

# European Trade Unions

## Actors for Sustainable Development

*An ETUC contribution to  
the Johannesburg Earth Summit 2002*

July 2002



## Foreword

European trade unions are going to the Johannesburg Summit with a message: that the current income and natural resource use gap between North and South is not sustainable. More – it holds cause for alarm.

Trade unions want world governments to adopt a global plan for sustainable development which will defeat poverty, protect the environment, and ensure respect for human and social rights.

The ETUC, which links together representative, democratic organizations, wants the plan to enable urgent action on the social dimension of sustainable development by giving recognition to fundamental social rights, jobs and training as fundamental shaping factors in the war on poverty, as well as the importance of access to collective goods like water, energy, education, health, and communication infrastructures through public services. The International Labour Organization must be given the job of rolling it out at international level.

The ETUC wants the European Union to take the lead in delivering these principles and objectives. Through a rapid increase in direct development aid to the 0.7% of GNP target. By significantly boosting resource and debt reduction policy delivery for the heavily indebted poor countries. By requiring all European firms awarded public works or supply contracts under Community assistance or export credit guarantee programmes to subscribe to contract terms that include compliance with social/labour rights and international environmental standards. The ETUC also wants European firms with business interests or investments outside the EU to comply with fundamental labour and environmental standards and publish regular reports on how they are putting them into practice.

This brochure, produced jointly with the European Trade Union Technical Bureau, sets out the challenges of sustainable development in Europe, and works towards answers through examples of how they are being addressed in practice at company and industry levels. What these examples show is that sustainable development is not possible without new forms of social dialogue and contractual relations which include the industry and inter-industry dimensions and a recognition that workers and their representatives are key players in changing the ways we produce and consume.

European Trade Unions –  
Actors for Sustainable Development  
TUTB, 2002

© European Trade Union Technical  
Bureau for Health and Safety  
ITUH Building  
Bd du Roi Albert II, 5  
B-1210 Brussels  
Belgium

ISBN : 2-930003-42-1  
D/2002/6107/43

Graphic design: Textcetera Den Haag  
Printed in The Netherlands

*The TUTB is financially supported by the European Commission*

A European strategy for sustainable development must also start with bringing in new Community policies – such as on energy – and making changes to existing ones, like in the transport and agricultural industries.

European labour history shows how, through ongoing action, the trade unions can help bring about a fairer and more united society. European trade unions are ready to shoulder their responsibilities for implementing the European strategy for sustainable development, and to work towards that through dialogue with social and environmental groups. Only the mobilizing of all relevant bodies will bring about an environmentally-sound human development model which guarantees social justice.

**Emilio Gabaglio**, General Secretary, ETUC

**Marc Sapir**, Director, TUTB

## Acknowledgements

This brochure is the product of work done with an ETUC working group of experts dealing with environmental issues in most trade union organizations in the EU and the European Industry Federations. The outcomes of their work were presented to a European trade union conference held in Seville in June this year.

Thanks are due to the main contributors who produced the issues papers for the proceedings: UGT and CC.OO, climate change and energy; CFDT and CGT, World food security and agriculture; LO Denmark, chemical risks; CGIL, CISL and UIL, workers as actors in sustainable development: capacities and rights; and the European Industry Federations which gave invaluable input in their respective sectors: EFFAT, ETUF-TCL, EMCEF, EPSU, ETF and UNI-EUROPA.

A particular debt of thanks is owed to Kees Le Blansch, who had the onerous tasks of rapporteur at the Seville Conference, and writing the text of this brochure.

This brochure could not have been produced and published without the invaluable assistance of Nanneke van der Heijden, Denis Gregory and Janine Delahaut.

## Contents

Foreword **3**

<b>1</b>	<b>European trade unions Actors for Sustainable Development</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The European trade union perspective</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Towards a European trade union perspective on sustainable development</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Elements of a European trade union perspective – balance and co-ordination between the social, the economic and the environmental policy areas</b>	<b>18</b>
	Strengthening the social dimension	<b>18</b>
	An action plan at global level	<b>19</b>
	Co-ordination at the European level	<b>20</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The main challenges in sustainable development from a European trade union perspective</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Food and agriculture</b>	<b>22</b>
	The agricultural production system	<b>23</b>
	Food safety, environmental quality and animal welfare	<b>25</b>
	Quality of agricultural work	<b>27</b>
	Workers' and trade union capacities	<b>28</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Climate change and energy</b>	<b>29</b>
	Ambitious and fair tax reform	<b>30</b>
	Promote more rational use of energy, including fair transitions	<b>31</b>
	Effective and equitable EU implementation of the Kyoto protocol	<b>34</b>
	Access to and security of supply	<b>35</b>

Further information on trade unions and sustainable development on the TUTB web site:

[www.etuc.org/tutb/uk/sustainable-development.html](http://www.etuc.org/tutb/uk/sustainable-development.html):

- English and French version of this brochure
- Thematic introductory reports in English and French
- The report of the ETUC-TUTB Conference in Seville (June 2002)
- The previous joint ETUC-TUTB publication on sustainable development: *Towards a European Trade Union Perspective on Sustainable Development*, Brussels, 2001 (bilingual: English and French)

- 8 **Chemicals** 35  
 Dealing with chemical risks at the global level 36  
 Dealing with chemical risks at European level 38
- 9 **Strengthening the role of European trade unions** 41  
 Strengthening European trade union competences  
 for sustainable development 42  
 Building European trade union capacities for  
 sustainable development 43

## 1 European trade unions – actors for sustainable development

In August 2002, ten years after the Rio Summit, the United Nations are organising another Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. **The European trade unions will be present** at this Summit to play a key role and to set out their requirements for the development of a global action plan for sustainable development giving priority to the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment, and the respect of human and social rights. The European trade unions consider involvement in effecting sustainable development to be part of their core task and responsibility, both with respect to their own membership and from the perspective of international workers' solidarity.

---

The **current paper** aims to elaborate the role of the European trade unions with respect to sustainable development. It opens with a description of the current position of European trade unions in European economic and political life. The paper shows that they play a central role in effecting the European social model, through negotiations on industrial and regulatory issues with employers and the State. For European trade unions, the sustainability challenge lies primarily in integrating environmental issues into their policy stances and actions. Since it is clear that in the future environmental issues will be more and more connected to core workers' and trade unions' interests, the importance of a balanced and co-ordinated approach, based on Global and European action plans is clear and compelling. In general terms, European trade unions recognise that the co-ordination of social, economic and environmental policies is essential to achieve truly sustainable development. Within this key challenge, three issues are identified as needing urgent attention; namely, (i) food and agriculture, (ii) climate change and energy, and (iii) chemical risks.

---

## 2 The European trade union perspective

---

The position of European trade unions in European economic and political life is pivotal to their perspective on sustainability issues. Several elements are crucial to understanding this position, notably their role as economic and political actors, the interests they articulate and the European context within which they operate.

---

The role that trade unions in Europe play is, first of all, an historic one, based on the results of a long-standing struggle for full employment, proper payment and decent working standards for all European workers. Naturally enough, a central objective of trade unions in Europe is to defend these achievements. At the same time, the contemporary role of the unions is to look for opportunities and ways to improve the position of labour.

- First and foremost they do this through their **negotiations with economic actors** i.e. employers and employer associations, at company, sectoral, national and regional levels of the economy. There are long-standing and widespread traditions of trade unions in Europe bargaining as accepted representatives of the whole workforce.
- Secondly, trade unions in Europe promote the interests of labour by **their interactions with national States**. In the social-liberal democracies of Europe, the economic order is not left purely for market forces to determine, nor is it entirely subject to State planning. Through consultation, State regulation and the provision of public services, mixed economies are created which offer workers certain minimum levels of access, security and protection. Thus, social policies, services of general interest and regulatory frameworks have been installed that create and protect jobs whilst guaranteeing certain social standards.

As a consequence, European trade unions are involved and have stakes in the current European social, economic and political order. This includes them being in a position (in principle at least) to negotiate industrial and regulatory transformation.

What interests do trade unions in Europe uphold? Their **key interests** concern basic social requirements like employment, pay, working condi-

tions and labour relations. These issues are bargained for from three perspectives.

- First of all, negotiations are about a **fair access to, and an equitable distribution of, scarce resources**. Equal access to the labour market (to be promoted through policies aiming at full employment), a fair distribution of the fruits of labour (in terms of the allocation of real wages) and minimum provisions for all (through public services of general interest) are key issues in European trade unions' interest representation.
- Secondly, trade unions in Europe aim to negotiate **protection against risks and insecurities** through responsible management and progressive regulation. Basic guarantees, collective insurance and decent work standards enforceable through the State, are all means that unions have negotiated to control and mitigate the risks and insecurities associated with job loss, invalidity, hazards at work and other negative factors.
- Finally, trade unions strive for **democracy and equity** between the privileged and the underprivileged, be they owners or workers, employed or unemployed, men or women, rich or poor.

In the post-World War II period, a process of European integration began that has required more and more involvement of the European trade unions in order to represent their **interests at the European level**. Initially, steps were taken by a pioneering group of six European States to establish an open market for Coal and Steel. Six years later, the same group of countries set about creating a European Community with a single market. In the last two decades further integration has taken place to widen and consolidate the European Community. Most recently, the introduction of a single currency and the development of common objectives and policies on a range of key socio economic subjects have formed the driving forces for an ever closer union in Europe. Many of these common policies, for instance the economic, monetary and labour market policies, are central to workers' and trade unions' interests. The challenge for European trade unions is to work with and converge national practices at the European level through their European trade secretariats and through the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC). Negotiations with European employers' associations are continuing (notably with UNICE, the body which represents private sector employers at the EU level) as well as consultation with the European Commission. Such efforts are aimed at developing a fruitful European consultation practice (frequently referred to as 'Social Dialogue') and promot-

ing employment security and the protection of labour through European regulation. A good example of this is the European framework Directive on health and safety, which regulates working conditions and provides the ETUC, through its technical bureau, with a statutory position.

### 3 Towards a European trade union perspective on sustainable development

---

How do European trade unions view sustainable development? Although European trade unions are primarily recognised as central actors within economic and social spheres, they have also been involved with environmental issues for a long time. As a result of this experience, it is becoming more and more clear that environmental issues can no longer be regarded as an external cause outside of a union's core domain to be dealt with as part of the trade unions' extended responsibilities. Instead, unions are recognising that environmental questions are intrinsically connected to core trade union issues concerning resources, risks, democracy and equity. In this context, European trade unions must develop their own perspective on sustainable development, based on their specific European trade union position vis-à-vis the urgent need for integrated social, economic and environmental approaches to meet the world's most pressing challenges.

---

As was shown above, trade unions are well established as central actors in the shaping of social and economic policies in European Member States and at the pan European level. Against this background, the sustainability challenge is seen by unions as the need to integrate and balance social and economic policy objectives (both well-known trade union domains) with the emerging environmental policy needs (considerably less familiar). Many trade unions have informally accepted a division of roles between trade unions (representing social interests) and environmental NGO's (representing environmental interests). Nevertheless, an analysis of the environmental initiatives pursued by European trade unions over the last

decade<sup>1</sup> – as is also called for in the context of Rio + 10 – demonstrates the extent to which trade unions have succeeded in being a driving force in integrating the environment into social and economic development. A brief overview:

- *Programmatic*: trade unions in Europe have adapted their political programmes to face the environmental challenge, and have issued statements accordingly.
- *Corporate environmental management*: Trade union members, health and safety representatives and works councils have taken initiatives to improve the standard of environmental management through training courses, consultation and pressure at workplace level.
- *Collective bargaining*: Environmental issues have been raised in collective bargaining by trade unions. Topics like hazardous substances, traffic, waste handling have been put on agendas. Workers' representatives and trade unions have acquired rights to take environmental initiatives and to participate in drafting environmental management plans.
- *Laws on the quality of work and participation*: Workers and their representatives have used EU legislation on quality of work and workers' participation to address occupational health and environmental issues in a combined fashion. In some EU countries new regulation has been developed creating workers' rights to participate in environmental decision-making at company level.
- *Initiatives to influence state policies*: Initiatives have been developed by trade unions for environmental tax reform, for eco-labelling of products and for the promotion of green jobs.
- *Participation in societal debates*: In all countries, trade unions have participated in environmental debates, taking a broader view on the issues at stake. Amongst other things, these have included: chemicals (pesticides, (repro) toxics, chlorines), agriculture, infrastructure, transport, traffic regulation, climate change, energy saving, renewable resources, waste and water management.
- *European initiatives*: trade unions have repeatedly called on European employers and the Commission for common initiatives on environmental/socio-economic action. Consequent activities have concerned: green jobs, eco-taxation and worker participation in environmental management (EMAS). Unions have also been active in promoting dialogue on sustainable development.

<sup>1</sup> See: *Towards a European Trade Union Perspective on Sustainable Development*. ETUC/TUTB, Brussels 2001.

- *International initiatives:* European trade unions have contributed to ICFTU / WCL debates (on food and agriculture, climate change and jobs) and to forums like OECD (common declaration on climate change), ILO and CSD.

The brief overview presented here shows first of all that European trade unions have been responding to environmental challenges and have taken active measures. In general, however, environmental issues have mostly been addressed separately from socio-economic issues, and often in a formal way (by developing rights and systems). Development models are dominated by a risk management approach from both the chemical industry and unions. In many cases there is a gap between what is advocated and shop floor practice. Finally, on practical issues trade unions often face dilemmas between environmental and socio-economic demands particularly where the former is perceived as threatening employment security.

### Two examples of European trade unions addressing the environment

#### *Europe: the introduction of EMAS*

Midway through the 1980's, the European Commission developed an Environmental Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) that provides European companies with a set of clearly defined criteria as a model for their environmental management system (roughly similar to BSI and ISO requirements). This system can be audited and certified. As such it can also function as a guarantee for third parties of the environmental quality of a company's operations. By the end of the 90's the EMAS Directive was revised, adopting to the requirements of ISO 14000 and thus connecting closely to a widespread voluntary system. On both occasions European trade unions were engaging themselves in the debate on the content of this Directive, and on the role workers and trade unions were to play in the EMAS system. ETUC and many national trade unions have joined in lobbying for workers and trade unions to have a right of say in implementing it – with limited success. In separate EU member states and on the European level trade unions actively campaigned through their branches for EMAS to be implemented in companies, and for workers to be involved in its implementation. For example in Austria, Germany (IG Metall and the DGB Bildungswerk carried out

projects and courses), Finland, Italy and the Netherlands, national trade unions were active. On the European level the ETUC and EMCEF (European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers Federation) also took active stances.

#### *Sweden: trade union promoting health and environmental quality of office work*

Also in the 1980's, TCO the Swedish white collar workers' union, developed standards for a new label which set new standards for the ecological, energy consumption, ergonomic and emission quality of computer monitors. Independent scientific institutes supervised and advised on the nature of these quality requirements. After an initially defensive reaction from the industry, Nokia started to design monitors that met the requirements. The new monitors experienced a rapidly increasing market share, partly as a consequence of the purchasing power of the TCO membership. Soon, many other manufacturers voluntarily adopted the TCO standard. Meanwhile the TCO label has been renewed several times (into the '92, '95 and '99 label, as well as being supplemented by the '6E-label' which adds economy and effectiveness) and is now applied worldwide.

Contemporary **sustainability issues** require a new and in many ways a wider ranging approach. Many of these issues derive from global problems, some of which are worse today than they were 10 years ago. They concern the widespread poverty in the world, the fact that 800 million people are suffering hunger and under-nourishment, whilst billions of people lack access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and basic energy services. Although programmes to address the problems of climate change and biodiversity loss are being developed, through amongst other things the Kyoto protocol and the UN Convention on Biodiversity, these wider life-threatening problems are still waiting to be properly addressed.

The shortage of resources, coupled with growing interdependencies and blatant inequities, call for policy responses and societal strategies, which need to deliver **major transitions and reform strategies** at all levels of governance. These transitions will need radical medium and long-term societal developments at all levels in order to achieve major changes in the allocation of resources, to restructure power relations and to ensure interests that are currently excluded are, in the future, included.



A closer look at the problems, the reform strategies and the nature of the transitions required (see footnote 1), points towards several key issues that touch on the **core concerns of European trade unions**.

- Firstly, they concern questions of distribution and access to **resources**. *Problems concerning food, energy sources (also in relation to climate change), water, biodiversity, lack of technologies and access to decent work head this list.* Given that the supply of many natural resources is finite, the prevention of their depletion requires active measures. This is not just a matter of eco-efficiency since an equitable access to these resources and the means to protect them (technologies, access to decent jobs) must also be assured. Such requirements strongly suggest that economic and societal transitions need to be strong enough to alter established production and consumption patterns to effect a fundamental reorientation of the present industrial order towards long-term sustainability.
- Secondly, current uses of technologies and resources frequently bring about serious hazards on a global level. *Problems such as climate change, risks from chemicals (including hormone disruptors and genetic modification) and the risks of nuclear energy and nuclear waste, all contribute to a mounting tide of environmental health risks.* Therefore, **effective ways for dealing with risks** are called for. However, risk management is not just a narrowly defined 'expert' issue, it also requires standards for product and production quality that will have to take account of changing trade relations, shifts in economic constellations, and emerging policy approaches and scientific insights.
- Finally, **democracy and equity** must be enhanced. *The main problems here are: poverty, exclusion, distributional inequities, and the lack of access to decent work.* The changes and transitions that must take place require the participation and consent of all stakeholders in order to secure fairness, distributional equity and trust.

European trade unions therefore consider sustainable development to be an issue and a future orientation that is central to their role and interests. They fully adhere to the **principles of sustainable development** as providing the only viable way to address the problems cited above. Moreover, the European trade unions acknowledge that to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the opportunities of future generations, will require strategies that balance economic, social and environmental objectives. They see the requirement to integrate these different objectives (like employment and environment) not as antagonistic, but as common

aspects of a broadly defined developmental quality. Consequently, they call for the development of integrated action plans at global and European level (see section 4 of this paper).

Primarily, **European trade unions** have a key role to play in furthering sustainable development through consultation and negotiation with **European Employers** and their organisations and with **European governments**. Alongside this, the recognition that the interests represented by **European environmental and other NGO's** are not separate from those represented by trade unions, requires trade unions to elaborate their dialogue and co-operation with these NGO's with greater vigour and commitment.

Given the global importance of the European economy and polity, the **role of European trade unions** at the European level also holds **significance at a global level**. European trade unions can, for example, influence issues of global equity, have an effect on the access of the world's population to essential goods and services, and encourage the proper management of global resources and risks. Trade unions in Europe (and elsewhere) therefore need to be informed of global problems and repercussions related to European industrial and political activities. In turn, they are themselves committed to aligning their own activities and aspirations in the European arena to the global transformations required to achieve effective sustainable development.

It is for the same reasons that European trade unions believe the **European Union should play a lead role** in the definition of a global action plan for sustainable development. Accordingly, they call on the European Commission and all governments of EU Member States to give priority to the objectives outlined in this paper.

## 4 Elements of a European trade union perspective – balance and co-ordination between the social, the economic and the environmental policy areas

Given the interests they represent and their position within the European social model, European trade unions place particular emphasis on certain strategic elements. Firstly, they promote a **balanced approach** based on social, economic and environmental policy areas. In this respect, trade unions' core concern requires that **their social objectives** are adequately accounted for in global strategies. Secondly, unions recognise that a balanced approach requires the co-ordination of economic, social and environmental strategies at all levels through **comprehensive action plans**. It is axiomatic that trade unions should be involved in the development of such plans. At the global level, the Johannesburg Earth summit provides the platform for the development of such a global action plan. On the European level, the EU Sustainability Strategy can be seen as a suitable vehicle for European actions.

### *Strengthening the social dimension*

An increase of direct **aid for development** must be achieved. More rapid progress should be made in meeting the UN target of 0,7% of GNP.

**Methods of financing** that lead to significant reductions in debt of the G77 countries must be introduced.

Urgent action must be taken on the **social dimensions** of sustainable development, particular improvements must be secured to social rights, employment, and training, which are fundamental in combating poverty. Similarly, access to collective services such as water, energy, education, health and communication infrastructure through public provision has to be achieved and maintained.

**Fundamental labour standards** must be universally applied. Instruments to implement and enforce these standards effectively must be elaborated. In this respect, the ETUC condemns the evident absence of progress on social standards in the conclusions of the Doha summit on trade and development.

The importance of **the role trade unions play** in negotiating collective agreements, particularly within multinational companies, and their contribution to the health and safety protection of workers and to the promotion of public health must be recognised. Within this framework the ILO programme 'Decent work and safe work' should be promoted along with policy instruments and standards developed to ensure good working conditions for workers.

### *An action plan at global level*

The Johannesburg Earth summit provides the platform for the **development of a global action plan**, in which the involvement of trade unions in the development and implementation must be assured. In this respect reference has to be made to the different fields of development that must be integrated in such a plan.

- First of all, Chapter 29 of the Agenda 21 adopted in Rio must be implemented by the Johannesburg summit. This chapter stresses the role of workers and their participation in the effective and equitable implementation of a sustainable development strategy at all levels.
- Next, the summit should include a move towards ratification by all States of ILO conventions, notably the following:
  - No. 162: protection against asbestos
  - No. 169: indigenous peoples
  - No. 170: chemical products
  - No. 171: protection of night work
  - No. 174: prevention of industrial accidents
  - No. 176: health and safety in mines
- There is still work that needs to be done after the Doha Summit on trade and development – in particular the issue of social standards should be addressed.
- The conclusions of the ILO report on 'Global Agenda for employment' should be taken on board. These illustrate three key areas – agriculture, energy and transport – where close ties exist between employment and

sustainable development in the lives of men and women. In these three areas the living conditions of hundreds of millions of men and women are at stake. The management of these changes, in our countries and in those of the South, requires new forms of social dialogue and the integration of sectoral and cross-sector dimensions. See also the sections 6 and 7 of this paper, where the position of European trade unions on these issues is presented.

European trade unions are willing and able to **participate in the implementation** of the action programme and in the partnership programme to be elaborated in Johannesburg (the so-called type II partnerships). These partnerships can be proper tools for implementing the objectives defined in Agenda 21. It should however be recognised that the partnership programmes between public and private actors must not place developing countries in a more dependent position. The role of European trade unions in such partnerships could consist of securing equitable access to public services and services of general economic interest, as well as promoting the employment effects of partnerships.

The contribution of workers and trade unions in the implementation of Agenda 21 must be further recognised through the articulation and adoption of **fundamental social standards** within the ILO.

### *Co-ordination at the European level*

At the EU level relevant policies continue to be introduced and revised, for example, the new chemicals policy, the European transport policy, agricultural and fishery policies. As a consequence of the treaty of Amsterdam and the Vienna European Council meeting, these and many other policies will be co-ordinated with environmental policy. The Gothenburg summit, where the EU sustainability strategy was launched further ensures that economic and social policy are also included in this co-ordination. Next to all this, a major change is due to arrive over the next decade from the enlargement of the EU with the accession of countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC). The co-ordination processes that are required here should involve all major stakeholders and European actors. The European trade unions therefore welcome the invitation of EU Environment Commissioner Wallström to open a **social dialogue on the EU sustainability strategy** with the European Commission, trade unions and employers' organisations, to which they will actively contribute.

The European Commission must oblige all **European companies benefiting** from **public procurement contracts**, from **Community aid programmes** or from **export credit guarantees**, to implement basic specifications including the respect of fundamental social rights and international environmental standards.

European trade unions call on all **European companies having business activity or interests** (investments) **in third countries** (subsidiaries, subcontractors) to implement and uphold fundamental social and environmental standards. They insist that these companies should produce regular implementation reports and that these reports should be debated at European level by social partners, the NGO's and the Community institutions. European Works Councils and sectoral social dialogues must also play a leading role in this field.

## 5 The main challenges in sustainable development from a European trade union perspective

European trade unions are focusing on a selected number of priority issues for a further development of their perspective on sustainable development. They are:

- Food and agriculture (see section 6)
- Climate change and clean energy (see section 7)
- Chemicals (see section 8)

The issue of trade union competence to promote and develop sustainability is a priority focus and cuts across all three issues. This focus will be used in formulating the final section of this paper.

These priority issues have been selected for the following reasons:

- Firstly: the issues are **core to the sustainability challenge**. They are fundamentally linked to the problems of world hunger and poverty (food and agriculture), to the depletion of resources and climate change

(energy and climate change) and to the threats to public health and risks of global environmental degradation (chemicals).

- Secondly: they build upon and strengthen **existing national European trade union practices with an important environmental dimension** in the following ways:
  - By emphasising those aspects of daily trade union work that concerns all three pathways of sustainable development (excluding the purely socially oriented work that European trade unions also perform, for example the provision of invalidity insurance and pensions).
  - By connecting with existing practices to ensure there is a real power basis for European trade union action.
  - By enabling specific strategies that can readily be implemented in day-to-day trade union work.
- Thirdly: the work on these issues strengthens **trade union representation in key European debates** (and thus helps to develop effective trade union strategies to meet challenges in EU political and policy arenas).
- Fourthly: the issues **cut across all economic sectors**, thereby permitting a broad spread of interest representation and enabling fundamental democratic and equitable approaches to be adopted.

## 6 Food and agriculture

---

Food security, i.e. meeting the dietary needs of the entire population, is still a pressing issue in large areas of the world. This is as much a consequence of an unjust agricultural production system as of unjust pricing and inadequate distribution systems. The burden lies on the shoulders of the poorest and weakest workers of the world, a large part of which is employed in the agricultural sector. Workers in farming and food industries are among those who have the lowest pay, the harshest working conditions and the weakest (or non-existent) trade union rights. Moreover, present agricultural production methods frequently reinforce inequities and produce unacceptable risks in terms of food safety and burdens on environment and animal welfare.

---

### *The agricultural production system*

The prospect of achieving economic and political stability in this sector rests on establishing **the right of populations to produce locally the food-stuffs that correspond to their needs**. This implies that all countries have a right to defend their agriculture through some level of protective measures at their borders. It follows from this that nations or large permanent exporting groups must refrain from destabilising fragile rural economies by exporting indiscriminately their agricultural surpluses.

Furthermore, countries should have the right to develop their **own agricultural model**, instead of being forced to adopt production modes that have hitherto been dominant in the Northern hemisphere. Added to which, a diversity of agricultural production forms is called for within the EU, including biological forms of production. These new production modes may yet prove a much better guide for agricultural production in developing countries.

An **EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** has to combine the positive progress in **quantitative** performance it has achieved so far, with a **qualitative** transformation to provide more food security, higher product quality, improved land management, greater protection of habitats alongside the preservation and renewal of natural resources. Judged by these criteria, the CAP has to be reformed. This reform will combine the necessary control over production volumes to avoid the surpluses that drive down prices, the setting of profit-generating prices defined by large zones of comparable levels of productivity, and suitable protection at borders.

Reform of the CAP also requires a fundamental discussion on the way present agricultural modes are handed **subsidies by the EU**. No reform would mean the CAP budget will become unable to continue subsidising certain forms of production whilst at the same time coping with the enlargement of the Union, since most of the CEEC accession countries are likely to be major recipients of CAP assistance. Also, it has to be recognised that the present subsidy system disturbs local markets and local capacities of production, thereby posing a serious threat to world food security. Subsidies for European agriculture are also often viewed as obstacles to developing other forms of agriculture around the world. Alternative systems should be developed that incorporate the principle of fair pricing. This means the

costs of burdening the environment must be internalised in production prices, thereby reducing the unfair competition between biological and agro-industrial production modes.

As with the CAP **EU policies on fishery** must, it is widely acknowledged, be reformed. Present European industrial fishing methods are plainly unsustainable. They jeopardize the world's fish stocks, endanger aquatic biodiversity, and diminish the possibility of fishermen in developing countries feeding themselves and earning a decent living. International agreements concluded under the aegis of the United Nations<sup>2</sup> and the FAO code of conduct for responsible fisheries therefore need to be applied with both urgency and vigour.

Though countries do have a right to use their timber resources productively, a number of **systematic deforestation policies** pose serious threats to ecosystems and impoverish natural heritage without providing sufficient revenue to the people harvesting the trees or working the land that has been cleared. Also, for many people around the world wood is the prime home energy source. Therefore, ambitious aid policies focussing on the management and replanting of forests are called for.

The key idea driving the worldwide reorganisation of trade, led by the WTO since 1994, is that the establishment of a **world market in food products** will set up a 'virtuous circle' whereby an increase in **trading**, will propel economic development and hence lead to greater wealth. This 'virtuous circle' sequence is currently increasingly questioned and disputed. Consequently, **deeper analyses** are required because a one-dimensional model entails the risk of world biodiversity gradually disappearing.

**Public assistance** to the countries of the Southern Hemisphere must be designed to provide supportive and balanced co-operation and be allocated to programmes supporting infrastructure, training and economic and social development that directly benefit the rural populations that comprise the great majority of these countries' populations. It is, therefore, vital that the amount of public development aid defined by the United Nations must quickly reach the goal of 0,7% of GNP. This was one of the EU's commitments at the Gothenburg summit, which was supported by European trade unions (see also section 4).

<sup>2</sup> Particular reference should be made to the Agreement for the implementation of the UN convention of the sea relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migrating fish stocks.

## *Food safety, environmental quality and animal welfare*

To **ensure the health safety of food products**, rules of prevention and precaution must be put into practice. Prevention concerns known and recognised health hazards. Precaution concerns risks that are possible but that have not yet been scientifically recognised. Risks must therefore be assessed. The European Food Authority should play a valuable role here in providing guarantees to consumers. For agricultural products, as the recent calamitous outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK has shown, traceability must be secured.

The appearance of **Genetically Modified Organisms** (GMO's) has generated intense debate. The development of new trans-gene technologies for the production of improved seeds could reduce the use of pesticides, the dependency of chemicals and the spread of pollutants. It is important, therefore, that research into these techniques be continued. At the same time, however, GMO's may pose a threat to biodiversity. Moreover, under present conditions they are likely to be appropriated by multinational companies to the detriment of local food producing capacities in the developing countries. The application of the precautionary principle and the fears expressed by consumers call for new guarantees to control and contain such developments. Two important requirements must be put into effect:

- **The role of consumers and of agro-industry workers** must be strengthened. They are most affected and they are also in a position to have a crucial impact. Organised labour must increase meetings and debates between researchers, scientists, workers, farmers and consumers to guarantee increasingly safe conditions of agricultural production. See the box on the next page for an example of this.
- The issue of **intellectual property** must be solved in such a way, as not to allow multinational companies to become the new creators and owners of nature and life. In particular the compatibility of the WTO agreements on intellectual property with the UN convention on biological diversity must be examined and, if necessary, strengthened.

## Two examples in the field of agriculture and food

### *The Netherlands: trade unions debate about GMO's*

FNV Bondgenoten in the Netherlands have started a discussion with members in the agricultural sector who deal or may deal with biotechnology. They discussed GMO's and the opportunities and threats they present with managers and experts. The discussion was broken up into three parts. One group examined the ethical issues of the matter. A second group examined the economic issues at play. The third group discussed the technology. These discussions are now more or less finished. A conference is due to be held at which all the participants involved in the discussion will form the components into a coherent policy. As one part of this policy, FNV Bondgenoten is in favour of ensuring that when companies want to start using biotechnology, works councils must be entitled to give their approval. After the full policy has been decided upon, union members and officers working in the sector involved in these developments will disseminate the policy in discussions with employees and – via the works council – with the employers. The union will also be involved in reforming education for present and future workers, to ensure safe work on a good product.

### *Denmark: trade unions promote ecological farming*

In 1995 the Danish trade union SiD produced a policy proposal with the objective to reduce the consumption of pesticides by 95% by the year 2000. Among its proposals was the suggestion to establish a Food Ministry, which would place more emphasis on the interest of consumers (instead of a Ministry of Farming that gives priority to the vested interests of farmers). SiD proposed to have the real social production costs for conventional and organic agricultural product made visible. In the present price system environmental and social costs are not internalised. If this could be effected, conventionally produced products would be far more expensive. Next, SiD proposed a special effort to promote pesticide-free cultivation (also through R&D in new races and seeds), in order to ensure a sustainable Danish production of high-quality fruit and vegetables. As to Danish forestry, it was suggested that labelling would be introduced in order to guarantee that the product (wood) has been produced in an environmentally correct fashion, both with regard to the external environment and the working environment. Respect for the rights of employees must be included in such a labelling system, both with regards to education, training and other working con-

ditions, including the working environment. SiD presented the principal opinion that GMO's have to be banned from conventional as well as from organic food production.

SiD proposed better co-ordination between trade unions and consumers' organisations, national and international, in order to promote sustainable food production and organic food production. According to SiD, EU subsidies at present favour conventional agriculture, and therefore are an essential barrier to the development of organic production. To SiD, sustainability must be an integrated part of the code of practice for organic production.

Meanwhile, the evidence to date shows that the proposals have been effective, as the consumption of pesticides in Danish farming has been reduced by around 75% between 1995 and 2002.

## *Quality of agricultural work*

**Working conditions** in agriculture and food production are often very bad. Agriculture is one of the sectors with the highest risk of accidents, due to the growing use of machinery and of pesticides and other agrochemical products. Exposure to such chemicals is a major occupational hazard. They can be multiplied in the developing countries by the use of highly toxic active ingredients (often banned in developed countries but still marketed in the Third World), and the absence of protective equipment, compounded by a lack of information and training. Health and safety on the job must therefore be one of the priorities of policies advocating sustainable development. All countries must ratify immediately the Convention and the Recommendation on Safety and Health in agriculture adopted by the ILO in June 2001.

According to the International Labour Office, in 1997 there were 250 million **children aged 5 to 14 working in agriculture** in the developing countries. Half of them were working there full-time. Some 80 million were in dangerous jobs. It is a modern scandal that **forced labour and coercive recruitment practices** are the fate of many workers 'employed' (or rather: enslaved) in agriculture and forestry. Sustainable development is incompatible with these inhuman practices of exploitation. The trade union movement of the agri-food sector bears a special responsibility in the fight against these extreme and unacceptable forms of labour exploitation.

As this century unfolds Europe is faced with a widespread relocation of agricultural production to developing or emerging countries. Guarantees must be formulated to prevent multinational companies from strategically using these redeployments to engage in **social** – or for that matter: **health and safety** or **environmental** – **dumping**, i.e.: to pit workers in the sectors involved against each other across continents. The guarantees must, as a priority, concern the quality of the jobs that are created in these countries in terms of wages, social security coverage, working conditions and trade union rights. Equally, they must ensure that local capacities for food production are not jeopardised. International trade union co-operation and the development of responsible consumption and fair trade could play a crucial role in addressing this challenge.

### *Workers' and trade union capacities*

The important position they occupy in the production process makes the workers of agriculture and agro-industry fully-fledged participants in the food sector. Consequently, their concerns centre on the following issues:

- **High-quality, professional qualification** of the workers in the food sector. This should concern the ever-developing technologies in farming and food processing, as well as operational procedures for effecting food safety, health and safety at work and environmental protection. When it comes to jobs and wages, this training should be recognised.
- A specific **right to notify and pass on information** from agri-food companies. Workers are the last ones to handle food products. Given such a right to notify, they could prevent incidents and perhaps accidents.
- **Safety at work** must improve radically. To this end ILO conventions must be ratified and observed, trade union rights must be respected, and quality of work standards must be integrated in definitions of fair trade and labelling.
- **More insight into the consequences of globalisation** is required. One of the typical features of globalisation is the development on a worldwide scale of a process of extreme concentration in certain sectors of food processing and in volume retailing. These phenomena must be better understood in order both to act at local level and to formulate international responses.

The challenges of sustainable development in all the constituent areas of food safety are creating a need for **renewed forms of co-operation between trade unions** throughout the world. This will come about via exchanges of

analyses and experience gathered on all relevant issues. European trade unions are prepared to play their role in this. They must get involved with their counterparts in developing countries, to implement training activities aimed at representatives in charge of working conditions, hygiene and health and safety.

**International solidarity and trade union co-operation** are achieved in particular through campaigns of support for trade unionists facing anti-union repression, backed up by firm trade union action to ensure observance of ILO conventions, the upholding of the basic rights of workers and the promotion of fair trade networks. The latter networks particularly, may offer valuable insights on the question of how to mobilise and involve whole production chains and distribution channels in the quest for sustainability and equity in the world's agricultural sector.

## 7 Climate change and energy

As a resource, energy is basic to social and economic development, but its use and transformation have caused significant environmental problems, ranging from urban pollution to acid rain, marine pollution and nuclear waste. The most serious problem is climate change resulting from emissions of greenhouse gases, whose main human-derived source is the use of fossil fuels. Throughout this century, therefore, energy is destined to play a central role in sustainable development policies.

The goal of achieving necessary energy supply while at the same time preventing adverse environmental impact certainly requires a profound change in the energy model of the largest consumers – the European Union and the world's most developed countries. However, the less industrialised countries who need to increase energy use to develop are also implicated in this change. For the European Union, such profound change can only be brought about by urgently initiating an **ambitious tax reform**, by promoting **more rational use of energy** (including demand reduction), by **using more renewable energy**, and by effective **implementation of the Kyoto protocol requirements**.

All these elements should be integrated into **one comprehensive policy plan for the European Union**, aimed at guaranteeing access to energy (including strategic reserves of fossil energy sources), and focusing on renewable energy sources, combined heat and power production and energy efficiency.

---

Equality between countries requires guaranteeing the *right to energy* – as vital a resource as water for satisfying the needs of the populations of developing countries. Access to energy for the most underprivileged members of the world community requires co-operation and an exchange of knowledge and technologies. From this perspective, help must be given to these countries to develop their own energy models. These models, founded on moderation and diversity, must be adapted – technically, economically, socially and environmentally – to the countries' own needs.

---

### *Ambitious and fair tax reform*

The need for an ambitious tax and environmental reform within the EU is urgent. Presently, at Community level fragmentation can be seen in energy matters, with only special taxes on hydrocarbons and VAT regulated by a Community system. The great differences between the various systems of taxing the energy industry in the EU combine to reduce their environmental impact and hamper the promotion of more efficient means of transport. What is needed, therefore, are **tax harmonisation** and **reform**, to ensure prices reflect environmental and social costs leading to improved competition between different energy products. Tax incentives are needed generally aimed at increased environmental efficiency but in particular by supporting demand for more environmentally sound products.

European trade unions support such tax reforms but require this reform process to be fair. The following specific trade union actions are therefore envisaged, to contribute to establishing a **fair transition**.

- The negative social repercussions on poor people and on vulnerable economic sectors must be identified. Once these have been detailed, trade unions can propose measures to prevent such repercussions. Amongst other things, this would involve guaranteeing access to energy and targeting the retraining and redeployment of workers affected by the transition.

- The eventual effects on employment in the energy sector and in sectors with high energy intensity must be identified. On this basis trade unions would propose specific measures for these sectors, comprising social support to prevent negative social repercussions.
- Trade unions will present proposals for the use of tax revenues derived from 'green taxation', aiming to:
  - Reduce the tax burdens on labour;
  - Promote (decent) job creation;
  - Contribute to the application of a strategy proposed by trade unions, as outlined below.

### *Promote more rational use of energy, including fair transitions*

The limited resources require that we commit ourselves to **using energy rationally**, pursuing criteria of saving and efficiency, to **develop renewable energy sources** and among other things, to invest in R&D for **large-scale technological innovation**. The efforts made over the next ten years must be targeted at a more efficient use of energy resources. It is possible to reduce current energy consumption within the EU by over a quarter without reducing living standards. This must be a primary objective of any Community energy policy. Furthermore, the development and marketing of energy equipment could give European industry a boost and make it more competitive in the medium and long-term future. Product labelling, regular reviews of the energy efficiency of services and buildings – public and private – together with energy audits, must be extended to industry with a view to bringing about modifications in equipment, processes and industrial products. Participation by employees and their representatives is essential for the success of such policies.

The **availability and structure of employment** is also affected by energy-related questions. The availability of and dependency on energy resources, energy costs and the energy efficiency of the production system are all factors exerting a powerful and continuing influence on employment. An unsustainable energy model results in unsustainable employment. Similarly, the use of one or another energy sources and its future development will also be decisive in determining the number and type of jobs available and future trends in this regard. The development of renewable ener-



gy and energy efficiency programmes is creating significant numbers of new jobs, which will require the adaptation and training of the workers involved. On the other hand, reductions in traditional energy sources also create employment problems, for example in the nuclear and coal industries. These problems must be tackled with the necessary mechanisms of fair transition to mitigate adverse and undesirable social effects.

## Two examples in the energy and climate change field

### *Germany: jobs through clean energy*

In Germany a platform called 'labour and environment' was built within the 'Alliance for jobs' ('Bündniss für Arbeit') that had been forged between the government and trade unions. This platform was proposed as a compensation for job losses in the traditional energy (nuclear, coal, oil and gas) sector. It aimed to create jobs through clean and renewable energies as well as targeting a reduction of energy consumption. The particular need for such alternatives arose as a result of Germany's decision to stop the use of nuclear power. The German trade union confederation proposed 80 measures for ecological modernisation creating 500.000 jobs.

Among the measures in progress is the programmatic improvement of energy consumption in existing buildings. Unions and the Ministry for the environment, together with interested groups in the industry, developed improvement programmes that were in the main financed through credits of semi-public investment banks. The estimated number of new jobs created to date by this programme total 200.000, of which 65.000 are in heating systems and 70.000 in insulation materials and provision. Other measures concern the export of environmental technologies (through environment area managers in German embassies and an internet system), sustainable tourism (through development of rural areas, co-ordinated by a leading NGO in nature protection), sustainable mobility (for example, the development of zero emissions vehicles), product and technology innovation (see also the book '*Die Jobmaschine*').

### *The United Kingdom: TUSDAC and the low carbon economy*

In the United Kingdom in 1998 the British government created a Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC), chaired by the Secretary-general of one of the largest unions (GMB), and

co-chaired by the Minister for the Environment. TUSDAC provides a forum where British unions can bring their interests, experiences and practices from a diverse range of sectors to promote discussion on a variety of issues. Key among the aims of TUSDAC is to have a direct input into the policy discussion about sustainable development and a real influence on government policy in this area. The other role of TUSDAC is to reach and try to mobilise the union movement in the UK to get involved in sustainable development issues.

One task TUSDAC took up was to assess the impact on employment of the movement toward a low carbon economy in the UK. In order to have a proper strategy it was necessary to look at what and how sectors and regions are going to be affected. The research commissioned for this purpose showed:

- In the UK the companies that are responsible for 78,9 % of the CO<sub>2</sub> emission represent 9,7% of employment.
- The research also highlighted sectors with above average and average emission intensities.
- The report identified the regions which will be most affected by the move toward a low carbon economy in the UK. Some regions proved to be more energy-intensive than others.

European trade unions propose the urgent drafting of a **broad strategy** (including non-tax measures) aiming **for more rational use of energy**. The following specific trade union actions are envisaged.

- Investigate **policies and measures** that reduce energy consumption, improve energy efficiency and favour the development of renewable energy, building on different trade union experiences throughout the EU.
- **Define objectives** to be obtained in the different sectors based on the technological potential and on trade union observations of social concerns. Target an equitable distribution of the burdens on different sectors allowing environmental objectives to be identified, which are economically feasible. Ensure **social concerns are taken into account**, for example, guaranteeing employment, reconverting workers, and creating quality employment in, amongst other things, new types of services.
- Propose specific **investment policies**, both inside and outside of EU, for renewable energies and the promotion of energy efficiency.

European trade unions will organise **exchanges of information and experience** (cross-national and cross-sectoral) covering: measures for efficient energy use, the creation of new and decent jobs and the reconversion of workers (including best practice, and feeding back quickly positive results – the dynamics of encouragement). This exchange is to be co-ordinated by the ETUC.

### *Effective and equitable EU implementation of the Kyoto protocol*

Given Europe's technological capacity and the fact that it has a more efficient production model than the US, it can and must lead the way in creating an energy model that is different to the traditional one. **Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol**, which commits the European Union to reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases, is a positive sign, and contrasts with the United States' refusal to accept similar commitments.

European trade unions will support the implementation of the Kyoto protocol by working to define principles, conditions and criteria that they consider essential in using the **flexibility mechanisms** – like negotiable licenses and emissions trading. Licenses that allow companies to obtain compensation if their effective emissions are below the set levels for their industry, must be organised in a market overseen by national and EU authorities to avoid distorted interpretation of the principle of 'the polluter pays'. It must be a transparent process with clear procedures.

The trade unions will put forward proposals that guarantee equity between social, political and environmental concerns. Amongst other things, this will necessitate controlling the content of flexibility mechanisms to ensure their consequences interplay appropriately with Community Directives. The Directives on the liberalisation of the gas market and on the obligations of public services in this sector, for example, demonstrated to the European trade unions the continuing need for coherence between existing policies and Directives (for instance with taxation policies).

### *Access to and security of energy supply*

The **creation of a single market for energy within the EU** must be implemented in such a way as to guarantee that energy supply remains a public, general interest service with a right to access guaranteed for all consumers. It must also be founded on a diversification of supply, in terms of sustainable development and the creation of employment.

According to EU data, atmospheric emissions of transport are responsible for 28% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, of which 84% derive from road transport. The European trade unions will therefore quickly intervene in the ongoing discussion within Europe concerning the **future of European transport**. Moves should be taken to stabilise mobility and encourage intermodal transport use, reducing the disproportionate importance of road transport. Proposals for integrating regional and urban planning, reducing mobility requirements and improving public transport must be supplemented with other measures to reduce the incursion of the automobile into the city and to favour public transport for commuting purposes.

## 8 Chemicals

Current methods of production and consumption of chemicals create many grave risks, to which all members of society are exposed. Moreover, our current levels of knowledge in this area probably represent little more than the tip of the iceberg. The use of chemicals threatens public health, workers' health and safety and the environment. Moreover, workers are exposed as employees (approximately 3% of exposure takes place in the chemical industries and 97% occurs with the downstream use of chemical products), in their private households as consumers, and as inhabitants of the world (through emissions and other forms of dispersed exposition). Therefore, European trade unions demand an **urgent improvement of available knowledge on chemicals** and on **ways of dealing with chemical risks**.

For developing countries the situation is particularly bad. Often chemicals are used in industrial and agricultural sites with highly toxic active ingredients (which although they may be banned in developed countries, are still marketed in the developing countries of the World). Protective equipment is often not available. Information and training are mostly lacking. Due to less stringent regulations and as a consequence of deliberate corporate strategies to relocate production to countries with lower standards, workers in these countries run serious risks of becoming victims of social, environmental and health and safety dumping. **Co-operation is needed between local unions in developing countries and international trade unions** in order to safeguard decent work and prevent these dumping practices from occurring. Moreover, they require that **chemical risks be addressed at global level**, given the global nature of chemical risks and the effects of globalisation trends.

### *Dealing with chemical risks at the global level*

**Chapter 19 of Agenda 21**, concluded in Rio in 1992, contains valuable principles and actions for sound ways of dealing with chemicals and hazardous wastes throughout their life cycle. Properly implemented, these would help protect human health effectively and promote a sustainable development trajectory for the environment. European trade unions propose to take **the year 2020** as a target year for having these principles implemented. Further analysis needs to be carried out to see how this chapter can be developed in and after Johannesburg. In this respect lessons can also be drawn from experiences with international conventions, like e.g. OSPAR, and with the EU's Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive 96/61 (IPPC).

European trade unions particularly support the inclusion of **principles of precaution** and of **substitution**.

- The precautionary principle, based on sound science, should be applied as set out in the Rio agreement. Moreover, it should be applied on the whole production chain.
- The principle of substitution concerns the use of the least harmful products able to perform a given task. The level of harmfulness should both be seen in terms of environmental harm as well as harm to health and safety.

European trade unions, accordingly, call for more research, assessment and risk prevention with respect to **multiple exposures** to chemical risks. From a workers' perspective the 'individual substance to substance' approach is insufficient.

All countries should implement the new **globally harmonized system (GHS)** for the **classification and labelling of chemicals** as soon as it becomes available, with a view to having the system fully operational in 2008.

To further develop and improve global abilities to deal with chemical risks, **further action and co-operation** is required **from ILO** (on chemical safety), **from OECD** (on chemical research) and **from UNEP** in developing a future global chemical strategy. UNEP must be provided with the necessary resources in order to be able to perform this vital task.

**National governments** are called upon to **ratify and apply ILO conventions** that set proper conditions for effective global dealing with chemical risks. These are conventions covering the use and management of chemicals, workers' rights and child labour (see also section 4). Moreover, **good governance** is required in all countries in order to ensure that the safety of workers, of the public and of the environment is a major concern and a high priority for all countries.

European trade unions call for legislation and global agreements to ensure that workers are given sufficient **information, training, education and empowerment** to perform their work in a safe and healthy way. This should concern workers in chemical industries, and also workers who are downstream users of chemical products. Moreover, all prevention done inside the workplace will have positive effects on the 'outside' environment. Participation rights in environmental issues should therefore be secured, to enable workers to prevent environmental pollution at the workplace.

European trade unions are willing to co-operate with local trade unions all over the world and with International trade unions (ICFTU and WCL) in advancing **big campaigns on issues concerning chemicals**, for instance concerning the banning of asbestos or substituting hazardous pesticides.

### *Dealing with chemical risks at European level*

European trade unions generally support the **EU strategy for a future chemicals policy**, as put forward in the White Paper of the same name. The White Paper principles must fully and urgently be implemented. Certain aspects need to be improved, when looked at from a trade union and Sustainable Development point of view, namely:

- The new policy should better reflect workers' health and safety issues, with a stronger focus on reducing the exposure of workers', including multiple exposure, chronic exposure to low doses, and exposure of women (assessing maximum limit values considering their specific biological and biochemical conditions). Also, it should specify greater workers' and trade unions' participation in this area.
- More attention should be paid to very persistent and very bio accumulative (VPVB) and to persistent, bio accumulative and toxic (PBT) substances and their substitution.
- Downstream user responsibility should be further elaborated. The inter-sectoral dimension and clarification of responsibilities require more attention.

European trade unions demand the **immediate ratification** by the EU and the EU Member States of all pending **international chemical conventions**.

European trade unions call for the development of **databases on chemicals and on safe alternatives and possibilities of substitution**. They also call for the centralisation and harmonisation of such databases. This is a task for the European Union's common research centres. A further allocation of resources to this end is called for. These databases should be accessible for workers, their representatives and for the general public.

### **Two examples in the field of chemicals**

#### ***Spain: prevention of the use of pesticides in buildings***

In 1994 in the Hospital Valle de Hebron (9000 workers) two consecutive fumigation incidents occurred within 15 days of each other. As a consequence, 80 workers were exposed and 8 workers were afterwards declared totally incapable for work. At first, nobody recognised the problem, not even the insurance companies and prevention services that were involved. Since that time at least 17 more cases were reported in Catalunya. The victims were mainly women workers.

Trade unions reacted first of all by providing information and training. They demanded epidemiological studies, and sought collaboration with independent experts (CAPS) who diagnosed and treated toxicated workers. From these experiences follow-ups were organised in order also to help those workers affected in other cases in Catalunya.

The results were that the authorities took action by regulating and controlling activities in enterprises where these pesticides were applied. In 2001 a tripartite project was launched to develop a protocol for integrated urban pest control. Now, in 2002 in 5 companies testing is taking place, with full trade union monitoring.

#### ***Italy: trade union and the revitalisation of an industrial area towards sustainability***

The area of Marghera is located close to the Italian town of Venice. Historically it is an area with a lot of textile industry, harbour activity and refineries. Due to the effects of the intensive use of chemicals over a long period of time and to the economic downfall of the industry, the area had degenerated into a deplorable state. Several parties with stakes in the economic, social and environmental quality of Marghera entered into consultations in order to develop a revitalisation plan. Among them were representatives from government, regional administration, national trade unions, regional trade unions and industry. The consultations finally led to a complicated agreement that sought to reclaim the area, modernise the enterprises and attract new economic activities. A committee in which all involved bodies participate presently manages the agreement.

European trade unions call for **proper State involvement** in bringing about effective chemical risk management in the EU. This means:

- Increased resources for evaluation and regulation concerning the use and the production of chemicals in Europe.
- Sufficient involvement of the national authorities to ensure that producers comply with national and international legislation.

European trade unions call for the **further development of health and safety and environment management standards** in an open, democratic and transparent process with the involvement of all major stakeholders. Worker participation should be secured in all management systems, including environmental management systems. The European Union is called for finance to enable non-business participation in the international standardisation process.

European trade unions support the development of more integrated **product labels**, which reflect quality requirements for the consumers, as well as environmental and occupational health and safety considerations for the workers involved.

The risk management that is called for may require serious **changes within companies**, and **within sectors**. With this in mind the European Unions encourage the use of modern **management principles**, such as EMAS and certified HSE management systems, and promote the inclusion of 'workers exposition management' in such systems. Also **voluntary initiatives** such as 'responsible care' and 'product stewardship' must be encouraged. However, such systems and initiatives are not enough by themselves to ensure production with a sufficient level of safety. All such systems must be based on general requirements – **standards, charters** – that are developed in an open and transparent process, where all stakeholders (unions, business, environmental NGO's and consumers) have an opportunity to take part.

It is important to note that the European trade unions do not consider such voluntary initiatives and agreements as alternatives but rather as complements to legislation.

Since only a sustainable chemical industry will be competitive on a medium to long-term basis in a society that increasingly demands stricter environmental and health standards, the chemical industry will have to modernise. Safer and cleaner alternatives must be created through substitution of substances, the transformation of processes and product innovation. Where these changes may entail negative social repercussions, companies, national authorities and the European Union must provide the necessary instruments for **fair transition** in order to facilitate the change process for the workers in the chemical industry. A discussion process at EU level should be started to operationalise this concept of fair transitions related to chemicals.

European trade unions seek further **co-operation and co-ordination with NGO's** in the area of chemical hazards. All trade union Members are consumers and members of civil society – and many if not most of consumers and members of civil society are workers.

## 9 Strengthening the role of European trade unions

Given their position, their role and their perspective, European trade unions must be central actors in bringing about sustainable development. Sustainable development is about their key concerns. They are major actors in shaping and defending the social dimension, and they are prepared and willing to move forward in integrating the social, the economic and the environmental policy areas of sustainable development. In order to effectively play this role, however, European trade unions **must have the ability** to do so. This means the **competences of the European trade unions** to play their role in sustainable development must be strengthened, and, they must **build their capacities**.

From all that has been said in the previous sections, the following concluding requirements can be derived.

## *Strengthening European trade union competencies for sustainable development*

First of all, it is necessary to raise **competencies for workers and trade unions at company and local level**. Employment, social rights and training (professional qualification) are fundamental in combating poverty and social exclusion – within Europe and elsewhere in the world alike.

Secondly, the **role that trade unions play** in effecting health and safety protection, the promotion of public health and bringing about decent work – again, in Europe as well as anywhere in the world, and particularly with multinational companies – must be **recognised and codified**. This can be done through the reassertion of chapter 29 of Agenda 21, through the ratification of ILO conventions and through the elaboration of fundamental social standards within the ILO.

In the reform strategies and transitions that are necessary to effect a sustainable development, European trade unions must be equipped to play their role in ensuring the proper balance between the social, economic and environmental consequences of the changes that are aimed for. This means they must play their role in **negotiating fair transitions**, based on:

- Accurate information on the social repercussions of different developments and measures
- Resources for the measures to ameliorate and counteract such repercussions
- Inclusion of trade unions in the strategy formation process, and recognition of their role through the creation of proper rights and competencies.

Pursuing these different roles of trade unions, aiming to strike a better social and economic balance between the environment and development, requires the **strengthening and extension of trade union rights on information, training, participation and consultation**. Particularly with respect to consultation, sustainable development requires trade unions to understand social, economic and environmental considerations, and to link the local to the global level. Trade unions must, therefore, be given information rights to deal with social, economic and environmental issues alike. This means they must be in the position to obtain the knowledge, as well as be recognised as a negotiation partner for dealing with these matters.

Moreover, paths must be created for trade unions to address effectively small and medium sized enterprises as well as large multinational corporations. The development and extension of works councils, sector councils, and European works councils all have a role to play here in improving negotiation channels. In addition, progressive attitudes from management and business leaders together with the extension of legal rights and collective agreements into SME's are called for as are explicit roles for trade unions in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of codes of conduct.

## *Building European trade union capacities for sustainable development*

European trade unions must further **qualify themselves** to play an effective role in bringing about sustainable development. They will continue to build their capacities, first of all by the process of **learning by doing**. In dealing with concrete sustainability issues on a daily basis, they will organise to reflect on the long-term developmental aspects from a combined social, economic and environmental perspective. The subsequent exchange of information and experiences between national and European unions will help create platforms for international co-ordination whilst all the time enhancing their knowledge, experience and expertise.

A balanced view will be further developed by fostering an **inter-sectoral approach** to dealing with sustainability issues. To this end trade unions, will increase co-operation, internationally and between sectors. The possibility of conflicting interests will be resolved through dialogue and by building on long-term, common global interests, thus creating solidarity and an understanding of what it actually means to balance social, economic and environmental objectives.

European trade unions welcome the opportunity to further establish **contacts with the European Commission**, both for the implementation of the EU Environmental Programme and for the implementation and follow-up of the EU sustainable development strategy decided in Gothenburg. Through this, European trade unions will build on their position in the European arena and promote issues of access, basic security and equity in the European Community policies that are being developed.

In the so-called Lisbon and Gothenburg process, dialogue was established between social partners. In order to integrate the environmental dimension, it is essential for European trade unions to elaborate their **dialogue** through the ETUC with **European NGO's**.

At the **European level** the European trade unions will **intensify** their **co-operation on sustainable development** through working groups that deal with concrete themes, and through conferences for the further exchange of ideas and concrete strategy formation. Above all, resolute actions will be undertaken that mobilise membership and officials, and show that the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment and the respect of human and social rights are challenges the European trade unions are willing and are able to address effectively.