

Bridging Generational Barriers in Trade Union Organisations

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1. INTRODUCTION

Defining the Concept of Generational Barriers

Generational barriers are a set of differences, misunderstandings and obstacles that arise between members of different age generations in the workplace and in society. These barriers result from the different life experiences, historical events, social conditions, value systems, working habits, and ways of communicating that shaped the individual generations over the course of their lives. Generational differences are a natural part of the development of society and do not in themselves constitute a problem. Difficulties arise when they lead to misunderstanding, stereotyping, mutual distrust, or limited cooperation between people of different ages.

In today's working environment, employees of several generations increasingly meet at the same time. Each generation has been influenced by different social, economic, and technological conditions, which is reflected in their attitudes to work, authority, education, the use of technology and ways of communicating.

Generational barriers may manifest themselves in differing work priorities, different approaches to problem-solving, different communication preferences or different perceptions of work and personal values. In the environment of trade union organisations, this issue takes on particular significance, because the successful functioning of trade unions depends on the ability to connect the experience of long-standing members with the needs and expectations of new generations of employees. If generational differences cannot be overcome, this may lead to reduced cooperation, a weakening of the membership base or a loss of continuity in the transfer of experience.

Understanding the nature of generational barriers is therefore an important prerequisite for overcoming them. Identifying the causes of these differences and promoting mutual communication, respect and cooperation is becoming an increasingly important part of modern trade union work.

A Brief Description of Trade Union Organisations

Trade union organisations are voluntary associations of employees whose main mission is to protect and promote the labour, social, economic, and professional interests of their members. They are among the most important institutions representing employees in labour relations and play an important role in creating balanced relations between employees and employers.

One of the most important functions of trade union organisations is collective bargaining. Through collective agreements, trade unions seek to negotiate better working conditions, fair remuneration, social benefits, and a safe working environment. In addition to collective bargaining, they provide members with legal advice, support in resolving disputes, educational activities, and information services.

In recent decades, however, trade union organisations have faced new challenges related to technological development, the transformation of the labour market and the arrival of new generations of employees. A major challenge is, in particular, attracting and retaining younger members and the ability to respond to their different expectations. The ability to bring together employees of different age groups is therefore one of the key prerequisites for the successful functioning of trade union organisations.

The Importance of Cooperation between Generations in Trade Unions

Cooperation between generations is an important prerequisite for the stability and development of trade union organisations. Older members bring experience; knowledge of how the organisation works and practical insights from collective bargaining and trade union work. Younger generations contribute new perspectives, knowledge of modern technologies and the ability to respond to the changing conditions of the labour market.

Intergenerational cooperation supports the transfer of experience, the preservation of organisational continuity and the strengthening of the cohesion of the membership base. At the same time, it creates conditions for more effective representation of employees' interests and a better ability of trade union organisations to respond to new challenges in the working environment.

Aim of the Report

The main aim of this report is to analyse the issue of generational barriers in trade union organisations and to identify the factors that influence cooperation between the individual generations of members. The report focuses on the causes of generational differences, their manifestations in trade union practice and their impacts on the functioning of the organisation.

At the same time, it assesses the state of intergenerational relations in trade union organisations and draws attention to the most common problems related to communication, value preferences, attitudes to technology and the expectations of the individual generations.

The report also identifies tools and procedures that can contribute to overcoming generational barriers, particularly in the areas of communication, sharing of experience, involving younger members in decision-making processes and the use of modern means of communication.

The aim of the report is to provide a comprehensive view of the issue of generational barriers in trade union organisations and to formulate recommendations that can contribute to strengthening the cohesion, effectiveness, and long-term stability of trade union organisations.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

Age Structure of the Membership

The age structure of the membership base is one of the most important factors influencing the current functioning of trade union organisations. The age composition of the members has a direct influence on the setting of priorities for trade union activity, the way communication takes place within the organisation, the form of collective bargaining and the ability of trade unions to respond to the changing conditions of the labour market. At the same time, the age structure is an important indicator of the long-term stability and prospects of a trade union organisation, because it reflects its ability to attract new members and ensure generational continuity.

In recent decades, a gradual ageing of the membership base of trade union organisations can be observed in a number of European countries, including the Czech Republic. This trend is related to the demographic development of society, the lengthening of the period of economic activity of the population, but also to changes in the working environment and the changing attitudes of younger generations towards trade union organising. Many trade union organisations were built at a time when union membership was a normal part of working life for a large proportion of employees. Today's situation is different, however, and trade unions must make ever greater efforts to attract new members, especially from among younger employees.

In most trade union organisations, employees of middle and older age make up a significant part of the membership base. These are workers with many years of professional experience, who often have many years of union membership behind them and have been actively involved in union activities. These members are an important pillar of the organisation because they possess extensive knowledge of labour law issues, experience of collective bargaining and a deep knowledge of how the specific workplace and the trade union organisation itself function. Thanks to their experience, they often hold positions as union officials, committee members, or members of negotiating teams.

The strong representation of older age groups brings trade union organisations a number of advantages. The most important of these include the stability of the membership base, continuity of activity and the ability to pass on experience gained during long-term involvement in the union. Older members usually know the history of the organisation, the development of working conditions and the results of previous collective bargaining well. This knowledge can be a valuable source of information when addressing current problems and planning future activities.

On the other hand, a high proportion of older members may also represent a certain risk. If the membership base is not continuously replenished with younger employees, the organisational potential of the union may gradually weaken. The retirement of experienced members or the end of their professional careers may mean the loss of important knowledge, contacts, and experience. If there are not a sufficient number of younger members ready to take over responsibility for the further functioning of the organisation, its long-term stability may be jeopardised.

It is precisely the lower representation of younger employees that is among the most frequently discussed problems of the contemporary trade union movement. Young people entering the labour market often perceive employment differently from previous generations. They change employers more frequently, use flexible forms of work, work on fixed-term contracts or combine various types of

employment. Their relationship to traditional forms of organising tends to be different, and membership of a trade union organisation is not necessarily an automatic part of their professional life. This may lead to lower interest in trade union activity and to a smaller representation of young employees in the membership base.

A specific group is made up of employees in the early stages of their professional careers. These workers are often dealing with issues related to gaining work experience, building their professional position, securing housing or balancing work and personal life. Their priorities may differ from those of older employees, who already have a stable position at work and focus, for example, on issues of job security, healthcare, or preparation for retirement. Trade union organisations must therefore look for ways to address different age groups and take their specific needs into account.

The age structure of the membership base may also differ significantly according to the sector in which the trade union organisation operates. For example, in traditional industrial sectors there tends to be a higher representation of older employees, while in some modern technology sectors or service sectors the average age of workers may be considerably lower. These differences are subsequently reflected in the way individual trade union organisation's function, their priorities, and their methods of communicating with members.

An important feature of the current age structure of trade union organisations is the fact that members of several generations increasingly meet within them at the same time. Alongside employees who began their working careers several decades ago, the organisations also include workers of the middle generation and newly arrived young employees. Each of these groups brings different experiences, values, and expectations. This diversity can be a source of inspiration and development, but at the same time it can create conditions for misunderstandings or generational barriers to arise.

For the future of trade union organisations, it is therefore important to strive for a balanced age structure of the membership base. Such a structure enables the effective transfer of experience between generations, supports the long-term continuity of activity and increases the organisation's ability to respond to the changing needs of employees. Trade unions that are able to address employees of all age groups and create conditions for their active involvement are better placed to fulfil their role in protecting the rights and interests of employees in the long term.

The age structure of the membership is therefore not merely a statistical indicator. It is an important factor influencing the current functioning of trade union organisations as well as their future development. The ability to ensure a balanced representation of the individual generations and to support their mutual cooperation will be one of the key prerequisites for the successful functioning of the trade union movement in the years to come.

Different Values, Expectations and Communication Styles of the Individual Generations

One of the most important factors influencing relations between members of trade union organisations is the different values, expectations and ways of communicating of the individual generations. These differences are not the result of the personal characteristics of individuals but are to a large extent shaped by the social, economic, technological and cultural conditions in which the individual generations grew up and gained their life experience. In the environment of trade union organisations, where cooperation between people of different ages is essential, these differences can be a source of mutual enrichment, but also a cause of misunderstandings and conflicts.

Older generations of employees generally entered the labour market at a time when job stability was considered one of the most important values. Long-term employment with a single employer was a common phenomenon and loyalty to the organisation was seen as a significant professional virtue. These employees often associate success at work with responsibility, discipline, personal commitment and long-term experience. In trade union activity, their attention therefore tends to focus primarily on the protection of jobs, employment security, stable working conditions, fair remuneration and the preservation of social security.

Younger generations of employees grew up in an environment strongly influenced by globalisation, rapid technological development and dynamic changes in the labour market. Their professional experience often includes more frequent changes of employer, work in international teams or the use of digital technologies as a normal part of working life. Younger workers therefore generally attach greater importance to flexibility at work, opportunities for professional development, the meaningfulness of the work they do and the balance between work and personal life. In addition to traditional work-related topics, they are also more interested in issues of mental health, sustainability, diversity and modern forms of work organisation.

Differences between generations are often also reflected in expectations towards trade union organisations. Older members often see trade unions primarily as a tool for protecting employees against adverse actions by the employer and as an institution ensuring collective bargaining on wages, working conditions and social benefits. Younger employees may expect a broader range of activities, including, for example, support for professional development, education, advice on work and personal life, or the use of modern communication technologies to involve members in decision-making processes.

Significant differences can also be observed in attitudes to authority and organisational structures. Older generations tend to be more accustomed to formal hierarchical arrangements and clearly defined competences. Younger employees, by contrast, often prefer more open communication, partnership-based relationships and the opportunity to participate actively in decision-making regardless of age or length of service. These differences can affect the functioning of trade union organisations, particularly when filling positions, preparing decisions or involving new members in the organisation's activities.

Communication is a prominent area of generational differences. Older generations are often accustomed to face-to-face meetings, telephone communication or traditional written correspondence. They regard personal contact as an important tool for building trust and solving problems. Younger generations, by contrast, routinely use electronic communication, social networks, mobile applications and other digital tools that enable rapid exchange of information and immediate feedback. While for older members a face-to-face meeting may be the basic means of communication, younger employees often expect to be able to obtain information through online platforms or digital communication channels.

Different communication styles can give rise to misunderstandings. Older members may perceive brief electronic communication as insufficiently personal or lacking in courtesy. Conversely, younger employees may consider some traditional communication practices unnecessarily slow and inefficient. Similar differences may also appear when organising meetings, passing on information or obtaining feedback from members.

Generational differences are also evident in attitudes to change. Older members often assess new proposals on the basis of long-term experience and may be more cautious when introducing new procedures. Their aim tends to be to preserve stability and proven working methods. Younger

generations are generally more open to innovation and faster change, especially where they see an opportunity to increase efficiency or improve the functioning of the organisation. Neither of these approaches is in itself right or wrong. Successful trade union organisations try to exploit the advantages of both perspectives and to find a balance between continuity and innovation.

Despite the existing differences, it is important to emphasise that the individual generations are united not only by their differences but also by a number of common interests. Regardless of age, employees have an interest in fair remuneration, safe working conditions, dignified treatment and the protection of their rights. It is precisely the ability to seek common goals while respecting the different needs of the individual generations that is one of the most important prerequisites for the successful functioning of trade union organisations in today's working environment.

Typical Problems and Tensions between Younger and Older Members

The different values, experiences and expectations of the individual generations can create situations in trade union organisations that lead to tension, misunderstandings or mutual distrust. These problems are not exceptional and, to some extent, appear in most organisations bringing together employees of different age groups. However, if they are not recognised and addressed in time, they can negatively affect cooperation between members, reduce the effectiveness of trade union activity and weaken the cohesion of the whole organisation.

One of the most common sources of tension is the differing perception of the priorities of trade union activity. Older members often regard issues of wages, job security, social benefits or the protection of employees against dismissal as the most important topics. These areas have long been at the centre of the trade union movement's attention and, for many experienced members, represent the fundamental mission of trade unions. Younger employees, however, in addition to these topics, also point to the need to address flexible working arrangements, opportunities for professional development, support for mental health, remote working or modern forms of employment. If one generation gets the feeling that its needs are not sufficiently reflected, feelings of frustration and alienation may arise.

Another common cause of tension tends to be differing views on change and innovation. Younger members often come up with proposals to modernise communication, digitalise certain processes or introduce new ways of involving members in the organisation's activities. Older members may be more cautious about such proposals, especially if they feel that they could disrupt well-established procedures or weaken personal contact between members. Younger generations then sometimes perceive this approach as an unwillingness to change, while older members may feel that their experience is not sufficiently respected.

Tension may also arise in connection with the filling of positions and decision-making processes. In many trade union organisations, leading positions are held by long-standing members with extensive experience. Although their expertise is very valuable to the organisation, younger members may sometimes feel that their opportunities to become actively involved in leadership or to influence the direction of the organisation are limited. If there is no room for the gradual involvement of a new generation of officials, an impression of closedness or generational distance between the leadership and younger members may arise.

Communication also tends to be a significant problem. Differing preferences for communication channels may mean that some members do not have enough information or do not feel fully involved

in what is happening in the organisation. Younger employees may consider traditional forms of communication inadequate and expect faster sharing of information through digital tools. Older members, by contrast, may prefer face-to-face meetings and have concerns about too much communication moving into the online environment. Failure to adapt communication methods sufficiently to the needs of different generations can reduce the effectiveness of the trade union organisation's work.

In some cases, mutual stereotypes and prejudices may also appear. Older members may perceive the younger generation as less loyal, impatient or unwilling to take on long-term responsibility. Younger employees, in turn, sometimes regard older members as too conservative, closed to change or insufficiently familiar with modern technologies. Such stereotypes can lead to an underestimation of the abilities of the other group and complicate the building of mutual trust.

Tension may also arise in the transfer of experience between generations. Older members possess extensive knowledge and experience gained during many years of trade union activity. However, if suitable conditions for sharing it are not created, they may feel that the younger generation does not show sufficient interest in their experience. Conversely, younger members may gain the impression that their views are not taken seriously or that they have no opportunity to come up with their own proposals. Insufficient communication in this area can lead to the loss of valuable knowledge as well as to the weakening of mutual cooperation.

A serious consequence of generational conflicts left unresolved over the long term may be a decline in the activity of the membership base. Members who feel that their views are not respected or that the organisation does not respond to their needs may gradually reduce their participation in trade union activity. In extreme cases, members may leave the organisation, or the interest of new employees in joining the union may decline. Such a development represents a significant risk, especially for organisations that have long struggled with a shortage of younger members.

Although generational tension can create a number of problems, it is not an inevitable consequence of age diversity. On the contrary, well-managed communication, open dialogue and mutual respect can turn generational differences into a significant competitive advantage for a trade union organisation. The key is to create an environment in which all generations have the opportunity to become actively involved in the organisation's activities, share their experience and jointly seek solutions to problems. It is precisely the ability to overcome generational differences and to harness the potential of all age groups that is one of the main prerequisites for the long-term successful functioning of trade union organisations.

3. CAUSES OF GENERATIONAL BARRIERS

Different Work Experience and Historical Context

One of the most important causes of generational barriers in trade union organisations is the different work experience and the different historical context in which the individual generations grew up, entered the labour market and formed their professional attitudes. Each generation of employees was influenced by specific economic, social and political conditions, which significantly shaped its view of work, employers, trade unions and its own professional future. These different experiences in turn influence the expectations of trade union members and their approach to solving work-related problems.

Older generations of employees gained their first work experience at a time when the labour market was relatively stable and long-term employment with a single employer was the normal standard. Many workers spent a considerable part of their professional careers at a single workplace, where they gradually built up their professional qualifications, their position at work and their social ties. Job stability was considered an important life value, and the work collective often formed a significant part of an employee's personal identity. In such an environment, trade union organisations had a strong position and were naturally perceived as an important tool for protecting employees' rights.

By contrast, younger generations entered working life under the conditions of a considerably more dynamic labour market. Globalisation, technological development, growing competition and the transformation of the economy led to greater flexibility in employment relationships. For young employees, more frequent changes of employer, fixed-term work, project-based employment or a combination of various work activities are much more common than for their older colleagues. Job security is no longer taken for granted, and many employees consider the ability to adapt to change more important than staying with a single employer for a long time.

Different experiences of economic and social change also play an important role. Older employees often remember periods of large-scale economic transformation, economic crises or significant changes in labour law conditions. These experiences may reinforce their emphasis on stability, caution in introducing changes and the protection of the working standards achieved. Younger generations, by contrast, grew up in an environment of rapid change, where flexibility is considered a normal part of professional life. Different life experiences therefore lead to different perceptions of work-related risks and opportunities.

The historical context also influences the relationship of the individual generations to trade union organisations. Older members often experienced a period when trade unions were one of the main tools for protecting employees and their importance was widely recognised in society. Younger employees, by contrast, are entering a working environment in which there is a wider range of options for professional development, individual negotiation or obtaining information through digital sources. Their motivation for joining a trade union may therefore be different and often requires a different way of reaching out to and involving them.

Different work experience is also reflected in views on authority, the leadership of the organisation and decision-making processes. Employees with many years of practice often draw on personal experience gained over many years of work and tend to rely on proven procedures. Younger members may place more trust in up-to-date information, new management methods or innovative approaches. These differences are not in themselves problematic, but if they are not accompanied by

mutual respect and a willingness to listen to differing views, they can create conditions for generational barriers to arise.

It is precisely different work experience and historical circumstances that explain why the individual generations may perceive the priorities of trade union activity, the way of communicating or the changes needed in the organisation differently. Understanding these connections is an important prerequisite for building mutual respect and effective cooperation between members of different age groups.

A Different Approach to Technology and Digitalisation

Technological development and digitalisation are among the most important factors that have transformed the working environment and the functioning of trade union organisations in recent decades. At the same time, they are one of the most common causes of generational differences, because the individual generations gained their experience of technology at different stages of their lives. While younger employees grew up surrounded by digital technologies and the internet, older generations had to gradually master new technologies over the course of their professional careers. These different experiences are reflected in the way they communicate, obtain information and organise their work.

Younger generations of employees consider the use of digital technologies a natural part of everyday life. Electronic communication, social networks, online platforms, mobile applications or remote collaboration are common tools for them. They expect information quickly, clearly and in electronic form. They carry similar expectations over into the environment of trade union organisations, from which they often demand modern communication channels, the possibility of online involvement in activities or electronic access to information and documents.

Older members of trade union organisations often have greater experience with traditional forms of communication and work organisation. Face-to-face meetings, assemblies, telephone communication or written documents are practices they have long used and trust. For many of them, personal contact is an important element in building trust and mutual relationships. Too rapid a digitalisation of certain processes may therefore give rise to fears of losing the personal character of communication or of limiting the opportunity to be actively involved in the organisation's activities.

A different approach to technology can create practical problems in the functioning of trade union organisations. If, for example, information is disseminated mainly through electronic channels, some older members may find it difficult to obtain it. Conversely, organisations relying exclusively on traditional means of communication may have trouble reaching younger employees, who expect a fast and flexible exchange of information.

Digitalisation is also affecting the very nature of work. Automation, the use of artificial intelligence, remote working or the digital management of work processes create new challenges for employees and trade union organisations alike. Younger generations tend to be more open to the introduction of new technologies and see them as an opportunity to increase efficiency or advance professionally. Older employees may judge some changes more cautiously, especially if they are concerned about the impact on jobs or the need to acquire new skills.

It is important to emphasise, however, that differences in approaches to technology cannot be reduced simply to a question of age. Many older employees have a high level of digital competence and, conversely, some younger workers may not be interested in actively using all modern tools.

Nevertheless, it can be said that technological development is an area in which generational differences are more pronounced than in many other areas of working life.

For trade union organisations, an important task is therefore to find a balance between modernisation and keeping communication accessible to all members. Successful organisations combine traditional and modern communication tools and try to ensure that technological innovations support the involvement of members of all generations, rather than creating new barriers between them.

Different Priorities (Stability vs. Flexibility, Tradition vs. Innovation)

Another important cause of generational barriers in trade union organisations is the different priorities of the individual generations. These differences stem from the different life experiences, professional needs and social conditions in which the individual generations grew up. Although all generations share an interest in protecting employees' rights and ensuring dignified working conditions, they may differ in which issues they consider most important and what means they prefer for pursuing them.

One of the most striking differences is the relationship to stability and flexibility. Older employees often attach great value to job security, predictable working conditions and the long-term stability of the employment relationship. These priorities are the result of experience gained over a long professional career, during which stability was an important prerequisite for personal and family security. Trade union organisations have therefore traditionally paid considerable attention to protecting jobs, collective agreements and social security.

Younger generations generally do not perceive job stability in the same way as their older colleagues. More frequent job changes, a rapidly changing labour market and new forms of employment mean that they place greater emphasis on flexibility, opportunities for professional development and the ability to adapt to new conditions. In addition to job security, they therefore also demand the possibility of remote working, flexible working hours, individual development or a better balance between work and private life.

Significant differences also exist in the relationship to tradition and innovation. Older members of trade union organisations often trust procedures that have proven themselves in the past and delivered concrete results. Their many years of experience lead them to be cautious about introducing changes and to emphasise preserving the continuity of the organisation's activities. Younger generations tend to be more open to experimentation, new forms of communication and innovative working methods. They often stress the need to modernise trade union structures and adapt the organisation to current conditions.

Different priorities may also be reflected in the very content of the trade union agenda. Older members generally pay more attention to issues of wages, working conditions, occupational safety or social security. Younger employees, in addition to these topics, more often draw attention to issues of mental health, work-life balance, professional development, equal opportunities or the environmental responsibility of employers. Trade union organisations therefore face the task of combining traditional areas of interest with new topics that appeal to the incoming generations of employees.

If different priorities are not sufficiently communicated and mutually respected, they can become a source of tension between individual groups of members. Conversely, organisations that are able to

create space for dialogue and the search for common solutions can turn generational differences into a significant advantage. The combination of the experience, stability and institutional memory of older members with the energy, flexibility and innovative approach of younger generations creates the preconditions for the long-term successful functioning of trade union organisations in the conditions of the modern labour market.

4. IMPACTS OF GENERATIONAL BARRIERS

Weaker Involvement of Young Members

One of the most significant consequences of generational barriers in trade union organisations is the weaker involvement of young employees in trade union activity. This problem appears to varying degrees in many trade union organisations and represents a major challenge for their long-term development. If younger generations do not find in trade unions room for active participation, the opportunity to influence decision-making or topics corresponding to their needs, their interest in membership and in the organisation's activities may gradually decline.

Young employees are entering the labour market under conditions that differ considerably from the experience of previous generations. They change employers more frequently, use flexible forms of work and are used to fast communication and a high degree of availability of information. If a trade union organisation operates predominantly on traditional principles and is unable to respond to these changes, it may be perceived by young people as an institution that does not reflect their needs and expectations.

Generational barriers can cause younger members to feel that their interests are insufficiently represented. If the main topics of trade union activity are focused predominantly on the needs of older employees, young workers may gain the impression that their problems are not sufficiently important. This may concern, for example, issues of professional development, flexibility at work, the use of modern technologies, support for mental health or the balance between work and personal life. Insufficient attention to these topics can weaken the relationship of younger employees to the trade union organisation.

Another important factor tends to be the limited opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. In some organisations, leading positions are held over the long term by the same representatives, who have extensive experience and contribute significantly to the functioning of the union. However, if at the same time there are no mechanisms enabling the gradual involvement of younger members in the leadership of the organisation, a feeling of generational distance and a lack of opportunities for active involvement may arise.

The weaker participation of young members may manifest itself in lower attendance at membership meetings, limited interest in standing for trade union positions or a lower willingness to help organise trade union activities. In the long term, the number of new members joining the organisation may also decline. This development represents a serious problem, because it limits the ability of trade unions to reach the incoming generations of employees and to build a sufficiently broad membership base.

Overcoming generational barriers is therefore an important prerequisite for the active involvement of young members. Trade union organisations that create space for open dialogue, support the involvement of young employees in decision-making and pay attention to topics important for all age groups are considerably better placed to attract new members and build a stable membership base over the long term.

The Risk of Losing Continuity and the Membership Base

Another significant impact of generational barriers is the risk of disrupting the continuity of trade union activity and gradually weakening the membership base. Trade union organisations are based on the principle of long-term cooperation and the transfer of experience between the individual generations of members. However, if generational differences deepen and communication between older and younger employees is insufficient, this process can be significantly disrupted.

Continuity is one of the basic prerequisites for the successful functioning of trade union organisations. Over the course of their existence, trade unions build up extensive experience with collective bargaining, resolving labour law problems, communicating with the employer and organising the membership base. This knowledge is usually not captured only in documents or internal regulations but is also part of the practical experience of long-standing members and officials. If it is not systematically passed on to younger generations, there is a risk of its gradual loss.

The ageing of the membership base is a problem that affects many trade union organisations to varying degrees. If there are not enough younger members ready to take over responsibility for the future functioning of the organisation, the retirement of experienced officials or the end of their active involvement can lead to staffing problems and a weakening of organisational stability. In extreme cases, the organisation may face difficulties in filling positions or in ensuring basic activities.

Generational barriers can at the same time complicate the process of recruiting new members. Younger employees who do not perceive the trade union organisation as an open and modern institution may have less motivation to join the union. If the organisation fails to reach new generations of workers, the number of members gradually declines and its bargaining power weakens. A smaller membership base may then mean lower financial resources, limited staffing capacity and less influence in promoting employees' interests.

The loss of generational continuity also has a psychological dimension. Trade union organisations are based on a certain tradition, values and experience that have developed over a long period of time. If there are insufficient contact and cooperation between the individual generations, the sense of belonging and shared identity may weaken. The organisation then loses not only individual members, but also part of its historical and cultural heritage.

Maintaining a strong membership base in the long term therefore requires active support for intergenerational cooperation. Only organisations that are able to link the experience of older members with the potential of younger generations can ensure a smooth transfer of knowledge, preserve the continuity of their activities and at the same time create conditions for further development.

Limited Effectiveness of Trade Union Activity

Generational barriers can also significantly affect the overall effectiveness of trade union activity. Trade union organisations achieve the best results when they are able to draw on the experience, knowledge and abilities of all their members. However, if there are communication problems, distrust or differing ideas about the functioning of the organisation between the individual generations, cooperation may weaken and the ability to pursue common goals effectively may decline.

One consequence of generational barriers tends to be more complicated communication within the organisation. Information may not be passed on effectively, individual groups of members may use different communication channels, and some important suggestions may not reach all members.

Insufficient communication then leads to misunderstandings, duplicated work or unnecessary conflicts, which distract attention from the main tasks of the trade union organisation.

Negative impacts may also become apparent in the planning and implementation of trade union activities. If the individual generations hold markedly different views on the organisation's priorities or on the ways of pursuing them, it may be difficult to reach the necessary consensus. Decision-making processes may become drawn out and the organisation may respond more slowly to the current problems of employees. In an environment where it is often necessary to act quickly and effectively, such a situation represents a significant disadvantage.

Limited cooperation between generations can at the same time lead to the available potential of the membership base going unused. Older members possess valuable experience, knowledge of labour law issues and the capacity for strategic thinking. Younger generations, in turn, bring new ideas, familiarity with the digital environment and often also a greater willingness to experiment with new working methods. If these strengths are not suitably combined, the organisation loses a significant part of its capabilities and resources.

Another problem may be the limited ability of trade unions to adapt to the changing conditions of the labour market. The modern working environment is characterised by rapid technological development, new forms of employment and changing employee expectations. Organisations in which generational conflicts or resistance to cooperation prevail may find it difficult to respond to these changes with sufficient flexibility. This can weaken their ability to defend employees' interests and maintain the trust of the membership base.

Generational barriers can also adversely affect the external image of the trade union organisation. An organisation that appears closed, is unable to reach younger employees or cannot make effective use of modern means of communication may be perceived by the public as lacking dynamism and insufficiently prepared for today's challenges. Such an image then complicates the recruitment of new members and weakens the overall position of the trade unions.

It can therefore be stated that generational barriers are not merely a problem of interpersonal relations but have a direct impact on the quality and results of trade union work. Organisations that are able to support mutual cooperation between generations, harness their strengths and create an environment based on respect and open communication are generally more effective, more stable and better prepared to respond to the needs of their members. It is precisely the ability to combine experience with innovation that is becoming one of the key factors in the successful functioning of trade union organisations in today's working environment.

5. WAYS OF BRIDGING GENERATIONAL BARRIERS

Supporting Intergenerational Dialogue

One of the most effective tools for overcoming generational barriers in trade union organisations is systematic support for intergenerational dialogue. Generational differences do not in themselves constitute a problem. People of different ages, with different experiences, views and expectations, are a natural part of every organisation. Barriers arise above all when there is a lack of sufficient communication, mutual understanding and opportunities for cooperation between the individual groups. Trade union organisations must therefore create an environment in which the individual generations can openly share their experiences, discuss their needs and jointly seek solutions to problems.

Intergenerational dialogue can be understood as a long-term process of mutual communication and cooperation between members of different age groups. Its aim is not to eliminate the differences between generations, but to create conditions in which these differences are respected and used for the benefit of the whole organisation. Successful dialogue helps to break down stereotypes, increases trust between members and supports the emergence of a common identity based on shared goals and values.

One of the most common problems in trade union organisations tends to be the fact that the individual generations communicate with one another only to a limited extent. Older members often move within the circle of their long-standing colleagues, while younger employees form their own informal groups. This creates an environment in which the individual generations form ideas about one another based on assumptions rather than personal experience. Regular communication and joint activities are therefore a basic prerequisite for overcoming mutual prejudices.

Regular discussion meetings focused on topics important to all generations of employees can play a significant role. Such meetings should not be limited to formal membership meetings but should create space for an open exchange of views. An important principle is that participants should not act merely as representatives of a particular age group, but as members of the organisation seeking common solutions. Discussions may focus, for example, on working conditions, changes in the organisation of work, the future of occupations, the use of technology or employees' expectations of the trade union organisation.

Thematic round tables tend to be a very effective tool. Their advantage lies in a more informal atmosphere and the possibility of actively involving all participants. For example, a trade union organisation can organise a discussion on the topic "How should trade unions communicate with young employees", with both long-standing officials and new members represented. Such meetings often reveal that the differences between generations are not as fundamental as they originally seemed, and that most participants share similar goals.

Another option is to create joint working groups made up of members of different generations. Such groups can prepare draft collective agreements, organise educational events or address specific problems in the workplace. Working together on a specific task is often more effective than discussion alone, because it leads to practical cooperation and the creation of personal relationships between members of different age groups.

Intergenerational workshops focused on sharing experience also bring positive results. Older employees can present examples of successful collective bargaining, experience of resolving labour law disputes or the history of the trade union organisation. Younger members, in turn, can contribute knowledge of digital technologies, modern communication or new trends in the labour market. Such an exchange of experience strengthens mutual respect and shows that each generation possesses knowledge that can be of benefit to the others.

Active listening is also an important part of intergenerational dialogue. Many conflicts between generations arise not because their interests are genuinely incompatible, but because the individual groups do not feel that they are being heard. Trade union organisations should therefore create mechanisms enabling regular feedback to be obtained from members of all age categories. They can use personal interviews, anonymous questionnaires, discussion forums or electronic platforms. The key, however, is that the suggestions obtained do not go unanswered and are genuinely taken into account in decision-making.

Joint education can also play a significant role. Training courses, seminars and educational programmes focused on labour law, collective bargaining or the development of trade union organisations provide an opportunity for members of different generations to meet outside the usual working environment. Participants have the opportunity to establish personal contacts, share experience and build relationships based on cooperation rather than on generational stereotypes.

When supporting intergenerational dialogue, it is also important to pay attention to the way of communicating. Information should be disseminated through various communication channels so that it is accessible to all age groups. A combination of face-to-face meetings, e-mail communication, social networks, internal web portals and printed materials makes it possible to reach a broad spectrum of members. The organisation should avoid a situation in which it favours only one method of communication, and some members consequently feel excluded from the flow of information.

Informal activities are also of great importance. Social events, sports tournaments, volunteer projects, family days or cultural gatherings create opportunities for building relationships outside formal trade union activity. It is often during these activities that the barriers that may exist in ordinary working meetings are broken down. Personal experience with specific people is often the most effective remedy against stereotypes and prejudices.

The experience of many organisations shows that successful intergenerational dialogue does not arise spontaneously. It requires active support from the leadership of the trade union organisation, a long-term strategy and a willingness to invest time and resources in building relationships between the individual groups of members. If, however, dialogue is supported systematically, it brings significant benefits in the form of greater organisational cohesion, better communication, greater trust between members and more effective problem-solving.

Supporting intergenerational dialogue is therefore not merely a tool for resolving generational conflicts. It is a long-term investment in the future of the trade union organisation. Organisations that are able to create an environment of open communication, mutual respect and cooperation between generations gain a significant advantage in representing employees and at the same time strengthen their ability to respond to the challenges of the modern working environment.

Mentoring and the Sharing of Experience

One of the most effective tools for overcoming generational barriers in trade union organisations is the systematic transfer of experience between the individual generations of members. Over the course of its development, every organisation builds up an extensive body of knowledge, skills, procedures and experience, arising from everyday practice, conflict resolution, collective bargaining and communication with employers. This experience represents a significant source of value that cannot be fully captured in internal documents or methodological materials. It is passed on primarily through personal contact, cooperation and mutual learning between the members of the organisation.

In many trade union organisations, however, a situation arises in which the most valuable experience is concentrated in a relatively narrow group of long-standing officials or active members. If no system for passing it on to younger generations is created, there is a risk of losing knowledge that has been built up over many years. The retirement of experienced trade union leaders or the end of their active involvement can then mean a significant weakening of the organisation's professional potential.

Mentoring is a structured process in which a more experienced member of the organisation passes on their knowledge, experience and practical skills to a less experienced colleague. Unlike ordinary training, mentoring is not focused only on the transfer of information, but also on developing abilities, supporting independent decision-making and building long-term professional growth. In the environment of trade union organisations, mentoring can contribute significantly to preparing a new generation of active members and future officials.

The practical form of mentoring can take various shapes. A newly elected member of a trade union committee may, for example, work alongside an experienced official for a certain period, take part in meetings with the employer, help prepare documents or follow the course of collective bargaining. In this way, they gain not only theoretical knowledge but, above all, the practical experience essential for performing a trade union function.

The value of mentoring, however, does not lie solely in the one-way transfer of knowledge from older members to younger ones. Modern approaches increasingly also use so-called reverse mentoring, in which younger employees help more experienced colleagues master new technologies, digital tools or modern communication practices. This model promotes mutual respect and underlines the fact that each generation possesses specific knowledge that can be of benefit to the others.

Sharing experience through joint projects is also of great importance. When members of different generations work together on preparing a collective agreement, organising a campaign or solving a specific work-related problem, a natural transfer of knowledge and skills takes place. This form of learning is often more effective than formal educational programmes, because it takes place directly in the real conditions of trade union practice.

The systematic sharing of experience also contributes to the creation of organisational memory. Trade union organisations that are able to capture and pass on the experience of their members are better prepared to respond to new challenges and, at the same time, to avoid mistakes that have already been overcome in the past. This strengthens the continuity of the organisation and its ability to fulfil its mission over the long term.

Mentoring and the sharing of experience therefore cannot be understood merely as an educational activity. It is a strategic tool for the development of the trade union organisation, one that supports generational continuity, prepares new leaders, strengthens cooperation between members and at the same time protects the valuable knowledge created over many years of trade union activity.

Modernising the Communication and Work of Trade Unions

The ability of trade union organisations to respond to social and technological change is one of the key prerequisites for their long-term relevance. Modernising communication and ways of working does not mean abandoning the traditional values of the trade union movement but adapting them to the conditions of today's working environment. It is precisely insufficient modernisation that tends to be one of the reasons why younger employees perceive trade union organisations as distant, inflexible or insufficiently responsive to their needs.

The communication habits of employees have changed considerably in recent decades. Whereas in the past the main sources of information were face-to-face meetings, notice boards or printed materials, today's employees obtain most of their information through digital channels. Trade union organisations must therefore look for ways to make effective use of electronic communication without at the same time giving up on the importance of personal contact.

Modernising communication may include creating clear websites, electronic newsletters, mobile applications or internal communication platforms. What matters, however, is not the technology itself, but the way it is used. Modern communication tools should facilitate access to information, support member involvement and enable rapid feedback.

Greater transparency is also an important element of modernisation. Today's employees expect regular information about the organisation's activities, the results of negotiations, planned activities and finances. Trade union organisations that are able to provide information openly and comprehensibly strengthen the trust of their members and create the conditions for their more active involvement.

Modernisation, however, does not concern communication alone. Equally important is the modernisation of working procedures within the organisation. A number of administrative processes can be simplified through the digitalisation of documents, electronic voting, online registration for events or the electronic sharing of materials. Such changes can increase the efficiency of the work of trade union officials and at the same time make it easier for members to take part in trade union activity.

The modernisation of education is also an important area. In addition to traditional seminars, webinars, online courses, video materials or electronic study materials can be used. These forms of education make it possible to reach a wider circle of members and to take account of their time constraints. At the same time, they support continuous education and the development of professional knowledge.

The modernisation of trade union work should also reflect changes in the labour market. The number of employees working remotely, in project teams or under non-standard working arrangements is growing. Trade union organisations must therefore look for new ways of communicating with and representing these groups of employees. The traditional model based exclusively on physical presence in the workplace may no longer be sufficient in some sectors.

Successful modernisation does not mean replacing traditional procedures with new ones at any cost. Its aim is to create a combination of proven methods and modern tools that makes it possible to reach employees of all generations effectively. Organisations that are able to combine tradition with innovation tend to be better prepared to respond to future developments in the labour market while retaining the trust of their membership base.

Involving Young People in Decision-Making Processes

The long-term viability of trade union organisations is closely linked to the ability to prepare a new generation of active members and future leaders. One of the most important prerequisites for this process is the genuine involvement of young employees in decision-making processes. It is not enough merely to recruit young members or to inform them about the organisation's activities. For the long-term development of trade unions, it is essential that they have the opportunity to help shape its direction and participate in making important decisions.

In many organisations, a situation exists in which younger members are perceived primarily as the future of the union, not as its present. Although they may take part in individual activities, their influence on decision-making tends to be limited. Such an approach can lead to the feeling that their views have no real significance, which in turn reduces their motivation to become actively involved.

Involving young people in decision-making processes should begin in the early stages of their membership. New members should have the opportunity to take part in working groups, project teams or the preparation of specific activities. In this way, they gain experience of how the organisation works and at the same time develop a relationship with its activities. Active participation in solving real problems tends to be much more effective than passively observing the work of more experienced officials.

Youth committees, advisory groups or thematic platforms focused on issues important to younger employees can also be an important tool. These structures make it possible to formulate proposals that then enter the organisation's decision-making processes. It is important, however, that their role is not merely symbolic. If young members are to gain trust in the trade union organisation, they must see that their suggestions genuinely influence the resulting decisions.

Generational diversity in the leadership of the organisation is also an important aspect. Trade union committees and other decision-making bodies should create space for the representation of different age groups. Such a composition brings a broader spectrum of experience and perspectives on the problems being addressed. At the same time, it enables younger members to gain experience directly in the process of managing the organisation.

Involving young people in decision-making is not only a question of generational balance. It also brings practical advantages. Younger employees often have experience with new technologies, modern forms of communication and current trends in the labour market. Their perspective can help identify problems that would otherwise be overlooked and contribute to finding innovative solutions.

The question of succession also plays a significant role. Every organisation needs to prepare future officials who will be able to take over responsibility for its continued functioning. If younger members do not get enough opportunities for development and involvement in the leadership of the organisation, a shortage of people prepared to hold key positions may arise in the future. The systematic involvement of young employees therefore represents an investment in the long-term stability of the trade union organisation.

Successful trade union organisations do not see young members merely as recipients of services or future continuers of tradition. They regard them as full partners who have the right to share in decisions about the shape of the organisation today. It is precisely the ability to create space for the active participation of all generations that is one of the most important prerequisites for a modern and sustainable trade union movement.

6. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Successful Initiatives from Trade Union Organisations

When looking for ways to overcome generational barriers in trade union organisations, it is advisable to draw not only on theoretical recommendations but also on the practical experience of organisations that have successfully dealt with similar problems. In various countries in Europe and beyond, a number of initiatives have emerged aimed at supporting intergenerational cooperation, involving young employees in trade union activity, developing future trade union leaders and modernising the functioning of trade union organisations. Although the individual projects arose under different conditions, they share a common goal – to link the experience of older generations with the needs and expectations of younger employees.

One of the most important examples at European level is the work of the Youth Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC Youth Committee). This body brings together young trade union representatives from all over Europe and creates space for their education, international cooperation and involvement in the decision-making processes of the European trade union movement. The Committee organises training courses, seminars, conferences, study programmes and campaigns aimed at young workers. At the same time, it serves as a platform through which young trade unionists can formulate their priorities and influence the direction of European trade union policies.

Another important example is the Youth4Future project implemented by the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITC-ILO). The programme was created with the aim of strengthening the position of young employees in trade union organisations and incorporating their perspective into social dialogue. The project includes specialised training for future trade union leaders, the creation of digital educational tools, support for national strategies aimed at young employees and the creation of mechanisms for their participation in decision-making. At the same time, the project emphasises the importance of topics relevant to young generations, such as precarious forms of employment, the digital transformation of the labour market or the reconciliation of work and private life.

Interesting experience has also been gained by a number of European trade union federations involved in the programme "Engaging Young People in Trade Unions", created under the auspices of the ETUC. Based on the experience of trade union organisations from many European countries, practices were identified that significantly increase the involvement of young members. Among the most successful are the creation of youth councils, guaranteed representation of young members in the leadership of organisations, systematic education of young officials and the use of modern digital communication tools. Experience from various countries has shown that recruiting young members alone is not enough. What is decisive is their long-term involvement in decision-making and the creation of opportunities for professional and trade union growth.

The experience of trade union organisations in the Nordic countries is very inspiring. In Sweden, Denmark and Finland, for example, a model of gradually involving young employees in trade union structures through local youth sections has been used for many years. These sections are not separate organisations, but function as incubators of future trade union representatives. Young members gain experience here in organising events, communicating with members, leading projects and representing employees. After gaining experience, they often move into higher trade union

structures. This model considerably facilitates the generational renewal of the leadership of trade union organisations.

Mentoring programmes are another interesting area. The Canadian trade union Unifor has developed a special methodology for introducing mentoring in local trade union organisations. The programme is based on the targeted pairing of experienced trade union officials with new members. The aim is not only to pass on professional knowledge, but also to develop self-confidence, communication skills and the ability to take responsibility for trade union work. Experience has shown that organisations using mentoring achieve higher levels of involvement of new members and cope better with generational change in their leadership.

Initiatives focused on reverse mentoring have also brought remarkable results. Some European trade union organisations have begun to use a model in which younger members train more experienced officials in digital technologies, social networks and modern communication. In return, older members pass on their experience of collective bargaining, organising campaigns and resolving labour law disputes. This approach strengthens mutual respect between generations, because each side acts simultaneously as teacher and pupil. Similar models are cited in European recommendations as one of the most effective tools for breaking down generational stereotypes.

Projects focused on intergenerational dialogue also deserve considerable attention. In several European countries, programmes have been implemented based on regular meetings of younger and older trade union members, during which participants jointly discussed the future of work, technological change, working conditions or the priorities of the trade union movement. The results showed that personal contact and long-term cooperation significantly reduce mutual prejudices and strengthen the willingness to seek common solutions. European programmes confirm that regular contact between generations is among the most effective tools for overcoming stereotypes and building trust.

At European level, projects focused on young workers in the transition from education to employment can also be considered a successful initiative. The ETUC, together with its member organisations, has implemented programmes aimed at supporting quality employment for young people and involving them in trade union structures in the early stages of their professional careers. These programmes have shown that contact with trade unions during the first years of employment significantly increases the likelihood of long-term membership and active participation in trade union activity.

Although the individual examples differ in their focus, several common elements can be found among them. Successful organisations work systematically with young members, create opportunities for their education, enable them to participate in decision-making, support mentoring and at the same time strive to preserve the experience of older generations. A willingness to modernise communication practices and to create an environment in which people of different ages can work together on common goals also plays an important role.

The experience of trade union organisations from various parts of the world confirms that generational barriers are not an inevitable consequence of age diversity. Organisations that are able to consciously support cooperation between generations gain a more stable membership base, a higher level of member involvement and better prospects for long-term development. It is precisely this experience that can be a valuable source of inspiration for trade union organisations operating in the Czech Republic.

Projects Supporting Cooperation between Generations

Projects supporting cooperation between generations in trade union organisations can be divided into several groups. The first consists of projects aimed at reaching young people before they enter the labour market or in its early stages. The second comprises programmes enabling young members to gain the trade union experience, education and confidence needed for active participation in the organisation. The third group consists of mentoring and educational programmes based on the transfer of experience between generations. The fourth group comprises projects adjusting the internal structures of trade unions so that younger members are not merely recipients of information, but genuine co-creators of trade union policy.

One of the most concrete examples is the Norwegian "Summer Patrol" (Sommerpatrulje) associated with the Norwegian trade union confederation LO. This is not a one-off campaign, but a long-standing, repeated model of fieldwork. Every summer, trade unionists visit young workers directly at their summer-job workplaces in restaurants, shops, services or transport operations. The aim is to reach young people directly in the workplace and inform them about working conditions, wages, working hours, occupational safety, contracts and basic labour rights. The practical significance of the project lies in the fact that young people encounter trade unions as a source of concrete help at the moment when they are starting to work and often do not yet know their rights.

At the same time, the project enables the transfer of experience between older and younger trade unionists. Older members pass on practical knowledge of labour law and experience from the working environment, while younger ones gain experience in communication, fieldwork and explaining the importance of trade unions to their peers. The project thus serves not only to recruit young members, but also to train a new generation of trade union activists. For Czech trade unions, what is particularly inspiring is the possibility of bringing part of trade union work directly to young workers, students and temporary workers.

The Norwegian example is followed up by a Czech reflection carried out among young trade unionists associated with OSSOO, ČMKOS, OS KOVO and other federations. An online meeting following a study trip to Norway showed that there is interest in systematic work with young members in the Czech environment as well. Particularly inspiring are inter-federation cooperation, the creation of networks of young members, the sharing of experience and the targeted identification of their needs. In practical terms, this may take the form of joint training courses, workshops, off-site meetings or educational events linking young members with experienced trade union officials.

A very concrete Czech example is also the recruitment and organising project in the Trade Union of Health Service and Social Care of the Czech Republic, which ran from March 2023 to February 2026 and whose evaluation was linked to a meeting of young trade unionists from six countries in Prague. The project shows that work with young members cannot be a one-off campaign but must have a long-term character. Recruitment and organising require the preparation of activists, the sharing of experience, international inspiration and continuous evaluation of results. It can serve as a model for other federations when planning multi-year projects aimed at developing the membership base and preparing new activists.

At European level, a key project is Youth4Future, implemented by the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization and the European Trade Union Confederation. The project is aimed at strengthening social dialogue through young trade union leaders and at incorporating the perspective of young people into decision-making processes. It includes digital tools, educational activities, support for national strategies and pilot initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of young workers. The project is significant in that it links the education of young trade unionists with

real social dialogue. Young people are not merely trained, but prepared for active participation in negotiations, formulating demands and bringing the topics of the young generation into the trade union agenda.

Examples for the Czech Republic

Czech local trade union organisations can adopt several concrete mechanisms from Youth4Future. Every larger trade union organisation could create its own "young trade union team" trained in labour law, communication, member organising and collective bargaining. This team should be linked to the leadership of the organisation and participate in preparing proposals, communicating with young employees, organising meetings and identifying topics important to the young generation. In this way, young members would learn trade union work in practice and at the same time bring the leadership information that older officials often do not have at their disposal.

Another important European example is the ETUC Youth Committee. This committee creates space for young trade union representatives from all over Europe and organises training courses, seminars, conferences, study meetings and campaigns. Its importance lies above all in linking young members with the decision-making structures of the European trade union movement. The ETUC Youth Committee model shows that a youth structure makes sense if it has the opportunity to formulate positions, prepare proposals and participate in decision-making. For local trade union organisations, it follows that youth structures must have clear tasks, access to information and a link to the leadership of the organisation.

Another interesting project is the initiative "Unions Say Yes to Revitalization", aimed at strengthening trade union power through intergenerational partnership. Its essence lies in linking the experience of older members with the activity and perspective of younger ones. Such a model can be put into practice, for example, in the form of a year-long programme in which pairs or small teams composed of an experienced and a younger member work on specific tasks, such as preparing membership campaigns, mapping problems in the workplace or succession planning.

Very practical and readily transferable is the mentoring model described in the handbook "Young Workers: A Handbook for Mentoring Future Union Leaders", disseminated by the United Steelworkers in Canada. The handbook is based on the premise that future trade union officials must be sought out, supported, educated and gradually involved in real work. Mentoring here is a structured programme aimed at developing knowledge, communication and organisational skills, and preparing for future leadership roles. Local organisations can use this model, for example, in the form of a year-long mentoring programme in which a young activist is given an experienced mentor and they take part in trade union work together.

An even more concrete form of mentoring is offered by UNI Global Union through its Equal Opportunities Mentoring Programme. This programme supports young women in trade unions and their preparation for leadership positions. It works on the principle of mentor–mentee pairs who together develop the skills needed for trade union leadership. In some countries, it has led to greater participation of women in collective bargaining, campaigns for the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 and the creation of committees against sexual harassment in the workplace. The example shows that mentoring can have a direct impact on trade union policy as well as working conditions.

The UNI mentoring programme is also significant in its scale. The programme has spread to dozens of countries and involved hundreds to thousands of women. Its transferability to the Czech environment

lies in the possibility of pairing younger members with experienced officials, setting development goals and regularly evaluating progress. The programme can have concrete outputs in the areas of collective bargaining, communication, campaign preparation or work with new employees.

Another example is the UNI Europa Youth Summer School. This is not merely an educational seminar, but an intensive school of trade union organising, campaigning, communication and international solidarity. Young activists learn from one another, analyse successful campaigns and practise specific skills. For Czech trade unions, what is particularly inspiring is the combination of practical education, peer-to-peer learning and the return of participants to their own organisations with specific tasks.

IndustriALL Global Union also offers significant experience. Its work with young members rests on three pillars: strengthening the capabilities of young members, their representation and their genuine participation. IndustriALL organises training courses, conferences and international exchanges of young leaders. Importantly, young members are not seen merely as a target group for recruitment, but as future trade union leaders. At the same time, IndustriALL points to the need to adapt communication to specific groups of young workers.

Particularly inspiring is the example of the Swedish trade union Unionen, which sends specialised teams to universities to reach out to students. This model shows that work with the young generation does not have to begin only after they start employment. Trade unions can enter schools, universities and vocational schools, explain labour rights and draw attention to the risks of precarious forms of employment. If young people encounter trade unions while still students, they are more likely not to perceive them later as an alien institution.

IndustriALL has also implemented international exchange programmes for young trade union leaders in cooperation with IG Metall. These programmes have enabled young trade unionists to compare different models of employee representation and to gain experience from abroad. For the Czech environment, they are valuable above all because they strengthen the motivation of young people to remain in the trade union movement and to bring new ideas into their own organisation.

Another concrete model is the youth structures in the European Transport Workers' Federation, which developed gradually, partly thanks to the Transunion project. This example shows the transition from an informal network of young members to a formalised youth structure with a mandate, a contact person in the leadership and the possibility of submitting proposals. It is a model that Czech federations can also make good use of.

At the global level, the ITUC's work with young workers is also important. The ITUC points out that young people often do not reject trade union values but find it difficult to find their place in trade union structures. Successful projects therefore combine recruitment, education, representation of young members and their active involvement in trade union work. If a young person is given a specific task, the support of more experienced members and the opportunity to see the results of their work, their bond with the organisation is significantly strengthened.

An interesting example outside Europe is the work of UNI Africa Youth, where young trade unionists draw attention to the need for genuine representation of the young generation in trade union structures. In some African organisations, youth structures are emerging that participate in shaping trade union policy and influence the direction of the organisation. For Czech trade unions, what is particularly inspiring is the creation of mechanisms that give young people both a voice and responsibility.

Women

Projects focused on young women in trade unions represent a specific area. UNI programmes show that generational barriers often intersect with gender barriers. A young female trade union member may face not only distrust because of her age, but also stereotypes associated with gender, family care or the lower representation of women in leadership. Projects supporting young women therefore use mentoring, leadership training, support for participation in negotiations and the creation of space for sharing experience. Local organisations can use this model, for example, by creating pairs of an experienced female official and a younger female member, or by deliberately involving young women in negotiating teams.

Projects linking trade unions with students, apprentices and workers at the start of their careers are also very important. They may take the form of school talks, legal workshops, information campaigns, internships or cooperation with career centres. Their aim is not the immediate entry of all students into trade unions but building awareness of labour rights and of trade unions as a tool for protecting employees. For local organisations, it would be possible to create a project called "Unions in Schools", in which experienced trade unionists, together with young members, would teach students to understand employment contracts, labour rights, occupational safety and basic labour law issues.

Another transferable project is "shadowing a trade union function". A young member would accompany an experienced trade union official in their everyday work for a certain period, taking part in negotiations, the preparation of meetings or collective bargaining. The aim is not to hand over responsibility immediately, but to enable the young member to understand what trade union work really involves. This model is particularly suitable where young members are interested but do not feel confident enough to stand for office.

A project called "a young member on the negotiating team" can also be very practical. The young member is invited to both the preparation and the negotiations themselves and has the opportunity to prepare materials on topics concerning young employees. In this way, they learn not only the theory of collective bargaining, but also its psychology, tactics and responsibility. At the same time, topics that might otherwise be overlooked enter the negotiations, such as the induction process for new employees, support for young parents, flexible working arrangements or education.

Another concrete project could be an "intergenerational audit of the trade union organisation". Once a year, the local organisation would map the age structure of its members, the participation of younger members, the representation of age groups on the committee, communication channels and the degree of involvement of new employees. The audit should not be an inspection, but a learning tool. The result could be a plan for the following year focused on recruiting new members, developing mentoring or expanding communication channels.

A "trade union induction package for new employees" is also a usable tool. Every new worker would receive, on joining, a comprehensible set of materials explaining how the union works, the collective agreement, the benefits of membership and contacts for people they can turn to. The package should be created in cooperation between older and younger members. The older ones contribute experience and content, the younger ones help with language, graphics and the digital format.

A "digital pair" project can also be very useful. An experienced official and a younger member form a working pair in which the older member passes on experience from trade union work and the younger one helps with digital communication. The purpose is mutual learning and linking experience with new skills.

Another project could be a "collective agreement laboratory". A group composed of both older and younger members would analyse the existing collective agreement from the perspective of various life situations, for example a young employee without experience, the parent of a small child, an employee approaching retirement or a worker caring for a close relative. The result would be specific proposals for provisions or topics for negotiation.

A project called "stories of trade union help" is also suitable for supporting cooperation between generations. The organisation can create a series of anonymised stories about how the union helped employees in various situations. Younger members can turn these stories into a modern format, for example as graphics, videos, podcasts or social media posts. This links the experience of the older members with the communication skills of the younger ones.

A "trade union incubator of young leaders" can also be a useful model, combining training, mentoring, practical tasks and gradual involvement in decision-making. Participants complete modules focused on labour law, collective bargaining, communication, conflict resolution and campaign organising, while at the same time carrying out practical tasks in their own organisation.

Another option is an "intergenerational project day". Once a year, the organisation would hold a working meeting at which mixed teams would address specific issues related to recruiting members, communication or the functioning of the organisation. The output would be a list of tasks, deadlines and responsible persons.

A "succession programme" can also be a significant project. Every local organisation should know who can take over key functions in the future. The succession programme should identify members of the younger or middle generation, offer them training, involve them in the work of the committee and gradually hand over responsibility to them. It is one of the most important tools for preserving the continuity of trade union work.

It follows from the examples given that projects supporting cooperation between generations have the greatest impact when they are not merely symbolic. They must have specific participants, a clear timeframe, practical outputs and a link to real trade union work. The projects that work best are those linking field contact with young workers, education and mentoring, the participation of young people in decision-making and the use of the experience of older members. If these elements can be combined, an effective tool for the generational renewal of the trade union organisation is created.

Specific Tools and Measures

Overcoming generational barriers in trade union organisations cannot be based solely on one-off activities or general calls for cooperation. Positive results can be achieved in the long term only if specific tools and measures supporting cooperation between generations are systematically incorporated into the everyday functioning of the organisation. Successful trade union organisations in various countries show that generational differences can be considerably mitigated through well-designed processes, clearly defined rules and regular activities that bring together members of different ages.

a) Introducing a Generational Succession Programme

One of the most important measures is the creation of a system of planned generational succession. Many trade union organisations address the question of replacing officials only when a long-serving chair, vice-chair or committee member announces their departure. Such an approach leads to organisational problems and a loss of experience.

Every local organisation should regularly identify members with the potential to take over responsibility for leading the organisation in the future. These people should be gradually involved in the work of the committee, collective bargaining, communication with the employer and the organisation of member activities.

A practical tool may be the creation of an internal "succession plan", which will contain:

- a list of key positions,
- the expected timeframe of generational change,
- possible successors,
- a plan for their training and involvement in activities.

This document does not have to be formal or public, but it should exist as a working tool for the leadership of the organisation.

b) Mandatory Involvement of Young Members in Working Groups

A very effective measure is a rule under which at least one younger member of the organisation is represented in every major working group.

These may include, for example, groups preparing:

- the collective agreement,
- positions on the reorganisation of the workplace,
- occupational safety,
- educational events,
- membership campaigns,
- internal communication.

In this way, younger members gain experience and, at the same time, the leadership of the organisation comes into direct contact with their views.

c) Introducing a Mentoring Programme

Every newly elected committee member or active young trade unionist should be assigned an experienced mentor.

Mentoring should have a clear structure:

- at least one meeting per month,
- the mentee's participation in negotiations,
- joint evaluation of problems,
- a gradual takeover of responsibility.

It is recommended that mentoring last at least one year.

The experience of trade union organisations in Canada, Scandinavia and western Europe shows that it is precisely mentoring that significantly increases the likelihood of young members remaining active in the union over the long term.

d) Reverse Mentoring

In addition to classic mentoring, reverse mentoring can also be used.

In this model:

- the older official passes on experience from trade union work,
- the younger member passes on knowledge of technologies, social networks and modern communication.

The result tends to be a marked strengthening of mutual respect.

Instead of the stereotype that "the young can't do anything" or "the old don't understand anything", a partnership based on mutual usefulness emerges.

e) A Generational Audit of the Organisation

Once a year, the organisation should carry out a simple generational audit.

The audit can answer questions such as:

- What is the average age of the members?
- How many members are under 35?
- How many young people are standing for office?
- What is the attendance of younger members at meetings?
- What topics interest the individual age groups?
- What communication channels do they use?

The results of the audit can form the basis for planning further activities.

f) A Programme for New Employees

Many employees form their relationship with the union during their first months in a new job.

It is therefore advisable to create a system for working with newly arriving workers.

This may include:

- a welcome package,
- a brief guide to employee rights,
- information about the collective agreement,
- contact details for a union representative,
- an invitation to a membership meeting.

Ideally, the new employee is approached jointly by an experienced and a younger member of the organisation.

g) Regular Intergenerational Round Tables

At least once or twice a year, a moderated discussion between members of different generations should take place.

Topics may include:

- the future of work,
- digitalisation,
- flexible working arrangements,
- shift work,
- benefits,
- employee education.

An important rule is to focus the discussion on finding solutions, not on defending generational positions.

h) Involving Young People in Collective Bargaining

Every negotiating team should include at least one younger member.

Their task does not have to be to lead the negotiations immediately.

They can:

- prepare supporting materials,
- analyse the needs of younger employees,
- follow the course of the negotiations,
- propose topics concerning the young generation.

This creates a natural school for future negotiators.

i) A Trade Union Academy for the Young

Creating a systematic educational programme is a very effective measure.

The content may include:

- the basics of labour law,
- collective bargaining,
- communication,
- conflict resolution,
- media appearances,
- member organising,
- chairing meetings.

The programme should conclude with a practical project, not merely with attendance at training.

j) Intergenerational Project Teams

Each year, the organisation can select several specific tasks to be addressed by mixed teams.

For example:

- increasing the membership base,
- improving communication,
- revising the collective agreement,
- preparing the annual conference.

Working together on a real task tends to be much more effective than theoretical debates about generational cooperation.

k) Modernising Communication Channels

Successful organisations use several communication channels at the same time.

A typical combination includes:

- face-to-face meetings,
- e-mail newsletters,
- websites,
- internal applications,
- social networks,
- short videos,
- online questionnaires.

The aim is not to replace traditional communication, but to complement it.

l) A Database of Experience and Cases

A great deal of experience departs together with long-serving officials.

It is therefore advisable to create an internal database of:

- major collective bargaining rounds,
- successful disputes,
- good practice,
- model documents,
- recommended procedures.

The younger generation thus gains access to the organisational memory of the union.

m) A "Function Shadowing" Programme

A younger member accompanies an experienced official for a certain period.

They take part in:

- negotiations,
- meetings,
- the preparation of documents,
- communication with the employer.

This tool significantly reduces young people's fears of taking on positions.

n) Regular Surveys among Younger Members

Many trade union organisations assume what young people need.

It is more successful to ask regularly.

It is recommended that at least once every two years an anonymous survey be carried out focusing on:

- working conditions,
- education,
- benefits,
- communication,
- expectations of the union.

The results should be discussed by the leadership of the organisation and reflected in activity planning.

o) Anchoring Intergenerational Cooperation in the Organisation's Strategy

The most successful organisations do not regard generational cooperation as a one-off project.

They incorporate it directly into:

- strategic plans,
- educational programmes,
- personnel policy,
- the rules governing the committee's functioning,
- recruitment activities.

Only then does intergenerational cooperation become a normal part of the organisation's life rather than merely a short-term initiative.

The experience of trade union organisations from Europe, North America and other parts of the world shows that the best results are achieved by organisations that do not rely on a single measure but combine several tools at the same time. Successfully overcoming generational barriers is a long-term process requiring systematic work, active support from the leadership and a willingness to involve members of all age groups. Organisations that are able to link the experience of older generations with the energy and perspective of younger members gain a significant competitive

advantage in defending employees' rights and, at the same time, create the preconditions for their long-term stability and development.

7. PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Measures to Improve Cooperation between Generations

An analysis of the current state of trade union organisations, the generational barriers identified and the experience of successful projects implemented in the Czech Republic and abroad shows that the question of intergenerational cooperation cannot be reduced to individual isolated activities. A real improvement in relations between generations requires a long-term change in the approach to the functioning of trade union organisations, their organisational culture and the way they work with the membership base. Successful organisations do not perceive generational diversity as a problem to be eliminated, but as potential that can be used for the benefit of the whole organisation.

The first recommendation is a change in the view of the age structure of the membership base. In many organisations, the question of young members tends to be perceived primarily as a personnel problem linked to the need to ensure future replacements for departing officials. Such a conception is, however, too narrow. Young employees are not only the future of trade unions, but also their present. Trade union organisations should therefore create conditions in which all generations are perceived as equal partners sharing in the common mission of the organisation. The basic aim should not be merely to recruit young members, but to build an environment in which all age groups have the opportunity to contribute actively to the development of the organisation.

The second recommendation is the systematic building of a culture of mutual respect. Generational conflicts often arise not because of a genuine clash of interests, but as a result of stereotypes and mutual prejudices. Older members may perceive the younger generation as insufficiently experienced or lacking in loyalty, while younger members may regard their older colleagues as too conservative or closed to change. The leadership of trade union organisations should actively promote an environment in which differing views are considered a natural part of the organisation's life rather than a source of threat. The ability to conduct open dialogue without generational prejudices is one of the most important prerequisites for the long-term stability of the organisation.

The third recommendation is to strengthen the principle of shared responsibility. Successful organisations do not strive for one generation to replace another, but for the individual generations to work together on common goals. Older members possess experience; knowledge of the organisation's history and practical skills gained over many years of trade union work. Younger generations bring new perspectives, the ability to respond to technological change and a better grasp of the current needs of incoming employees. An effective organisation is able to combine both types of experience and to create an environment in which the individual generations complement one another.

The fourth recommendation is to pay greater attention to changes in the labour market. Today's working environment differs considerably from the conditions in which trade unions operated a few decades ago. Flexible forms of employment are developing, work processes are being digitalised, remote working is growing and employees' career paths are changing. Trade union organisations must be able to reflect these changes while preserving their traditional mission of protecting employees. If trade unions combine historical experience with an understanding of new trends, they will be better able to reach employees of all generations.

The fifth recommendation is long-term work on organisational culture. Many generational barriers are caused not by a lack of formal rules, but by unwritten norms and customs that have gradually

developed in the organisation. In some cases, younger members may get the feeling that their views are not sufficiently respected, without there being any conscious effort to that effect on the part of the leadership. Organisations should therefore regularly evaluate their own functioning and consider whether they genuinely create space for the involvement of all members, regardless of age, length of membership or job position.

The sixth recommendation is a consistent focus on the transfer of experience. Every trade union organisation possesses a significant body of knowledge and experience built up over many years. This experience is an important source of stability and expertise. At the same time, however, it is essential to ensure that it is not concentrated in only a few individuals. Organisations should create conditions for its systematic sharing and transfer between generations. Preserving organisational memory is one of the key prerequisites for the long-term continuity of trade union work.

The seventh recommendation is to strengthen the orientation towards the future. Trade union organisations have historically been most successful when they were able to respond to changes in society and working life. The current generation of employees will face new challenges related to technological development, automation, artificial intelligence, demographic change and the transformation of employment relationships. Trade unions should therefore create space for strategic thinking about the future of work and actively involve different generations in discussions about what changes can be expected and how to respond to them.

The eighth recommendation is to strengthen the role of education as a tool linking generations. Education should not be understood merely as a way of acquiring professional knowledge, but also as a means of building relationships between members. Joint educational activities enable people of different ages to meet, support the exchange of experience and create space for the emergence of informal ties, which are often just as important for the functioning of the organisation as formal structures.

The ninth recommendation is regular evaluation of the situation within the organisation. The generational composition of the membership base, the needs of employees and the conditions on the labour market are constantly changing. Trade union organisations should therefore monitor the development of their membership base, analyse the needs of different groups of employees and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the measures adopted. Only organisations capable of learning from their own experience can respond to changing conditions over the long term.

The tenth and most important recommendation is to view intergenerational cooperation as part of the long-term development strategy of the trade union organisation. Generational barriers cannot be eliminated by a one-off project or a single organisational measure. Overcoming them is a long-term process requiring patience, systematic work and the support of the organisation's leadership. Trade union organisations that are able to link the experience of older members with the energy and potential of younger generations gain not only a more stable membership base, but also a greater ability to defend employees' interests in the conditions of a rapidly changing working environment.

Experience from the Czech Republic and abroad clearly confirms that generational diversity does not have to be a source of conflict and organisational weakening. On the contrary, it can represent a significant competitive advantage. The key task of trade union organisations is therefore not to suppress generational differences, but to create conditions in which they become a source of mutual enrichment, stability and long-term development of the trade union movement.

The Role of the Leadership of Trade Union Organisations

Success in overcoming generational barriers in trade union organisations depends to a considerable extent on the approach of their leadership. Although all members of the organisation contribute to shaping relations between generations, it is the leadership that possesses the means, responsibility and authority needed to determine the direction of its long-term development. The experience of trade union organisations from the Czech Republic and abroad shows that generational cooperation does not arise of its own accord. Where the leadership pays no attention to this issue, generational differences deepen, the interest of younger employees in trade union activity weakens, and the transfer of experience and responsibility becomes complicated.

The role of the leadership of a trade union organisation does not consist only in the administrative management of the organisation, leading collective bargaining or representing employees vis-à-vis the employer. Its responsibility also includes creating conditions for the long-term stability of the organisation, its staff development and the preparation of future trade union representatives. The leadership must deal simultaneously with everyday operational tasks and with questions concerning the organisation's future. Intergenerational cooperation is therefore one of the most important strategic topics influencing the long-term functioning of the organisation.

The first and most important task of the leadership is to formulate a clear vision of intergenerational cooperation. In many organisations, work with the younger generation tends to be limited to partial activities that are not part of a long-term strategy. The result is fragmented initiatives with limited impact. The leadership should therefore define why intergenerational cooperation is important, what goals it wants to achieve in this area and how their fulfilment will be evaluated. If the leadership regards generational cooperation as part of the organisation's strategic development, it sends a clear signal to the entire membership base.

No less important a role of the leadership is the creation of an organisational culture based on respect and openness. Formal rules alone do not guarantee good cooperation between generations. What is decisive is the everyday way of communicating, running meetings, taking decisions and working with differing views. The members of the organisation are sensitive to whether the leadership genuinely listens to different perspectives or whether it favours only a narrow circle of long-standing collaborators. If the leadership supports open discussion and respects the views of members regardless of their age, it creates an environment in which generational cooperation can develop naturally.

An important responsibility of the leadership is also the identification of future trade union leaders. Many organisations begin to look for successors only when one of the officials announces their departure. Such an approach tends to be late and leads to a loss of time. A capable leadership, by contrast, continuously monitors the membership base, seeks out active and motivated members and creates conditions for their professional and personal growth. This process must be long-term and systematic, because preparing a future trade union leader often takes many years.

A key task of the leadership is also the transfer of experience. Trade union work involves a wealth of knowledge and skills that cannot be acquired merely by studying legal regulations or attending training. Experience with collective bargaining, conflict resolution, communication with the employer or leading the membership base arises primarily through practice. The leadership of the organisation must therefore create opportunities for its systematic transfer to younger generations. If this does not happen, the organisation risks losing part of its professional potential.

Another important area is working with members' motivation. The leadership of a trade union organisation should not assume that members will be active automatically. Activity is influenced by a number of factors, such as the opportunity to influence events, a sense of usefulness or trust in the organisation's leadership. Younger employees in particular often expect the opportunity for active involvement and concrete feedback. The leadership should therefore create conditions in which members see the point of their participation and have the opportunity to take part in activities corresponding to their abilities and interests.

An important part of the leadership's role is the ability to work with conflicts. Generational differences naturally lead to differing views on the functioning of the organisation, the priorities of trade union work or ways of communicating. These differences do not in themselves constitute a problem, provided they are addressed openly and constructively. The leadership must create an environment in which differing views can be discussed without fear of personal attacks or the marginalisation of any group of members. The ability to turn conflict into an opportunity to find a better solution is among the important managerial competences of trade union representatives.

The modern leadership of a trade union organisation must at the same time respond to changes in the labour market. Younger generations of employees often work under different conditions from their older colleagues and encounter flexible forms of employment, digitalisation, hybrid work or more frequent changes of employer. If the leadership fails to perceive these changes, it may gradually lose contact with a significant proportion of employees. The ability to understand the changing needs of different generations is therefore one of the prerequisites for the long-term relevance of a trade union organisation.

An important responsibility of the leadership is also representing the organisation externally. The public image of trade unions significantly influences employees' interest in membership. If trade unions appear to be a closed structure made up predominantly of the older generation, younger employees may feel that they are not meant for them. The leadership should therefore ensure that the age diversity of the membership base is naturally reflected in the organisation's communication.

The leadership's ability to support innovation also plays a significant role. The history of the trade union movement shows that organisations were most successful when they were able to respond to the changing conditions of society. Today's leadership must be able to distinguish between values that need to be preserved and practices that should be modernised. Trade unions do not have to abandon their traditional mission in order to be attractive to younger generations, but they must look for ways to fulfil that mission in the conditions of today's world of work.

A specific responsibility of the leadership is creating space for participation. Many members leave organisations not because they disagree with their goals, but because they feel that their opinion does not matter. The leadership should therefore strive for the broadest possible involvement of members in preparing decisions, planning activities and formulating the organisation's priorities. This principle is particularly important for younger members.

Another area in which the leadership plays a fundamental role is working with organisational memory. Trade union organisations possess extensive experience gained over many years of activity. This experience represents a significant competitive advantage if it is preserved and passed on. The leadership must support the systematic preservation of experience, the documentation of important procedures and the creation of conditions for sharing them between generations.

Last but not least, the leadership of a trade union organisation must fulfil the role of guarantor of continuity. The current officials are only temporary custodians of the values, experience and

traditions created by their predecessors. At the same time, they bear responsibility for handing the organisation over to the next generations in good condition and prepared for future challenges. The ability to combine respect for the past with responsibility for the future is one of the most important characteristics of good trade union leadership.

It can therefore be stated that the role of the leadership of trade union organisations in overcoming generational barriers is absolutely fundamental. No mentoring programme, educational project or communication initiative can function in the long term without the active support of the leadership. It is the leadership that sets the organisation's priorities, shapes its culture, decides on the use of resources and, by its example, influences the behaviour of the other members. The future of trade union organisations therefore depends not only on their ability to solve the current problems of employees, but also on the ability of their leadership to create an environment in which the individual generations will cooperate, respect one another and jointly develop the values of the trade union movement.

The Role of the Leadership of Trade Union Organisations – Strategic Responsibility for the Future of the Organisation

When assessing the role of the leadership of trade union organisations, attention is often focused on visible activities such as collective bargaining, communication with the employer, representing employees in resolving labour law problems or organising the membership base. Although these activities are undoubtedly important, they represent only one part of the responsibility of trade union representatives. No less significant is their role in creating long-term conditions for the stability, cohesion and future development of the organisation. It is in this area that it is decided whether the trade union organisation will be able to function successfully not only today, but also in the decades to come.

One of the most important tasks of the leadership is creating and maintaining a long-term vision. Every successful organisation needs an answer to the basic question of why it exists and where it is heading. In day-to-day operations, it is easy to focus only on current problems, resolving individual disputes or organisational matters. The leadership, however, must at the same time keep the broader perspective in view and recall the purpose of trade union activity. This role is particularly important at a time when the labour market is changing rapidly, and some employees question the importance of traditional institutions. If the leadership is unable to explain the organisation's mission and its significance for employees in a comprehensible way, trust and interest in active participation weaken.

The vision must not be a mere formal declaration set out in a strategic document. It must be present in everyday decisions, in communication with the membership base and in the way the organisation responds to new challenges. Employees need to see that the leadership is not only solving current problems but is also thinking about the future of working conditions, the transformation of the labour market and the place of trade unions in a changing society.

Closely related to the question of vision is the leadership's role as custodian of trust. Trust is the most valuable capital of every trade union organisation. Unlike financial resources or material equipment, it cannot be acquired by a one-off decision or bought. It arises gradually on the basis of members' experience, the transparency of decision-making and the leadership's ability to keep its commitments. Employees join trade unions above all because they believe that the organisation will defend their interests. If this trust is damaged, the organisation loses its greatest strength.

Building trust requires long-term and systematic work. The leadership must be open, predictable and consistent. The members of the organisation must be certain that decisions are not taken on the basis of personal relationships or informal group interests, but for the benefit of the entire membership base. Trust is also built by the ability to admit a mistake, explain difficult decisions and communicate even unpleasant facts. Organisations whose leadership communicates only successes and avoids problems generally face a greater risk of internal conflicts.

An extremely important area is the creation of a new generation of trade union officials. Many organisations rely over the long term on a few experienced individuals who bear the main share of responsibility for their functioning. This model may be effective in the short term, but from a long-term perspective it represents a significant risk. Every official will one day retire, change jobs or end their active involvement. If the organisation does not train its successors continuously, it may find itself in a situation where it does not have enough people prepared to take over responsibility.

Successful leadership therefore does not see the preparation of successors as a one-off process, but as a permanent part of its work. Capable leaders do not strive to be irreplaceable. On the contrary, they create around themselves an environment in which other people can grow. They recognise the potential of members, support their development and give them the opportunity to gain experience. Organisations that neglect this area often face problems with generational change, and their further development becomes dependent on a few individuals.

Another important role of the leadership is managing change. The working environment is undergoing one of the fastest transformations in modern history. Digitalisation, automation, the development of artificial intelligence, new forms of employment and demographic changes are fundamentally affecting working conditions and employees' expectations. Trade union organisations cannot avoid these changes. The leadership must therefore seek a balance between preserving proven principles and the ability to respond to new conditions.

It is precisely in this area that generational tensions often arise. Older members generally emphasise stability, continuity and the protection of the traditional values of the trade union movement. Younger generations tend to be more open to experimentation, new technologies and innovative approaches. The task of the leadership is not to decide which group is right, but to create space in which both perspectives can be combined. The organisation needs experience as well as innovation, continuity as well as the ability to adapt. A successful leader therefore does not act as the representative of one generation against another, but as an intermediary seeking a solution acceptable to all.

Related to managing change is the ability to work with conflicts. Conflict is not automatically a sign of organisational failure. On the contrary, it may be a natural consequence of the existence of different views, experiences and priorities. A problem arises only when conflicts are not addressed or when they escalate into the personal sphere. The leadership must create an environment in which differing views can be openly expressed while common solutions are sought.

An important task of leading representatives is to distinguish between a conflict of values and a conflict of interests. Many generational disputes are in fact not a clash of fundamental values, but merely of differing ideas about the path to achieving them. Most members, regardless of age, strive for dignified working conditions, fair remuneration and the protection of employee rights. They differ, however, in their views on how to achieve these goals. The leadership must be able to recognise this fact and help members focus their attention on common goals instead of emphasising differences.

An extremely important role of the leadership is the protection and development of organisational memory. Over the course of its existence, every trade union organisation creates a unique body of experience, knowledge and contacts. This organisational memory includes not only documents, but also practical experience with collective bargaining, knowledge of the history of relations with the employer, an overview of successful and unsuccessful strategies, and the ability to navigate the specific conditions of a particular workplace.

If the leadership pays no attention to capturing this experience, the organisation may gradually lose its institutional memory. Each new generation then has to deal anew with problems that have already been overcome in the past. Organisations that are successful in the long term therefore build systems for the transfer of knowledge, the archiving of important documents and the sharing of experience between generations. Preserving organisational memory is not an expression of conservatism, but one of the prerequisites for effective development.

Another important area is representing the organisation to the young generation of employees. For many young people, the leadership of the trade union organisation is their first and often only contact with trade unions. On the basis of this experience, they form an idea of whether the organisation is open, trustworthy and capable of responding to their needs. Every public statement, negotiation and decision by the leadership therefore influences not only the current membership base, but also future generations of potential members.

The leadership should be able to communicate with different groups of employees in a language they understand. This does not mean adapting to fashionable trends or abandoning traditional values. It means the ability to explain the importance of trade union work in a way that corresponds to the experiences and expectations of different generations of employees. An organisation that is unable to reach the incoming generations risks a gradual weakening of its membership base and its influence.

The role of the leadership in creating organisational culture is also absolutely fundamental. Organisational culture is not determined by statutes, organisational rules or formal structure. It arises from the everyday behaviour of the members and, above all, of the leadership. Members very quickly recognise whether openness, cooperation and respect are being supported, or whether closedness, formalism and distrust prevail.

It is the leadership that sets the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. What the leadership tolerates gradually becomes the norm. If the leadership overlooks generational stereotypes, personal attacks or the marginalisation of certain groups of members, it creates an environment in which these phenomena continue to develop. Conversely, a leadership that actively supports cooperation and respect contributes significantly to the long-term stability of the organisation.

In a broader view, the leadership of a trade union organisation can be understood as the custodian of a certain heritage. The current officials are not the owners of the organisation. They are only one generation in a long chain of people who have contributed to building the trade union movement. They took over responsibility from their predecessors and have a duty to hand the organisation over to the next generations in the best possible condition. This view extends beyond the ordinary term of office or the current electoral cycle.

Truly good leadership therefore does not think only in a horizon of a few months or years. It considers what consequences its decisions will have in ten, twenty or thirty years. It thinks about who will lead the organisation in the future, what values will be passed on to the next generations and how to ensure that the trade union organisation remains relevant even in the conditions of the future world of work.

It is here that the deepest meaning of the role of the leadership of trade union organisations lies. It is not merely about managing the present. It is about responsibility for the future. About the ability to link the experience of the past with the needs of the present and the challenges of the future. About the ability to build a bridge between generations and to ensure that the values of solidarity, mutual assistance and the protection of employees are not only part of the history of the trade union movement, but also of its future. In a time of rapid social change, it is precisely this ability that is one of the most important conditions for the long-term existence and success of trade union organisations.

A Long-Term Strategy for Developing the Membership Base

a) Current Challenges Concerning the Membership Base

The question of developing the membership base is currently one of the most important strategic topics for trade union organisations, not only in the Czech Republic but also in most European countries and other advanced economies of the world. While in the past trade unions were often considered a natural part of working life and their membership base was relatively stable, current social, economic and technological changes are creating new conditions to which trade union organisations must respond. The long-term stability of the membership base can no longer be taken for granted. Organisations that want to function successfully in the future must pay systematic attention not only to representing their current members, but also to actively developing their membership base.

One of the most significant challenges is the ageing of the membership base. This problem manifests itself to varying degrees in many trade union organisations across Europe. A significant proportion of current members joined the unions at a time when union membership was a normal part of working life and trade unions were the natural partner of employees in protecting their rights. These members today form an important part of the trade union movement and are often among its most active representatives. At the same time, however, they are gradually reaching retirement age or ending their professional careers. If the organisation is unable to attract new members continuously and prepare a new generation of active trade unionists, it may find itself in a situation where the number of departing members exceeds the number of newly recruited ones.

The ageing of the membership base is not only a question of the total number of members. It also has significant consequences for the functioning of the organisation. Together with departing members, the unions lose experience, contacts, knowledge of the working environment and capable officials who have often held key roles for many years. If generational change is not sufficiently prepared, there may be not only a decline in the number of members, but also a weakening of organisational capacity and the ability to defend employees' interests effectively.

Another significant challenge is the transformation of the labour market. Today's employees work under different conditions from the generations of their parents or grandparents. The traditional model of long-term employment with a single employer is gradually giving way to greater professional mobility. The number of workers who change jobs, professions or entire sectors several times during their careers is growing. At the same time, flexible forms of work, remote working, project-based employment and various atypical working arrangements are spreading.

These changes have a direct impact on trade union organisations. Employees with a shorter-term attachment to the workplace often do not perceive union membership in the same way as workers

who expect to stay with one employer for a long time. Trade union organisations must therefore look for new ways of reaching employees whose working careers are more dynamic and less predictable than in the past.

The growing individualisation of society is also a significant challenge. Contemporary culture places greater emphasis on individual responsibility, personal success and individual solutions to problems. This trend is also reflected in the working environment. Some employees tend to deal with their work-related matters individually and do not perceive collective organising as a natural tool for protecting their interests. This does not mean that they reject the values of justice, solidarity or mutual assistance. Often, however, they do not perceive trade unions as an institution that can effectively help them solve their problems.

Related to individualisation is the changing nature of employees' expectations. Younger generations tend to be more oriented towards the opportunity to influence their working environment, professional development, flexibility at work or the reconciliation of work and personal life. Trade union organisations must therefore increasingly reflect a broader spectrum of topics that go beyond the traditional area of wages and working conditions. The ability to understand these changes is an important prerequisite for successfully reaching new members.

Another significant challenge is the changing relationship of the public to institutions in general. Many social institutions, including political parties, the media, state institutions and professional organisations, have faced a decline in trust in recent decades. This trend also affects trade union organisations to varying degrees. Younger generations of employees in particular tend to be more cautious towards organisations whose functioning they do not know from their own experience. This makes the ability of trade unions to communicate their activities, results and concrete benefits for employees transparently all the more important.

Technological development also represents a significant change. Digitalisation and modern communication technologies have fundamentally transformed the way people obtain information, communicate and organise their activities. Employees today expect rapid access to information, the possibility of electronic communication and greater flexibility in getting involved in various activities. Organisations that are unable to adapt their functioning to these expectations may gradually lose contact with some employees.

At the same time, technological changes create new opportunities. Modern communication tools make it possible to reach a wider circle of employees, share information more quickly, organise education or obtain feedback from members. The challenge is therefore not the mere existence of new technologies, but the ability of trade union organisations to use them in a way that supports the development of the membership base and strengthens relationships between members.

The generational transformation of employees is also a significant factor. Workplaces today bring together people who grew up under different social conditions and have different experiences of working life. Each generation brings its own expectations, values and ways of communicating. This diversity can be a significant advantage if the organisation is able to make use of it. At the same time, however, it places greater demands on the ability of trade union organisations to reach employees of different age groups and to support cooperation between generations.

Growing competition for employees' time and attention is also an important challenge. People today have a wide range of professional, social, educational and leisure activities at their disposal. Trade union organisations can no longer automatically assume that employees will devote their time to trade union activity simply because it is considered a traditional part of working life. The ability to

demonstrate the concrete benefits of membership, to create meaningful opportunities for involvement and to build a relationship between the organisation and its members is becoming ever more important.

Changes in the economic structure of society cannot be overlooked either. In many countries, the share of traditional industrial sectors, which were historically associated with high levels of union membership, is declining. Conversely, the importance of services, information technology, creative professions and new forms of business is growing. These sectors often have a different working culture and different experiences with the collective representation of employees. Trade union organisations must therefore look for new approaches corresponding to the specific features of these professional groups.

Despite all the challenges mentioned, it is important to emphasise that the current situation represents not only a risk, but also an opportunity. The transformation of the labour market, the generational turnover of employees and technological development create space for new forms of trade union work, new ways of communicating and new opportunities for developing the membership base. Organisations that are able to recognise these changes in time and respond to them actively can not only maintain their position, but in many cases even strengthen it.

That is precisely why the development of the membership base must be understood not as a partial task assigned only to recruitment workers or officials responsible for membership records. It is a strategic question concerning the future of the entire organisation. The ability to attract new members, maintain their trust, develop their activity and prepare new generations of trade union representatives will be one of the main factors determining the success of trade union organisations in the Czech Republic and abroad in the years to come.

b) Developing the Membership Base as a Strategic Priority of the Organisation

The development of the membership base cannot be understood merely as an administrative activity consisting in keeping membership records or occasionally recruiting new employees into the trade union organisation. In reality, it is one of the most important strategic areas, one that determines the long-term strength, stability and ability of the organisation to fulfil its mission. The number of members is not merely a statistical figure. It influences the bargaining power of the unions, their legitimacy vis-à-vis the employer, the financial stability of the organisation and its ability to carry out its own activities.

In the past, some organisations could rely on a relatively stable influx of new members. Today the situation is different. Employees have wider options to choose from; work teams are more dynamic and people's relationship to organised association is changing. This means that the development of the membership base must be managed just as systematically as collective bargaining, the organisation's finances or the training of officials.

The first prerequisite of a successful strategy is accepting the fact that every member matters to the organisation. It is not only a question of the amount of membership fees or the number of votes at a membership meeting. Every member represents a potential source of experience, knowledge, contacts and future development. An organisation that perceives its members merely as a statistical item gradually loses the ability to create a strong and active community.

At the same time, a long-term strategy must be based on a realistic assessment of the situation. The leadership of the organisation should regularly analyse the age structure of the members, the

development of the membership base in recent years, the number of newly recruited members and the reasons for any departures. Without knowledge of the actual state of affairs, effective development plans cannot be created. Just as an employer monitors the economic indicators of its business, a trade union organisation must monitor indicators related to the development of its membership base.

A strategic approach also means setting specific goals. The organisation should know whether it is striving primarily to stabilise the current number of members, for gradual growth, to rejuvenate the membership base or, for example, for better representation of certain professional groups. Clearly formulated goals make it possible to plan individual activities better and to evaluate their success.

Long-term thinking is an important principle. The development of the membership base cannot be built on one-off campaigns. Employees form their relationship with trade unions gradually, on the basis of personal experience, everyday communication and the concrete results of the organisation's work. The strategy must therefore be planned over a horizon of several years and must be able to survive changes in the organisation's leadership as well as changes in the working environment.

An important part of the strategic approach is also the ability to anticipate future developments. The organisation should monitor changes in the structure of employees, planned recruitment, the generational turnover of workers and technological changes that may affect the nature of jobs. Only in this way can new groups of employees be identified in time who will need to be reached and involved in trade union activity.

At the same time, the development of the membership base should be perceived as the responsibility of the entire organisation, not only of the chair or a few active officials. Every member of the trade union organisation contributes through their conduct to how the union is perceived in the workplace. An employee's positive experience with a trade union colleague is often more effective than any information campaign. Successful organisations therefore create a culture in which caring for the membership base becomes a natural part of everyday trade union work.

At the same time, a long-term strategy for developing the membership base must be linked to the other areas of the trade union organisation's activity. It is not possible to separate member recruitment from the quality of collective bargaining, communication, education or work with the young generation. All these areas influence one another. Employees join trade unions above all when they see that the organisation genuinely delivers results and that it has a clear idea of its future.

From this perspective, the development of the membership base represents one of the most important investments in the future of a trade union organisation. Organisations that pay systematic attention to this area gain greater stability, higher trust among employees and better prospects for defending their interests in the long term. Conversely, underestimating this issue can gradually lead to a weakening of the organisation's influence and the loss of its ability to represent employees effectively in a changing working environment.

c) Recruiting New Members

Recruiting new members is one of the basic conditions for the long-term viability of a trade union organisation. It is not merely a matter of mechanically increasing the number of members, but of creating a stable, diverse and active membership base that will be able to respond to changes in the working environment. A successful recruitment strategy must be based on an understanding that different groups of employees have different needs, experiences and motivations for joining a union.

The basic rule is an active approach. A trade union organisation cannot rely on employees seeking out information about membership themselves. Younger workers, new employees or people without previous experience of trade unions in particular often do not know how unions work, what services they provide and why membership could be useful for them. It is therefore important for the trade union organisation to be able to approach employees directly, comprehensibly and in good time.

Special attention should be paid to newly arriving employees. The first weeks and months in a new job are the period when a worker forms a relationship with the workplace, the team and the trade union organisation. If they do not encounter the union during this period, they may later perceive it as a distant institution that has nothing to do with their everyday work. A suitable measure is therefore to create a system of regular contact with new employees, for example through welcome materials, a personal introduction to the trade union organisation or a short information meeting.

Reaching out to young workers and graduates is also important. This group often has lower awareness of trade union rights and collective bargaining. Young people may perceive trade unions as an institution associated rather with the past or with older generations of employees. That makes it all the more important to show them the concrete benefits of membership: protection when dealing with work-related problems, information about labour rights, support in negotiating working conditions, opportunities for education and space to influence the environment in which they work.

Employees in less stable forms of work represent a specific group. These may be fixed-term workers, agency employees, part-time employees, workers in project teams or people working remotely. These people may have a greater need for protection, but at the same time tend to be harder to reach through traditional means of trade union communication. Trade union organisations should therefore look for ways to explain to these groups that it is precisely a more precarious position at work that can be a reason why collective representation is important.

Successful recruitment of new members is impossible without a clear explanation of the value of membership. An employee should understand what membership brings them not only in exceptional situations, but also in everyday working life. It is not enough to say in general terms that trade unions defend employees' rights. It is necessary to show concrete results: better conditions in the collective agreement, legal assistance, protection in conflicts with the employer, support during changes in the organisation of work or the opportunity to influence the working environment together.

The language of recruitment communication is of great importance. It should be matter of fact, comprehensible and concrete. Overly formal or ideological language may put some employees off. Communication based on specific situations tends to be much more effective: What to do when an employee is not paid for overtime? How to proceed with an unclear employment contract? How do trade unions help with shift changes? What does the collective agreement mean for pay, holidays or benefits? Communication conceived in this way presents trade unions as a practical partner for the employee.

Personal recommendation is also a significant tool. Employees often trust their colleagues more than official leaflets or declarations. It is therefore important that existing members are able to explain simply why they are in the union and what their experience of it has been. The trade union organisation can support its members in becoming natural ambassadors of membership. They do not have to be formal recruiters, but people who can tell a colleague at the right moment why membership makes sense.

The recruitment of new members should be continuous, not merely campaign based. A one-off recruitment event may be useful, but it is not enough on its own. Successful organisations work with

potential members over the long term. They monitor where new work teams are being formed, where new employees are starting, which groups are under-represented and what problems are currently troubling employees. Only on the basis of such knowledge can effective and targeted recruitment work be carried out.

Linking recruitment with subsequent involvement is also important. If an employee joins the union but no further work is then done with them, they may quickly lose interest. After joining, a new member should be welcomed, familiarised with the organisation's activities and invited to take part in specific activities. It is precisely the first experience after joining that often decides whether the new member becomes an active part of the organisation or remains merely a passive payer of fees.

The recruitment of new members must therefore be understood as a long-term process of building a relationship between employees and the trade union organisation. It is not merely about signing an application form, but about creating trust, understanding and a sense of belonging. An organisation that is able to approach new members in good time, concretely and in a human way significantly strengthens its future stability.

d) Retaining Existing Members

Retaining existing members is just as important as recruiting new ones. Trade union organisations sometimes devote considerable attention to recruitment, but monitor less systematically why members stay, why they become passive or why they leave the organisation. Yet a stable membership base is one of the most important prerequisites for the long-term bargaining power of trade unions. An organisation that recruits new members but is at the same time unable to retain existing ones finds itself in constant flux without genuinely growing stronger.

Member retention is closely linked to their trust in the organisation. Members must feel that the union genuinely defends their interests, that it communicates with them and that their membership has concrete meaning. If a member sees no results of the organisation's activity over a long period, is not informed about its activities or has no opportunity to express their opinion, their relationship with the union may gradually weaken.

The first prerequisite for retaining members is regular communication. A member should not have the feeling that they learn about the union's activities only when elections, collective bargaining or an extraordinary problem is approaching. The organisation should provide ongoing information about what it is dealing with, what results it has achieved, what problems remain open and how members can get involved. It is important that communication is not merely formal, but comprehensible and focused on its practical significance for members.

The ability to respond to members' needs in various life and work situations also plays a major role. A young employee at the start of their career may need one kind of support, a parent caring for a small child another, an employee working shifts yet another, and a worker approaching retirement age something else again. An organisation that is able to perceive the diversity of its membership base has a better chance of retaining members' long-term loyalty.

The involvement of members in the life of the organisation is also an important factor. Passive membership may be acceptable in the short term, but in the long term it represents a risk. A member who takes part in no activities, has no personal ties to the organisation and does not see its inner workings can more easily lose the motivation to continue their membership. It is therefore advisable to create various levels of involvement. Not every member wants to be an official, but many can help

with a specific event, take part in a survey, join a working group or bring a suggestion from the workplace.

Member retention is also related to the quality of the services and support the organisation provides. Legal advice, help in resolving labour disputes, information about the collective agreement, education or support in communicating with the employer represent the concrete value of membership. It is important, however, that members know about these options. Sometimes an organisation provides quality support but fails to communicate it sufficiently. The result may be a paradoxical situation in which members underestimate the importance of the union because they do not know the scope of its work.

The prevention of departures from the organisation deserves special attention. Every member's departure should prompt reflection. It is not necessary to draw general conclusions from every individual case, but if certain reasons recur, the organisation should respond to them. Members may leave because of a change of job, dissatisfaction with communication, distrust of the leadership, a feeling that their membership serves no purpose or insufficient identification with the organisation. Without knowledge of these reasons, work with the membership base cannot be improved.

Regularly gauging member satisfaction is therefore a suitable tool. This does not have to involve complex research. Even a simple anonymous questionnaire can provide valuable information about what members appreciate, what they lack and what topics they consider important. What matters is that the organisation genuinely works with the results and that members see that their suggestions have an impact.

Recognising members' contributions is also a significant element of retention. People need to see that their participation is meaningful. Thanks for help with an event, recognition of long-standing membership, public acknowledgement of the work of active members or simple personal feedback can significantly strengthen people's relationship with the organisation. Trade unions are based on solidarity, but solidarity is strengthened by concrete interpersonal relationships.

Retaining existing members therefore requires a combination of trust, communication, concrete results and a personal relationship with the organisation. Members stay where they feel purpose, respect and benefit. An organisation that cares for its members continuously, not only in times of trouble, creates a stable basis for further development.

e) Working with the Young Generation as an Investment in the Future

Working with the young generation of employees is one of the most important components of a long-term strategy for developing the membership base. Young people are not merely a group to be recruited into the union on a one-off basis. They represent future members, activists, officials, negotiators and bearers of the organisation's new energy. If trade unions are unable to reach young employees and create meaningful space for them, they risk the gradual ageing of the membership base and the weakening of their long-term stability.

Work with young people, however, must be based on an understanding of their actual situation. Young employees often enter the labour market under conditions of uncertainty, high housing costs, pressure to perform, more frequent job changes and rapid technological change. Their needs may therefore not entirely coincide with those of older generations. In addition to traditional topics such as wages and working conditions, they may also emphasise professional growth, flexibility, mental health, the quality of management, work-life balance or fair treatment in the workplace.

Trade union organisations should show young people that unions are not an institution intended only for dealing with crisis situations, but a tool that can help create a better working environment from the very start of a professional career. A young employee may not immediately have experience of a serious labour law dispute, but they may be dealing with questions concerning their employment contract, probationary period, overtime, shift scheduling, workplace induction or opportunities for further education. It is precisely here that trade unions can demonstrate their practical value.

Timeliness is an important principle. Trade unions should not wait until young employees have a negative experience and only then start looking for help. They should communicate with them from the moment they start work, as part of the induction process or through contacts with schools and vocational schools. The sooner a young person understands that labour rights and collective representation have practical significance, the greater the chance that they will perceive trade unions positively.

At the same time, work with young members must include the possibility of active involvement. Young people often do not want to be merely passive recipients of information. If they decide to join the organisation, they want to understand how it works and to be able to influence at least some areas of its activity. Local organisations should therefore offer them specific tasks corresponding to their abilities and experience. This may involve helping with communication, preparing a questionnaire, organising a meeting of young employees, processing suggestions about the working environment or participating in working groups.

It is also essential to avoid a paternalistic approach. Young members should not be perceived merely as inexperienced newcomers who need to have things explained to them. Of course, they need support and guidance, but at the same time they bring their own experience, perspectives and skills. If the organisation is able to make use of their abilities, it strengthens their motivation as well as the overall quality of its work.

Working with the young generation is also an opportunity to modernise the trade union agenda. Young employees often open up topics that may be important for other age groups as well: work-related stress, the quality of communication in the workplace, education, flexible arrangements, protection against overload or fair treatment by superiors. If trade unions include these topics in their activities, they not only strengthen their relationship with young members, but also expand their ability to represent the needs of the entire membership base.

Long-term work with young people should also aim at their gradual preparation for more responsible roles. Not every young member will become an official, but everyone should have the opportunity to learn how the trade union organisation works. Those who show interest and ability should be given the opportunity for further education and involvement. This creates the basis for future generational change.

Investment in the young generation may not pay off immediately. Its significance becomes apparent over a longer time horizon. An organisation that works systematically with young members today is creating its future active base, strengthening its credibility and reducing the risk of staffing exhaustion. Conversely, an organisation that postpones work with young people may find in a few years' time that it has no one to reach out to, no one to involve and no one to hand responsibility over to.

Working with the young generation is therefore not a supplementary activity, but a strategic investment in the future of the trade union organisation. Its success depends on the ability to

combine respect for the experience of older members with openness to the new perspectives and needs of incoming employees.

f) Building an Active Membership Base

The number of members is an important indicator of the strength of a trade union organisation, but in itself it says nothing about its true viability. The real strength of an organisation is determined not only by the number of registered members, but above all by their willingness to participate in its functioning, contribute their experience, support common goals and, if necessary, actively defend employees' interests. A long-term strategy for developing the membership base must therefore pay equal attention not only to recruiting new members, but also to building an active and engaged membership community.

One of the most common problems of trade union organisations is the existence of a large group of passive members. These people generally have no negative attitude towards the organisation, pay their membership fees regularly and support the union's basic goals. At the same time, however, they get involved in its everyday activities only minimally. They do not attend meetings, do not join in discussions, do not come up with suggestions and often do not even follow information about the organisation's activities. Such a state of affairs may not be a problem in the short term, but in the long term it represents a certain risk. The organisation may find itself in a situation where its functioning depends solely on a few active individuals.

When assessing member passivity, however, it is important to avoid simplistic conclusions. Not every member has the time, health or personal disposition for active involvement. Many employees work shifts, care for their families or deal with other life responsibilities. An active membership base therefore does not mean that all members will hold positions or regularly take part in all activities. The point is to create an environment in which everyone has the opportunity to get involved in a way corresponding to their possibilities and interest.

A very important task of the organisation's leadership is to understand members' motivation. People do not get involved in trade union activity solely for material advantages or personal gain. A sense of purpose, the opportunity to influence their working environment, relationships with colleagues or the conviction that joint effort can achieve better results than acting individually all play a significant role. Organisations that are able to support these motivations have a considerably greater chance of building an active membership base.

Experience from various types of organisations shows that people tend to be more active when they see concrete results of their work. If members get the feeling that their views are not taken into account or that everything is decided by a narrow circle of officials, their willingness to get involved gradually declines. Conversely, organisations that support open discussion and enable members to participate in preparing decisions create an environment that fosters activity and responsibility.

Organisations that are successful in the long term generally work with various levels of involvement. Not every member has to be a trade union official. Some can help organise events, others can take part in preparing questionnaires, educational activities or information materials. Still others can contribute professional knowledge from a specific field. It is precisely the diversity of forms of involvement that makes it possible to reach a wider circle of people while increasing the organisation's resilience.

Informal authorities also play a significant role. In every work team there are employees who hold no formal position but enjoy the natural respect of their colleagues. These people can significantly influence the attitudes of other employees towards the trade union organisation. The ability to establish cooperation with them and involve them in the life of the organisation is an important prerequisite for developing an active membership base.

One common problem tends to be the overburdening of the most active members. In many organisations, a group of people gradually forms who carry out most activities, organise events, communicate with the employer and deal with everyday operational matters. If this state of affairs persists over the long term, it can lead to fatigue, frustration and the gradual departure of these key figures. A long-term strategy must therefore also include continuously widening the circle of active members and handing over responsibility.

Building an active membership base is also closely related to creating a sense of belonging. People tend to be more willing to get involved where they feel part of a community. A trade union organisation should therefore not be perceived only as an institution dealing with work-related problems, but also as a community of people sharing common interests and values. An important role here is played not only by formal meetings and negotiations, but also by educational, social or community activities that enable personal relationships to be formed between members.

An active membership base represents a significant source of organisational stability. An organisation with a wider circle of engaged members is better able to respond to change, copes more easily with generational turnover and is not dependent on a few individuals. At the same time, it has a greater capacity to attract new members, because active members are the most convincing proof of the meaningfulness of trade union work.

Building an active membership base therefore cannot be understood as a supplementary activity or the task of a few officials. It is one of the most important investments in the organisation's future. A trade union organisation that is able to turn passive members into active participants in common affairs creates a solid foundation for its long-term stability, development and ability to defend employees' interests in the changing conditions of the labour market.

g) Developing Future Trade Union Leaders

One of the greatest risks facing many trade union organisations today is neither a lack of financial resources nor the complexity of labour law regulations. The real problem tends to be a shortage of people prepared to take over responsibility for leading the organisation in the future. Many local organisations rest on the work of a few experienced officials who, for many years, have handled collective bargaining, communication with the employer, the organisation of the membership base and the resolution of employees' everyday problems. Although these people represent an enormous asset, at the same time a risk arises of the organisation becoming dependent on a few individuals.

The moment such an official retires, changes jobs, loses motivation or ends their activity for health reasons, the organisation may discover that it has no successor prepared. Yet it is precisely the ability to ensure continuity of leadership that is one of the most important prerequisites for the long-term stability of a trade union organisation.

Future trade union leaders do not emerge by chance. Only exceptionally does a person appear who, without previous experience, can immediately manage to lead an organisation, negotiate with the employer, manage a team of people and at the same time win the trust of the membership base. In

most cases, it is a long-term process during which the future leader acquires knowledge and experience and gradually takes on ever greater responsibility.

The first step is identifying potential future leaders. When selecting future officials, many organisations focus primarily on people who are prominent, vocal or willing to speak at meetings. However, this need not always be the right criterion. A good trade union leader does not necessarily have to be the most striking personality in the team. It is often a person whom others trust, who is able to listen, seek compromises and naturally bring people together.

The experience of successful organisations shows that potential leaders are often found among active members of working groups, event organisers, members of negotiating teams or among people to whom colleagues spontaneously turn with their problems. The ability to recognise such personalities in time is among the most important tasks of the organisation's leadership.

A common mistake is the idea that a future official needs to be ready only when a position becomes vacant. In reality, the preparation of successors should begin several years before generational change in the leadership is expected. Organisations that address this area systematically create a so-called second line of leadership. This is a group of active members who do not yet hold the highest positions but are able to take over part of the responsibility if needed and gradually move into leading roles.

Education is an important part of preparing future leaders. It is not enough merely to know the Labour Code or the basic rules of collective bargaining. A modern trade union representative must understand communication, people management, conflict resolution, strategic planning and the basics of organisational management. In some foreign trade union federations, there are therefore special programmes for young officials aimed at the systematic preparation of future leading representatives.

For example, the German trade union IG Metall has long invested in educational programmes for young trade unionists, who learn not only about labour law, but also about running campaigns, communicating with the membership base and organising trade union work. Similar programmes are also being developed by the Scandinavian trade union confederations and Canadian trade union organisations. A common feature of these initiatives is the fact that the preparation of future leaders is not considered a side activity, but one of the main investments in the organisation's future.

Alongside formal education, practical experience plays an extremely important role. A future leader needs to experience real negotiations, conflict resolution, the preparation of collective bargaining or the organisation of member activities. It is therefore advisable to enable promising members to take part in negotiations with the employer, committee meetings or the preparation of important projects. Such experience is often more valuable than many hours of theoretical training.

The gradual handover of responsibility is also an important tool. A common mistake is a situation in which a long-serving official carries out most activities alone and other members have no opportunity to gain experience. When they leave, the organisation then discovers that no one knows how certain processes work. A responsible leadership should therefore consciously create opportunities for involving other people and gradually distributing tasks.

Mentoring plays a very important role. An experienced official can pass on knowledge and experience to younger colleagues much more effectively through regular cooperation than through one-off training. Mentoring makes it possible to pass on not only professional knowledge, but also the

experience gained over many years of trade union work. It is precisely this experience that is often the most valuable and at the same time the most difficult to transfer.

When developing future leaders, it is also necessary to reckon with the fact that not every promising member will be interested in taking on a leading position. Some people prefer professional work, others organisational activity or supporting specific projects. A successful organisation therefore does not create only future chairs and vice-chairs but builds a wider circle of people able to take on various roles according to their abilities and interests.

The changing expectations of younger generations are also a significant challenge today. Young people often approach voluntary and public activity differently from their predecessors. They are less motivated by the position itself and more by the concrete opportunity to influence what is happening around them. Trade union organisations must therefore look for ways to offer future leaders not only responsibility, but also space for their own initiative, professional development and meaningful work.

The preparation of future leaders must not be based solely on the handover of positions. Its aim must be to create a new generation of people who will be able to develop the trade union organisation in the conditions of the future labour market. They will face challenges related to digitalisation, automation, new forms of employment and the changing expectations of employees. That is precisely why their preparation must be focused not only on current problems, but also on the ability to respond to future changes.

A long-term strategy for developing the membership base must therefore regard the development of future leaders as one of its main priorities. An organisation that systematically prepares its successors, builds a second line of leadership, supports education and creates opportunities for gaining experience significantly increases its stability and capacity for long-term development. Conversely, an organisation dependent on a few individuals' risks losing a significant part of its potential and its ability to defend employees' interests when they depart.

h) Communication as a Tool for Developing the Membership Base

Communication is one of the most important activities of every trade union organisation. Nevertheless, its importance is often underestimated. Many trade union officials devote considerable attention to collective bargaining, resolving labour law problems or organising the membership base, but perceive communication merely as a supplementary activity. In reality, however, it is precisely communication that determines how employees perceive the union, whether they trust it and whether they are willing to become its members.

Most employees judge trade unions not by the extent of their actual work, but by the information they receive about that work. An organisation may successfully negotiate better working conditions, help employees solve problems or prevent unfavourable changes in the workplace. If, however, employees do not know about these activities, their view of the union will not change. The frequently heard sentence "I don't actually know what the union does" therefore tends to be a consequence of insufficient communication rather than of union inactivity.

From the perspective of developing the membership base, communication simultaneously informs, explains, motivates, builds trust and creates a relationship between the organisation and employees. Neglecting any of these functions can negatively affect the organisation's ability to attract and retain members.

The first area is communication towards existing members. Members have the right to know how the organisation works, what problems it is dealing with, what results it is achieving and what challenges lie ahead. A lack of information leads to uncertainty, the emergence of rumours and a loss of trust. Conversely, regular and open communication strengthens the sense of belonging and supports members' more active involvement in the life of the organisation.

Regularity is an important principle. Many organisations communicate intensively only during collective bargaining, elections or when dealing with extraordinary problems. For the rest of the year, however, employees receive a minimum of information. Organisations that communicate continuously, even when nothing extraordinary is happening, tend to be more successful.

Communication towards non-members is equally important. It is here that the future development of the membership base is decided. Potential members form their opinion of trade unions long before they consider joining the organisation. They observe how the union presents itself, how it communicates its successes and how it responds to employees' problems. If an organisation communicates only inwardly, it deprives itself of the opportunity to reach new members.

Experience from many countries shows that employees often join trade unions on the basis of trust built up over a long period. What tends to be decisive is personal experience with a trade union official, a colleague's recommendation or repeated encounters with information about the concrete results of the organisation's work.

Communication during collective bargaining is a very important area. Employees need to understand what is being negotiated, what the aims of the bargaining are, what obstacles are emerging and what results have been achieved. If the leadership communicates only the final outcome without explaining the course of the negotiations, an impression of a lack of transparency may arise. Open communication, by contrast, helps create the feeling that employees are part of the process.

Crisis communication is a specific discipline. Sooner or later, every trade union organisation finds itself in a situation where it must respond to a conflict with the employer, a reorganisation, redundancies or another extraordinary event. It is precisely then that employees expect clear, rapid and credible information. Silence or unclear messages create room for speculation and can damage trust in the organisation.

Crisis communication should be based on several basic principles. Information must be truthful, timely and comprehensible. If the organisation does not have certain information, it is better to admit this openly than to create inaccurate assumptions. Trust is built above all through honesty and transparency.

Considerable attention must also be paid to the form of communication. Different groups of employees prefer different communication channels. Older employees often prefer face-to-face meetings, notice boards or printed materials, while younger generations more often use electronic communication, social networks or mobile applications. A successful organisation therefore uses several communication channels at the same time.

The experience of many trade union organisations shows that personal contact remains the most effective form of communication. No newsletter, website or social network can fully replace a conversation between two people. It is precisely personal communication that makes it possible to build trust, answer specific questions and better understand employees' needs.

The ability to explain complex topics in simple language also plays a significant role. Trade union work often involves legal, economic or organisational questions that may be difficult for an ordinary

employee to understand. If an organisation uses overly technical or bureaucratic language, it risks some employees losing interest or failing to understand the significance of the information being communicated.

A long-term problem of some trade union organisations tends to be a focus of communication primarily on problems. Although it is important to draw attention to conflicts and risks, it is equally important to communicate successes and positive results. People need to see that their organisation not only responds to problems but also achieves concrete changes.

A number of interesting examples can be found abroad. Some trade union federations in Scandinavia regularly publish stories of employees whom the union has helped. Canadian unions use short videos explaining the significance of collective agreements or bargaining successes. British trade union organisations often work with personal testimonies of members, which tend to be more persuasive than general statistics. A common feature of these approaches is the effort to show the union as an organisation made up of specific people and solving specific problems.

Communication also plays an important role in overcoming generational differences. Older and younger employees may use different ways of communicating, perceive authority differently and have different expectations. The task of the trade union organisation is to create a communication environment that supports mutual understanding and cooperation.

In a broader view, communication can be understood as a tool for building the brand of the trade union organisation. Every organisation has a certain reputation, regardless of whether it consciously shapes it or not. Active and well-thought-out communication makes it possible to influence this reputation and to strengthen employees' trust in the trade union organisation.

Communication must therefore not be perceived as a marginal activity or an administrative duty. It represents one of the most important tools for developing the membership base, building trust and strengthening the influence of the trade union organisation over the long term. Organisations that are able to communicate openly, regularly and comprehensibly gain a significant advantage in attracting new members, retaining the existing membership base and creating a positive image of the union in the workplace.

i) Using Modern Technologies in Working with the Membership Base

In recent years, modern technologies have become a normal part of employees' working and personal lives. Trade union organisations therefore cannot stand aside from this development. The purpose of using technologies is not to replace personal contact between people, but to make communication, the administration of the membership base and the involvement of members in the life of the organisation more efficient.

One of the most important areas is the digitalisation of membership records. A clear and regularly updated database makes it possible to monitor the development of the membership base, its age structure, professional composition and the activity of individual members more effectively. The leadership of the organisation thus obtains material for strategic decision-making and can respond to unfavourable trends in time.

Modern communication tools also play a significant role. Electronic newsletters, mobile applications, videoconferencing or internal communication platforms make it possible to reach a large number of

employees quickly. This is particularly important in organisations with several sites, shift work or employees working remotely.

Online educational programmes have great potential. Many employees cannot attend in-person training for time or work reasons. Online courses, webinars and video materials make it possible to open education up to a wider circle of members while reducing organisational costs.

Social networks are also beginning to play an increasingly significant role. They can help in reaching younger employees, presenting the successes of the trade union organisation and building its public image. At the same time, however, they require a responsible approach, regular administration and consistent verification of the information published.

In the future, wider use of artificial intelligence tools can also be expected. These can help, for example, with preparing information materials, analysing questionnaires, processing members' comments or searching for information in extensive documents. However, the responsibility of the organisation's human leadership for final decisions and communication must always be preserved.

The basic principle should be to use technologies as a support for trade union work, not as a replacement for personal relationships. Even in the digital age, trust, solidarity and the ability to represent employees remain based above all on interpersonal communication.

j) Measuring Success and Evaluating the Strategy

Every long-term strategy for developing the membership base should also include mechanisms for ongoing evaluation. Without regular monitoring of results, it is impossible to determine reliably whether the measures adopted are actually working and whether the organisation is heading towards the fulfilment of its goals.

The most frequently monitored indicator tends to be the number of members. However, this provides only basic information. For strategic management, it is also important to monitor the age structure of the membership base, the number of newly recruited members, the number of departures, the degree of member involvement in the organisation's activities and interest in educational programmes.

Regular analyses of the reasons for members' departures can be very valuable. They make it possible to identify the organisation's weak points and to adopt measures aimed at eliminating them. It is similarly important to monitor which recruitment, or communication activities bring the best results.

Evaluation should not be perceived as an administrative duty, but as a management tool. An organisation that regularly works with data and feedback gains a better ability to adapt its activities to changing conditions.

An annual evaluation of the state of the membership base, forming part of activity planning for the next period, can be recommended. Such a procedure makes it possible to respond to new challenges in time and at the same time supports the long-term continuity of the strategy.

k) A Long-Term Vision for the Development of the Membership Base

A long-term strategy should not aim solely at growth in the number of members. Its real goal is to create a stable, active and generationally balanced membership base that will be able to support the mission of the trade union organisation over the long term.

In the coming decades, trade unions will operate in an environment of rapid technological change, transforming employment relationships, an ageing population and the arrival of new generations of employees. Organisations that want to remain strong and credible must be able to respond to these changes without losing their fundamental values.

The future membership base should be built on cooperation between different generations, openness towards new employees and the ability to create space for members' active involvement. What will matter is not only the protection of labour rights, but also support for education, professional development and employees' adaptability to the changing conditions of the labour market.

The successful trade union organisation of the future will not be merely an institution resolving labour disputes. It will also be a source of information, education and professional support, and a place where employees find the opportunity to influence their working environment together.

From a long-term perspective, therefore, the development of the membership base cannot be separated from the development of the whole organisation. A strong membership base creates the preconditions for successful collective bargaining, stable leadership, generational continuity and the ability to respond to future challenges. That is precisely why it represents one of the most important strategic investments in the future of the trade union movement.

I) Trade Unions and the Public Media: Foreign Experience

Foreign experience shows that the most successful trade union organisations do not strive only to communicate with their members but also seek to influence the broader public debate through their own media. The strength and influence of the Swedish trade unions, for example, is often spoken of with great respect. It is precisely they that offer interesting inspiration for thinking about a long-term communication strategy for trade unions.

The most important European example is the Swedish daily **Aftonbladet**. This newspaper is among the best-known and most widely read media in Sweden and reaches millions of readers every day. The Swedish trade union confederation **LO (Landsorganisationen i Sverige)** bought the newspaper in 1956 with the aim of strengthening the voice of employees in the public sphere. In the 1990s, the Norwegian media group Schibsted acquired a majority stake, but the LO confederation retained a very significant share along with the right to appoint the daily's political editor.

Aftonbladet is important above all because it is not a trade union magazine intended for union members, but a fully-fledged mainstream medium aimed at the general public. It carries domestic and foreign news, commentary, economic topics, investigative articles and social issues. Thanks to its scope and reach, it has the ability to influence the public debate on working conditions, social policy and the position of employees in society over the long term.

For trade unions, the Swedish model is interesting above all because it shows the possibility of going beyond the boundaries of internal communication. Instead of addressing only their own members, trade unions can use the media to enter the public debate, explain their positions and shape society's perception of work, employee rights and solidarity.

Today, when the internet dominates the communication media, there is no need to invest hundreds of millions of crowns in buying or launching a "paper" daily. A well-conceived and well-run online daily (combined, for example, with an internet radio station or even television) can have a similar influence, and the costs are an order of magnitude lower.

Another example is the Maltese daily **L-Orizzont**, published by a media company owned by Malta's largest trade union confederation, the General Workers' Union. Here too, it is an ordinary public medium, not merely a members' bulletin.

The experience from Sweden and Malta shows that trade unions can play a significant role not only in workplaces, but also in the media space. It is no coincidence that Aftonbladet is the most striking and most successful European example of the connection between the trade union movement and a public medium.

A related benefit of running public media is the fact that young people, seeing the influence of such media on the public, are more willing to get involved, whether directly in the union or in its media presence as such.

8. CONCLUSION

Summary of the Main Findings

This report has dealt with the issue of generational barriers in trade union organisations and the possibilities of overcoming them in the conditions of today's working environment. The analysis has shown that generational differences are a natural part of the life of every organisation. They arise as a result of the different life experiences, working conditions, historical circumstances, value orientations and differing expectations of the individual generations of employees. The mere existence of these differences, however, does not constitute a problem. A problem arises when generational differences become barriers preventing mutual communication, cooperation and the sharing of experience.

The analysis carried out shows that trade union organisations currently face a whole range of changes related to the transformation of the labour market, digitalisation, the ageing of the membership base and the arrival of new generations of employees. These changes place increased demands on the ability of trade union organisations to respond to new conditions while preserving their fundamental mission of protecting the rights and interests of employees.

The report has shown that generational barriers most often manifest themselves in the area of communication, differing ideas about the functioning of the organisation, attitudes to technology, priorities in solving work-related problems and the question of involving younger members in trade union activity. At the same time, however, it has been confirmed that the individual generations possess specific experience, knowledge and skills that can complement one another and create significant added value for the whole organisation.

An important finding is the fact that overcoming generational barriers cannot be achieved by a one-off measure. Successful organisations use a combination of various tools, including intergenerational dialogue, the transfer of experience, mentoring, systematic work with young members, support for education, open communication and the well-planned preparation of future trade union representatives. A key role is played by the organisation's leadership, which by its approach creates the conditions for cooperation between generations and determines the long-term direction of its development.

The report also included an analysis of examples of good practice from the Czech Republic and abroad. This experience confirms that generational cooperation is not merely a theoretical concept, but a concrete area in which measurable results can be achieved. Organisations that consciously work with generational diversity generally show a higher degree of stability, a better ability to attract new members and greater readiness to respond to future changes.

The report also paid considerable attention to the issue of the long-term development of the membership base. The analysis showed that the future of trade union organisations will depend not only on their ability to solve the current problems of employees, but also on their ability to attract new members, develop an active membership base, prepare future leaders and create conditions for the generational continuity of trade union work.

The Importance of Bridging Generational Barriers for the Future of Trade Unions

Overcoming generational barriers cannot be understood merely as a question of interpersonal relations within the organisation. In reality, it is one of the key strategic topics for the future of the trade union movement. The ability of the individual generations to cooperate, share experience and jointly seek solutions to new challenges will significantly influence the ability of trade union organisations to fulfil their mission in the years and decades to come.

Experience from many countries shows that organisations that are unable to reach younger generations of employees and prepare future officials gradually lose their dynamism, membership base and bargaining power. Conversely, organisations that are able to link the experience of long-standing members with the energy, knowledge and perspective of younger employees gain a significant competitive advantage. They are better prepared for changes in the labour market, technological development and the changing expectations of employees.

At the same time, bridging generational barriers contributes to preserving the continuity of the trade union movement. Throughout their history, trade unions have been based on the principles of solidarity, mutual support and the joint defence of employee rights. These values retain their significance today. However, if they are to be passed on to future generations, it is essential to create an environment supporting dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding.

The future of trade union organisations will therefore depend not only on economic conditions, the legislative environment or the results of collective bargaining. It will depend to the same extent on the ability of the individual generations to find a common language, respect their differences and jointly develop organisations that will be able to defend employees' interests even in the conditions of the future world of work.

Final Assessment

Generational diversity is a natural part of every trade union organisation. It should not be perceived as a problem to be eliminated, but as potential that can be used for the benefit of the whole organisation. Older generations bring experience, historical memory, knowledge of trade union work and proven procedures. Younger generations bring new perspectives, the ability to respond to technological change and sensitivity to new topics affecting today's working life. Only the combination of these perspectives creates the preconditions for the long-term successful functioning of trade union organisations.

The report confirms that overcoming generational barriers is neither a one-off task nor a short-term project. It is a long-term process requiring an active approach from the leadership, systematic work with the membership base, support for education, open communication and the willingness of all generations to work together towards common goals. Organisations that pay appropriate attention to this area will gain not only a more stable membership base, but also a greater ability to respond to future challenges and changes in the working environment.

The ability to ensure generational continuity can be considered one of the most important conditions for the future development of trade union organisations. Each generation of trade unionists builds on the work of its predecessors and at the same time creates the conditions for its successors. The success of the trade union movement therefore cannot be measured only by the results achieved in the present, but also by the ability to pass on experience, values and responsibility to future generations.

It can therefore be concluded that trade union organisations that are able to link the experience of the past with the demands of the present and the needs of the future will be better prepared to fulfil their mission even in the conditions of a rapidly changing society. It is precisely the ability to build a bridge between generations that may be one of the decisive factors determining their strength, stability and significance in the decades to come.

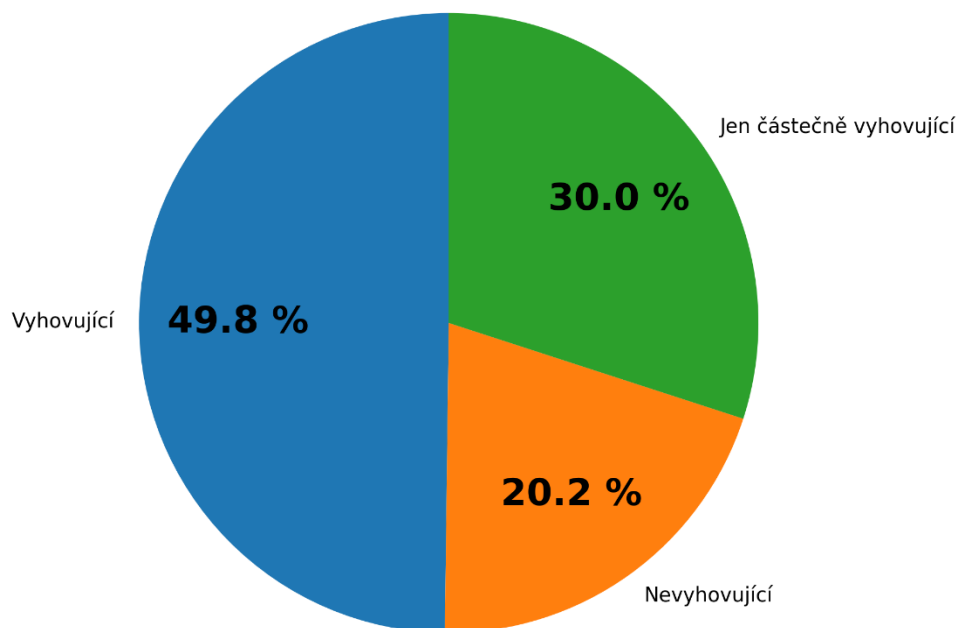
9. Evaluation of the Survey among ASO ČR Trade Unionists

Chart 1: Assessment of the working conditions of older employees

Question: How do you assess the current working conditions of older employees in your workplace?

- Satisfactory – **49.8%**
- Unsatisfactory – **20.2%**
- Only partly satisfactory – **30.0%**

Graf 1 – Hodnocení pracovních podmínek starších zaměstnanců



BRIEF SUMMARY

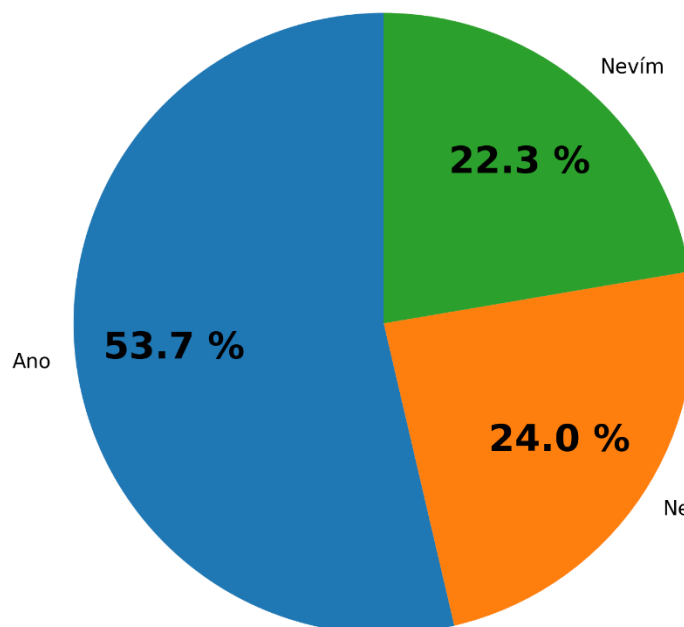
The results show that almost half of the respondents (49.8%) assess the working conditions of older employees as satisfactory. At the same time, however, 30.0% of respondents stated that the conditions are only partly satisfactory, and a further 20.2% consider them unsatisfactory. In total, therefore, more than half of the respondents perceive some room for improvement in working conditions. The results suggest that the issue of the working conditions of older employees remains a topical subject that deserves further attention.

Chart 2: Age-related problems

Question: Do you believe that older employees in your organisation face age-related problems?

- Yes – **53.6%**
- No – **24.0%**
- Don't know – **22.3%.**

Graf 2 – Problémy spojené s věkem



BRIEF SUMMARY

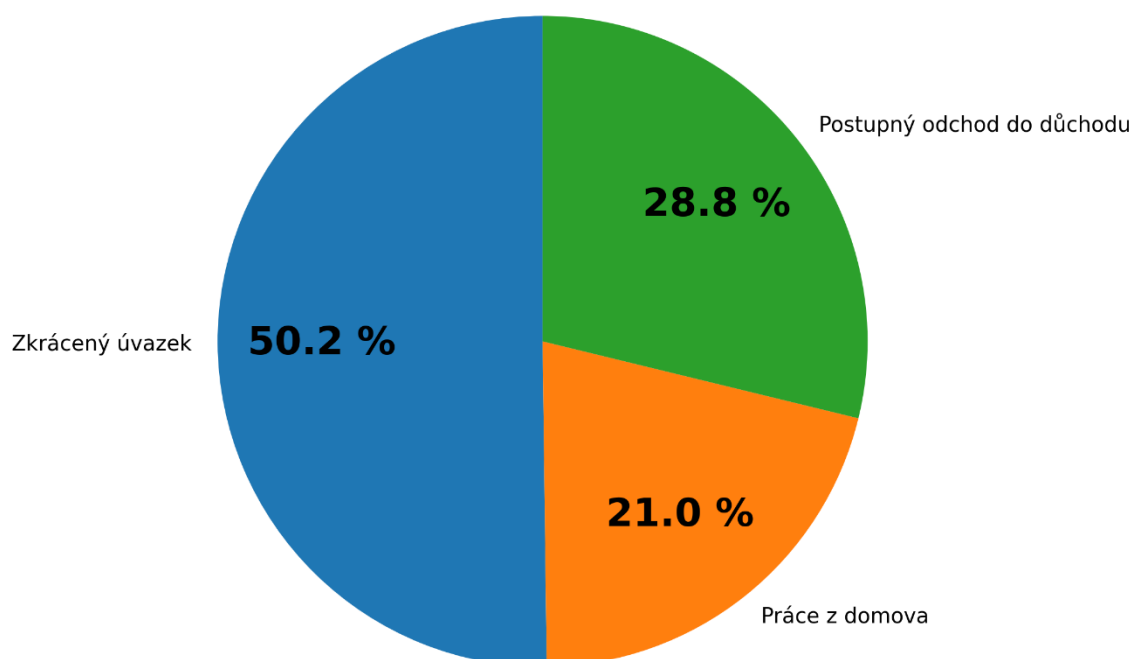
More than half of the respondents (53.6%) believe that older employees in their organisation face age-related problems. The opposite view is held by 24.0% of respondents, while 22.3% were unable to assess the situation clearly. The results show that the question of age barriers is perceived by employees as a real problem. At the same time, the relatively high proportion of "don't know" answers may indicate insufficient awareness or differing experiences among employees.

Chart 3: Preferred forms of work flexibility

Question: What forms of work flexibility should be made more available to older employees?

- Part-time work – **50.2%**
- Working from home – **21.0%**
- Phased retirement – **28.8%.**

Graf 3 – Preferované formy flexibility práce



BRIEF SUMMARY

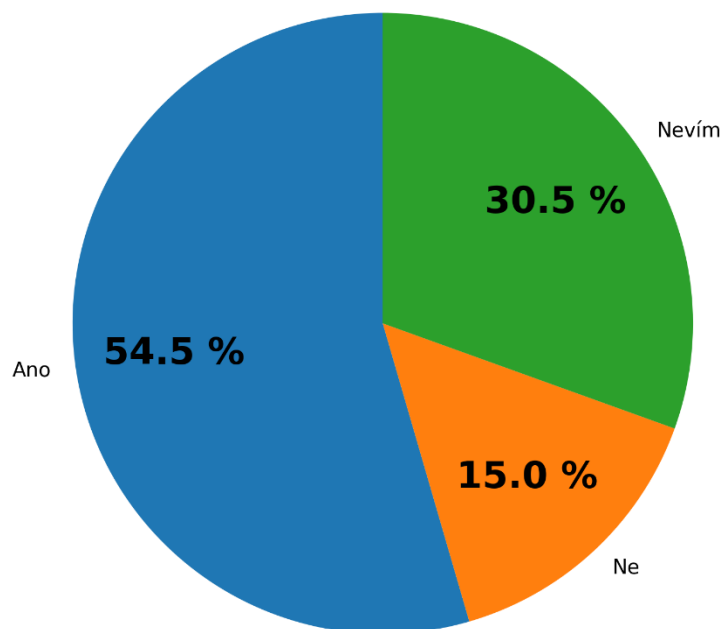
Part-time work received the greatest support, preferred by 50.2% of respondents. The second most frequently cited option is phased retirement, with a share of 28.8%. Working from home was chosen by 21.0% of respondents. The results suggest that employees consider measures enabling a gradual reduction of the workload in the later stages of working life to be the most suitable.

Chart 4: Support in the areas of ergonomics, OSH and health breaks

Question: Does the employer provide sufficient support in the areas of ergonomics, occupational safety and health breaks?

- Yes – **54.5%**
- No – **15.0%**
- Don't know – **30.5%.**

Graf 4 – Podpora v oblasti ergonomie, BOZP a zdravotních přestávek



BRIEF SUMMARY

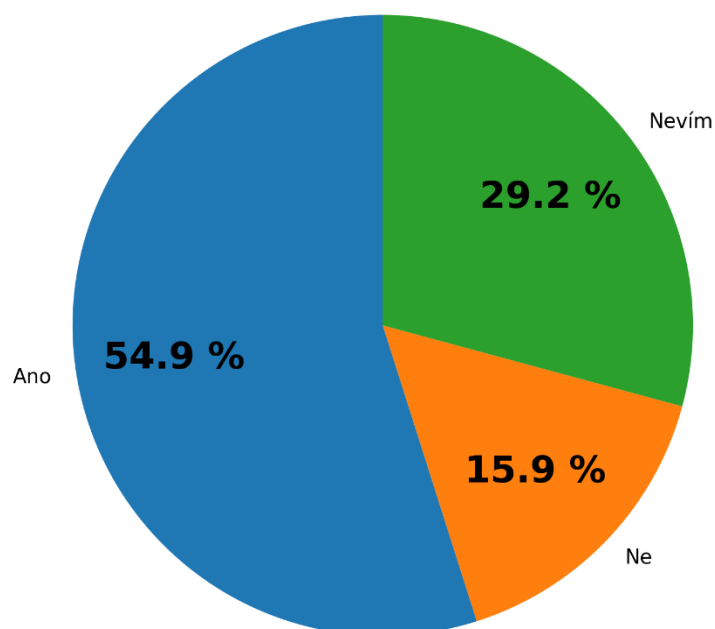
More than half of the respondents (54.5%) assess the employer's support in the areas of ergonomics, occupational safety and health breaks positively. A negative assessment was given by 15.0% of respondents. However, the proportion of "don't know" answers is significant (30.5%), suggesting that some employees may not have enough information about the measures provided. The results therefore point not only to the importance of the measures themselves, but also to the need to communicate them effectively.

Chart 5: Access to professional training and retraining

Question: Do older employees have sufficient access to professional training and retraining?

- Yes – **54.9%**
- No – **15.9%**
- Don't know – **29.2%.**

Graf 5 – Přístup k profesnímu vzdělávání a rekvalifikaci



BRIEF SUMMARY

Access to professional training and retraining is assessed positively by 54.9% of respondents. Conversely, 15.9% of respondents believe that access is not sufficient, and 29.2% chose the answer "don't know". The results show that most employees view the training opportunities favourably. At the same time, however, the high proportion of undecided answers suggests that the available training opportunities may not be sufficiently known to all employees.

SURVEY: Overall Analytical Conclusion

A total of 233 respondents took part in the questionnaire survey. The results showed that employees generally perceive the issue of the ageing of the workforce as an important topic deserving the attention of employers and trade union organisations.

More than half of the respondents believe that older employees face age-related problems. At the same time, only just under half assess the current working conditions as fully satisfactory. A significant proportion of respondents therefore consider it necessary to adopt further measures aimed at supporting older workers.

Part-time work and the possibility of phased retirement were identified as the most suitable support tools. These results confirm the growing importance of flexible forms of work as a means of maintaining the employability of older workers while preserving their work performance and health and wellbeing.

A positive finding is the fact that most respondents view the employer's support in the areas of ergonomics, occupational safety and training favourably. On the other hand, a relatively high proportion of "don't know" answers appears in all the areas monitored, which may indicate insufficient awareness among employees of the existing programmes and measures.

Overall, it can be stated that the results of the survey support the need for a systematic personnel policy focused on older employees. An important role is played not only by the introduction of specific measures, but also by their communication to employees. Creating a working environment that respects the needs of older workers can contribute to employees remaining in work longer, to increasing their satisfaction and to making more effective use of their experience and professional knowledge.

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