

# Union disputes accuracy of equity report

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TRADE union Solidarity has taken issue with the recent employment equity report, saying its focus on top jobs, which represent a fraction of the workforce, fails to reflect that in occupations where most people work racial representivity has been achieved.

It adds that in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs white people are under-represented.

Dirk Hermann, the deputy general secretary of Solidarity, said yesterday the way the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) interpreted the data was subjective "as if there is no transformation".

The union, which pursued affirmative action cases against the state early this year, said it was always prepared to find the legal basis in the issue and threatened court action. "We are going to wait for the submissions of proposals to the bill and make our inputs in our attempts to put it into correct perspective," Hermann said.

Solidarity was concerned as the CEE advised Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana on

the Employment Equity Act and related legislation.

Last week Mdladlana said he intended to amend legislation to make it easier to fine employers who did not comply.

**Solidarity said errors in the report meant it 'compares apples with pears and ends up with bananas'.**

Mdladlana said: "We want to shorten the process around fining those who do not comply by being able to fine them on the spot. As to the size of the fines, there is talk around looking at a percentage of turnover in order to make those large employers feel the pain."

Hermann said the flaws in the report were a concern. He said that specific errors in the report, relating to the adding up of percentages and the sampling method, which had different sample sizes each year with different companies

reporting, meant it "compares apples with pears and ends up with bananas".

As this report was statistically flawed and subjectively interpreted it could not be taken seriously as a tool to guide policy, he said.

Solidarity said it was "extremely misleading" to represent the findings of the CEE regarding the three top occupational levels as a disappointment for the prospects for all South Africans.

"The vast majority of South Africans of all race groups will never occupy positions at top, senior or professional level," the report says.

But Mpho Nkeli, the acting chairwoman of the CEE, said the report highlighted top occupations because that was where transformation was slow, and because these were the decision-making levels in the economy. "We would like to see meaningful change there."

The report shows that in private entities, including companies, parastatals and educational institutions, white people hold 70.8 percent of the top management positions,

68.6 percent of senior management positions and 56.9 percent of professional positions. Of the economically active population, white people constitute 12.2 percent.

The equity report shows that black people - who include Africans, coloureds and Indians and who constitute 87.8 percent of the economically active population - hold 24.6 percent of top management posts in private entities, 28.5 percent of senior management posts and 40.8 percent of professional occupations.

In the government, representation is a closer reflection of demographics with black people holding 80.4 percent of the top positions.

Solidarity conceded that white men still dominated the top echelons of the private sector workplace, but said that since 2001 there had been a marked reduction in the number of white people in senior positions, particularly males.

CEE data show that between 2001 and 2009 African representation in senior and top management had increased to 20 percent from 13 percent, coloureds



Dirk Hermann, the deputy general secretary of Solidarity, says the employment equity report is statistically flawed.

dropped to 6.1 percent from 11.6 percent, Indians rose to 8.6 percent from 4 percent and white people dropped to 62.3 percent from 71.4 percent.

Nkeli said employment equity was about transformation. "We are not saying it is not happening, we are saying it is slow."

Solidarity said that in the two lowest occupation levels white people were underrepresented. "While some might see this as nothing to worry about because these jobs are mostly low paying and low prestige, it

is quite hypocritical to express concern when black people are underrepresented but to make no mention of it when white people are in the same boat at certain occupation levels," Solidarity said.

At the semi-skilled levels black people hold 88.6 percent of the positions, white people hold 8 percent and foreigners the balance. In unskilled jobs, 94.6 percent are held by black people.

Additional reporting by Lucky Biyase