

Project results and recommendations for the further development of social dialogue on the topic of 'Joint response options for achieving emission-free production in energy-intensive industries – a pilot project of trade unions and employers' organisations from Germany, Croatia and Italy'.¹

Why we started this project?

Trade unions are an active part in the social dialogue at national and European level. A basis must be created together to achieve the pan-European goal of the Green Deal. For this it is necessary to deal with the different perspectives and initial situations of the individual countries, to exchange ideas and to share different examples of best practice. To develop a common approach in the direction of the EU.

The green transformation represents the greatest challenge and most far-reaching changes for our industries (energy & chemicals).

The main task of the trade unions remains to represent the needs of the employees. Above all, securing jobs.

Multiple crises underline the necessity of our project and the acceleration of the transformation. We can no longer proceed step by step, but need sustainable solutions as soon as possible - now. The sector most affected by the crises (primarily the war in Ukraine) will have a drop down effect on all other sectors and branches. And thus to the EU strategy of green transformation.

It is in the hands of political leaders whether the crises slow down the necessary transformation in the energy sector and in the chemical industry or whether they are seen as an opportunity to accelerate it. However, acceleration of the transformation in both sectors can only be achieved through coordinated and consistent action at the European level.

Leading questions during the project

1. What are the technical possibilities for transformation and what does their social acceptance look like?

The project "Green@Work" addressed the transformation of the energy and chemical sectors with a clear focus on the role of trade unions. The focus was therefore on the needs, fears and wishes of the employees.

This is important to mention in order to correctly classify the answer to the question about social acceptance.

¹ Disclaimer: The project was subsidized by the European Commission under project number VS2012/0038. The European Commission was not involved in the preparation of this text and does not accept any responsibility for its contents. The project promoter is solely responsible for the accuracy of the content and information. Nor can the European Commission accept any liability for any direct or indirect damage that may result from the implementation of the project. This product reflects the views only of the authors and editors. The Commission will not assume liability for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

Social acceptance of the transformation in this case means the acceptance of the measures by the employees and the consideration of the same in transformative processes.

A public debate to answer the question of acceptance of the transformation processes in society as a whole is still missing (e.g. neither specific aspects of culture or gender have been focused on).

The technical requirements that are necessary to successfully complete the transformation are well known. But the infrastructure is missing - this has to be provided by politics. More renewable energy or carbon free industry is needed for example we need a lot of green hydrogen, but we can't see so far where to get this big amount.

More and more workers are afraid of losing their jobs. This remains the main topic for trade unions.

We have to find solutions for regions and special parts of branches, which are heavily affected by the transformation. There is a need for a transition plan, offering possibilities for further education and training. And these offers have to be realistic. People are waiting for answers and you cannot leave them alone.

2. What possibilities do trade unions have to influence the necessary transformation processes at European and national level?

There is a need of understanding the national level better, because it varies a lot. Trade unions all over Europe should share examples of best practice and get (re)connected strongly.

The trade unions have the best opportunity to exert a great influence if they act together at European level. This means to lobby the EU as well as to take the employers in their responsibility. Employers have to play their role as well as politics and unions. They have to be also a financial supporter for solutions.

Lessons learned (from each other)

The Italian Manifesto on the Energy Transition was adopted in 2021 under the government of Mario Draghi together with employers' associations and trade unions and contains guidelines but also action steps for a successful socio-ecological transformation. It describes the action steps and the trilateral cooperation possibilities (trade unions–state–employers) in detail. The Manifesto laid a good foundation for further discussions between the state, business, and social partners.

In Germany, ad hoc discussion circles are formed, which then take root and are continued for ongoing dialogue. There are several circles acting simultaneously. A consolidation of the discussion results, as in a manifesto, has not yet taken place. Not least due to the desired green transformation, factors such as price explosions, supply and livelihood security are also coming into focus. The social partners' cries for help are loud. Policymakers must respond in a better way.

At the EU level, Croatia, like many other smaller states, receives little attention. The EU-wide green transformation is a good goal. Croatia has many good professionals and a lot of potential but lacks the financial means for a planned and purposeful transformation. The

problem could be solved with a fairer distribution of financial and technological support by the EU. Because ultimately, the ambitious goals of the Master Plan can only be achieved if all countries in the EU are supported according to their possibilities.

Supply chains must be strengthened again within Europe or sites brought back to Europe. One example is the supply of medicines. Even before the pandemic, there was a shortage of medical supplies because a large part of the production of active ingredients had been shifted to India and the production chain did not function properly. A (mainly) European production supply chain could insure more stability. Globalisation cannot be completely rolled back. But if the EU is aiming for an ecological and sustainable way of production with the Green Deal, then the development of European 'green' supply chains is necessary. At the same time, consideration must be given to how levies can be used to discourage the import of cheap products made in an environmentally damaging way.

It must be said that the European Green Deal can only be achieved in the form of an overall concept for Europe.

Demands

- There is a need to provide financial resources for further training and continuing education.
- Laws must not hinder innovative developments / transformations of the chemical industry. More must be done to keep research in Europe!
- As a key industry, the chemical industry needs easily accessible financial support in the areas of research and development to ensure global competitiveness.
- Social dialogue must be constantly conducted and promoted. Trade unions must build up and use the information channel to the workers. For this, access to the companies is important!
- National platforms in which there is equal trilateral dialogue (trade unions–state–employers' associations) with the aim of socially acceptable conversion should be the standard in all EU countries.
- Regional and European cooperation between the ministries of economic affairs for better and faster expansion of the grids of green power producers, which must also aim, for example, at connecting offshore wind farms.
- Use of disused opencast lignite mines or brownfield sites for solar parks and their connection to the grid through nearby disused coal-fired power plants.
- A fairer and more targeted distribution of financial resources is needed. industriAll Europe has already developed the right proposals here.
- There is a need for unified legislation at national and European level. Laws at different levels must not contradict each other and should speed up processes, rather than block them.

- The goals of the Green Deal can only be achieved if greater consideration is given to the different performance capabilities as well as the different preconditions of the various EU member states.
- There is a need for constant social dialogue – at European level, but also at regional level. For the trade unions it is important here that the flow of information from the European level to the company level is constantly optimised.
- European countries are strongly oriented towards exports. There is a need for intra-European supply chains and ecologically sound intra-European production.