

Concern over increase in trade union applications

 By [Johan Botes](#)

24 Jul 2013

Late last week the Department of Labour expressed its concern regarding the dramatic increase in South African trade union applications. This expression of concern should be welcomed by the industrial community.

The department's deputy director of Labour Policy & Industrial Relations, Les Kettledas, reported that the department had received, on average, 140 application for union registration per year for the past three years. Considering that in 2002 the number of registered trade unions peaked at 504 in total, the number of annual applications for registration of trade unions should be cause for concern by all those interested in labour market stability.

The number of trade unions seeking to enter the market could be an indication of employees dissatisfaction with the levels of assistance received from their current trade unions. Members usually migrate to new trade unions where they are disgruntled with their current trade union or where a new entrant promises them a better dispensation.

Promises made by new entrants into the market could lure members to the fold. Whatever the reason for new unions seeking registration, the instability caused by migrating membership between unions is clear to observers. It is thus comforting that the department, similarly, expressed its concern about the proliferation of trade unions and the potential impact on labour market stability.

Creating a more stable labour market

Further comfort can be gained from the proposed action plan to create a more stable labour market. The department has proposed greater monitoring of disputes by the CCMA, developing a draft protocol (with NEDLAC) on union membership verification and injecting more resources into trade union education.

These steps suggest that the department is acting positively to address the current labour market instability. Making resources available to train trade unions is certainly a laudable step, but similar training should also be made available to management negotiators.

Joint union/management negotiations training could lead to lower bargaining breakdown rates. Where the parties to the collective bargaining processes are schooled in the theory of such negotiations, the likelihood increases that there will be successful collective bargaining. While there are numerous negotiators with ample experience in collective bargaining, gained through years of participating in annual negotiations, exposing bargaining parties to new and innovative ideas on how to bargain successfully can only be positive.

ABOUT JOHAN BOTES

Johan Botes is Head of the Employment Practice for Baker McKenzie in Johannesburg. He has a Master's Degree in Labour Law, and regularly appears in the CCMA, Bargaining Councils, Labour Court and High Court. Contact Johan: Tel: +27 (0) 11 911 4400, mobile: +27 (0) 82 418 0157, switchboard: +27 (0) 11 911 4300, fax: +27 (0) 11 784 2855
Johan.Botes@bakermckenzie.com

- Remote onboarding: What every employer should know - 11 Oct 2022
- Search for flexibility and meaning in the post-pandemic workplace - 15 Jul 2022
- Defining the lines for automatic transfer of employees - 4 Oct 2018
- Five New Year's resolutions for employers in 2017 - 12 Jan 2017
- Alternatives to retrenchment - 17 Feb 2014

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>