

THE EU AND AGENDA 2030: TRADE UNIONS' DIALOGUE

HELSINKI, 6-7 NOVEMBER 2019

MEETING REPORT

The meeting reference documents are available [here](#). The article on the event is available [here](#).

DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY 6/11

In their opening remarks Mamadou Diallo, ITUC Deputy General Secretary, and Liina Carr, Confederal Secretary of the ETUC, both highlighted the uniqueness of the meeting, which brought together for the first time the two working groups from ETUC and ITUC focused on the SDGs, to foster coordination in promoting the SDGs both in EU's internal and external policies.

SESSION 1- TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT IN THE SDGS: ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The ETUC Secretariat firstly introduced the ETUC's strategy on SDGs; secondly, members of the [ETUC TUSLO Working Group](#) shared the conclusions of the TUSLO seminar held the two previous days. Their inputs included:

- 1) On public/private investments: the need for safeguards to ensure that private investment promotes labour and social rights, through adequate accountability mechanisms involving trade unions;
- 2) On SDGs in the EU Semester: the importance of incorporating Agenda 2030 in the EU semester, by focusing on SDG 8 in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- 3) On fiscal policies and 2030 Agenda: the need to strengthen the democratic accountability of the EU economic governance, for example by introducing compulsory consultation with social partners at national level for the European Semester.

Afterwards, the ITUC/TUDCN Secretariat shared the [ITUC strategy on SDGs monitoring](#) and explained the objectives and methodology of the trade union "SDGs Country Reports".

SESSION 2- TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT IN THE SDGS: ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

Following up on the previous session, the ITUC/TUDCN Secretariat shared the ITUC "[#Timefor8 Campaign](#)" and the ITUC "SDG8 Index" (currently under elaboration), both focused on the pivotal role of SDG 8 in the overall framework of Agenda2030. In their remarks concerning the Campaign, participants stressed the need to link its messages to national trade union priorities, as already done by several ITUC affiliates (eg. CCOO). Concerning the SDG8 Index, it was considered a relevant tool to strengthen trade union advocacy monitoring of SDGs; at the same time, concerns were raised in relation to the technical complexity of the tool, the selection of the indicators related to labour rights and the importance to translate its findings in advocacy messages to address policy makers.

DAY 2 – THURSDAY 7/11

SESSION 1- HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE "FOCUS ON SDG 8"

Enrico Giovannini, Professor of Economics and Finance of the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", presented the first findings of the SDG 8 Index. On the basis of the preliminary results of the SDG8 Composite Index, Giovannini highlighted 4 policy implications: 1) the lack of comparable data among countries for several SDGs; 2) the fact that economic well-being alone cannot ensure the full achievement of SDG8 ambitions; 3) the strong heterogeneity in labour rights standards regardless of economic conditions; 4) the impossibility to jointly pursue SDG8 and environmental sustainability without structural changes in the production system.

SESSION 2- HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON “THE EU AND AGENDA 2030 WORLDWIDE”

The session, moderated by Mamadou Diallo, discussed the future perspectives of EU development cooperation policy, in the framework of the current negotiation on the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework and its Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

Ville Skinnari, Finnish Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, focused his intervention on the priority of Finland -as Presidency of the EU Council- for the future of EU’s development cooperation. He recognized trade unions’ role in fostering partnerships as essential for social and economic development. He also called for a better understanding of blended finance in development.

Thereafter, Udo Bullmann, Member of the European Parliament (S&D) applauded the involvement of trade unions in development cooperation. He also welcomed the ETUC-ITUC position on the next EU budget, when it warns against the subordination of EU’s development cooperation commitments to security and migration management interests.

Lastly, the President of SAK Finland Jarkko Eloranta highlighted the importance of engaging in partnerships with trade unions for the implementation of Agenda 2030, as well as the role of trade unions’ international solidarity to achieve the SDGs.

Questions and remarks from participants focused on the centrality of Goal 8, social dialogue, business accountability and policy coherence in shaping the future of EU’s development cooperation.

SESSION III: HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON “ACCELERATED ACTION TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS IN THE EU”

The session, moderated by ETUC Confederal Secretary Liina Carr, discussed the key priorities to ensure that the SDGs will be at the centre of the Commission’s overall policy, especially of the European Semester.

Jeroen Jutte, Head of Unit DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission, highlighted that the President-elect of the European Commission wants to set the EU pillar on social rights and the EU Semester in line with the SDGs, and that social partners play a key role in this alignment process.

On her side, Annika Lindblom, Secretary General of the National Commission on Sustainable Development of Finland, shared the experience of the Commission, as a consolidated multi-stakeholders platform, including trade unions amongst the most active members; she then called for the revitalization of the multi-stakeholder platform on SDGs set up by the European Commission, with a strong trade union participation.

From the perspective of the European Parliament, Anna Colombo, S&D Political Advisor, stressed the fact that S&D consider the SDGs as the compass for action. Concerning the alignment of EU policies to Agenda2030, she called for a transformation of the EU Semester governance, by setting a binding framework supported by indicators and ensuring the involvement of trade unions in decision-making processes.

SESSION 4: SETTING THE ROAD MAP (14:00 – 15:30)

In the final session, the evaluation of the activity by participants was positive: participants agreed on the relevance of connecting the ETUC and ITUC’s work on SDGs, to support and complement each others’ work on EU internal and external policies. Coherently, the importance of promoting the same synergy within union centres was highlighted.

A preliminary follow-up roadmap was proposed and endorsed, including: 1) making Timefor8 as a support instrument to influence the economic governance of the EU; 2) continue exchanges on Index 8; 3) if possible, having a follow-up meeting and 3 sub-regional meetings across Europe during 2020, according to the same format, to support the #timefor8 Campaign and strengthen the joint work on SDGs.