

## **TURKISH TRADE UNIONS AND THE INTERNET-WEB USE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNION SURVIVAL**

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### **ÖZET**

*Son 30 yıl sendikal hareketi olumsuz yönde etkileyen çeşitli gelişmelerle doludur. Bu olumsuz gelişmelerin yanı sıra enformasyon ve iletişim teknolojilerinin son on yıl içerisindeki hızlı gelişimi de önemli bir değişim-dönüşüm dalgası yaratmıştır. Bu bağlamda sendikal hareket farklı fırsatlar ve mücadele alanları ile karşı karşıyadır. Bu değişim dalgasının dışında kalarak sendikal hareketin yapılanmasını tartışmak mümkün olmadığı gibi, sadece bu değişim dalgasının yarattığı fırsatlar ile yapılanmayı düşünmekte yeterli değildir. Kısaca sendikal hareket yeniden yapılanma arayışlarında enformasyon ve iletişim teknolojilerinin yarattığı fırsatları ve mücadele alanlarını doğru ve zamanında değerlendirmek zorundadır.*

*Bu görüş çerçevesinde internet ve web, sendikal yapılanma açısından her geçen gün daha fazla fırsatlar yaratan araçlardır. İnternet ve web, bireysel niteliği güçlenen ve farklılıkları artan işgücü ile kolektif hareket ve dayanışma anlayışı arasında günümüzde köprü görevi niteliği kazanan araçlardır. Bu çerçevede makalenin genelinde enformasyon ve iletişim teknolojilerinin önemi ve gelişimi Türk işçi sendikaları açısından değerlendirilmekte ve bu bağlamda işçi sendikalarının enformasyon ve iletişim teknolojilerine olan ilgisi ve yakınlığı tartışılarak, bir durum analizi yapılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Makalenin amacı işçi*

*sendikalarının internet ve web hizmetleri ile olan ilişkilerini değerlendirmek, beklentileri ve uygulamaları tespit etmektir.*

**Anahtar kavramlar:** *İşçi sendikaları, enformasyon ve iletişim teknolojileri, internet ve web hizmetleri*

## ABSTRACT

*Last 30 years is an era which is full of the developments affecting trade union movement adversely. Besides these developments, a new transformation wave has been gaining ground within the last ten years. This transformation wave is the rapidly expanding information and communication technologies. These technologies have brought out both challenges and opportunities for the trade union movement. The transformation experienced with the advent of the information and communication technologies hasn't been limited to the workplace and the level of production. On the contrary, a process of transformation is being experienced in a social environment where the unions take place, too. While staying out of this transformation wave makes it difficult for trade unions to overcome this precarious situation the union movement has got caught in, benefiting from the opportunities of the process of change is doubtless unenough for unions to cope with this precarious situation.*

*In conclusion, the trade union movement had better appraise the transformation of organizational structure created by information and communication technologies and benefit from the opportunities appearing in this transformation process for its own organizational structure. To this view, internet and web are transformation technologies and trade union movement could have the chance of reorganization depending upon benefiting from the opportunities information and communication technologies have created. According to the views which point out that these technologies affect the trade union movement positively, internet and web carry out a bridge task between the workforce, whose individual dimension gets stronger and variety increases, and collective movement and solidarity.*

*In this context, throughout the paper, the importance and development of the information and communication technologies are assessed from the perspective of Turkish trade unions. In this sense, the paper discusses the interest and closeness of the trade unions to information and communication technologies and tries to do a situation analysis. The core of this study is the web and internet relationship of the trade unions. In other words, the paper addresses the interest of trade unions in internet and web services, what is understood and aimed from internet and web services, what are the expectations and analyse the situation in practice.*

**Keywords:** *Trade unions, information and communication technologies, internet and web services*

## INTRODUCTION

Last 30 years is an era which is full of the developments affecting trade union movement adversely. Of these, many factors, such as globalization, changes in macroeconomic policies, legislative changes and flexibility, regression at conventional industrial sectors, sectoral change and gaining importance of the service sector in employment and structural transformation of the workforce in connection with this transformation, changes in labour relations in the workplace towards human resource management can be stated.

A new transformation wave parallel to these change dynamics has been gaining ground within the last ten years. This transformation wave is the rapidly expanding information and communication technologies. These technologies have brought out both challenges and opportunities for the trade union movement.

The transformation experienced with the advent of the information and communication technologies hasn't been limited to the workplace and the level of production. On the contrary, a process of transformation is being experienced in a social environment where the unions take place, too(Townsend, Demarie, Hendrickson; 2001:275-276).

Information and communication technologies mean two technologies that are closely interrelated but made up of dissimilar functions.

These are :

1. Communication technologies and
2. Computer technologies(Townsend, Demarie, Hendrickson; 2001:276).

Communication technologies smooth out geographical distances and create connections. As for computer technologies, they as software and hardware strengthen workforce -human- and production processes (Townsend, Demarie, Hendrickson; 2001:276) (<http://www.labournet.org.uk/sbu>).

*Collecting, processing, preserving and sharing by assessing of data-information with the support of internet, which is considered as a data-communication-exchange protocol, and software and hardware, which are two main dimensions of computer technologies, is a change process that should profoundly be evaluated by the unionist movement(Townsend, Demarie, Hendrickson; 2001:276)(Greer; 2002:216). While staying out of*

*this transformation wave makes it difficult for trade unions to overcome this precarious situation the union movement has got caught in, benefiting from the opportunities of the process of change is doubtless unenough for unions to cope with this precarious situation.*

Interconnection of powerful communication technologies and computer systems prompt inestimable global information communication and exchange. Beginning with the means of communication such as telephone and fax, information technologies have turned into an unlimited variety of communication with internet, e-mail and web. Shortly, the communication technologies based on computer provide strong connections and mutual information flow within organization and among organizations. Therefore, these two intercomplementary technologies reveal the real power of information technologies (Townsend, Demarie, Hendrickson; 2001:276).

Doubtless the strengthening of not only organization-based but also human-based relationship, communication and information flow had better be mentioned about when the effect of the transformation wave is taken into consideration within social environment. In this context, removing the obstacles to be brought about by time and geographical differences, information technologies enhance the flow of communication, information and connection through constituting boundlessness in terms of speed and scope. Hence, the right for everyone to get and transfer information is accepted as the main principle.

Consequently, changing life, making it difficult and accused of being the major responsible for the unsuitability of working conditions by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, technology has become a fact in which the trade union movement is to take interest. Even the development of information and communication technologies caused the term of “cyberunion “ to enter into the literature.

### **IS THERE ANY CHALLENGE EXPECTING TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS?**

Rapid development of information and communication technologies negatively affect the organizations trying to keep “their traditional structures”. With the development of information and communication technologies, the function of bridge task among society and institutions of many traditional organizations like political parties, loses its importance (Diamond, Freeman; 2002:569). There are influential assertions which point out that the unions are a part of these process of being negatively affected. That the unions gradually lose its function of

being a strong castle of mass organization, that they lose their power at political decision-making processes, and that their effectiveness upon the society gets weaker are put forward as the main grounds of these assertions.

There are two distinct views at the essays appraising the effects of the information and communication technologies upon the unions: First, the developments experienced in these technologies are to continue to inappropriately influence unions. To this view, the formation of a group that acts on the basis of the proceedings on the agenda is dominant. In essence of this formation, it's stated that the participation will only be individual-based.

The latter favors the view that the opportunity, that a change process whereby union practices are modernized and revived is lived, has emerged(Diamond,Freeman;2002:570). In this context, the terms of "e-union", "cyberunion" are being discussed. It's claimed that this change process facilitates the autonomy and democratize the power which is hierarchically under the control of a certain elite circle in trade unions. As masses-members' participation has gotten stronger, incompetencies of the masses will diminish and union leadership is to get democratic prestige.

In conclusion, the trade union movement had better appraise the transformation of organizational structure created by information and communication technologies and benefit from the opportunities appearing in this transformation process for its own organizational structure. To this view, internet and web are transformation technologies and trade union movement could have the chance of reorganization depending upon benefiting from the opportunities information and communication technologies have created.

According to the views which point out that these technologies affect the trade union movement positively, internet and web carry out a bridge task between the workforce, whose individual dimension gets stronger and variety increases, and collective movement and solidarity(Diamond, Freeman;2002:570).

#### **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

Throughout the paper, the importance and development of the information and communication technologies becoming widespread and more influential in every area of the life are assessed from the perspective of Turkish trade unions. In this sense, the paper discusses the interest and closeness of the trade unions to information and

communication technologies and tries to do a situation analysis. Due to the fact that such kind of study hasn't been done so far, that a situation analysis towards the trade unions is done gains importance.

The core of this study is the web and internet relationship of the trade unions. In other words, the paper addresses the interest of trade unions in internet and web services, what is understood and aimed from internet and web services, what are the expectations and analyse the situation in practice.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

Research has two phases. At the first phase, trade unions were surveyed and at the latter, the web site content analysis of the trade unions from the survey perspective was analysed. Owing to the fact that such kind of study hadn't been done in Turkey before, the content analysis and survey questions were comprehensively prepared. The reason for this is to prepare a basis for the future studies at which more exhaustive evaluations are going to take part.

The observations which were made in the light of the data obtained from the survey, which was applied to the trade unions, were transferred to numerical indicators. The data obtained were compiled by Mr. Kerem Çolak, Faculty Research Assistant, through the statistic program called SPSS 10.0 with the support of computer. At the end of this compilation, survey questions were statistically classified, the relationship among the questions was established and tried to present systematically. The process of collecting the data with the survey and processing them on computer lasted a month. The frequencies of the data obtained from the survey questions were specified and frequency distribution according to the answer choices for survey questions was shown via tables.

### **SCOPE OF THE SURVEY**

It's tried to include all of the member trade unions of 3 trade union confederations in Turkey into the survey. These confederations; The Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions(Turk-Is), Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey(Disk) and Hak-Is Trade Union Confederation(Hak-Is). According to January 2004 data of The Ministry of Labour, the number of the trade unions which were member of 3 confederations and reported as notified member to the Ministry was 58.

Of the trade unions notifying members to The Ministry of Labour as of January 2004, 33 unions were member of Turk-Is, 18 to Disk and 7 to

Hak-Is. As of the same year, the number of independent trade unions notifying members to The Ministry was 32 and the number of those member of The Confederation of Nationalist Trade Unions(Misk) was 2.

The total number of trade unions which notified members to The Ministry as of January 2004 was 92, the number of member trade unions of the 3 confederation which were tried to be included within the scope of the survey was 58. Thus the proportion of the number of the trade unions that were tried to be included within the scope of the survey to the total number of the trade unions which notified members to The Ministry is 63.04%.

On the other hand, while total number of members of 92 trade unions notifying members to The Ministry as of January 2004 is 2.806.927, total number of members of 58 trade unions that are members of 3 confederation is 2.709.238. Therefore the proportion of total number of members of 58 trade unions which were tried to be included within the scope of the survey to total number of unionized workers is 96.51%. Obviously this rate shows that 58 trade unions are essentially active. As a consequence, adequacy in the formation of the survey scope was provided from the point of view of both the number of the trade unions and total number of members of the trade unions. Finally 42 trade unions out of 58 that the survey had been sent did respond the survey. So the return rate of the survey is 72.41%.

### **CONTENT OF THE SURVEY**

The survey is made up of three parts. First part called “Union Information” tries to get basic information about the trade unions. For this aim, the questions like union’s name, the name of the confederation of which the union is being a member and its total number of member according to the data of the Ministry were asked.

Second part called “Use of Communication Technologies” examines computerization situation, IT structure, internet access, internet and computer services towards members, use frequency and situation of basic means of communication, union’s approach to internet use and its understanding of e-unionism.

Final part covers the questions concerning web sites. In these questions, whether the unions had got a web site, the reasons why it didn’t have a web site, if it did, the purpose of its use, the role of the web site from the perspective of union activities and goals, and the rate of unions’ benefiting from web sites were discussed.

### **SCOPE OF WEB SITE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The purpose of web site content analysis is to evaluate the information obtained from the survey. In this framework, analysing the practice rate of the trade unions' interest in information and communication technologies and, in particular, specifying the practice rate of the responses taking part in the third part of the survey are of importance.

For this aim, web site content analysis of 58 trade unions were tried to be made. It was found out that only 26 out of 58 trade unions had active web sites according to the study done by means of internet as of April 2004. Hence, the proportion of the trade unions having active web site within the scope of the questionnaire is 44.82%.

As far as the proportion of these trade unions to 3 confederations is regarded, it's observed that those member of Turk-Is outnumber. According to the data of January 2004, it was found that 20 trade unions out of 33 ones member of Turk-Is had active web site. It was established that only 3 out of 18 trade unions member of Disk and 7 ones member of Hak-Is had web site.

### **EXAMINING WEB SITE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

With the examining web site content analysis, it's appraised whether web sites are "active" according to the communication, taking information and interactive features. In this sense, the questions of web site content analysis were composed of 8 parts in which small questions formed a group inside themselves. These parts are called "General Information", "Organizational Structure and Address Information", "Unionization", "Data Concerning Working Life", "Collective Agreements", "Training and Union Publications", "e-Applications", and "Links".

### **ASSESSMENT OF THE SURVEY RESULTS**

Initially it was found that the trade unions member of Turk-Is had the vast majority when the distribution of 42 respondent trade unions to 3 confederations of which they were member were assessed. The proportion of the trade unions member of Turk-Is is 64.3%(27 unions); the proportion of those member of Disk is 23.8%(10 trade unions) and the proportion of those member of Hak-Is is 11.9%(5 unions). When these rates are compared, the proportion of those member of Turk-Is is nearly 2.5 as big as the proportion of those member of Disk and approximately 5.5 as big as the proportion of those member of Hak-Is.



Thus, It could be put forward that the unions member of Turk-Is has an influential role in determination of the main directions of the survey.

A striking point from the perspective of general information is distribution of total number of member of the respondent unions according to the data of the Ministry. According to those, total number of member of 14 trade unions is under 15.000, total number of 15 trade unions is between 15.001-45.000 and total number of 13 trade unions is 45.001 and above. Thus, the trade unions participating in the survey can be called as relatively equal numbered small, middle and big-sized trade unions. In brief, 33.3 % of the respondent trade unions could be considered as small-sized(14 unions) with the number of members below 15.000; 35.7% of them middle-sized(15 unions) with the number of members between 15.001-45.000 and 31% of them big-sized(13 unions) with the number of 45.001 and more members. These rates show the commensurately distribution of the respondent unions from the size point of view and so the fallible assessments stemming from being dependent upon a certain amount of size diminish.

At “Use of Communication Technologies” part of the survey, widespreadness of trade unions’ computer use and internet and union services towards their members about computer and internet ownership and use were discussed. For this purpose, at first it was specified whether the trade unions had a computer use irrespective of its purpose and number. It was found that 97.6% of the respondent trade unions used computer. Only 1 out of 42 trade unions was found not to use computer.

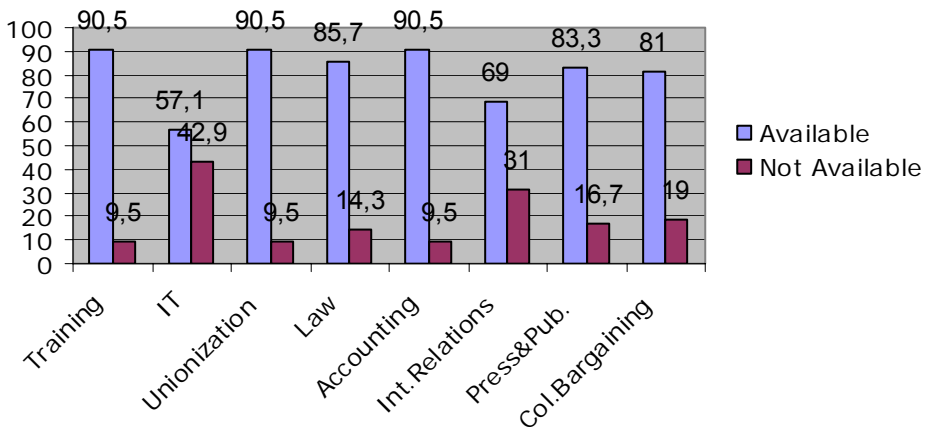
When the distribution of the total number of computer being used by trade unions was considered, it was found that 28.6%(12 unions) was using computers among 1-5; 23.8%(10 unions) among 6-10; 9.5%(4 unions) among 11-15 and 35.7%(15 unions) among 16 and above. The trade union not responding this question is ,in fact, the one that stated that it wasn’t using computer at previous question.

If the fact that 33.3% of the respondent trade unions is small-sized and 31% is big-sized is remembered, as parallel to these rates, it can be pointed out that the number of the computers small-sized unions use is 5 and below, the number of that big-sized unions use is 16 and above. Indeed, though the members of 14 trade unions are less than 15.000, the number of computers 12 trade unions use is 5 or below, too. Despite this, while the number of the members of 13 trade unions is 45.001 and above, the number of the computers 15 unions use is 16 and above, too.

As far as the widespreadness of the trade unions' computer use is concerned, at first, it was established whether or not the unions had certain departments and afterwards the rate of computer use in the existing departments of unions was surveyed. The purpose is to specify the departments in which computer was extensively being used.

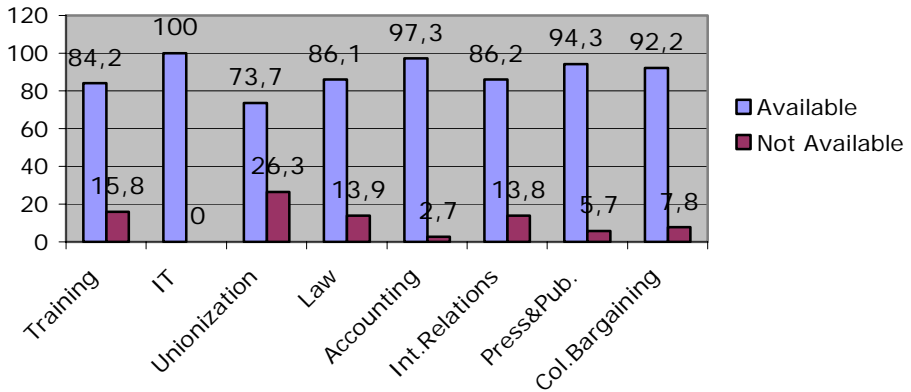
It was worked out that the departments of training, unionization, law, accounting, the press&publication and collective bargaining were notably prevalent in the trade unions. For instance, the departments of training, unionization and accounting in the organizational structure took place at a rate of 90.5%; the departments of law 85.7% and the press& publication 83.3%. What's striking here is that IT department hasn't been widespread in the organizational structure of the unions. The trade unions which have IT department is only 24.

**PERCENTAGE OF DEPARTMENTALIZATION IN TRADE UNIONS**



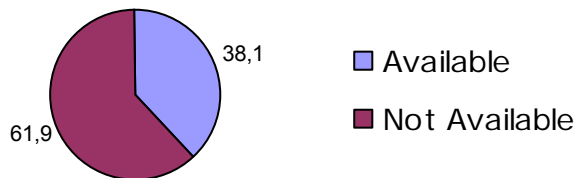
With regard to this determination, as far as the rate of computer use in related departments is concerned, it can be put forward that the computer use in all the departments of the unions is fairly widespread. It was found that computer use had been above 80% in 7 departments out of 8 ones that took part in the organizational structure. In particular, the rate of computer use in IT department increased at a rate of 100% as its structure required.

**PERCENTAGE OF COMPUTERIZATION IN DEPARTMENTS**



Once the union’s organizational structure was concerned in the context of the responsibility of computer and internet operations, it was established that 16(38.1%) out of 42 respondent unions had IT department. In plain words, the fact that a higher rate had been found within the scope of the previous study, through which whether IT departments had been organized in trade unions was taken into consideration, should be regarded as an ambiguity. While 57.1% of the unions pointed out that they had IT department at previous questions, an affirmative response at a rate of 38.1% was given to the question “ is there an IT departmnet responsible for computer and internet”. Thus, the number of the unions pointing out that they had IT department fell from 24 to 16.

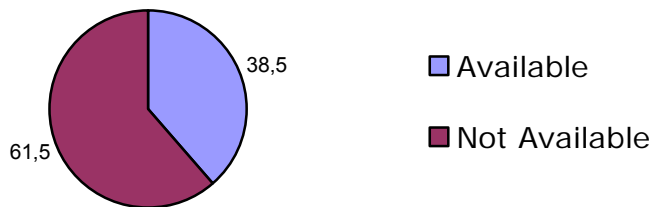
**PERCENTAGE OF IT DEPARTMENTS TAKE PART IN TRADE UNIONS**



Clearly, since the question that “is there an IT department responsible for computer and internet operations” has an obvious meaning, it’ll be true that the rate of 38.1% is taken as the measure for the assessment of the existence of IT department. In this sense, as emphasized before, it could easily be stated that IT department hasn’t become a widespread one in the organizational structure compared to the other divisions.

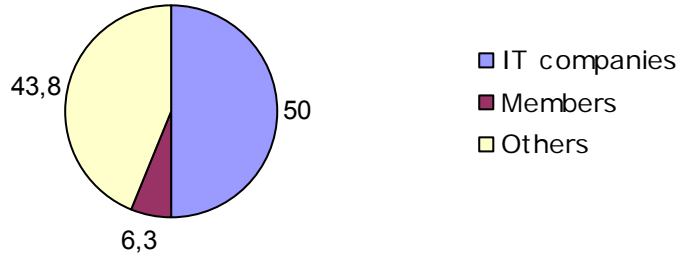
When only 26 trade unions(61.9%) not having IT department were concerned, it was determined that the number of the unions employing IT specialist(s) in order to execute computer and internet operations was 10. Therefore it can be stated that 61.9%(16+10 unions) of the trade unions has IT department and specialist(s).

#### PERCENTAGE OF IT SPECIALIST(S) EMPLOYED IN TRADE UNIONS



16 unions not employing IT specialist(s) stated two ways of filling this gap. But what should specifically be emphasized is that 50% of 16 unions preferred benefiting from IT companies at internet and web design. On the other hand, 7 trade unions, too, marked the choice of the union administrators or staff familiar with internet, even web design by choosing “other” option.

**PERCENTAGE OF UNIONS' CHOICES FOR IT DUTIES  
INSTEAD OF EMPLOYING IT SPECIALIST(S)**



Shortly 34 unions pointed out that they had preferred to work with IT department, IT specialist(s) or IT companies so as to execute computer and internet operations. Doubtless to say, this tendency shows that trade unions have inclined towards a specialization-oriented organizational structure as regards computer and internet use.

**PERCENTAGE OF IT DEPARTMENTS TAKE PART ACCORDING TO SIZE OF UNIONS**

Small-sized unions	18.8 (%)	3 (Number of unions)
Midium-sized unions	31.2 (%)	5 (Number of unions)
Large-sized unions	50.0 (%)	8 (Number of unions)

**PERCENTAGE OF IT SPECIALIST(S) EMPLOYED ACCORDING TO SIZE OF UNIONS**

Small-sized unions	50.0 (%)	5 (Number of unions)
Midium-sized unions	30.0 (%)	3 (Number of unions)
Large-sized unions	20.0 (%)	2 (Number of unions)

When the formation of IT department or working with the specialist(s) was compared to the size of the union, it was found out that only 3 out of 16 trade unions which had IT department were small-sized(18.8%), despite this fact, 8 unions were big-sized(50%). However, it was observed that the unions which were working with IT specialist(s) were

comparatively in a converse situation. Also, it was found that 5 out of 10 unions working with IT specialist(s) were small-sized(50%); 2 of them big-sized(20%). As a result, it's possible to point out that IT department is preferred as the number of members of the unions goes up.

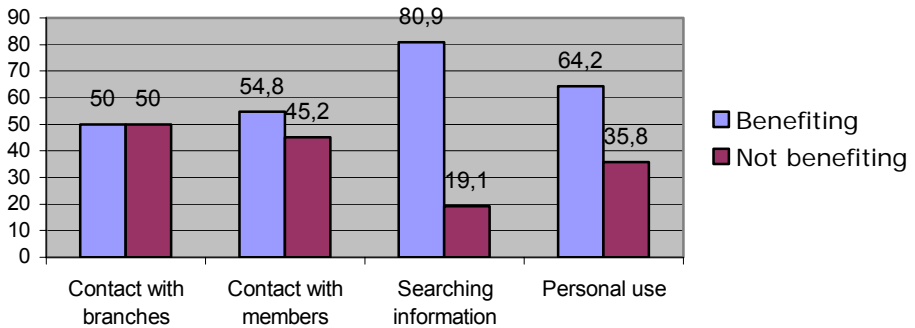
When internet access was surveyed, 95% of the unions pointed out that they had internet access. Just 2 out of 42 unions stated that they had no internet access. As far as the method of providing internet access was concerned, it was observed that the vast majority of 39 trade unions(2 unions didn't respond the question due to not having internet access, 1 union did forget to answer the question despite having internet access) had preferred fast internet access. 82%(32 unions) of the unions preferred the method of cable or ADSL as internet access. Consequently, it was concluded that the vast majority of trade unions had internet access and it was at a fast speed. When the network line among the computers in the union was considered, it was found out that 29 unions(69%) had network line. This rate is of great importance in view of the fact that it shows that the unions employ internet access organizationally not individually.

In the light of all these information, stating that the unions are strong from the perspective of their computer use, ownership of specialists on IT, internet access and its speed and network line inside the union won't be misleading.

But, as far as whether there was an on-line connection between the headquarter and branches was analysed, it was inferred that the trade unions hadn't made a noticeable progress. Just 4 unions(9.5%) stated that they had on-line connection system towards their branches. As a result, although trade unions formed a strong structure in the headquarter, unification of the branches with this structure remained weak.

As for the way of the trade unions' benefiting from internet access, a large number of the unions pointed out that they used internet to search information and for personal purposes. To be brief, 34 of the unions marked information search(80.9%), 27 of them personal use (64.2%).

**PERCENTAGE OF UNIONS' WAYS OF BENEFITING FROM INTERNET**



Even though the terms of “information search” and “personal use” comprise remarkable uncertainties, it’s highly obvious that the purposes of information search and personal use outweigh compared to the use of the internet for communication with the branches and members. On benefiting internet, though the rate of the unions which emphasized the importance of the communication with the branches was around 50%(21 unions), the rate of those which stated the aim of the communication with the members was 54.8%(23 unions). Considering these data, information search and personal use take precedence over communication. In other words, it’s discussable if the trade unions use internet effectively enough.

Another topic examined within the extent of the survey is the situation and frequency of trade unions’ using the means of communication. Its purpose is to discuss unions’ e-mail and web site use and its frequency. It was found out that 97.6% of the unions were using mail, phone and fax. Just 1 union stated that it wasn’t using these means of communication. As far as the use frequency of these means of communication, it was concluded that 78.6% of the unions highly frequently and frequently uses mail; 97.6% phone and 90.5% fax. So it could be asserted that the trade unions prevalently and noticeably frequently use the traditional means of communication.

**PERCENTAGE OF USING OF COMMUNICATION MEANS**

	Not in use (%)	Planned (%)	In use (%)	No answer (%)
Mail	2,4	0	97,6	0
Phone	2,4	0	97,6	0
Fax	2,4	0	97,6	0
Tele-Conference	23,8	2,4	42,9	31
e-mail	9,5	0	81	9,5
Web	7,1	4,8	73,8	14,3

As far as the use of e-mail and web sites as a means of communication was taken into consideration, it was found that a vast majority of the unions were using e-mail and web sites. 34 out of the trade unions which responded the survey stated that they were using e-mail, 31 out of them stated that they have web sites and 2 stated that they were planning to compose a web site.

Consequently, the proportion of the trade unions that use e-mail and web sites isn't inadequate even if it isn't as high as that of the trade unions which use traditional means of communication. 81% of the trade unions expressed that they were using e-mail and 73.8% put forward that they had web site. It was found out that 58.8%(20 unions) of the unions highly frequently and frequently used e-mail and 61.3%(19 unions) web sites.

**PERCENTAGE OF FREQUENCY IN USING OF COMMUNICATION MEANS**

	1 (rarely)	2	3	4	5 (highly freq.)	No answer
Mail	2,4	4,8	11,9	4,8	73,8	2,4
Phone	---	---	---	2,4	95,2	2,4
Fax	---	4,8	2,4	16,7	73,8	2,4
Tele-conference	26,3	21,1	31,6	5,3	15,8	---
e-mail	5,9	11,8	20,6	17,6	41,2	2,9
Web	3,2	12,9	22,6	29	32,3	---

Accordingly, while use frequency of e-mail and web sites is relatively low compared to traditional means of communication, this situation doesn't prove that the trade unions don't prefer the possibilities of web site and e-mail. Conversely, it seems possible to say that the trade



unions prefer the e-mail and web sites as the new means of communication and develop their possibilities related to these parameters.

Another topic being assessed is that which union activities have gained effectivity with the practice of the means of communication. What primarily attracts attention is that the trade unions ascribe great importance to communication activity. Thanks to the means of communication, an important part of the unions pointed out that the coordination and communication with the branches, other union organizations and association, and communication with the public gained more effectivity. It was found that 65-70% of the trade unions was in favour of this opinion.

On the other hand, the trade unions put forward that they couldn't make enough progress in creating solidarity among the members and services towards them with the support of the communication technologies. As regards the services towards the members, 54.8% of the unions, as for the solidarity among the members, 71.4% stated that there was no progress. Obviously, it oughtn't be forgotten that the efforts to provide service and solidarity are mutual and the members should also be willing to be active on web and internet.

Emphasizing the fact that their political effectiveness didn't improve, perhaps, the trade unions engaged attention to the weakness of computerization and the use of internet and web on the level of society and member. But, under these circumstances, it's too hard to account for the fact that 66.7% of the unions pointed out that their communication effectivity with the public had improved. As a result, it seems hardly persuasive to state that the union activities have gained momentum through communication technologies.

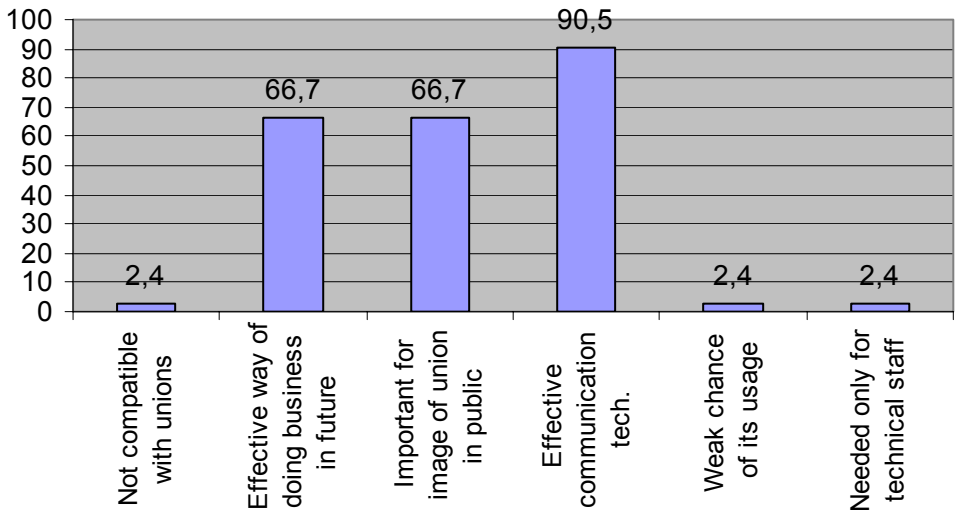
#### **CHANGES IN EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADE UNIONS' ACTIVITIES BY COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES ([CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE TABLE](#))**

In the context of this discussion, when an appraisal was done from the e-unionism point of view, more than 75% of the trade unions stated that they believed in the effectivity which information and communication technologies would bring about. For this reason, increasing importance of e-unionism should be acknowledged for unions.

### PERCENTAGE OF IMPORTANCE OF TRADE UNIONS' ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO E-UNIONISM ([CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE TABLE](#))

When the approach of the unions to the use of internet was analysed, it was observed that the unions essentially believed in the effectivity which information and communication technologies would create. The number of the unions was 3, which pointed out that internet use wasn't required for their union, and its use chance in unionism was weak, and only needed for technical staff(while 3 seperate choices could be marked for this question, 3 seperate unions marked these 3 choices). Though, as emphasized before, 90.5%(38 union) of the unions put forward that internet was an effective means of communication, and 66.7%(28 union) stated that they were believing it to be an effective means of doing business in advance. What's interesting here is that 66.7%(28 union) of the unions regarded the use of internet as important from the perspective of image.

#### PERCENTAGE OF UNIONS' APPROACH TO INTERNET USE

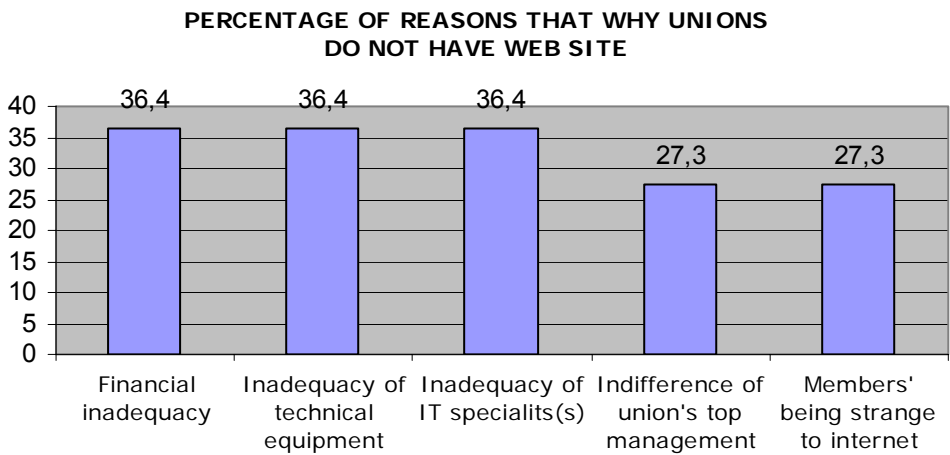


#### ASSESSMENT OF THE DATA RELATED TO THE WEB SITES

What should firstly be pointed out is that it was found out that 31 out of 42 unions had web sites. Accordingly, within the extent of this survey,

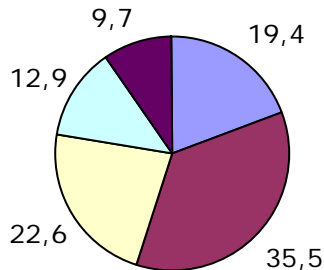
the proportion of the unions which have web sites is 73.8%. Of 11 trade unions which didn't have web site, only two stated that they were planning to compose a web site.

Of the unions which didn't have web site, the number of those which were believing the benefit of the web site is 10(1 union didn't respond the survey). Consequently, 90.9% of the trade unions put forward that they had faith in the fact that the web site would be beneficial. When the reason why the trade unions didn't have web site was inquired, one of the reasons of financial inadequacy, inadequacy of technical equipment, being understaffed in IT specialist, inconsiderateness of the top administration of the union and the unfamiliarity of the members to the virtual media outweighs. In this context, it can be stated that all of these reasons is effective.



As far as the trade unions that have web site is considered, it's concluded that the vast majority of them activated their web site newly. The proportion of the unions that have had web site for less than 3 years is 54.9%. Despite this, the proportion of those which have had web site for 5 years and more is 22.6%. Briefly, that 26.2%(11 unions) of the unions responding the survey don't have web site, and that the 54.9%(17 unions) of those which have web site have had for less than 3 years can be assessed as the rates that show the fact that the unions have been developing their web sites very recently.

## PERCENTAGE OF BEING ACTIVE OF WEB SITES



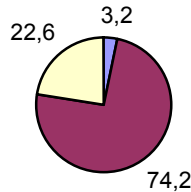
■ Less than 1 year ■ 1-3 years □ 3-5 years □ 5-7 years ■ 7years +

Once the purpose of the web site use is inquired, it's inferred that the trade unions don't compose their web sites short-sightedly. The unions put forward that they were using their sites not only to procure their personalization by diversifying the services of the web site towards the members, but also to build an interactive communication with the members and society. Evidently, this approach of the unions points to a comprehensive viewpoint.

Of the trade unions that have web sites, whereas 23(74.2%) expressed that they had aimed at building an interactive communication with the members and society, just 1(3.2%) put emphasis on the services towards the members. What's interesting here is that 7(22.6%) didn't respond the question related to the purpose of the web site use.

As a consequence, it can be asserted that a certain part of the unions don't have a certain view about web sites. Besides, that the unions(approx. 55%) have had newly activated their web site could be taken into consideration as the reason why they didn't respond to this question. Perhaps, they didn't act by concentrating on a certain aim while composing web sites. On the other hand, none of the unions pointed out that they had composed web site just to be able to say that "we have a web site, too".

### PERCENTAGE OF AIMS OF UNIONS IN USING OF WEB SITE



- To personalize services for members
- To have an interactive connection with members&society
- No answer

When the considerations related to the role of the web sites are looked into, it should be stated that web sites have a narrow influence on some points but the unions attach a special importance to the communication aspect of the web sites. To illustrate, the rate of the unions, which find it important that web sites facilitate members' getting information from the union and their communication with it, strenghten the relationship with national and international union and civil society organizations, union-press relationship, acquainting the public and feedback from it, is above 60%. Doubtless to say, all of these expressions put emphasis mainly on the aspect of communication and shows the fact that the unions attach importance to the function of communication via web sites.

On the other hand, the unions didn't disregard the role of the web sites in enhancing the organizational productivity, reinforcing the services towards the members and union campaigns, and strenghtening the union identity and organizational activities. The rate of the unions which believe in that web sites play a constructive role even if not so effectively is above 60%.

### PERCENTAGE OF IMPORTANCE OF WEB SITE ROLE IN TRADE UNIONS' ACTIVITIES ([CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE TABLE](#))

Yet, the unions(64.6%) that attached importance to the role of the web site in strenghtening the unionization activities didn't value at the same level the fact that the member recruitment would get easier via web sites(42.1%). In brief, the unions put forward that unionization grew up

positively, but in practice, that the web sites didn't play such an important role(6.5%) in recruitment of the new members.

In the meantime, the unions pointed out that web sites had a limited role in democratization of the union administration and getting stronger of the social image of the union movement. Only 50% of the unions stated that they were appreciating the role of the web sites in these matters. What's noteworthy here is that 22.5% of the unions didn't reply to these questions at all. Perhaps, the unions avoided explaining their choices on these matters.

When the role of the web sites and the viewpoint of the trade unions to e-unionism are contrasted, above all, what should be emphasized once more is that the unions substantially attach importance to multi-dimensional communication. In this context, enhancing of the international union movement, and developing the relationship with other unions and the associations effective on work life are essential aims.

Owing to the fact that the concept of e-unionism was a multi-dimensional one and direct application was considered in the appraisal of the role of the web sites, the vast majority of the unions appraised the web sites more prudently while considerably appreciating the effectivity which the e-unionism would create. For instance, the unions gave more prudent appraisals at provision of the members' active participation(73.2%) and reinforcing of the feedback from the members(70.9%) rather than communication with the members(87.2%). Though the e-unionism was considered important in constituting and enhancing new union activities(90.4%), the unions abstained a bit more on the matter that the services towards the members would be effective with the web sites(64.6%).

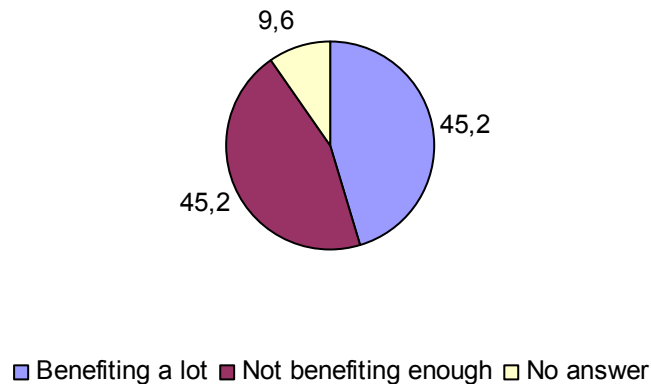
The unions, which had expressed the importance of e-unionism in acquainting the public and taking its brace(88.1%), pointed out that they were believing less in the fact that acquainting the public would get easier(60.7%) and the feedback from it would gain strength(64.6%) via web sites.

Correspondingly it was put forward that e-unionism was important in making the union democracy stronger(80.5%), but the role of the web sites in democratising the union administration(48.3%) was limited.

In conclusion, once the evaluations related to the understanding of e-unionism and the role of web sites are taken into account as a whole, it's observed that the importance and effectivity of web sites in e-unionism haven't properly been comprehended and assessed in practice by the unions yet. The major reason of this situation is that the internet use hasn't become widespread in the society and that the web sites are far from leading to interactive participation.

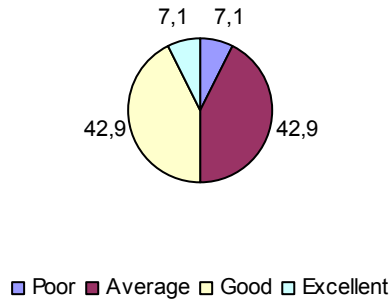
Finally, as far as the situation that the unions benefit from the web sites and how they benefit from it are concerned, half of 28 unions(3 unions didn't respond) stated that they had been benefiting from the web sites considerably(45.2%), the rest not benefiting from them sufficiently(45.2%). There were no unions that put forward that they hadn't been benefiting from the web sites at all.

#### PERCENTAGE OF BENEFITING FROM WEB SITES



What seems intriguing is that this distribution also appears in the question of how they appraise the web sites. 12 out of 28 trade unions evaluated web sites averagely, other 12 of them well. Only 2 unions valued web sites weak, and other 2 excellent. In short, the unions, which pointed out that they were benefiting from the web sites a lot, mostly valued them well, and those, which pointed out they they weren't benefiting from the web sites adequately, valued averagely.

### PERCENTAGE OF UNIONS' ASSESMENT OF WEB SITES



### THE ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE WEB SITES

Through the second phase of the research, the content analysis of 58 trade unions' web sites was tried to be done. By the research done on internet as of April 2004, it was specified that only 26 out of 58 trade unions had active web site.

The purpose in the web site content analysis is to make a general comparison of some information obtained from the survey. The degree of the trade unions' interest to the information and communication technologies is to be discussed.

According to the data of the survey, the point that the unions primarily and especially put emphasis on is to communicate with their members and the society. As far as the web sites were concerned in this sense, it was observed that there had been basic information required to provide the communication. It was concluded that the rate of the unions which offered the information such as mail address, phone and fax on the level of headquarters was 100%; the rate of those which offered these information on the level of the branches was 96.2%.

When whether there was an e-mail address belonging to the headquarters is inquired, it was specified that there was an e-mail address belonging to the headquarters in just 20 web sites. In spite of this, the number of those which offered the e-mails of the administrators of the headquarters is 6. Thus, while 76.9% of the web sites offered an



e-mail address belonging to the headquarters, 23.1% released the e-mail addresses of the headquarters administrators. Even though there is a proportionately complementary structure, the fact that an e-mail address to the headquarters was absent in 6 web sites was a considerable inadequacy from the communication point of view. This eventually discloses the insufficiency of the institutional communication. Meanwhile, the fact that, mostly, there wasn't a private e-mail address belonging to the headquarters administrators is a situation that uncovers the poorness of the interest to the communication technologies on the managerial level. Nonetheless, it was established in only 1 web site that there were separate e-mail addresses released for the departments of IT, industrial relations-collective bargaining, public relations and international relations.

Similar inadequacy was also observed on the branch level. The web site number of the branches which offers e-mail addresses is just 6(23.1%). And the e-mail addresses of the administrators of branches weren't offered in any web site. As a consequence, the communication of the headquarters and especially members with the branches gets more and more difficult and traditional means of communication gain more and more importance. In this extent, it was specified that only 1 trade union gave an e-mail address, assigned to the union, towards its members.

This inadequacy became more and more clear while considering the lower level positions. While in no web sites, the e-mails of the workplace representatives were offered; in just 3 ones, the information(name& surmane) about the representatives was presented.

When the union policies and activities were considered from the perspective of taking information of the members and society, it was found that most of the web sites were introducing lots of varied kinds of information. It was made out that 76.9% of the web sites was presenting information about the union activities, 69.2% about union policies.

Yet, in the content analysis, every topic ranging from any visit of the union president to the training meetings held regularly was regarded as union activity. As for the union policies, the views and practices of the union administration, which were reflecting the union's formal considerations, about the economic and social events were taken into consideration. Such as the views about privatization, economical stability policies and early retirement programs, which were reflecting

the union's formal considerations. Shortly, it's impossible to put forward that the web sites have a rich content regarding general information.

As far as the content analysis is concerned as a whole, it's inconceivable to assert that the web sites have an affluent content concerning the unionization, the data and information about the work life, the information about collective agreements, union publications and e-applications, too.

When 26 web sites are assessed as a whole, it was observed that only 4 sites had mentioned about the aim of unionization, 5 offered the e-mail address of the headquarters administrator responsible for the unionization, 6 general information about membership procedures and registration form, 4 statistics related to the work life, 5 macro economic data, 7 legal process of collective bargaining and 6 the text of the collective bargaining in force. For instance, of the statistics related to the work life, the rate of unionization, monthly food expenditures, monthly and yearly inflation rates, minimum wage rates and income tax rates were included. It was found that the number of the web sites which had revealed the texts of the law and regulations of work life was 17.

As to the training, union publications and e-application services of the web sites, it was observed that 12 web sites had brought up the importance of the training and offered general information (such as place, schedule, topic, name of the instructor and participants) about the yearly and periodically training activities, training programs (information about their content) were presented in 8 web sites and e-training modules took part in 3 ones.

Nonetheless, e-training modules are never an education program which provides information or expertise on virtual media and directed under an instructor's observation. It's only conceivable to mention about that a structure takes part, which aim at acquainting the members and in which many distinguished articles released by academicians and union specialists about the matters closely related to the work life. It had better not be forgotten that even this distinguished e-training presentation takes part in too few web sites.

It can easily be pointed out that the web sites are rather too poor in union publication and e-applications. It was established that the number of the web sites, which had been presenting e-union publications (book

and other ones), e-union periodicals and e-union bulletin, fluctuated just between 5 and 7. It was worked out that just the presentation of the union publications was being made in 23 web sites. In other words, it was concluded that only the parts of the cover and contents of the periodicals and other publications were being released in most of the web sites.

As for the e-applications, it was found out that a coverage towards this topic didn't take part in almost none of the web sites. It was specified that live chat-rooms, e-mail groups and e-voting practices hadn't been included in any web site; a forum coverage that was open to everyone, which could be entered with user name and password and in which every kind of topic was being discussed, was composed in just 1 web site; and e-survey were made in 6 web sites. As of April 2004, the number of those who had been member of the forum page was approximately 150. As of the phase at which the content analysis was made, of the question examples of e-survey were "How do you consider the studies of public administration reform?"; "Have you found the last Annan plan acceptable?"; "In your opinion, should the new internet law be released?"; "How is the new labour law affecting the work life?"; "Which activities should be attached more importance in union activities?".

Additionally, in the web site in which forum coverage had been composed, a list of e-mail was introduced, too. With this list of e-mail, recent developments related to the union and social news like birth, marriage and illness were being relayed to the group. In the same web site, the topics relating to the members of the union had been determined and it was made possible for the members to put forward their views. Of the discussion topics, privatization, collective bargaining, employee health and safety could be cited. A similar practice called "page of the visitor" was observed in another web site. It was inferred that the members of the unions had relased their views about collective bargaining.

## **CONCLUSION**

Turkish union movement has been going through a precarious situation deriving from the union crisis all around the world. But beyond this union crisis being experienced, perhaps above all is that Turkish unionism has also been facing the challenges stemming from the conditions peculiar to the country itself. Internal challenges of the union movement such as

unionization, democracy and participation, and socioeconomic ones, like the process of industrialization which hasn't been able to be completed through The Republic era, first rapid inclination to the liberal economic policies with 24<sup>th</sup> January economic decisions, afterwards the constitutional and legal framework which were shaped by the military intervention in 1980, the economic policy preferences of the conservative governments having mostly been taking office over the last 20 years and particularly high inflation having been faced from 1990 onwards, low investment, permanently increasing internal-external debt burden and eventually unemployment which has been ingrained with the economic crises and unregistered employment, have been the main issues of Turkish trade unionism.

According to the data of Ministry of Labour, the union movement which had been struggling to get stronger within the spiral of these challenges was able to organize approximately just 2.8 millions out of 4.9 million employees within the extent of social security as of January 2004. In brief, the rate of unionization is 57.78%. This rate comprises 30% of the total paid workforce. But as in the case of most of the countries, if the total workforce is taken into consideration, the proportion of unionization goes down nearly to 15%.

### **NUMERICAL TRANSFORMATION ISSUE IN TURKEY**

Within the extent of such a weak unionization, it's rather difficult and controversial to take into account of the development and importance of the information and communication technologies from the perspective of the trade unions in Turkey. Nonetheless, this technological transformation is of importance as not to be underestimated in protecting the power of the union movement and making it possible for the unions to be effective in social and economical policies by expanding its organizational framework.

The main issue for Turkey is the fact that these technologies haven't become widespread throughout the social ground rather than debating the possible transformation which information and communication technologies are to bring about in the union area.

As far as the prevalency of the internet in Turkey, which is the most preferred means of communication in the XXIth century, is concerned, it's inconceivable to talk about a constructive development. The number

of the computer in Turkey per 100 people is 4.1, the number of internet users 2.5 millions(if the fact that the number of the ultimate users is more than the registered one is regarded, it was claimed that there were approximately 3.5 million internet users), the penetration rate of internet 3.8%(the proportion of internet users to total population above 14 years-old)(Canbey;2003:158-159) and the frequently use rate of internet was 4% in the year 2001(<http://www.tisk.org.tr/yayinlar.asp?sbj=ic&id>).

When only the cities were taken into consideration for a healthier assessment, computer rate in the houses went up to 12.3% and the rate of those who have internet at their home became 7%(Canbey;2003:169-170). In short, there isn't internet connection on nearly half of the computers existing in the houses in the cities. Specifically, it was established that 9 out of each 100 people had been using internet frequently(<http://www.tisk.org.tr/yayinlar.asp?sbj=ic&id>).

Low prevalency rate of the internet conversely affects the internet servers as well. As of 2001, the number of internet server per 1000 people in Turkey was only 3.6. Inadequacy of the number of the internet user and servers is accompanied by insufficiency of the web sites. As of the same year, the number of the web sites per 1000 people was just 0.3 (<http://www.tisk.org.tr/yayinlar.asp?sbj=ic&id>).

Therefore, in a society in which numerical transformation is extremely weak, it's not so easy to expect the trade unions to perceive this transformation process and benefit from it with their members.

When the survey results are evaluated without disregarding these main challenges; it can be asserted that the trade unions are in a strong position from the point of views of computerization, working with specialist on IT, internet access and its speed and interunion network. Nevertheless, it's very obvious that the unions haven't made a noticeable progress in on-line connection between the headquarters and branches. In this sense, while the unions have composed a powerful structure on the level of headquarters, the parameter of integrating the branches with this structure has remained weak. It's another fact that the trade unions are unable to provide services toward their members by web sites. Briefly, a failure in the transfer of the process based on new technologies to the branches and members can be brought up. Consequently, on benefiting from the internet access, information search and personal use outweigh instead of the communication with the members and branches. For this reason,

whether the unions have reached the level of enough effectivity is debatable.

When the relationship between communication technologies and union activities is considered, what attracts attention is that the trade unions attach huge importance to communication activities. Approximately 65-70% of the unions pointed out that, thanks to the the communication technologies, the communication and coordination with their branches, other union organizations and associations, international organizations and the public had improved. But it's inferred that, with the support of the communication technologies, enough progress wasn't acquired in the services towards the members and creating solidarity among the members.

As far as the e-unionism is evaluated in the context of this discussion, nearly more than 75% of the unions put forward that they were believing in the effectivity which information and communication technologies would create. For instance, the proportion of the unions, which find it important that, by means of e-unionism, acquainting the public and getting its support, strengthening the international union movement, coming up with new union services, inspiring union democracy and providing active participation of the members, is above 70%. Moreover, there is a strong belief that e-unionism is the core of the union communication and reform strategies.

It was concluded that the trade unions, which didn't disregard the importance of information and communication technologies, and enhanced its main technological infrastructure such as computerization and internet access, take the web sites into consideration with a comprehensive viewpoint. Vast majority of the unions stated that they were using web sites to interactively communicate with the members and society.

Nevertheless, in view of the fact that the term of e-unionism is a multi-dimensional one and direct application has gained importance in assessment of the role of the web sites, while highly valuing the effectivity which e-unionism would create from the union activities point of view, vast majority of the unions evaluated the role of the web sites prudently. In this context, the statement that the unions use their web sites to interactively communicate with their members and society brings out an ambiguous situation and even loses its validity. In other words, though profoundly appreciating the transformation that

information and communication technologies will bring about, the unions act extremely slowly in practice.

Consequently, as far as e-unionism, the evaluations related to the role of the web sites and the content analyses of the web sites are appraised as a whole, it's concluded that the effectivity of internet and web sites still couldn't be comprehended enough by the unions and hasn't been assessed enough in practice from the perspective of the members and society.

It can easily be asserted that the trade unions haven't had a certain view about internet use and web sites, and acted with a clear aim. Such kind of strategy deficiency has prompted the unions to form a web site, which doesn't have any interactive characteristic in the sense of "we have a web site, too", just to use e-mail. In other words, the inclination towards developing union movement with the support of the information and communication technologies, strengthening a democratic and participative structure is an understanding what is too far from the perspective of the trade unions. The number of the unions which reflect such an aim isn't more than the fingers of a hand.

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**CHANGES IN EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADE UNIONS' ACTIVITIES  
BY COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

	Effective (%)	Not effective (%)	Effective (number of unions)	Not effective (number of unions)
Unionization	59,5	40,5	25	17
Collective bargaining	35,7	64,3	15	27
Services for members	45,2	54,8	19	23
Solidarity among members	28,6	71,4	12	30
Communication between union man. & members	50	50	21	21
Communication with branches	64,3	35,7	27	15
Communication with national unions	69	31	29	13
Communication with international unions	69	31	29	13
Political effectiveness	19	81	8	34
Communication with public	66,7	33,3	28	14

**PERCENTAGE OF IMPORTANCE OF TRADE UNIONS' ACTIVITIES**

**ACCORDING TO E-UNIONISM**

	Not important	Partly important	No idea	Important	Very important
Effective & cheaper communication	---	9,5	---	59,5	31
Strengthen active participation of members	4,9	22	---	41,5	31,7
Main element of union communication & reform strategy	2,4	9,5	11,9	42,9	33,3
Giving information to public & having its support	---	11,9	---	38,1	50
New services & strengthening of the services	2,4	4,8	2,4	69	21,4
Unionization & new members recruitment	7,3	17,1	2,4	34,1	39
Strengthening of the union democracy	2,4	12,2	4,9	43,9	36,6
Strengthening of the international union movement	---	4,8	4,8	50	40,4

**PERCENTAGE OF IMPORTANCE OF WEB SITE ROLE IN TRADE UNIONS' ACTIVITIES**

	Important					
	Not important	Partly important	No idea	Very important	No answer	
Increases the organizational effectiveness of the union	6,5	6,5	3,2	48,4	19,3	16,1
Reduces the administrative cost of the union	16,1	16,1	9,6	32,5	9,6	16,1
Makes the services for the members effective	6,5	19,3	---	51,7	12,9	9,6
Facilitates members' getting information from union & communicating with it	---	3,2	---	48,4	38,8	9,6
Strengthens the feedback from the members	6,5	3,2	6,5	48,4	22,5	12,9
Strengthens union's identity	3,2	9,6	3,2	38,8	35,6	9,6
Strengthens unionization activities	3,2	19,3	---	51,7	12,9	12,9
Facilitates recruitments of new members	9,6	25,7	6,5	35,6	6,5	16,1
Democratizes union's administration	6,5	12,9	9,6	29	19,3	22,5
Makes union's campaigns effective	3,2	3,2	12,9	32,5	29	19,3
Strengthens the relationship with national & int. union associations	---	---	---	51,7	38,8	9,6
Strengthens the relationship with civil society organizations	---	3,2	---	67,7	19,3	9,6
Strengthens union-media relationship	---	6,5	3,2	54,8	22,5	12,9
Facilitates to give information to the public	---	6,5	3,2	38,8	21,9	9,6
Strengthens the feedback from public	3,2	12,9	3,2	35,6	29	16,1
Strengthens the social image of the union movement	---	16,1	9,6	25,7	25,7	22,5

