

A stylized world map composed of a grid of dots in various shades of gray, with several dots highlighted in red. The map is centered behind the title and authors' names.

Armenien Trade Unions – Problems and Challenges

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- The legacy of Communism still strongly influences the operation and structure of Armenian trade unions. As a result, they are unable to defend workers' rights in an organised, efficient manner. Collective agreements exist only in individual companies.
- There is no active discussion or collaboration between trade unions and political parties. In addition, trade union representatives are rarely involved in public debates on socio-political issues. As a result, they have little to no influence over policy and reform.
- One result of privatisation and the market economy since the fall of Communism is that the number of branch trade unions exceed the number of economic sectors. This means that many trade unions are in fact in competition with each other for new members. Some trade unions are struggling and have a low membership base.
- Key to ensuring the Armenian trade unions future survival as modern defenders of workers' rights is structural reforms. They also need to establish more proactive links with civil society and political parties.

1. Armenia's Trade Union Landscape

1.1 A Brief History of Armenian Unionism

Armenian Trade Unions in the Soviet Era

The first Armenian trade unions were founded as early as 1905 and 1907 and existed during the Soviet era. After the Soviet system was established in Armenia in 1922, trade unions were transformed from social entities into public bodies that served the political system. Trade unions redistributed parts of Armenia's economic capital and carried out certain state functions, such as managing retirement funds and reallocating social benefits.

However, trade unions were not concerned with membership, which was ›automatically‹ regulated according to the ›voluntary-mandatory‹ principle: Each worker was automatically considered to be a member of a trade union.

During the Soviet period, the state ensured mass employment, and state employers and employees enjoyed equal (albeit limited) rights in the workplace. Trade unions supported the state by supervising the working conditions of both employers and employees. They were authoritative, rather than merely representative, actors and enjoyed a fairly high level of prestige among all social groups.

After the Soviet Union

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, trade unions lost much of the power and influence the state had granted. Nevertheless, Soviet-era structures and behaviours have continued to exert a strong impact on how trade union leaders, members and society as a whole view the role of trade unions and how they work. Armenia's new political system, the development of a civil society and the concomitant social changes, such as political reforms in public and government, have forced trade unions to adjust.

1.2 Armenia's Trade Unions Today

It is not yet clear how established Armenian trade unions have become within the relatively new political system, which public needs they address, how effectively they function and which factors hinder their activities.

Armenian trade unions were forced to abandon their state privileges but little is known about how they are now functioning as institutions of civil society. How does the country's social and political environment affect trade unions and how – if at all – are unions contributing to the society's democratization ?

Deprived of their Soviet-era functions, trade unions have lost much prestige and many of their leaders are nostalgic for the golden past. They mistakenly view their future in Soviet-era institutions.

The drastic drop in trade union membership is not just due to their lost prestige but also because of the rise in the share of unemployed people. How much trade unions actually represent their clients (members) is contested.

Apart from socio-economic changes, political reforms also created a new legal basis for trade unions. The Armenian ›Law on Trade Unions‹ of 5 December 2000 describes their main functions: ›To present and defend employment and employment-related social and other interests and rights of employees towards the employer and/or third persons...‹ The law helped to realign trade unions more closely to the defence of workers' human rights, yet unions have had difficulty overcoming their well-worn modes. Furthermore, the effectiveness of any legal framework is compromised by a shortage of jobs and employers' widespread infringements of laws, while general ignorance of the law makes it easier to break. Trade unions and their members are at the mercy of employers, who obstruct the effective protection of labour rights.

1.3 The Structure and Performance of Armenian Trade Unions

Structure and Mode of Working

In Armenia, trade unions are joined in a pyramidal structure and a common mode of working. The ›primary organizations‹ or ›trade union organizations‹ are the lowest level of the pyramid. Most of them are confederated in regional ›Territorial Trade Unions‹ (TTUs), which make up the sectoral and supra-regional ›Branch Republican Trade Unions‹ (BRTUs), in which ›Branch‹ refers to the sector and ›Republican‹ denotes its nationwide activity. Until 2012, TTUs were federated in 24 BRTUs, which constituted the national Confederation of Trade Unions

of Armenia (CTUA), the top level of the pyramid. The CTUA coordinates BRTU activities and protects their interests. The CTUA's executive body is the executive committee, which represents all the BRTUs.

Institutional Influence through Representation

The trade unions' organizational structure means that the size of a BRTU influences decisions taken at the top. The largest BRTUs depute the most delegates to the CTUA's quinquennial general meeting, which elects the president and vice presidents. One BRTU president and two delegates are deputed to this meeting for every 5,000 members. Thus a BRTU's institutional influence is conditioned by its organizational capacity on the ground and in the workplace. The two most influential BRTUs are Education and Science, and Higher Education and Health (see Table 2).

1.4 Influential and Active BRTUs

Large Sectoral Trade Unions

Trade union membership is fairly widespread in sectors that have not undergone drastic systemic changes and do not have many informal workers. However, membership numbers and formal institutional influence have little to do with the trade unions' current organizational capacities and activities since many members are inactive. When reminded of their trade union membership, many people decide to quit – so BRTU representatives prefer keeping inactive members rather than risk losing them altogether. The representatives may also want to monopolize their own influence in the CTUA. Although many BRTUs dispose of financial and human resources, they never initiate social dialogue or address employees' social concerns because they are funded by employers.

Small Sectoral Trade Unions

After Armenia became independent, BRTUs in service industries, agriculture and banking were confronted with far-reaching systemic changes. Many trade unions lost nearly all their members and were forced to modernize their structures and cooperate with international organizations. Today, these BRTUs are small, with between just 3,000 and 6,000 members each. However, their members are more active and motivated: Most belong to a young

generation that doesn't have the Soviet mindset and are determined to protect their work-related interests. The mobilizing capacities of these smaller unions make them more influential than the larger ones.

Modernization and Organizational Leeway

Since 2012, some BRTUs have been trying to modernize their organizational structures in order to retain members. The reforms included merges that reduced the total number of BRTUs to 20. However, there still are more BRTUs than economic sectors, which creates conflict and unhealthy competition within sectors. These days, some BRTUs are attempting to gain control of the primary organizations in competing BRTUs, and many trade unions are struggling to survive instead of addressing issues confronting organized labour.

The CTUA's pyramidal structure and confederative principle allows for non-hierarchical relations among trade unions and guarantees functional independence for the 'subordinate' unions. However, the different levels have mutual responsibilities: Each 'low-level organization' must pay membership dues to the superior organization, which is expected to provide organizational, advisory and other kinds of support. But the lower levels are not accountable to the higher levels with regard to their activities.

1.5 Social Dialogue and its Problems

The Legal Basis

Armenia is generally strengthening the practice of social dialogue. The Armenian Law on Trade Unions states that a trade union has the right to sign collective agreements with employers and employers' associations, and the CTUA can negotiate and sign agreements with the Armenian government. Trade unions must follow the international standards that Armenia has agreed to implement.

Current Practice

BRTUs have signed more than 1,000 collective agreements. However, in many cases, the success of an agreement is due to the type of employer and the trade union leader's prestige and social capital.

The Armenian government, the CTUA and the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia (RUEA) signed two trilateral agreements on 27 April 2009 and 1 August 2015. Experts find, however, that as a result of the negotiators' inexperience with trilateral formats, the agreements have a simple declaratory character, which impedes translating them into political action.

Trade Union Activities and Performance

Trade unions primarily direct their activities in two directions: (1) organizing recreational events (cultural and sports events) and providing support services (financial benefits), and (2) training activities on social, labour and human rights. Most trade union events have a recreational or social character, which members expect as a result of their

ignorance of the role that trade unions can play vis-à-vis employers. Trade union activities regarding health and job safety are grossly inadequate.

Personnel

Many union leaders – particularly in primary and territorial organizations – and some BRTUs still have a flawed understanding about what trade unions do, lack the political will to openly engage in labour disputes, and have weak management and organizational skills. Many members only expect the entertainment and material benefits they knew during the Soviet era. Modern trade unions, however, usually offer social support and seek to protect workers' rights.

Table 1 – The Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA)

Founded	1 October 1992
President	Eduard Tumasyan (elected in 2007)
Vice Presidents	Khachik Arakelyan and Boris Kharatyan (elected in 2007)
Number of member unions	20 confederated Branch Republican Trade Unions (BRTUs)
Total number of members	2009–2010: 296,645 members in 24 BRTUs – 753 primary organizations 2014–2015: 208,000 members in 20 BRTUs – 700 primary organizations
Funding and financial sources	An annual membership fee of 1% of a member's salary is paid by a primary organization to the BRTU, which pays AMD (Armenian dram) 20,000 to the CTUA each month. The CTUA budgetary capital is deposited in banks, thus yielding additional monthly operating income.
Level of trade union membership	2,994,000 – Armenian population (April 2016) 1,194,000 – employees in Armenia 208,000 – trade union members (17.4% of all employees)
Political orientation/ affiliation	Trade unions are relatively independent (including financially) of political parties, the state and other political institutions. The government neither interferes in their affairs nor supports them.
International memberships	The CTUA is a member of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).



Table 2 – The Branch Republican Trade Unions (BRTUs)

Name of the Branch Republican Trade Union (BRTU)	Number of members
Branch Republican Trade Union Organizations of Workers of the Agro-industrial Division of the Republic of Armenia	5,195
Republican Union of Trade Union Organizations of Health Workers of Armenia	18,750
Republican Branch Union of Trade Union Organizations of Commerce, Catering, Consumer Co-operatives and Enterprise Workers Union of Armenia	2,517
Sectoral Republican Union of Workers of Professional Organizations of Car–Agricultural–Machine–Building and Forest–Paper–Wood–Manufacturing Industries of Armenia	1,683
Branch Republican Union of Trade Union Organizations of Industrial Workers of Armenia	3,840
Branch Republican Union of Banks, Financial Institutions Employees and Professional Trade Employees of Armenia	4,570
Branch Republican Union of Professional Organizations of Institutions of Higher Education in Armenia	19,980
Branch Republican Union of Professional Organizations of Railway and Commutation Workers of Armenia	4,123
Republican Branch Association of the Electrical Trades Union of the Trade Union Organizations of Armenia	10,681
Branch Republican Trade Union of Armenian Electronics Workers	2,003
Branch Republican Union of Trade Union Organizations of Light Industry Workers of Armenia	2,305
Branch Republican Union of Trade Union Organizations of Miners, Metallurgists and Jewellers of the Republic of Armenia	6,263
Employees Trade Union Organizations and Municipal Economy and Public Utilities of the Republic of Armenia	5,719
Branch Republican Union of Trade Union Organizations of Workers in Education and Science of Armenia	67,560
Branch Republican Trade Union of Workers in Cultural Institutions of Armenia	10,750
Branch Republican Union of Professional Organizations of Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers of Armenia	9,658
Branch Republican Union of Professional Organizations of Workers in State Enterprises, Municipal Authorities and Public Service of Armenia	11,127
Branch Republican Union of Professional Organizations in the Service Sector, and Food and Fishing Industry Workers of Armenia	5,262
Branch Republican Union «Miabanutyun» of Professional Organizations of Information Technology, Aviation and Communication Workers of Armenia	1,417
Branch Republican Union of Professional Organizations of Transport and Communication Workers of Armenia	3,570

2. The External Scope of Armenian Trade Union Work

2.1 Labour Legislation in Armenia

International Commitments and Constitutional Law

Armenia has ratified 23 conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which constitute the country's labour legislation framework, and particularly the Labour Code of Armenia. Armenia has committed itself to adhering to international standards such as Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which includes the right to form trade unions and guarantees their basic rights.

Article 28 of the Armenian Constitution defines fundamental principles with regard to the legal status of trade unions. All people enjoy the right of free association, and may found or join trade unions.

Legal Provisions

The Law on Trade Unions and the Labour Code of Armenia set out trade union rights and obligations, and reinforce their legal status and mode of operation. The Law deals with regulatory issues concerning the formation of trade unions, their activities, relations with public and private bodies, and the protection of members' rights. The Labour Code regulates relations between employers and trade union representatives.

General Rights and Obligations

Trade unions have the right to submit legislative initiatives and amendments, as well as recommendations related to job safety, general working conditions and union members' social rights. Furthermore, they enjoy a deliberative vote in the government, which they can use to push through their recommendations. Trade unions are entitled to organize public meetings, as well as walk-outs, rallies and other mass events in order to make their demands known, stimulate interest in the issues and initiate negotiations with the state, local authorities and employers. However, most trade unions are not actively promoting legal initiatives.

Employers are obliged to respect their employees' union activities and to not punish them (eg, by suspending

them from work). They also must consult with union representatives when making decisions that affect an employee's legal status, and to ensure timely collective negotiations.

Besides this legal framework, other circumstances can curb the effective conduct of union activities and the protection of employee rights. One is insufficient knowledge of the complex legal provisions that often cross-refer to other relevant laws. Trade union leaders and staff do not always have full command of the legal situation. It is not weak laws, but rather legal complexity and ignorance at the trade union that impede effective trade union activity.

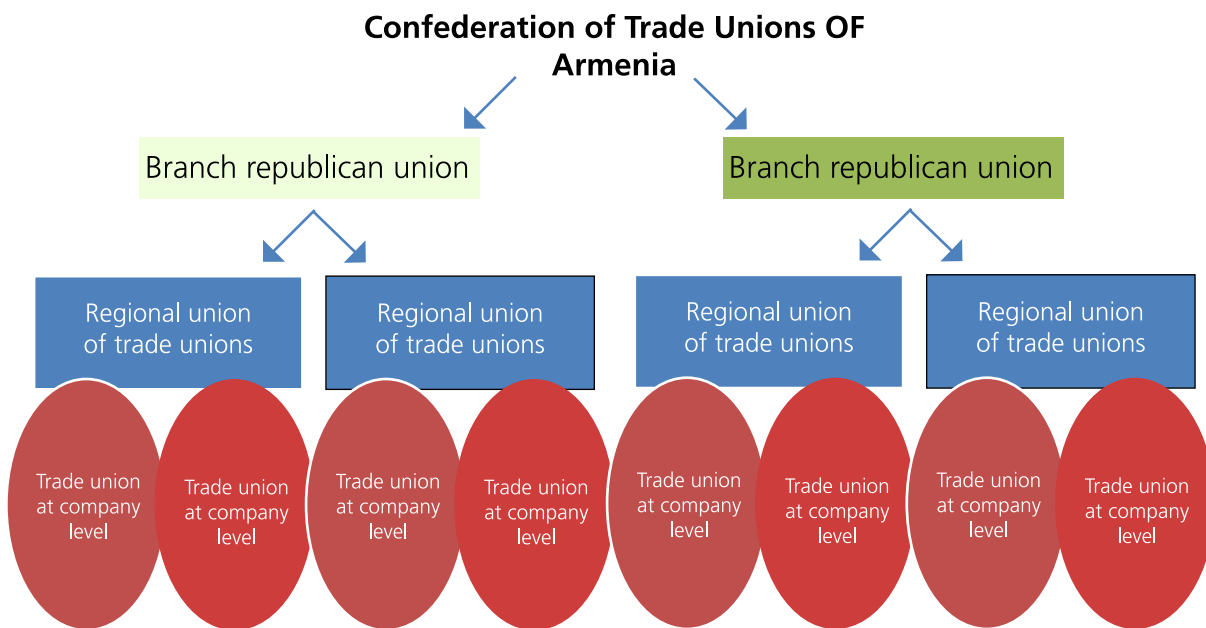
2.2 The Right to Strike and its Limits

Another legal obstacle to effectively complain and exert pressure during collective negotiations is the regulation that trade unions can organize strikes if employers are negligent with regard to a collective agreement or if other disputes arise over collective agreements. Strikes are only permitted if collective agreements have been signed.

The Labour Code considers collective negotiations to have failed if any side refuses to take part in them. In practice, employers abstain from negotiations and cannot be prodded to enter into a collective agreement. The previously mentioned legal provisions make it almost impossible to organize a legal strike. However, these obstacles do not concern relations that have developed as a result of collective agreements at the national level.

Furthermore, since the judiciary cannot be regarded as independent and impartial, it is practically impossible to win disputes about poor or dangerous working conditions in court, although the Labour Code obliges the employer to ensure safe working conditions for employees.

This means that trade unions can exercise influence through their legal right to collectively negotiate and the fact that their consent regarding certain corporate decisions that affect employees is required by law. However, legal procedures are hardly used and widespread ignorance of the law exacerbates the inequality of the state and the trade unions.



Impediments to Union Activism

An Armenian trade union member’s role and significance has changed since the Soviet era ›voluntary-mandatory‹ principle (Section 1.1). This change is reflected by the fact that most working citizens do not acknowledge that a trade union’s performance of its main functions depends on its constituents; many employees see no causal link between themselves and how their trade union performs. They believe that it is up to the trade union leaders to solve their problems. The fundamental transformations in the nature of trade unions have had crucial repercussions on their capacity to mobilize members to perform certain activities and functions.

2.3 Gender Policy Shortcomings in Armenian Trade Unions

Although most of the employees involved in trade union elective bodies are women, gender inequality is a problem. At the BRTU level, nine of the 20 BRTU presidents are women. However, men hold the three key positions in the CTUA that command considerable financial and power resources.

At the world congress of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) held in Berlin in 2014, the CTUA acknowledged that as an ITUC member, it is responsible

for ensuring gender equality. However, no steps have yet been taken in that direction. Nor have Armenian trade unions joined the ›COUNT US IN‹ movement to increase women’s share in leading positions. These shortcomings are reproduced in all sectors at all levels: Women do most of the almost invisible and non-remunerated work at the lower levels and hit a ›glass ceiling‹ at higher levels of the decision-making process.

3. Trade Unions: Realizing their Main Functions

General Principles

In a very general sense, the main functions of trade unions include (1) protecting employee rights at the workplace, (2) improving working conditions and ensuring security standards, and (3) effectively representing employee rights and interests. Their most powerful instrument – and goal – are to sign collective multiparty agreements on various labour issues.

Union Activism in Armenia

Negotiating collective agreements is a relatively new practice in Armenia, and one of the main reasons why most parties continue to insist on their unshakable demands until the bitter end. Negotiating processes yield

few substantive results. The cultures of negotiation and political struggle are underdeveloped, with trade unions sometimes preferring to not confront political opponents.

The Second Collective Republican Agreement of 2015 emphasizes the need to solve social and work issues co-operatively, and has its own implementation mechanism and supervisory committee. In addition to the national agreements, other collective agreements signed between BRTUs and governmental authorities regulate aspects of the economic sector. Many primary organizations have signed smaller-scale collective agreements.

Although such national agreements are rare in Armenia, there are grounds for assuming that such collective agreements could significantly contribute to the country's socio-economic development. However, trade unions do little to promote these main functions. Trade union activism exhibits structural inertia in the case of the low minimum wage: Aside from submitting dissenting statements, trade unions have not come up with any other complaints or initiatives.

The Influence of Collective Agreements

The legally binding collective agreements signed at all organizational levels have a mainly declaratory character: They play no significant regulatory role with regard to social and work conditions, or promoting pay raises for members.

This can be traced to the fact that some primary organizations operate under the auspices of a single employer. Employees formally join trade unions, but their demands and opinions are never discussed. The current desolate economic situation in Armenia gives employers considerable leverage over trade union activities: They can influence or prevent implementation of collective agreements. Some employers simply ignore the parts of a collective agreement that do not suit their interests. Such illegal behaviour is possible through the mute consent of the 'yellow trade unions' – formal unions that are inactive or only act in accordance with the employer's interests.

Social Movements and the Trade Unions' Dwindling Influence

Another sign of the trade unions' inability to carry out their main functions and effectively represent the

members' interests is the fact that their functions are being addressed by other, more active civil society actors, who are largely unaware that trade unions even exist in Armenia. This became especially clear in 2015, when the government raised electricity rates despite the low salaries, inflation and generally poor socio-economic situation. Peaceful marches demanding social justice were held all over the country, and the government backed down after only 15 days. This was one of the few entirely social movements in Armenia, and was neither organized nor patronized by any political force or party. Unfortunately, trade unions also played no leading role in the fight.

A similar mobilization had occurred in summer 2014, when the Yerevan municipal government doubled the cost of public transport – from AMD 100 to AMD 200 (EUR 0.20 to EUR 0.40). Masses of city dwellers protested in front of city hall, and drivers of public transport accepted passengers free of charge. Trade union members and BRTU presidents took part in the strike, but the trade unions as such were not officially present.

4. The Political Influence of Trade Unions

We have seen that Armenian trade unions do not sufficiently exercise their right to submit bills, amendments and recommendations in the Law on Trade Unions. However, in 2009 and 2010, trade unions did propose amendments to the Labour Code. Although some of their recommendations were taken into account by legislators and the CTUA initiated activities during the discussion, these few instances do not show the Armenian trade union to be a strong, established institution in the domain of labour rights protection.

Cooperation with Political Parties

Trade unions generally try to avoid cooperating publicly with political parties. However, some trade union members have done just that and evaluate their experience positively. Nevertheless, the CTUA does not promote such rare events – nor do branch trade unions or any others. Most trade unions do not cooperate with political parties because (1) there are so many political parties and (2) party members belong to trade unions. Conversely, political parties do not cooperate with trade unions because they

don't view them as real political players and are loath to strengthen their influence.

Cooperation with Non-governmental Organizations

Unions have only recently begun to cooperate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Since elements of a civil society began to appear in Armenia in the 1990s, civic initiatives have created NGOs in virtually all spheres of public life – with help in the form of foreign funding. Some of these NGOs are now working on labour rights protection. Thus far, trade unions and NGOs have not developed any joint actions or proposals because they either see the other as competition or have been unable to find common ground for substantial cooperation.

Some NGOs are addressing issues of workplace discrimination, and discussions are currently being held on a bill banning discrimination in Armenia. Once again, however, trade unions are playing no decisive role.

Cooperation with International Organizations

Armenian trade unions are, however, closely cooperating with international institutions and organizations and carrying out joint projects. They also belong to organizations like the ITUC. The most important outcome of these cooperative efforts is the organization of international seminars and conferences in Armenia, the exchange of experience, and knowledge and skills transfers.

Political Visibility and Connectedness

Trade unions are hardly visible in Armenia's social and political arena. No National Assembly deputies belong to trade unions and no political force would demonstratively support the unions. Trade unions are not political actors because they have not sufficiently changed their strategies and mode of working. Instead of cooperating with domestic partners such as NGOs, political parties and other political organizations, trade unions have cooperated with international organizations, which has not helped them to play a more significant public role at home.

5. Prospects for the Coming Years

While Armenian trade unions are still beset by the legacy of Soviet structures and mentalities, they are increas-

ingly confronted with an ever-faster-changing political, economic, legal and social environment. To overcome the challenges concomitant with societal change, Armenian trade unions need to develop strategies that link them to other actors in the labour field and increase their visibility. They also need to develop more participatory internal procedures to mobilize their members. If trade unions were to commit themselves to delivering benefits in the field of labour rights protection and income and executing their other main functions, their members would probably be more loyal.

5.1 External Factors

Social, Economic and Political Affairs in Armenia

Although a number of ILO conventions have been signed that make it possible for trade unions to take active political roles, national legislation is needed regarding implementation and enforcement. The Labour Code, the Law on Trade Unions and the Collective Republican Agreements provide an adequate legal basis for trade unions to be active in Armenia. Trade unions hinder progress through their own inaction and inertia.

A sign of Armenian democracy's deficiencies is its relatively closed political system, which hinders the development of free, democratic and active trade unions. The country's socio-cultural environment and political culture, and the general lack of civic political participation are reflected in the trade unions' organization and inactivity.

Another factor contributing to trade union inactivity is Armenia's unstable business environment. The labour market is insecure and unregulated. Furthermore, there is a great imbalance between workforce supply and demand, with little demand for professionals such as engineers and chemists, who once were sought out. Today's employers want specialists in the newest technologies and service workers (waiters, bartenders, hotel service personnel, managers and supermarket cashiers, stockers etc.). This situation contributes to the continuous drop in trade union membership and tips the balance of bargaining power in favour of employers. Added to that is the large informal sector, which employs some 480,000 people – nearly twice the number of union members.

5.2 Internal Factors

Financial Resources

Trade unions are still challenged to consolidate their financial basis. Most BRTUs cannot meet the exigencies of all their primary organizations because of insufficient funds. This lack also negatively affects

1. litigations,
2. actions in defence of labour rights (such as walkouts),
3. active cooperation with mainstream media,
4. using and developing information databases (eg, of their members),
5. maintaining websites and conducting public relations (PR) campaigns, and
6. possibilities of conducting effective, large-scale campaigns (to promote initiatives etc.).

The situation is further aggravated by low membership fees, which may be welcome to members but hinder the trade unions' effectiveness. In fact, better performance would serve to motivate employees to join trade unions and pay membership fees in the first place, and without it trade union staff salaries also remain low and unattractive.

Personnel and Membership

Much of the staff have outdated principles and notions about a trade union's main functions, and members do not understand how they can contribute to their union's success. They prefer passivity to political struggle.

Most trade unions lack young, flexible and resilient administrative staff. Most staff have few negotiating skills, know little about their legal rights and duties (especially at lower organizational levels) and are ignorant of new technologies.

Those trade unions who have begun to modernize are attracting younger personnel and conscious members who are crucial for continuing the reform processes and implementing internal structural changes.

Potential and Resources

Trade unions must focus on their inherent strengths. These are mainly


1. the relatively high number of members;
2. their presence in all regions of Armenia;
3. their membership in international organizations, which increases social capital (valuable contacts and personal relations), economic capital (financial support) for projects and human capital (knowledge transfers and expert seminars);
4. their long-standing relations with employers, which can facilitate negotiations;
5. their legal standing as participants in the social partnership to discuss labour issues, usually in a tripartite format of unions, employers and government (this entitles them to participate in decision-making processes and discussions about laws and amendments), and to submit legal recommendations; and
6. the CTUA's legal status: It can enter into collective agreements on behalf of all its member organizations and negotiate legal changes to improve the status of primary organizations and BRTUs.

5.3 Recommendations

These five points are especially useful for reforming trade unions:

1. Trade unions should run programmes and activities dealing with labour rights for those employed in the informal sector as a means of boosting membership.
2. Trade unions must intensify their work on legal issues and labour rights to activate members in the workplace and encourage their participation in official union campaigns. To facilitate fair litigation, decent and safe working conditions must be written into the Labour Code.
3. The CTUA needs departments for PR and analytics, and to train their staff. Public awareness of union activities can be raised through media work and targeted campaigns.
4. Networking and cooperation must be improved at the BRTU level, for example by regularly held meetings of working groups at the branch or territorial levels.
5. Trade unions should intensify cooperation with NGOs and foreign trade unions that are also targeting labour rights issues.

Implementing these recommendations would help trade unions to gain new members, including workers from the informal sector, and to work with new target



groups. Such an integrative approach would benefit the Armenian state and also increase public recognition of trade unions, increase citizens' knowledge of their rights and duties, and help youth who are entering the labour market. Optimizing internal procedures, clarifying work methods and applying international best practices could transform trade unions into institutions that embody their slogan, ›*We are strong together*‹.

In the near future, trade unions should start a programme to employ younger staff members and a campaign about trade union ideals, and seek to solve the problems of their members as well as non-member employees. Trade unions should become decision-makers and fight for progressive social development in Armenia. In 2017, elections will be held in a number of BRTUs, and the CTUA's five-year-term comes to an end. More staff – of diverse gender, age and attitude – should be recruited to lead trade unions to innovate and act. In the next five years, Armenian trade unions could overcome current obstacles and promote their members' interests – thereby considerably raising their status in Armenia's social and political life.



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