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# Strategies for Organising Polish Workers: The Case of UK Unions

Ian Fitzgerald

Presentation at the  
ESRC Cross Border Trade Union Collaboration and Polish  
Migrant Workers in Britain

practitioner dissemination event 7<sup>th</sup> October 2008

# Strategies for Organising Polish Workers: The Case of UK Unions

## Introduction

- Unions active from early stages (fire-fighting?);
- TUC important in seeking to support engagement (3 regional projects);
- Resources and men/women involved locally;
- Three main ways of involvement.

# Strategies for Organising Polish Workers: The Case of UK Unions

## **‘Employer’ strategies:**

- Negotiated entry by northern bus companies (T&G);
- Bfawu agency agreement + webpage now provides vital information in range of languages;
- Other cases?;
- **Challenges:** 1) short-term relationships  
2) organised workplaces?

# Strategies for Organising Polish Workers: The Case of UK Unions

## Learning strategies:

- Through learning centres (communicating with friends; booking tickets home);
- Through Esol taught in many differing locations and Ways;
- Through innovation GMB & fishing;
- **Challenges:** 1) Will we continue to support these approaches if Esol & learning funding goes?  
2) organised workplaces?

# Strategies for Organising Polish Workers: The Case of UK Unions

## Community strategies:

- Through locations & events;
- Through traditional Polish networks – ZPWB and church;
- Through the ‘media’ – Polish newspapers, radio and the internet;
- **Challenges:** 1) How sustainable are approaches?  
2) competitive unions?  
3) Listening unions?

# Strategies for Organising Polish Workers: The Case of UK Unions

## **Conclusion:**

- Migrant organising takes time – past we have been piecemeal;
- Trust is vital;
- Learning union – culturally aware able to change;
- A real opportunity > real progress > much to be pleased with