. The project is led by Dr Stefania Marino.


Summary

The briefing draws from various research projects, conducted by the authors, which deal with how trade unions respond to the question of migration and the unprotected position of many migrant workers in different countries. The projects mainly draws on two sets of studies: one on the UK, the Netherlands and Spain funded by Leverhulme Trust, the other on the UK, the Netherlands and Italy funded by the ESRC (Project Number: …).

The briefing looks at the role of locally based community information centres which are focused on assisting migrant workers in terms of the representation of their employment and social rights. It looks at the importance of local centres for supporting workers in a way that allows us to appreciate the possibilities and challenges of such developments.
In Spain and Italy—both before the recession that commenced 2008—there was evidence that economic development was reorienting growing away from major cities towards the larger urban areas. Thus, urban unemployment was an issue of concern and many migrant workers had to rely on informal employment arrangements to make ends meet. Successful initiatives in Spain and Italy have provided a wide range of the funding for such provision of such services, to develop trade union networks and to support a new social dialogue.

The Italian trade unions also present specific challenges and opportunities that are being carried out within an ongoing political context. The Italian trade unions do not have readily accessible offices or resources. This allows trade unions, who are considered to be difficult. In part this is due to their diffuse organizational structure and the failure to develop consistent strategies and approaches. Nevertheless, trade unions still have a significant role in representing the interests of workers, and they continue to provide important support services to workers.

Innovations and representation (continued)

The Research: reaching out and supporting migrant workers

Our Spanish research covered a selection of cities in and around south-western Spain (Málaga, Tarifa, Cádiz, and Oviedo). It consisted of visits to trade union offices and interviews with trade unionists and migrant workers about their experiences of organizational change and the provision of services. The research was carried out over a period of seven months, and involved interviews with trade union officials.

Innovations and representation

The most significant innovation in the trade union network—something which is divided from the broader immigration system—is that as centres for bringing into the trade union movement workers who are from an immigrant background, there may be less of a problem of sustainability that such groups face. The CCOO for example do not always organize in the workplace, visited local communities and responded to by various trade unionists. This has been acknowledged that these are not immigrant-specific services. The amount of resources provided a wide range of funding for such provision of such services, to develop trade union networks and to support a new social dialogue. Therefore, an agreement between the Ministry of Interior and the trade union developed around the period of integration and employment of foreign workers, which has been seen as a positive development.

There were also discussions around building relationships for the regularization of foreign workers. The regularization process involves applying for residence permits and entry visas, renewal and duplication of these permits and entry visas, obtaining external documentation, and obtaining external documentation for permanent residence permits. This process is divided into its employment section, which is divided from the broader immigration system.

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