

EMF WORK PROGRAMME 2007-2011

(Adopted by the 3rd EMF Congress – Lisbon, 6th & 7th June 2007)

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining - core business of trade unions in Europe

4) The main aims and objectives of the EMF collective bargaining strategy remain the improvement of working and living conditions of metalworkers, the co-ordination of national collective bargaining policies and the development, enhancement and promotion of an active European collective bargaining policy. In this respect we need to make the EMF policies more visible and more closely linked to the trade union membership.

5) All EMF affiliated trade unions consider collective bargaining as the main tool in protecting and improving the wages and working conditions of workers in Europe and as an integral part of the European Social Model.

The current situation

6) Collective bargaining, collective bargaining systems, as well as social legislation are under continued pressure. A number of key influences can be noted.

7) There is of course the economic reality, which shows us ongoing globalisation, further relocation, or the threat of relocation, and an increased tendency towards short-term maximisation of profits. This strategy without any doubt puts pressure on working conditions and largely influences the collective bargaining rounds in all countries of Europe, thus creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. The EMF needs to continue the debate on restructuring, relocation and the threat thereof and, in view of the influence it has on the collective bargaining situation amongst others, this debate has to be enlarged to all EMF policy areas. The EMF must look for viable alternatives, guidelines and strategies, including possible rules to be introduced into restructuring/relocations agreements, combining the home and relocation country and the

respective trade unions (open- ended contracts, quality of employment, working time and working time organisation, rights for trade union membership, trade union rights, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike, etc.). The EMF rejects the short-term strategy of the financial markets, with their growing emphasis on profits and aggressive shareholder value strategies.

8) The hard-line policy of the European Central Bank is clearly far too much oriented towards the one-sided approach of high interest rates and a fear of inflation - this, while all indicators show this policy to be erroneous and even dangerous for the further economic development of Europe. The EMF clearly wants the ECB to change this policy and to focus in the future, together with the Commission and the Members States, on a policy aiming not only at full employment in Europe but equally at safeguarding the industrial production capacity of Europe.

9) We are still faced with unfortunate and unacceptably high levels of unemployment in many regions in Europe, especially among young people and women. Low participation of women in the labour market is to be seen in some countries. We are also confronted with an increase in precarious jobs and an ongoing process of deregulation. All these situations lead to a continued feeling of insecurity and a further slowing down of the consumption rate.

10) At the same time we can still see a discrepancy between required qualifications and the requirements of companies and the availability of qualified employees on the labour market. This also shows the clear need for more further training and life-long learning and the recognition of this training. The 1st EMF Common Demand on training is therefore a clear and excellent proactive instrument and a solution to this problem and should be used in ongoing collective bargaining rounds. Having said this the EMF wants to point out that many companies often exaggerate their required qualifications in order to obtain or create a more flexible work force, thus creating even higher tension on the labour market.

11) More and more attention should also be paid to the age structure in companies. There is, on the one hand, an increased demand for a lengthening of the pension age in order to keep workers, and especially qualified workers, longer in companies, without always or necessarily having the required jobs for them. On the other hand, we also see the increased tendency of employers to dismiss workers before they have

reached their early retirement age, often misusing the social security funds. And we cannot help but stress also the continuously intensified production rhythms with which workers are confronted in general and the highly increased flexibility and work-related stress which often accompanies these elements. In this light, it is equally clear that workers cannot prolong their careers above the current pension limit.

12) Collective bargaining rounds are also influenced by the increased mobility of workers in Europe and the increasing level of migrant workers. The EMF points out that this is an opportunity for trade unions in Europe to campaign in this domain, both for the rights of these workers and to organise them. The EMF needs to set up a strategy aimed at the integration of migrant labour.

13) There is clearly also a tendency towards influence, not only from employers and governments but also from European policies and guidelines, on the outcome and results of collective bargaining rounds. This calls for further efforts from the EMF to mobilise and lobby towards the European institutions, in co-operation with the other European Industry Federations and the ETUC, in order to influence or stop certain policy proposals like the service directive and the revision of the working time directive.

14) Finally there is also the background of the lessening influence of the trade unions in Europe. Strong national trade unions, a strong EMF AND European-wide co-ordinated collective bargaining strategies are still the best viable answer to the corresponding danger of social competition, wage dumping, health and safety risks and a downward spiral of wages and working conditions. In a coordinated approach of all policy domains, the EMF needs to support the trade unions in Europe and their campaigning strategies towards more organised workers, without overlooking the newer and traditionally less organised sectors of the metal industry.

The Wage Co-ordination Rule

15) We strongly reconfirm the EMF commitment to its wage coordination rule as a means of maintaining purchasing power and a balanced participation in productivity increases. The EMF believes that the national level is still considered as indispensable to achieve this goal. The EMF reconfirms its rejection of wage policies geared towards further

redistribution in favour of profits derived from capital. Such policies reduce purchasing power, destroy jobs and undermine the European social and welfare model.

16) The wage co-ordination rule enables the EMF to co-ordinate collective bargaining policy and to integrate wage increases with qualitative elements in collective agreements. The EMF considers this as essential and will actively implement the wage co-ordination rule and support the trade unions when the coordination rule comes under pressure in certain countries. In this respect we aim at reinforcing the political role and influence of the wage coordination rule, which should become more visible during all aspects of collective bargaining rounds. This wage coordination rule is a concrete political and policy tool towards employers, which will be actively used by the collective bargaining negotiators of all affiliated organisations. To strengthen further this coordination the EMF calls upon affiliated organisations to invite an EMF representative to their national collective bargaining committee or similar body.

17) The EMF will examine various strategies for achieving the goal set out above: The EMF will organise a debate on the effects on the wage co-ordination rule of the current pressure on collective bargaining rounds, company-level concession bargaining, negative wage drift and ongoing decentralisation and relocation. The EMF will look into the possibility of updating and possibly extending the EMF resolution on undercutting wages, working time and labour conditions^{*1}. The continued emphasis on the need for information between all the main actors in this domain, including the EWC co-ordinators, the national trade unions and the Eucob@n network, is of vital importance. The EMF will continue to reinforce its coordination with the Company Policy Committee and coordination between its main policy committees.

The Eucob@n network

18) The wage co-ordination rule is central to the EMF collective bargaining policy; therefore it is important that we monitor all aspects of the rule, including negative wage drift and all qualitative elements of collective agreements.

¹ The text of the EMF Resolution on Working Time and Undercutting Labour costs is available on:
http://www.emf-fem.org/about_the_emf/position_papers/english/collective_bargaining_policy

19) The EMF intends to further strengthen its Eucob@n network by extending it to and coordinating it with other European Industry Federations, beginning with EMCEF and ETUF-TCL. In this respect we refer also to the agreement that was concluded between EMCEF, ETUF-TCL and the EMF in December 2006 on closer cooperation between the three existing collective bargaining data gathering networks, by closely linking data collection in the future, making information generally available, linking the three websites and agreeing also on the common new name of Eucob@n and a common logo to be used by the three organisations.

20) The Eucob@n network also needs to be enlarged towards company policy and company-level negotiations. In order to develop Eucob@n even further we need to investigate the possibility of a macro-economic chapter and perspective.

Regional collective bargaining networks

21) Since 1996 the possibility of creating regional collective bargaining networks within the framework of the EMF has always been an important part of our overall coordination strategy. These networks emphasise that collective bargaining is no longer simply of national interest and they play an important role in practical coordination of bargaining policies. We have noticed in the past a mixed success in both creating these networks in all regions as well as in the general functioning of these networks.

22) The EMF remains convinced of the usefulness and necessity of these networks, however they are organised. As such we need to strengthen this part of our strategy and an evaluation of these regional networks should be organised in relation to the next Collective Bargaining Conference in 2009. The EMF will also launch an initiative to exchange 'good practices' regarding these regional collective bargaining networks.

The Common Demand

23) An intermediate evaluation of the ongoing first EMF Common Demand shows a large interest and a high-level of enthusiasm. The EMF, right down to the level of the membership of its affiliated organisations, sees the first common demand as a positive, successful and modern answer to the employers' strategy of increased competition and lowering of wage and working conditions.

24) The EMF will thoroughly evaluate this very important first EMF Common Demand. A concrete evaluation of this initiative should be made towards the next Collective Bargaining Conference in 2009. This evaluation should also take into consideration all other EMF elements related to the topic of the first Common Demand such as the training issue in industrial policy matters, in company policy and in social dialogue. This will especially be the case with regards to the CEEMET-EMF dialogue.

25) As a result of the support of the affiliated organisations and following the above-mentioned evaluation, the EMF can take the initiative towards further common demands.

Working time

26) The organisation and determination of working time remains at the forefront of the collective bargaining agenda and is an important tool in the struggle against unemployment.

27) Working time is under pressure in many companies, with employers asking for ever more flexible working time without limitations and at an ever lower cost. The EMF acknowledges the problem of the extension of real working time and rejects a general extension of contractual working time, calculated on an annual basis, or on a career basis, in any country. Moreover, it goes without saying that no breaches whatsoever of the EU Working Time Directive will be tolerated.

28) The EMF reaffirms its commitment to a working week of 35 hours, and to the common European minimum standard of 1,750 hours maximum of normal contractual working time calculated on an annual basis and an annual maximum of 100 hours paid-only overtime. The EMF deems this still to be an extremely important trade union instrument in the struggle against unemployment, as a way to improve working conditions, as a protection in health and safety matters and as an important instrument for the work/life balance. Reduction of working time remains an instrument for both the redistribution of work and the improvement of the quality of life and working conditions. It is essential that working time reduction takes place with full wage compensation and that no group of employees be excluded from working time regulations.

29) It is extremely important to continue the struggle to exclude the opt-out clause from the working time directive and limit the annual flexibility. In many countries, professional and managerial staff are excluded from working time protection and many of these employees receive no specific compensation for their overtime. In many cases they are not even protected or covered by the EU Working Time directive. The EMF will continue the work to fully include professional and managerial staff in the Working Time Directive.

30) The EMF will also assess how to improve and reinforce the Working Time Charter. Specific attention shall be given to all aspects of flexibility and on the EMF policy of ensuring that precariousness is taken out of flexibility.

Precarious employment

31) Precarious employment is more and more seen as an essential and difficult problem for collective bargaining in all European countries. The ongoing pressure from employers, governments and not least the European Commission towards more flexible contract forms will increase the precariousness by undermining workers' private lives, job and contract security and collective bargaining structures. It can eventually create problems for companies by eroding the skilled workforce. It also presents a challenge for trade unions in respect of recruiting and organizing members.

32) The current initiative of the Commission on flexisecurity has to be followed closely, not least since it is presented as a possible common European strategy, based on the Danish model, but without completely taking over the Danish model – i.e. especially the social security system. In reality, it talks only about flexibility and not about security and therefore leads to increased precariousness. Closely linked to this is the EU Green Paper on labour law, which focuses equally on the flexibility aspect as well as on all matters related to labour law and social protection in EU countries. Seemingly, the idea behind it is to come to a harmonization at European level. But with the danger of ongoing deregulation of social rights and social protection in mind, the EMF has to position itself clearly on this issue.

33) The EMF needs to investigate the possibilities of making the resolution on precarious employment more concrete in terms of policy guidelines and promote its use in practice in affiliates' collective bargaining rounds. The EMF will also investigate the possibility of formulating a second EMF common demand on this topic. The EMF will initiate a European action day against precarious employment.

34) In its political activities the EMF also needs to focus on improving working conditions for organized workers who are not covered by collective agreements. Exchange of information on best individual contracts is an important step which will be organized within the next congress period.

Restructuring and relocation

35) In recent years the EMF and its affiliates have faced an increase in cases of restructuring and relocation of production. The EMF has organised trade union coordination and action days in this respect. It refuses the MNC strategy to put workers in competition with one another. This strategy develops a feeling of uncertainty and puts pressure on working conditions. The EMF has been always in favour of enlargement and also of a deep industrialization of the Eastern European countries that can bring better working and living conditions for millions of workers and increase their labour rights. It reiterates that enlargement cannot be used as a tool of social dumping. In Europe the blackmail threat of relocation (loss of jobs) often brings workers to accept undercutting agreements. The EMF needs to continue the debate on restructuring, relocations and the threat thereof, and will investigate viable alternatives and strategies, including possible rules to be introduced into restructuring/relocation agreements combining the home and relocation country. Building solidarity in such a difficult situation is one of the priorities of the EMF. The issue of restructuring should be a matter for cross-sector cooperation between collective bargaining, company policy and industrial policy.

Welfare

36) The European metalworkers' trade unions recognise the necessity of maintaining common welfare as a common responsibility and they consider it an integral part of the European Social Model. Although it is considered a central State task, it is our responsibility to defend and improve these social tasks as a collective property. At the same time, the European metalworkers' trade unions cannot stand idle in the face of cuts in welfare or the lack of political will to shoulder the necessary responsibility for important social improvements. The EMF is clearly opposed to the EU policy of lengthening unilaterally the pension age and undermining social security systems.

37) The EMF will open the debate on the social, political, workplace, quality of life, economic or any other issues surrounding retirement.

38) The EMF will investigate possibilities for implementing elements from our Social Charter in collective bargaining rounds. Specific attention will be given to the following:

39) The EMF will open the debate on a possible policy guideline for supplementary pension schemes

40) The EMF will promote a policy guideline on equal opportunities, aimed not only at wages and working conditions but also including all aspects of the EMF Social Charter

41) The EMF will also investigate the current situation and set up an EMF guideline on the extension of family leave opportunities such as: parental leave and the right to remain at home to care for sick family members, etc.

Migrant labour

42) As stated before, the numbers of migrant workers - both intra- and extra-Europe - are increasing rapidly and they play an important social and economic role in Europe. The EMF clearly states that all workers should be covered by collective agreements, the welfare state and social security systems without any kind of discrimination. To achieve this we have to use the existing collective bargaining systems to a maximum to assure the same rights to all workers, regardless of their status or origin.

This would also give a clear position in the debate on posted employees, the service directive and the principle of country of origin. The debate should therefore focus on all aspects of this issue and include that of increased inner European labour mobility as well as immigrant workers and illegal immigration in Europe.

43) The EMF reaffirms its position regarding the service directive and the posting of workers that the principle of country of activity, i.e. the place where the worker is employed, for all wage and working conditions, is the only possibility in order to prevent any downward spiral of competition on wages, working conditions and the labour market.

44) The EMF strongly supports all activities aimed at better integration of migrant workers into the working community of the country where they are active. The trade unions, with the help of the EMF, have already set up special projects, as for instance the Solidarity Pact, to support the rights of these migrant workers and to organise them. Collective bargaining can play a specific role in this by providing possibilities for training, language courses, holiday periods and career opportunities, etc.

European industrial relations system

45) In the coming period the EMF must focus also on the further development of the future European industrial relations system and the Commission's initiative on a system for transnational collective agreements.

46) In view of established experience the EMF needs an evaluation of the internal EMF procedures with regard to negotiating processes, both in respect of the mandate for company-level negotiations and the sectoral level. The development of a European industrial relations system, or a transnational system of collective agreements as the EU Commission calls it, creates the need for an ongoing debate about the internal structures, working methods and framework for the EMF.

47) The EMF underlines that trade unions must be able to initiate joint transnational action, demonstrations and strikes. This comes within the framework of establishing a European wage and collective bargaining policy. There is a need for information on all possible industrial actions via Eucob@n through which practical solidarity can be organised.

48) The EMF needs to support and take actions vis-à-vis countries where basic trade union rights, such as the right to free association and the right to strike, are not regularly respected.

49) The EMF will undertake appropriate steps to investigate all possibilities and legal aspects related to transnational strikes and strike-breaking.

50) The EMF Executive Committee can initiate sympathy strikes and other collective solidarity actions in close consultation with the member organisations concerned. The EMF will fully support affiliates in countries where the right to undertake sympathy strikes does not yet exist in their struggle for this right.

51) The EMF reconfirms in this connection its policy paper on the future European industrial relations system from the Collective Bargaining Conference of Oslo in 2001. The EMF states clearly that the development of a European IRS has to include all European levels of negotiation and include the European right to strike as an essential component for a clear collective bargaining strategy. The EMF furthermore stresses the need to bring the employers organisation(s) to the table. The development of an IRS system as well as the creation of a European bargaining space, as stated in the EMF work programme, cannot be established without a qualified employer counterpart.

Collective bargaining and social dialogue

52) The developing sectoral social dialogue in the metal industry has to be seen in relationship to the development of a European industrial relations system. Even if the EU Commission always links very closely the social dialogue committees with the fact that the social partners involved in the process need to have the capacity and the mandate to negotiate, the EMF reconfirms that the social dialogue currently in practice is mostly related to industrial policy issues linked to the sector concerned and is not collective bargaining.

53) We nevertheless need to develop a strategy to reinforce the emerging sectoral social dialogue and to create a more open policy towards collective bargaining aspects. Especially important in this respect is the dialogue started between EMF and CEEMET, where for the first time elements clearly linked to EMF collective bargaining strategy, such as the

first EMF common demand, the European Qualification Framework and the transparency of qualifications, were introduced in the debate.

54) We need to further develop this strategy and ensure that collective bargaining and collective bargaining topics can also be debated in a more general approach in the sectoral social dialogue committees.

Conclusion

55) Collective bargaining remains at the heart of trade unionism. In recent years, the EMF has undertaken the setting up of a co-ordinated common strategy and policy in Europe. This policy should be reinforced during the next congress period. We need to re-evaluate our guidelines and minimum standards on a regular basis and ensure that they are playing a more concrete and active role in national and European trade union strategy. In order to achieve this, the EMF will have to ensure far greater coordination between its various committees, both operationally and in terms of how it communicates.