

## **Collective bargaining and the green economy: a European trade union perspective**

Collective bargaining and the green economy covers four main areas of interest to trade union in Europe, each with the potential to strengthen union influence on behalf of their members, and help build union membership itself:

- Greening the workplace;
- Green collective bargaining;
- national dialogue on the green economy; and
- National dialogue on training and education programs contributing to the transition to a low carbon economy.

Developing social dialogue at national and local level is, of course, one of the main union demands for a Just Transition to a low carbon future.

In this paper, we aim provide examples of these different types of initiatives in Europe, basing ourselves on the Syndex study (2010-11) ‘**Social partner initiatives in Europe on climate change and employment**’<sup>1</sup>. The study was initiated to give the European-level social partners the means to identify existing joint actions and forthcoming initiatives to better address the opportunities created by greenhouse gas reduction as well as minimise negative employment effects of policy and emission reduction measures.

### **1. Greening the workplace**

Union-led workplace initiatives, where unions work with their members and employers to promote energy efficiency and the sustainable production of goods and services, are developing in Europe, including in Belgium and the UK. Key activities range from awareness raising, publicity and training to the establishment of well-developed workplace green committees with facilities for green union reps.

#### **1.1. The Belgian experiences: “RISE”, “BRISE” and “Arbeid en Milieu”<sup>2</sup>: platforms helping and training trade union reps on environmental issues**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://resourcecentre.etuc.org/Climate-Change-86.html>

<sup>2</sup> For more information :

In Wallonia : RISE (Réseau Intersyndical de Sensibilisation à l’Environnement) <http://www.rise.be>

In Flanders : Arbeid en Milieu <http://www.a-m.be>;

website of the green jobs project: [www.groenejobs.be](http://www.groenejobs.be)

In Brussels: BRISE (Réseau Intersyndical Bruxellois de Sensibilisation à l’Environnement) <http://www.brise-milieu.be/>

For trade union activists, it is not always clear how to engage with the climate policy of their company or sector. It is a complex issue, and even company level solutions can be complicated and technical in nature. Moreover, management is rarely open to a debate with worker representatives on the corporate climate strategy.

Therefore, a series of initiatives were developed by the FGTB and CSC-ACV to support shop stewards and their activities on: education and training, systemic dissemination of information, trade union pilot projects focused at the company level, as well as regular support and aid.

Concretely, this resulted in the creation, at the end of the 1990s, of inter-trade union networks on awareness raising and training on environmental and climate questions in the 3 Belgian regions: Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels-Capital.

## **RISE & BRISE**

These networks aim to stimulate social consultation and negotiation on environmental matters, reinforcing the capacity of shop stewards to respond on these questions at company level. These objectives are primarily achieved through awareness raising activities (e.g. training, trade union press articles, educational materials and tools, electronic tools such as website and electronic newsletter, brochures, and support services), as well as grassroots actions.

It is clear that the awareness and interest of shop stewards about environmental and climate issues is constantly growing, particularly as these issues increasingly touch the daily lives of workers. It is therefore essential to provide the tools to defend their rights and ensure sustainable and decent jobs.

## **Arbeid & Milieu vzw**

Arbeid & Milieu (Labour & Environment) is the Flemish not for profit organization through which the three major trade unions (ABVV, ACV and ACLVB) cooperate with the Flemish environment organizations network (BBL). A&M was founded in 1987 and its mission is to contribute to a social and environmentally responsible economy and society. The three trade unions each have their internal environment program (the inter-syndical environment project<sup>3</sup>). Also BBL pays substantial attention in its work to the socio-economic aspects of environmental policies. However, the four organizations are convinced that they can create added value by working together. This is done in several ways:

- **Consultation.** Environmental and social interest can conflict in specific dossiers. A&M provides a forum for the organizations involved to discuss complex and delicate issues (emission trading, environmental taxes etc. are examples) and try to find common ground. It is important to stress that A&M does not communicate externally with proper positions. This rests the responsibility of the four organizations.
- **Research, information distribution and awareness raising.** Bringing together and synthesizing information on issues where social and environmental aspects meet each

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<sup>3</sup> This program supports directly the representatives of each trade union in the companies on environment issues.

other is a central task for A&M. A&M is also very active in the divulgation of this information. Instruments are magazines, leaflets, conferences, education sessions, etc. The target audience is trade union representatives and members of the environmental movement.

- **Policy advice.** Due to the increasing knowledge gathered in A&M the organization is also often invited as stakeholder public policy consultations.

With a small secretariat combined and the active participation of representatives of the four member organizations, A&M can contribute in a substantial way to the environment and labour debate. Just one concrete example to illustrate this. A&M started a project on “green jobs”. Through a major conference, site visits and information sessions members of the four organizations could be actively informed and involved on this important social aspect of the greening of the economy.

## 1.2. The UK « Green workplaces »

The TUC argues that every job can be a green job, every workplace a green or at least greener workplace. In the UK, workplaces account for a fifth of carbon emissions. As the UK’s low carbon plan <sup>4</sup>(2009) noted: “By 2050 all of our workplaces will need to be using less energy and making use of clean energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and potentially save billions.” Efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the workplace are crucial to limiting the impact of climate change.

The UK’s Energy Savings Trust advocates an effective employee engagement programme to help reduce wasted energy, cut carbon emissions and develop a positive low carbon culture at work and in the home. However, according to the Carbon Trust<sup>5</sup>, “employers are failing to galvanise their employees’ enthusiasm”. The UK has set itself challenging and legally binding carbon reduction targets, so the need to engage employees in building sustainable workplaces has never been greater.

“Green workplaces” are union projects are focused on the workplace level, with the aim of engaging workers and management in action to reduce energy use and the ecological footprint of the company. They feature awareness raising activities, training workshops, as well as joint audits, consultations and other initiatives.

An initial batch of 13 pilot projects allowed the training of 97 environmental reps, and developed strategic initiatives on the reduction of CO2 emissions and efficient use of resources. Amongst these projects, the TUC initiative in United Utilities created an employer initiative called 'Managerial Carbon Champions' alongside a trade union agenda on reduced energy use and waste production in 50 sites nationally.

*Greenworks*<sup>6</sup>, a report of the TUC’s GreenWorkplaces Projects for 2008-2010, describes the work of 13 pilot projects in the public and private sectors in enabling resource and energy

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<sup>4</sup> The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, DECC, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> UK employees ready to help cut costs around the workplace: [http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/news/news/press-centre/2009/Pages/employee\\_research.aspx](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/news/news/press-centre/2009/Pages/employee_research.aspx)

<sup>6</sup> *GreenWorks*, TUC 2010: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/greenworkplacesreport.pdf>

efficiency at work.

Typical Greenworkplace pilot projects include:

- Magor Brewery, South Wales: union members working for the world's biggest brewer initiated a project to cut resource use and carbon in a project that has achieved significant results in two years: water usage has fallen by 46%; electricity usage fall 49%; heating bills by 23%; and an overall 40% reduction in CO2 emissions. The project has saved £2m in costs and helped increased the level of job security.
- Great Ormond Street Hospital, London: a new joint environment committee including senior management and union representatives covers all key occupations and functions in the hospital. Members are granted reasonable time off to carry out environmental audits, including CO2 reduction strategies.
- A&P Marine, Falmouth: A&P Marine is the city's largest dockyard employer, with over 450 staff. Its main activities include refitting and repair to large vessels, but it has recently branched out into developing wave power generators. The company has a joint workplace energy team, which has identified various energy saving initiatives including replacing the compressor system with a more efficient model (a £100,000 outlay that paid for itself within 18 months); and installing new energy efficient pumps for a dry dock. The TUC and the recognised unions have provided joint training on environmental awareness across the site.
- BT's Adastral Park complex: unions and management set up a joint environmental forum, with joint initiatives to boost frontline employee involvement in greener workplace activities. It's part of BT's wider commitment to reduce its global carbon intensity by 80% by 2020. Early initiatives include engaging staff in site-wide carbon impact assessments covering energy, water and waste and introduction of widespread water efficiency savings and a Green Travel Plan.
- A Greenworkplace at the British Museum, London, saved £700,000 in energy costs, with projected carbon savings of 1050 tonnes in two years.
- Bristol City Council: a joint environmental agreement provides for a green reps committee, including facility time to audit sites and access training needs. This includes a green rep in every department. The committee's work programme focuses on four priority areas: implementing a standard approach to waste and recycling in all major council buildings; replacing all large bottled water dispensers with filtered, cooled mains water where practicable; developing a waste management policy for all council-organised festivals and events; and an eco-driving scheme targeting high mileage drivers at the council. Eco-driving training, training 60 drivers so far, has helped deliver fuel savings of at least £350 every year for each diesel van covering at least 25,000 miles in a year.

### **Green Workplaces – building a national network**

A TUC survey in 2009 found over 1300 workplaces with some kind of green project underway. This survey highlighted the need for a more systematic approach to supporting union green reps to maximise their potential and influence among their work colleagues (*Unions and Climate*

*Change: A guide for union reps*<sup>7</sup>). The survey uncovered 430 different joint management-union committee structures/working parties discussing climate-related issues at work, pointing to high levels of enthusiasm among reps to be involved in the environmental workplace agenda. However, only 14% of reps had attended courses on environmental issues and climate change as part of union training. This reflects research by the Carbon Trust highlighting that the vast majority of employees want to reduce workplace greenhouse gas emissions but only one in five workers have access to training.).

This survey, and the TUC's experience with pilot projects, demonstrates the significant potential that exists to build the Green Workplaces agenda across UK workplaces, where unions can support employees wanting their employers to scale up their response to climate change.

In August 2011, the TUC launched a new GreenWorkplaces Network<sup>8</sup> for union green reps and activists. Membership is free and allows union reps access to tips and resources, the latest news and events, along with details of training courses and workshops. A Newsletter, case studies from other union activists who are taking action on green issues in their workplace are available to download. Reps can also submit their own stories and comments. The website includes a video by green reps Sarah Lewis explaining her own activities and why joining the network is a good idea.

## **2. Green collective bargaining**

Green collective bargaining involves unions negotiating green initiatives in areas such as new technology, energy efficiency, industrial reconversions and behavior change/training. A few examples:

### **2.1. The Swedish PFE program promoting industrial energy efficiency**

The PFE program was initiated by the Swedish Energy Agency in 2005 to address two concerns: the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and rising energy prices.

The objective was to encourage energy intensive industries to improve their energy efficiency.

This was addressed through incentives based on reductions in energy taxation.

The programme ran over 5 years, with 117 industrial companies participating (i.e. 250 industrial sites).

The Programme Board, a consultation and control body created in 2005, was made up of government, company, union and employer representatives together with research centres.

After only 2 years in existence, the project had debarked on 900 improvement measures (either implemented or en-route), which cost the companies €110 million but represented a rapid return on investment (on average 2 years). In 2010, the project had achieved its original objectives by 200%.

The auditing and energy management system allowed the question of energy saving to take a central place in the concerns of employers and workers, notably through training programmes. The programme was not only considered a success by the social partners but also by the public authorities and NGOs.

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<sup>7</sup> Labour Research Department, 2009: <http://lrpublications.org.uk/publications.php?pub=BK&iss=1464>

<sup>8</sup> TUC Green Workplaces network: [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) go to Green Workplaces. And <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/index.cfm?mins=392&minors=87&majorsubjectID=2>

Its extension is dependent on 2 factors: companies will not invest without state aid, and therefore the programme is dependent on decisions taken in Brussels, particularly the revision of state aid rule and the harmonisation of governmental aid and environmental protection.

## **2.2. A German example: 'Resource Efficiency Network'**

In Germany, the **'Resource Efficiency Network'** (*Netzwerk Ressourceneffizienz*) was created with the aim of taking measures to improve industrial energy and resource efficiency, contributing to the greening of industry. The project was supported by the addressing of skills needs and vocational training.

In the framework of this project, the DGB and its affiliates launched a series of training programmes on energy efficiency aimed at workers and works councillors primarily in the aluminium sector, supported by the Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU), IG Metall and the aluminium producers (GDA). The Federal Ministry of the Environment participated in debates allowing the exchange of good practice and improving the energy efficiency in the sector from production to recycling.

The DGB and the German Minister of the Environment have collectively managed a project since 2008 entitled 'Resource efficient companies'. Works councillors and workers have benefitted from training on how to recognise and implement the opportunities for energy efficiency in their companies.

A similar initiative has been launched at sectoral level, in the plastics industry by the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, together with the union concerned (IG BCE) and the sectoral employers (GKV).

## **2.3. A German example: 'Alliance for Employment and Environment' in the construction sector**

In Germany, the **'Alliance for Employment and Environment'** created by the DGB in 1998, which involves numerous actors, had a number of objectives:

- renovating 300 000 apartments a year;
- creating and/or preserving 200 000 jobs;
- reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2 million tonnes per year;
- reducing energy bills for tenants and home-owners;
- reducing public spending by close to €3 billion per year by reducing unemployment and the costs associated and increasing tax revenue;
- reducing the national dependence on imported fossil fuels.

The action plan was launched on the basis of investment of €71 billion over 10 years. The stimulus measures in 2009-10 reinforced this although austerity measures in 2011 have reduced the budget.

The programme has resulted in the renovation of 2.4 million apartments, leading to emissions reductions of 1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2006 and 1.5 million tonnes in 2009.

The initiative led to the creation of 221 000 'green jobs' in 2008 and 340 000 in 2010, largely in the building and construction trades, but also in the manufacturing of construction goods (e.g. glass, other insulation materials), and finally in professions such as architecture, consulting and engineering.

## **2.4. A Danish case: Industrial reconversion at Lindoe Offshore Renewable Centre (LORC)**

A strong symbolic project has been the large-scale reconversion of the Lindoe shipyards and their workers towards the offshore wind and marine energy sectors. These shipyards, in the Odense region of Denmark, were closing as a result of bankruptcy. Brought together collectively by private companies, regional public authorities, professional bodies and the social partners concerned, and while largely privately financed, this emblematic programme has also benefited from some public support.

Under the title of LORC, a structure created in Copenhagen, are a R&D and demonstration centre focusing on the production of offshore wind and marine energy technologies, the infrastructure for the production and transportation of equipment, innovative training schemes addressing the needs of 2500 workers, all with a strong cooperation from the social partners (DanskMetal and 3F for the union side).

The unions participate in LORC's Council, which is a consultative body, and hope that, despite the heavy social costs, within 6 years the initiative will result in maintenance of the volume of jobs lost in the shipyards closure.

## **2.5. The European dimension: ULCOS (Ultra-Low CO2 Steelmaking)**

ULCOS was borne from the need to create a low-carbon industrial policy and promote low-carbon breakthrough technologies for the steel industry, avoiding carbon leakage from Europe in a highly competitive global industry. It allows the development of collaborative low-carbon R&D before the integration of technology and process changes by the industry. Based on a public-private partnership, it is governed by the social partners (Eurofer and the EMF) and the European Commission, within the framework of the European Steel Technology Platform (ESTEP). The project builds on an earlier evaluation of the technological and theoretical possibilities to make steel. In the current ULCOS II, pilot demonstration plants and tests are pursuing the dissemination of technology allowing the reduction by 50% of CO<sub>2</sub> per tonne of steel produced in the next 20 years.

## **3. National dialogue on the green economy**

National dialogue on the green economy exists in several European countries, through joint bodies such as the Green Economy Council in the UK, the Belgian economic council.

### **3.1. Belgium**

#### **3.1.1. National level: social actors calling for the greening of the Belgian economy**

In light of the various climate and environmental crises, as well as the financial and economic crises from 2008, the debate on the greening of economy has flourished to a degree across Europe.

Belgium has not escaped this trend, even if one must admit that the process has been slow and primarily pushed by social actors, particularly the trade unions. The debate has been structured

officially within the Central Economic Council (CCE) and the National Employment Council (CNT) since 2009<sup>9</sup>.

The Central Economic Council and the National Employment Council are public arena, framing the consultation and dialogue between employer and worker representatives.

They are traditionally called the 'Belgian social partners' home'.

Both councils act by formulating opinions and proposals on economic (CCE) and social (CNT) matters addressed to the government and/or Belgian parliament.

In October 2008, the Employment Ministry formulated a joint request to both councils - the objective was to generate an opinion from the social partners on the question of 'green jobs'. More precisely, the opinion was to explore the necessary conditions for creation of green jobs, to look at the related restructuring, at the new skills and lifelong learning needed, the impact on health and safety, the quality of work in green sectors and the integration of this theme into the EU's strategy post-Lisbon/2010.

Debate was largely focused on the definition of 'green jobs'.

The unions argued for a broad definition of a 'green job' in this opinion, as a concept *'which includes all new jobs in a sector where the ecological footprint is less than average, that contribute to the improvement of global performance, even if to a limited degree'*. Moreover, *'rather than replacing existing jobs by completely different green jobs, it is the content of jobs, the work process and the competences of workers that must change'*<sup>10</sup>.

Within this frame, the unions have always spoken of the greening of the economy rather than green employment.

Employers were much more cautious on the question, with a much more restricted conception of green jobs: as those jobs strictly linked to the environmental sector (soil protection, pollution and waste sectors).

A first opinion was finalised on the 14 July 2009.<sup>11</sup>

Following this opinion, which responded to the Ministry's requests, the social partners decided to continue their work and formulate a second opinion further developing on the concepts elaborated.

Paragraph 8 of the second opinion summarises the logic of the social partners' work succinctly: *'The Councils underline the need for economically competitive companies on the one hand and a socially just transition on the other, in order to fully succeed with such a strategy. It is only if the companies are competitive and acting in an internationally fair commercial environment that they will be able to implement the necessary ecological transformation. Meanwhile, it is only if, within the framework of our social protection system, workers are preparing adequately at the same time for related employment transitions, imposed by technological change and clean processes, that this transformation will be socially acceptable'*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Other debates, at the Economic council (CCE) and at the labour council (CNT), but also in other councils, had already taken place before (example : "<http://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/txt/fr/doc05-1391.pdf>" \t "\_" Avis relatif à l'efficacité énergétique dans le secteur du logement en Belgique » -21/12/2005 - CCE 2005-1391). But it is the first time that opinions are adopted specifically on the greening of the Belgian economy.

<sup>10</sup> « Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World ». Common Report UNEP/ILO/International employers organization/ITUC 2008

<sup>11</sup> Cf <http://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/txt/fr/doc09-1091.pdf> (en français)

<sup>12</sup> cf <http://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/txt/fr/doc10-470.pdf> (en français)



It should be noted that these 2 opinions allowed the Belgian government to make the greening of the economy a priority during the Belgian Presidency of the European Council, in the first half of 2010.

### **3.1.2. Regional level: the role of trade unions in the debate on renewable energy, the case of Flanders.**

To stop global warming while securing our energy supply we need massive investments in renewable energy. This ambitious transition to a low carbon and sustainable society major can only be realized with broad civil society support. Flemish trade unions contribute to this debate in the discussions between social partners and other civil society organizations.

#### **Renewable energy in Flanders**

The EU directive on renewable energy (RE) gave Belgium a 13% target of energy from renewable sources in the final energy consumption by 2020.<sup>13</sup> To reach this objective, there should be 20% renewable electricity by 2020. In 2010 the share over RE in total electricity generation was only 4,8% in Flanders.<sup>14</sup> It is clear that there is still a long way to go to realize the 2020 objective. This shouldn't come as a surprise. Flanders is densely populated and has only a limited shore with optimal conditions for windmills, there are no major mountains for hydroelectricity and also the conditions for biomass production are only limited.

In 2002 the Flanders region introduced the present system of RE support. All electricity suppliers have the obligation to present a certain amount of Green Electricity Certificates (GEC). Electricity producers receive a certificate for every Mw RE. The total amount of certificates (quota) that have to be handed in increases year after year and reflects the RE objective of Flanders. Suppliers that do not reach their quota pay a fine. This system has worked rather well. Green electricity production increased from 150 GWh in 2002 to 3.067 GWh in 2010. The system has a cost however, 1,5 billion euro of GEC were paid during this period. The majority of the cost of these GEC is charged by the suppliers on the electricity bill of their customers. The situation is different however for photovoltaic's (PV). PV receives three times the support of most other technologies, and this extra cost is covered by the electricity distribution charges. Due to the immense success of PV (in 2010 there was a doubling of installed capacity in one year time) the weight on the distribution tariffs also increased substantially. The cost of GEC for PV contributed to the raising energy bills. Although the situation is much more complex than this, the image rose in public opinion that the poor (who cannot afford solar panels) were paying the subsidized green electricity of the rich. Today subsidies for PV-installations have diminished substantially but everybody is convinced that a further major revision of RE-subsidies is necessary.

#### **Social partners' consultation on renewables**

The Flemish social partners (employer and employee organizations) discuss energy policy in the Socio-economic Council, SERV<sup>15</sup>. The SERV is an advisory council for the Flemish government

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<sup>13</sup> Directive 2009/28/EC.

<sup>14</sup> These are figures for the whole country. Due to political uncertainty the distribution of the objectives between the Walloon, Brussels and Flemish region, who are largely responsible for renewable energy policies, is not realized yet.

<sup>15</sup> Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (SERV)

and parliament. The reform of renewable energy subsidies is a priority for the SERV. On this issue the SERV works together with the Flemish Environment and Nature Council, Minaraad<sup>16</sup>, where the same employer and employee organizations are members together with environment and nature organizations amongst others. After a major participatory study process intended to provide the necessary knowledge to all the representatives of the involved organizations, an intense discussion started on the nature of the most optimal RE support scheme. These discussions started in 2010 and should lead to a common advisory statement for the Flemish government. What are the priorities of the trade unions in this debate?

Our starting position is threefold: (1) we want a reliable energy system that guarantees the security of supply for both households and industry; (2) this system should be environmentally sustainable, contributing to the protection of the climate and respecting other environmental norm including those on air quality and (3) the energy should be sold with competitive prices taking into account the needs of both industrial consumers and household consumers including special needs for the most precarious families.

First on our list of priorities is the need for much more attention for the promotion of rational energy use and energy efficiency (EE). There are many opportunities that are still not used that could limit our energy consumption and do not receive the necessary policy support.

Also job creation is a major issue. Although there is discussion on the labor intensity of renewable versus fossil energy generation, we want that the job creation potential of RE (and energy efficiency) is maximized. Local RE generation can also contribute to increased energy independency with a potential positive impact on job creation. A complex issue is the actual creation of additional jobs by some renewable energy investments. Many of these jobs (rooftop workers for the installation of PV-panels, engineers, etc.) are already in short on the market. Often these workers come from neighboring countries not creating new jobs in Flanders. These problems indicate to the need of capacity building and skills development programs related to RE and EE for the work force.

There is also the extremely complex issue of financing renewable energy policies. As long as grid parity is not reached, and RE technologies become competitive with fossil energy generation, they need (financial and other) support. RE subsidies contributed to an substantial increase of energy prices in Flanders. In such a way that public support for RE might come under pressure. Companies complain about their competitiveness due to the rising energy cost. Passing the bill to consumers (via tariffs or directly on the invoice) has its limits. Also the public budget is under major pressure leaving only limited financial space to finance the RE subsidies. The only alternative is trying to do more with less support. Designing subsidy systems that target on the most efficient technologies. However, focusing on the most efficient solutions is not an excuse for leaving aside some important sustainability issues (employment creation, the negative social and environmental impact of biomass and biofuels, etc.).

The equitable distribution of the costs and benefits is of utmost importance. We're convinced that most actors involved accept to pay more for sustainable energy, but only if they know that the costs and benefits are distributed in a fair way. Both industrial and household consumers have to pay their fair share. Defining this share is not an easy job. Sometimes this can be done in a very

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<sup>16</sup> Milieu- en Natuurraad van Vlaanderen (Minaraad)

direct way. Cooperative RE projects can involve neighbors in such a way that they can also (financially) benefit from the renewable investments. This approach will also contribute to diminish raising ‘not in my backyard’ feelings regarding some projects.

More renewable energy is crucial for the transition to a low carbon and sustainable society. Such a major shift of our energy system can only be realized with broad civil society support. The Flemish trade unions contribute to this process to make this urgently needed transition a just transition.

### **3.2. UK: Green Economy Council**

The new Coalition government established a tripartite Green Economy Council (GEC) in November 2010. It represents a further important part of the high level institutional framework to drive forward green economic growth in the UK:

- The Climate Change Act 2008: with binding commitments to cut carbon emissions by at least 34% by 2020, and 80% by 2050;
- An independent Committee on Climate Change: advising Government on setting the level of the 5-year carbon budgets, and to report annually on progress.

The TUC welcomed the GEC as a high-level, 20-member tripartite body “to advise on how government and industry can work together to support the transition to a green, low carbon economy.” It includes of business and trade union representatives, and is co-chaired by the respective Secretaries of State for Business, Energy & Climate Change and the Environment and Rural Affairs.

The GEC is supported by a Working Group which examines policy issues in more detail and is currently working on its future programme, and by an Energy Intensive Industries Task Group to examine options for a “policy package” for these industries, following an initiative from the Energy secretary earlier in 2011. The Task Group is a response to intense disquiet from business and trade unions over energy prices and jobs losses facing industries such as steel, cement, ceramics, certain chemicals, aluminum and others. The group will bring together evidence on how they are affected by energy and climate change policies, including how investment decisions may be affected. It will make policy proposals to the GEC in autumn 2011, including measures to address the early impact of the carbon tax.

The GEC is due to meet three times a year, and has discussed: a Green Economy Roadmap; growth of the Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services sector; and progress on the Energy Intensive Industries package. Its forward work programme includes skills for the green economy; competitiveness issues; leveraging investment; public procurement; infrastructure; and innovation.

The Government committed to publishing a Green Economy Roadmap, and having discussed this with GEC members and advisers, published an online report, *Enabling the Transition to a Green Economy*<sup>17</sup> (August 2011). *Enabling the Transition* provides a useful overview of the Government’s vision for a green economy. It is valuable as a communication tool to interested

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<sup>17</sup> *Enabling the Transition to a Greener Economy*, 2011:

[https://online.businesslink.gov.uk/Horizontal\\_Services\\_files/Enabling\\_the\\_transition\\_to\\_a\\_Green\\_Economy\\_Main\\_D.pdf](https://online.businesslink.gov.uk/Horizontal_Services_files/Enabling_the_transition_to_a_Green_Economy_Main_D.pdf)

businesses.

However, the final policy text and communications strategy were not shared with Council members, leaving a sense perhaps of a missed opportunity to draw fully on their experience and advice in shaping a new strategy. NGOs have also commented that the Council needs broader representation from civil society and academia to establish greater legitimacy.

#### **4. National dialogue on education and training programmes contributing to the low-carbon economy**

Trade unions have been very active on this theme in a number of member states.

In the UK, on the question of skills for a low carbon economy and resource efficiency, Unionlearn (the provider of union training for the TUC) entered into a partnership with the UK government with the objective of creating a skills development programme.

Unionlearn's role was to:

- coordinate union participation in the development of the skills strategy;
- to create a manual for union reps and Sector Skills Councils;
- to collaborate with Sector Skills Councils to build awareness amongst workers on the environment and to put together ecological initiatives;
- to organise thematic seminars at regional level;
- to develop training modules on the environment;
- to formulate recommendations on career development related to the greening of the economy;
- to support local initiatives aimed at skills development and greening the workplace, with local partners (employers, training bodies, local authorities, unions, NGOs and others).

In Denmark, social partners participate in the national professional education council, which is responsible for creating training programmes and validating qualifications, also in the new/low-carbon green sectors where the social partners ensure the application of standards, and climate and energy legislation. This council also adapts agreements on qualifications and vocational training on these matters. The Danish LO and 3F have strategies to promote energy savings at company level, based on worker participation.

In Portugal, there are 2 complementary consultative bodies on training: the professional training council and the national agency on skills. the first is responsible for evaluating and fixing the general objectives and broad policy lines on training; and the second, created in 2007 as a result of a tripartite agreement on training, is more practical and brings together sectoral committees with the role of monitoring to anticipate labour market needs, new skills, and declining trades as well as emerging and growing sectors.

Social dialogue on skills needs and education and training programmes (such as those developed by the social partners and trade unions) is essential to ensure a success transition to a low-carbon model.

In Bulgaria, the social partners put in place a project called FSE creating an evaluation system on skills, which was launched by the Bulgarian industrial association (BIA), financed by the European Social Fund and managed in partnership with the union confederations CITUB and Podkrepa. Nearly 2000 companies have been touched by the project, particularly to study 'green

jobs' at sectoral and regional levels. The unions have also been actively participating in a project on mapping skills entitled 'Competence Map', and are represented within a consultative council.

In Romania and elsewhere, the project Euroneff involves various European partners (Romanian construction employers' association, as well as partners from Germany, Denmark, Spain and the Netherlands), and is aimed at identifying the training needs of companies in the construction sector in the area of energy efficiency technologies.

This project has also published a guide, for trainers and education professionals, on energy efficiency and the renovation of older buildings, essentially on the basis of the German and Danish experiences, but adapted to the specific needs of the different countries. The length of the project was 2 year (2008-2010), but unfortunately the network lacked the financial resources to develop further.

## **5. Some avenues for future action**

**5.1. Develop green workplace projects across Europe:** The findings from the UK national survey and experiences with pilot projects to date demonstrate the significant potential that exists to build a Green Workplaces campaign across EU workplaces. There is a lot of unmet support among employees wanting to work with their employers in tackling climate change at work. These green workplace projects should be developed across Europe.

**5.2. Give rights to environmental reps:** In the UK, Environmental Reps do not have their own rights in law to take time off work to attend environmental education, inspect their workplace or represent their members on green issues. Of course, green reps get on with their green commitments at work as best they can, and where unions are recognised shop stewards and health and safety reps will take on the green issues. But green reps should have the following rights to allow them to perform their functions; carry out environmental audits and walkabout surveys; carry out environmental risk assessments; communicate with members and other local stakeholders; and access to training and information about environmental impacts; consultation on environmental matters (which is not in ISO 14001 although it is in EMAS).

**5.3. Reach Sustainable Workplace Framework Agreements:** Environmental Reps can be instrumental in the development of a Sustainable Workplace Framework Agreement, as the basis for bargaining on a green agenda at work.

A **Sustainable Workplace Framework Agreement** would include:

- principles of employee participation, partnership and co-operation;
- the framework of a joint sustainable workplace policy and specific issues it will cover, such as energy sourcing, energy efficiency, resource and waste management;
- arrangements for time off for training and inspection;
- mutual responsibilities and joint procedures for dealing with issues;
- clear objectives and agree how they will be regularly monitored and assessed;
- integrating sustainability objectives with the employers Statutory Health and Safety Policy and with its' Risk Assessment process.

**5.4. Develop Reps Skills and Training initiatives:** Where changes take place in the workplace, whether job changes or new policies and procedures, it is important that they are

explained and understood and that the changes are negotiated properly and seen to be fair. A well trained and skilled Environmental Rep should play a key part in this process. Trade Union education plays a key part in this process. Trade Union members must be able to respond to both employer-led changes and to raise their own issues and concerns.

**5.5. Develop Social dialogue at national and local level:** this is one of the main union demands for a Just Transition. The Green Economy Council (UK) demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of national level, tripartite discussion on the green economy. The 'Green workplace' projects are an expression of this same principle at the level of the workplace.

## 6. Conclusions

Climate change is an issue that we will be dealing with for the very long term. It blends an essential forward-looking dimension (the objectives for the next ten or forty years) and our current systems of labour relations rooted in today's collective bargaining structures, which we have to adapt to the new challenges.

Social dialogue and social consultation have a pivotal role here as an integral and key part of civil society: hence the imperative for the economic and political players to anticipate the effects of this sea change in terms of jobs, qualifications, investments and restructuring operations in order to smooth this transition towards the „green economy“.

New low carbon technologies cannot be envisaged without their counterpart, the economic dynamism and the social and societal relationships which allow them to be generated and to evolve.

### **What are the main observed mechanisms?**

**First, tripartite consultation is well developed** on the basis of the realisation shared by the employers, the public authorities and trade unions that a return to economic growth can be accelerated with the green economy, which can create jobs.

In the early days of the crisis, therefore, particularly in the EU's new Member States, we witnessed the development of tripartite consultation on green jobs coming out of the fight against pollution and climate change – the two frequently overlapping – as a response to the crisis.

In general, the **impact of the crisis** was very quickly felt as the safeguarding of the banking system reduced the available and essential resources, consequently squeezing the financing available to support the economy.

Even so, social consultations have taken shape through some exciting and unprecedented proposals, whose originality is stressed by the social partners. Such is the case in Bulgaria, Romania and France, through the Grenelle Environment Forum.

In many European countries, the low-carbon transformation entails wide social consultation dynamics, bringing together many private and public players, governmental and non-governmental, working in specific or pre-existing institutions.

**Second, the study has demonstrated the value and strength of trade union initiatives** to raise

awareness and providing education and training courses vis-à-vis their members. This work, which we term unilateral – for it is undertaken at the initiative of each organisation – is continuing today in many forms, and must not be underestimated as a foundation for future discussions on these measures.

**Third, bipartite social dialogues**, involving national medium- and long-term policies, are covering of industrial policy, energy efficiency, vocational training, jobs and working conditions. They take the form of bipartite initiatives in the framework of social dialogue and collective bargaining formal and institutional systems.

Depending on the country, situations vary widely in terms of the intensity of initiatives, with countries like Germany and Belgium positively teeming, compared to the vast majority of the cases studied.

In the joint study commissioned by the European social partners and carried out by Syndex experts, the **bilateral initiatives** between trade-unions and employers organisations were logged, but also the **tripartite initiatives** (with the government), which were the most common.

There were also the **“tripartite-plus” initiatives**, with players such as NGOs, research centres or universities, as well as the so-called “public-private partnership” initiatives. However, it is quite unusual for the social partners such as NGOs to be invited to discuss and propose economic recovery and job creation measures in a macroeconomic framework, with the low-carbon economy here showing its potential for social creativity.

**Finally, there are the unilateral initiatives**, particularly where trade unions have taken the lead, as in the many workplace-based green initiatives. These had their own importance in contributing to the maturity of the processes of dialogue between the social partners on these complex questions; and also played a role in terms of raising the level of awareness of union members and employers on these problems.

#### **The results:**

- Policies to combat climate change have asserted themselves in the economic and social policies across the EU.
- Climate change is a multidimensional and very long term challenge requiring immediate actions by the social partners in the enduring framework of a Just Transition.
- The social dialogue and social consultation are essential for bridge-building. This is a subject that demands a long-term view and anticipation.
- The need for training and awareness raising on climate change is enormous. This includes training on new techniques and new management modes; Human Resources policies must be radically transformed.

#### **What are the main transformation vectors?**

- **The first vector for this transformation: the question of climate change is addressed via the problem of energy efficiency.**

The social partners and the public authorities alike, whether together or autonomously, have committed themselves to a string of initiatives making for energy efficiency savings across most

European countries.

Most of the time, these initiatives come from tripartite social and societal consultation institutions which link energy efficiency, employment and new skills. Building and public works was one of the first sectors to combine these two objectives, as in the case of the Employment- Environment alliance. This goes back a long way in Germany, but has more recently been developed in Belgium and Romania, at the initiative of the social partners alone.

However, certain initiatives show that this approach can be applied to other sectors (resource efficiency network in Germany, for example), focused primarily on training, such as the Vocational Education Council in Denmark; or based upon the workplace (green workplaces in the United Kingdom). The Energy Efficiency Programme in Sweden incorporates energy efficiency for highly energy-intensive industrial sectors and staff training.

In parallel, the local communities are running decentralised industrial policies in close association with the social partners as in the examples of the Fora for growth in Denmark, the 1,000 projects run by local and regional communities, the cities of Evora or Viseu in Portugal or the city of Berlin, which are developing local new energy technology programmes.

#### • **Second vector: renewable energies and low carbon industrial technologies**

Three countries have developed low-carbon industrial policies: Portugal, the United Kingdom and Denmark.

The European ULCOS (Ultra-Low CO<sub>2</sub> Steel-Making) sectoral R&D project is interesting, with its aim of driving down CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the steel industry.

Concentrating on the question of renewable energies makes it possible to create new jobs, transform old ones and create facilities dedicated to renewable energies: for example, the Lindoe shipyard (in Odense region) transformed into an green offshore (wind & wave) energy producer. The challenge is above all to develop jobs, not just in volume but also in quality, within the frame of social dialogue and societal development.

Local communities, at a decentralised level, are also conducting various industrial policies:

- The „Growth Forum” in Denmark;
- Portugal with the towns of Evora and Viseu or the city of Berlin in Germany;
- The SALAR network in Sweden.

#### **Climate change and the crisis:**

The social partners agree that the low-carbon economy can create jobs. In some countries, the social partners have been involved in the framing of proposals relating mainly to energy efficiency, the low-carbon economy and the transformation of employment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, with the financial crisis and the funding shortfall, this initial impetus has stalled.

The results vary widely from country to country. In some cases, initiatives have survived.

#### **The question of a Just Transition:**



Securing a Just Transition to a low carbon future is of fundamental concern to the ETUC and its affiliated unions. Just Transition is about recognising and planning fairly for the huge changes that a genuinely green and sustainable economy will bring. In the past, significant periods of economic change and restructuring have often happened in a chaotic fashion, leaving ordinary people, families and communities to bear the brunt of the transition to new ways of producing wealth.

The notion of ‘just transition’ seeks to avoid this kind of injustice. Just Transition principles should underpin the Green Economy transformation, involving:

- stakeholder consultation - inclusive consultation on changes to the world of work - at all levels, from the workplace to national government, including representatives from business, trade unions, local government and community bodies;
- green jobs - investing in the technologies and infrastructure to meet the sustainability challenges for a low carbon, resource- efficient future;
- green skills – investing in skills and training programmes, from the workplace to national levels, to equip employees with the skills for a low carbon, resource-efficient economy;
- respect for labour and human rights in the transformation to a sustainable future.

Clearly, this study shows many examples where trade unions are putting these principles into practice, both in their own right or through initiatives with one or more social partners.

Unions insist that investment in so-called “green” jobs must focus on the quality of the jobs and must equally guarantee high standards in terms of health, safety and working conditions. The low-carbon transition must not adversely affect the situation of the least well off. The priority is to train qualified staff, to promote a constructive social dialogue and to raise awareness and train workers, as well as entrepreneurs, on this subject.

**Vocational training emerges as an indispensable tool to accompany the creation of low-carbon jobs, the reskilling of the jobless or the transformation of existing jobs.**

On the question of transforming jobs, examples of initiatives exist to identify the new qualifications include:

- The Romanian initiative of a skills roadmap;
- The National Qualifications Agency created by a tripartite agreement in Portugal;
- The government initiative in Spain to keep the social partners regularly informed about the effects of the policy being conducted to combat climate change.

**Ensuring a socially negotiated transition towards a green economy poses many open questions which must be tackled urgently. The European social partners have been invited to work further on their responses to these questions and the development of clear responses for workers, public authorities and companies alike.**

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