

# **BUILDING A RECOVERY FOR ALL**



industriAll Europe  
Congress 2021

**A STRONG VOICE FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN EUROPE**

# **MOTIONS**

## Wage Convergence and Fair Wages in Europe

At our Congress in 2016, we adopted a Resolution entitled 'Equal pay for equal work and solidarity in the European Union'. The resolution was based on the premise that, in order to achieve European integration, industriAll Europe must focus its energy on the principle of equal pay for equal work across the EU. This is the start of an imaginary long-distance run with the aim of achieving a fairer Europe, where employees who do the same job have the same purchasing power and can live an equal quality of life.

### **What has happened since the last Congress?**

Following the adoption of the resolution, the topic of equal pay for equal work became an integral part of the industriAll Europe Action Plan. The countries of the Eastern Region, at their sessions after the Congress 2016, dedicated themselves to elaborating this resolution on the conditions of their countries and agreed to have political discussions with employers and decisive political forces at their national levels. The fulfilment of this task was continuously monitored at individual meetings of the Eastern Region and was also supported by the Resolution of the Vienna Memorandum Group, which was handed over to the then-President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, Business Europe and other actors.

The Eastern Region of industriAll Europe continued its efforts and cooperated on materials elaborating on the subject and approved at the industriAll Europe Conference for Collective Bargaining in December 2018. The wage coordination rule has been revisited and the topic of convergence has been highlighted. The macroeconomic indicators used so far, i.e., inflation and productivity, are not sufficiently objective for the countries of Eastern Europe. Productivity in these countries is often distorted by multinationals, which set prices at a level that only covers the cost of production in Eastern companies, which is below market prices. This causes distortion and productivity in the East appears optically lower than it actually is. In addition, according to statistics, Eastern countries have significantly lower earnings in purchasing power parity and GDP wages than Western countries. Wage growth in the East should not only be linked to inflation and productivity, otherwise wage convergence will not continue. It would also contribute to reducing social dumping towards the West.

It can be positively evaluated that the industriAll Europe activities in this area resulted in the campaign 'Together at Work', launched in September 2019. The materials prepared within the campaign from the available data clearly confirmed that collective bargaining has a major positive effect on wages.

### **But what is the current economic reality?**

Inequalities still prevail in the European Union. Wages in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe remain well below the European average and do not reflect the growth performance of these economies. The performance of the economies of Eastern Europe is rising, no doubt. For example, at the beginning of the transformation process, the Czech Republic had an economic performance in purchasing power parity per capita of 69% of the EU average. It fell to 60% during the transition period in the early 1990s, but is now at 90% of the EU average. But if we take the twelve old EU countries as a measure, it is 83%. The situation is similar in other countries of the Eastern Region.

Unfortunately, wages do not go hand in hand with rising performance. In 2018, labour costs in relation to the EU average amounted to 44% in the Czech Republic, 35% in Hungary and around 40% in Poland and Slovakia. Nor is the argument of different price levels valid - they reached values of 57 to 71% in the same countries in the same period. Prices for food in the Czech Republic corresponded to 83% of the European price average, clothes reflected the average and footwear was 93%. Moreover, after the Scandinavians, French and British, the Czechs spend most of their earnings on housing expenses. Thus, they spend over a quarter of their money on the roof over their heads, water and energies. In the industriAll Europe paper concerning wage policy, which was approved at the Collective Bargaining

Conference in 2018 in Bratislava, we also read that while a machine and equipment operator in Germany earns enough money in half a year with which to buy a VW Polo, the same worker in Hungary needs to work the whole year plus another 10 months, i.e. nearly two years.

In another Eastern European country, Bulgaria, in 2018, hourly labour costs amounted to only 12.5% of the labour costs in Denmark or 15.5% of the German ones.

Inequalities have continued and continue to do so. According to the recently published research work 'Convergence of Czech labour prices' based on Eurostat data, new EU countries are converging in the performance of their economies. For example, GDP per worker in PPP (purchasing power parity), compared to the euro area, was 77.2% in the Czech Republic, 70.9% in Lithuania, 66.3% in Slovakia and 65% in Romania. However, in these countries the average net monthly earnings reach values of 47.9 to 62.2% of the euro area average, namely the Czech Republic 62.2%, Lithuania 51.6%, Slovakia 47.9% and Romania 54.7%.

In some Central and Eastern European countries, real estate prices are also extremely high, making housing almost unavailable. The availability of new housing in the Czech Republic in 2019 was the worst for the third year in a row in comparison with selected European countries. A new apartment of 70 m<sup>2</sup> was 11.4 times the average annual wage, in Slovakia 9.9 times, while in Italy, 6.2 times is enough to buy a new apartment of this size and in Belgium only 4.1 times of the average annual wage.

Significantly more profits are flowing from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. While the balance of dividend flows from direct and portfolio investment as a percentage of GDP and is positive in the countries of Western and Northern Europe, in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe it is significantly negative. One of the countries in which the outflow is most prominent is the Czech Republic, which ranks second in the EU countries.

Partly in response to the economic crisis of 2008-2009, labour market institutions were often transferred from the national and sectoral to the company level. Collective bargaining mechanisms, which had been already weaker than in Western and even Southern Europe at the onset of the economic crisis, were weakened further, in some cases dramatically, such as in Romania and Slovenia. In Hungary and Bulgaria too, the degree of coverage by collective bargaining agreements dropped from around 40% before the crisis, to below 30% afterwards. These reforms were accompanied by a falling degree of organisation of both employees and employers, resulting in the decentralisation of wage bargaining.

A key issue for all Central and Eastern European Countries is how to fundamentally change their economic policies, invest more in their education systems and first of all give social partners and social dialogue a bigger role in shaping their countries' future and thereby achieve much faster convergence of their economies. It is necessary to take advantage of the chance to make the most of new directions and opportunities for the development of science, technology, digital technologies and new management systems, skipping the entire development phase and thus reaching the level of more advanced countries much faster.

However, not even the most advanced parts of the EU are without problems, as these countries have to face increasingly global competition from China, Japan, the United States and other Southeast Asian Countries in the areas of most developed technologies, artificial intelligence, digitisation, new telecommunications technologies, biotechnology, autonomous control and robotics, etc. It is essential to involve 'new' countries more closely and comprehensively in these challenges, to include them in a complex solution and not to leave them behind. Low innovation capacity in CEE is a blocking factor of further development and low wage profile contributes to conserve this. The role of CEE in international value chains should not be dominantly based on cheap labour and thus leaving them in a vulnerable position without any future perspective, especially ahead of digitalisation and technological change.

In the first quarter of 2020, a crisis broke out due to the new Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, spreading the disease COVID-19. The crisis has had a negative impact on the global economy and disrupted the work

and private lives of most employees. Many people lost their jobs, others had to reduce their working hours and accept lower pay, others had to change their work habits, as work from home or elsewhere expanded significantly. Many employees have lost their income, or their income has decreased. The crisis hit women particularly hard, who were mostly burdened by the new situation, when they also had to play the role of cook and teacher while working from home. Although statistics are not yet available, it is very likely that the crisis has slowed down or halted wage convergence within Europe.

### **What next?**

In the framework of industriAll Europe, it is necessary to:

- Continue efforts to fight for equal pay for equal work within the EU.
- Support all efforts to rebuild the European economy following the Coronavirus crisis and seek the involvement of trade unions in recovery plans at all levels.
- Accept the fact that European industrial trade unions must act together and in solidarity, as agreed in the resolution adopted at the Collective Bargaining Conference.
- Continue to develop our coordination in industriAll Europe with a view to achieving better rights and collective guarantees for all.
- Continue to promote effective combating of tax evasion in dialogue with the European institutions.
- To push through full implementation of the Posting of Workers' Directive in order to tackle wage and social dumping.
- Enforce the rule that profit should be taxed in the country where it was generated.
- Increase the coverage rate of collective agreements and seek to restore sectoral collective bargaining where weakened.

## Deepening European Trade Union solidarity

Solidarity is the foundation of trade unionism. Beyond the simple rhetoric, it expresses the will of workers and trade unions to fight the logic of pitting workers against each other. The establishment of solidarity and cooperation beyond territorial borders, cultures, languages, and more generally, whatever divides the workers, is at the very heart of international trade union action.

### **The principle of solidarity is intrinsic to industriAll Europe and its members**

The debate on the concrete application of solidarity is ongoing and constantly changing. The resolutions, position statements, common demands and action days, are the foundations of this structure. The resolutions and positions on the restructurings, the information-consultation of the European Works Councils (EWC) are all examples of this.

IndustriAll Europe and its affiliated organisations have identified the necessary tools with which to build solidarity, whether this is through democratic decision-making bodies, policy forums, European trade union coordination, trade union coordinators in multinational companies with an EWC or European Collective Bargaining Network (Eucob@n).

### **A still fragile solidarity**

Our many successes must not hide our failures, despite the enormous progress made in the construction of trade unionism of industrial workers over the last years. Many challenges are ahead of us, which pushed us to stand stronger together than ever.

The crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened a national turning inwards, with a tendency to no longer seek European answers to transnational problems. At the same time, multinational businesses take advantage of the situation to play workers against each other.

Numerous obstacles still remain and one observes that it is the employees who are suffering. Having a national approach to a problem, wanting to defend the interests of the employees in a country, is totally legitimate and understandable. Nevertheless, the adoption of a national strategy is not in conflict with the principle of transnational solidarity; in reality, one goes hand in hand with the other. What should bring us together is that this approach and this defence should not be done to the detriment of the employees of other countries. We have the responsibility to pursue a collective and common approach for the benefit of all, without exclusion. This is certainly a lot more difficult, but within our reach.

### **Turning a corner**

The need to limit the negative effects of this crisis on employment and on the national industrial base presents a risk of "renationalisation", but this appears to be only a short-term measure; cooperative and efficient solidarity will be the only concrete effective formula to confront the European and world structures of businesses and socio-economic relations. The economic, social, health crisis that spans the workers, our companies and our countries, makes the questioning of our model of solidarity indispensable to be able to turn the corner.

European trade unionism is at a decisive time in its history. IndustriAll Europe brings hope.

In the face of this tsunami of social plans, restructurings, the freeze in salaries, despite a strong distribution of dividends, it is more than time to strengthen our solidarity in order to be in a position to develop European strategies, to adopt common positions and to achieve common results.

We must enter into substantive debate and reflect on the solidarity, its instruments, its means and the role of employees, trade unions, national affiliated organisations, and of course our European federation.

But turning a corner in order to progress throughout Europe the idea of an economy, with a high social level for the benefit of employees, obliges us collectively to show our willingness to do so. We are at a turning point in history and in the economy. We must from now on play a major role in this transformation.

It is time to launch a debate and discussion, which affect all levels of the management of industriAll Europe and its affiliated organisations, about the challenges and mechanisms of effective transnational solidarity. One working group is already established and delivered results – the ad hoc working group on restructuring, and progress was made in the different political committees as well. Their results and their work will be integrated into a high-level debate. One of the first meetings of the Executive Committee following the Congress will decide the structure and methodology of the following process. Overall, this debate has to be organised in a constructive, targeted way that includes all affiliated organisations.

The time has come to put aside national interests, as no worker or trade union will benefit from such an approach. European trade unionism finds itself at a decisive moment and a turning point in history, and industriAll Europe must bring unity, strength, power, optimism and hope to an entire future generation of workers.

## **Labour practices of European multinational companies outside Europe**

Some of the practices of European multinational companies in Turkey clearly show that double standards are used by some European multinationals in the process of organising and collectively bargaining in their operations in Turkey.

A number of European multinational companies pursue systematic methods to put pressure on workers who would like to be unionised, including intimidation, threats, assaults and psychological harassment. Unfair dismissals and forcing union members to resign from the union at the beginning of an organising activity are the most obvious violations of freedom of association and have been used by these multinational companies in Turkey. The non-recognition of the union and the denial of the start of a collective bargaining process are other common violations practised by European multinationals.

Petrol-İş, together with the other industriAll European Trade Union members from Turkey, have experienced examples of bad practices in a number of multinational companies.

The violations mentioned above are not the only examples, and dismissals are commonly used as a reprisal action by the employers of the subsidiaries of other European and multinational companies headquartered in Turkey.

Such hostile actions, together with Turkey's poor Labour Code towards unionising, also jeopardise the very existence of unions in Turkey. The loopholes and shortcomings in Turkey's Labour Code are exploited by these European multinational companies. At the same time, this attitude and the behaviours of some European multinationals constitute the bad practices of violations of international labour norms.

European and transnational companies should take responsibility for their subsidiary firms and suppliers in other countries. More effective mechanisms are therefore needed to hold these companies responsible and accountable for their labour policies.

European governments and institutions should improve and expand their oversight of European company labour practices outside Europe. The Turkish government should bring labour codes into closer conformity with international freedom of association standards and ensure that the laws are effectively enforced.

We think that cooperation among our unions and coordinated actions and solidarity at European and regional level are key factors to ensuring union rights in Europe. We believe that the affiliated organisations of industriAll Europe can make much effort in this regard.

## The industry trade unions at the heart of the struggle against the far-right and identity politics

The unions have always been at the forefront of the struggles for more political, economic and social democracy. They must maintain and reinforce their engagement in the systematic opposition against the values and ideas carried by the far-right and nationalists on all sides.

It is especially the case that for the last 40 years, the presence of neo-liberal politics has fostered the temptation to turn inward and competition between workers, on a global scale.

This is all the more true in the industrial sectors. The success of right wing, populist politicians within the industrial heartlands of the United States demonstrated this perfectly. And Europe does not escape from the threatening song of the sirens of far-right and populist parties!

Heightened competition and relocations for financial reasons create a fertile ground for sectarian identity and nationalism. The far-right draws strength from this by manipulating workers, male and female, and offering them fake solutions to these problems.

Authoritarianism, homophobia, misogyny and xenophobia are closely linked to union busting and have devastating consequences on democracy in the workplace, on the interests of workers, and on democracy as a whole.

The lack of political response at European level to these issues is not appropriate to prevent this phenomenon.

The role of our umbrella organisation at European level is thus of major importance. In the coming years, industriAll Europe must hold high the banner of the struggle against all the ideas of the far-right, by proposing pathways towards solutions to the issues which concern industrial workers.

Only by struggling for alternatives to the competition between workers, to scapegoating and identity politics, will we drain the life-blood from the spread of these ideas and reveal the dishonest and dangerous nature of the ideas pushed by these trends.

We ask industriAll Europe to henceforth:

1. Intensify the fight against unemployment, poverty and all forms of exclusion, in line with the reality on the ground to resolve the specific problems of workers in Europe's industry,
2. Intensify the dialogue and develop the tools which facilitate dialogue, discussions, mutual understanding and meetings with the different communities which exist among industrial workers,
3. Deliver a strong trade union response that denounces expressions of the far-right, particularly when the latter falsely claims to bring answers to the problems of the workers that we represent,
4. Develop information (communication) to our members which highlights the lies and which allows the dangerous nature of the factions and ideologies of the far-right for industry workers and trade unionism to be revealed,
5. Reinforce, if necessary, the internal provisions which underline that within industriAll Europe, racism is not an option, but a strongly condemned ideology!

The member organisations affiliated to industriAll Europe must position themselves for the purpose of a global European industrial policy benefitting the integration of all, regardless of their nationality or culture, through a strong social dialogue, based on collective bargaining which is similarly strong!



## For a fair energy transition at the service of workers and peoples

IndustriAll Europe and its affiliated trade unions are not opposed to taking measures at European and global level that contribute to decarbonisation, the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and that consequently translate into an improvement of the environment on a global level.

However, industriAll Europe understands that the intended energy transition must be gradual and balanced, so that no one is left behind, must ensure jobs without loss of rights, with quality training and professional retraining (when necessary), and must bring progress to industry and the economies of citizens and countries.

IndustriAll Europe rejects attempts to abuse the Just Transition Fund to undertake brutal economic restructuring under the false guise of environmental protection, as is the case in Portugal.

The early closure of the Sines thermoelectric plant, proclaimed by the Portuguese Government as an “advance in decarbonisation”, is, in fact, an economic benefit taken advantage of by the EDP company, the owner of the plant, to receive a few million euros from the Environmental Fund and the European Just Transition Fund. EDP had little business interest in keeping the unit in production due to environmental taxes and charges.

Two closures would be added to this reduction of 1200 MW in production capacity: Central do Pego, in 2021, and Tapada do Outeiro, by 2024.

The “alternative”, according to government advertising, would be a project for a 10 MW hydrogen production plant. This is clearly insufficient to absorb the lost jobs or to cope with the drop in production in view of the very uncertain economic situation associated with the current phase of technological development.

These significant decreases in electricity production capacity will have to be compensated too, in addition to the intermittent renewable capacities (wind and photovoltaic) with the use of imports.

Around 500 direct jobs will be lost in this process overall, damaging the regional and national economy, for which decommissioning will be financed with part of the €200m available from the Just Transition Fund.

In addition to these examples, the closure of the GALP petrochemical complex in Porto was announced. This was disguised as a measure to reduce the environmental and climate impact, leading to the transfer of millions of euros to the company's shareholders' pockets, before benefitting the Portuguese government, which is also a shareholder of the company.

If this closure is carried out, it will lead to the destruction of more than 1,500 jobs in the refinery and many more in the companies that supply products and services to the refinery. Several chemical industries that buy raw materials from the refinery will also be affected and it will lead to the drastic decrease of exports of petroleum products and petrochemicals and an increase in imports of these products. All of this will happen without any reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as there is no substitution of consumption, only changes in the production sites and supply channels. On the contrary, it will lead to an increase in these emissions, derived from the increased distances for the product transport circuits.

If it materialises, this closure will be a true economic crime against the region and the country, and even an environmental crime, made at the cost of a false transition that is only “just” in name.

As can be seen, these cases only represent massive destruction of the country's productive capacity and not a real transition, much less a fair transition.

A transition involves a gradual and controlled replacement from one energy paradigm to a different one, based on a mix of solutions and, to be fair, it should not harm workers, consumers or even regional

or national economies. We are obliged to reaffirm that, in any transition process, unions must be involved, because only then can we achieve a “fair transition”.

The path that is being announced is not a transition, it is a rupture, that leads to even greater energy precariousness and greater unemployment, simply to increase the profits of half a dozen large shareholders of the involved companies at the expense of public money.

Thus, the industriAll Congress expresses its support and solidarity to workers fighting to defend employment rights and the local and national economy. The industriAll Congress mandates the Executive Committee to intervene with the European Commission to reverse this path of destruction.

## Increase bargaining power by organising the whole industry

Technological progress and industry change are currently transforming labour markets worldwide. The need for up- and reskilling is increasing, especially with regard to the green and digital just transition. The jobs we once had will no longer be the same. We see new jobs emerging in the sectors where industriAll Europe organises workers, many of them white-collar jobs. In order to remain strong, trade unions across Europe must adapt to this development and ensure that we as trade unions not only welcome all potential members, but actively aim to organise and represent all workers in the workplace.

With an increasing proportion of white-collar workers in our industries, a specific focus on this group will remain highly relevant for the years to come. During the COVID-19 pandemic, telework has played an important role in keeping white-collar workers in employment and in keeping the industry afloat. In many spheres, telework will certainly continue to play an important role, even after the pandemic has come to an end. This raises new questions that should be addressed: concerning an equal distribution of the money saved, e.g. through a reduction of office premises, but also concerning personal integrity and health and safety at the (remote) work place, including both physical and psychosocial health aspects. This includes, but is not limited to, issues of work-life balance and the right to disconnect, and the role of the higher managerial staff when working life is changing.

Employees' representatives and trade unions must have the right and the means to reach the workers, especially if they are working remotely and are therefore not approachable on the company premises, to monitor those developments, and to be able to counteract. Embracing change and listening to the voices of all workers entails expanding the issues we bring to the table. A European trade union approach to telework will therefore be especially relevant to keep pace with the emerging trends and to coordinate the responses.

In order to address all these challenges, and in order to grow our unions and sustain our important influence over the current and future labour market, it is of utmost importance that blue-collar and white-collar workers continue to come together within industriAll Europe. It is important to remember that our advantage lies in our knowledge of all aspects of the workplace and the labour market. Therefore, we need the voices of all workers. Yet, there are companies in Europe where higher managerial staff are not covered by collective agreements. The envisaged project on organising white-collar workers, including higher managerial staff, will therefore be a good tool to increase our bargaining power.

One emerging issue that is likely to grow, in parallel with the transformation of work, is the increase in so-called algorithmic or data-driven management. In short, it entails the automation or semi-automation, as well as the augmentation of managerial work tasks. Within this issue there are several challenges, including gathering and control of worker data, worker integrity and the maintaining of human control over managerial decisions. There are risks that workers will not receive the right leadership, adequate support and balanced feedback. We must therefore continue to monitor the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence on industry and jobs.

To conclude: the areas in which we see an obvious role for industriAll Europe are manifold, from monitoring and engaging in debates on skills needs for the twin transition to emerging trends in the field of Artificial Intelligences, from remote working to strategies of detection and prevention of physical and psychosocial health aspects, i.e. by participating in the ETUC/Eurocadres EndStress.eu project. And all this under the umbrella of constantly increasing our bargaining power in all fields of work and among all status groups, as planned in the project on organising white-collar workers, as this is the fundamental requisite to relevantly engage in the debate on these issues on both, the national and the European levels.

## **We must avoid losing the next generation of industrial workers**

The COVID-19 crisis is disproportionately affecting young workers, apprentices, and any students enrolled in work-based training or education. Many young people have suddenly found themselves with suspended employment or apprenticeship contracts, and with no other opportunities to start their professional career. Young workers are mostly on fixed-term contracts, many are agency workers or are stuck in atypical forms of work, with limited or no social protection. Many are already experiencing the second economic crisis in their young lives, without having managed to overcome even the previous 2008-09 crisis, when austerity left them in a precarious existence. They are [reported](#) as the “lockdown’s biggest losers”, feeling excluded from society.

An adequate response is urgently needed in order to prevent irreparable damage. We must avoid losing the next generation of industrial workers. We must ensure that young people are included in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and prevent the young generation being once again stuck in precarious employment. Young people must be able to start their professional lives with a good-quality job, that offers security and the possibility for personal and career development through training and lifelong learning. This is crucial in the context of the recovery and the digital and green transformations of the industry. Many sectors already suffer from a lack of a qualified workforce. We rely on qualified young people to work in the green and digital industries. We cannot sit back and watch how almost an entire generation is made redundant and left behind. Our future green and digital industry depends on this next generation of industrial workers.

The present democratic systems also depend on good opportunities for young people. Many of them have started to lose trust in the current model. They feel abandoned by the empty promises of politicians and might end up becoming attracted to populist alternatives. Failing the young generation will only play into the hands of the populists.

### **Young people must not be left behind in the recovery and twin transformations**

In 2020, the EU proposed the Youth Employment Support package to improve the situation of the younger generation. IndustriAll European Trade Union [welcomed](#) the package and its [Council recommendation on the Reinforced Youth Guarantee](#), but argued that these measures are not enough to prevent a lost generation. The initiatives focus on training without employment opportunities and lack quality criteria for the offers young people receive under the public-funded scheme. Member States must now implement the Council recommendation. We must pressure national governments to introduce binding quality criteria negotiated by the social partners.

The Youth Guarantee model proposed at EU level and emulated also by some national governments is one option, but it does not represent the silver bullet in solving the issue of youth unemployment. This model provides cash to employers and/or exempts them from certain tax contributions if they take on apprentices and/or hire young people. However, the issue of quality apprenticeship and quality job offers often remains unsolved, and therefore public money continues to sponsor precarious short-term jobs for the young. We demand that trade unions are always involved in the development and implementation of any scheme.

IndustriAll Europe’s Youth is very concerned that in most national recovery and resilience plans, the measures intended to tackle the urgent situation of the young are not enough (if such measures are mentioned at all). Governments must reverse these mistakes when they implement the plans. They must set up schemes for identifying skills-needs and -gaps, especially with a forward-looking view towards the green and digital industry of the near future. They also need to set up apprenticeship and training programmes with job retention possibilities to prepare the next generation of industrial workers. Trade unions need to be fully involved in this process and to proactively support young people at the start of their career, especially also as part of a trade union renewal strategy.

Not failing the young generation is a shared responsibility among European and national policymakers, companies and employers, and trade unions. Policymakers must create an enabling legal and institutional framework to integrate the youth on the labour market and ensure good quality employment, as well as the right to training and lifelong learning. Companies must play their role by offering good quality apprenticeship and employment opportunities to young people. Employers must sit at the bargaining table everywhere in Europe and engage in collective bargaining on youth-related issues also. Trade unions must renew their youth strategy and become more proactive in their approach towards recruiting and organising young members.

Each trade union must fulfil its duty and provide the necessary measures to ensure that the younger generation is not left behind in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and the twin digital and green transformations of the industry. A modern and competitive European industry relies on this next generation of industrial workers, who must acquire and maintain the skills needed to ensure that our sectors are world-leading.

### **IndustriAll Europe's Youth demand a renewed trade union youth strategy**

IndustriAll Europe's Youth highlights the crucial need for unions to adopt a critical perspective towards their own strategy of trade union renewal. Unions need to urgently step up their activity towards the youth. They need to stop waiting for young people to knock at their doors but be more proactive towards reaching the youth. Unions' communication strategies need to be adapted to also speak to the youth by using channels of communication, like social media. Unions need to show young people that they are proactively defending them and that joining a union helps them advance their interests and win more rights at work.

Unions must support the development of youth structures at all levels and encourage young unionists in their activities. Young unionists need to be given the opportunity to participate in relevant union committees in order to better advance youth issues and bring in their youth perspective. They should be included in the necessary trainings to develop their skills in order to effectively participate in union work. Furthermore, young unionists should be involved in the development of trade union renewal strategies and participate in recruitment and organising activities in order to effectively attract young members to the union.

The future of the labour movement depends on trade union renewal and on increasing the level of young and active members. We need to act now and modernise our way of working, our communication and image in order to better speak to the youth and to win young members. All young people want to have their rights defended and to have fair working conditions. But, in the current era of misinformation, they often do not know where to go for protection or are prevented from joining unions by aggressive employers. We need to proactively reach out to them and show them that there is space for them in the movement.

## Palestine

Palestine has been militarily occupied since 1967. This continuous Israeli occupation, the illegal Israeli settlements and the control over numerous aspects of the daily life of the Palestinian people, make decent work in Palestine hardly possible. The Palestinian people suffer from discrimination, labour exploitation and precarious work. A UN report finds Israel's decade-long blockade of the Gaza Strip is making it unfit for humans to live in after 10 years of blockade by air, land and sea.

The Congress deplores the daily acts of oppression and domination perpetrated against the Palestinians, as well as any violent acts in the region.

Last year, the Israeli government unilaterally planned the annexation of a part of the occupied West Bank. This is a violation of international law and a blow to the prospects of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel, and for the economic development for Palestine.

The health crisis due to COVID-19 has highlighted the lack of protection, vulnerability and disposability of Palestinian workers. This health crisis has accentuated inequality. The state of Israel has an obligation to ensure swift and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for the Palestinian people under occupation.

Congress calls for a just solution to the conflict, the end of the occupation and the dismantling of the Israeli settlements in accordance with respect for international law and UN-Resolutions 242 and 338.

Congress supports the objective of a two-state solution with Palestine as a sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital and encourages cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian trade unions.

Congress welcomes the publication of the United Nations database of businesses engaged in activities related to Israeli settlements and recognises that European involvement of governments and businesses in economic activities in these illegally occupied territories contributes to perpetuate the situation. Congress will request assurance from the European Union that European instruments will be used effectively to guarantee human and social rights in the occupied territories.

Congress demands the end of all violation of human rights by all parties involved in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

The Congress takes note of the involvement of some industriAll Europe affiliated organisations in working towards a peaceful solution and in supporting the Palestinian people.

## Situation of Collective Bargaining in the Benelux Region

Currently in the Benelux, we are seeing more and more attacks on our freedom to negotiate.

At this very moment, collective wage bargaining in Belgium is in the doldrums, in a state of deadlock. The main reason for this is the amended Wage Standard Act, the so-called 'law to safeguard competitiveness' - a law that allows the government to impose a normative wage margin (0.4% for 2021-2022) within which the social partners must then continue to negotiate. This law completely erodes the right to free negotiations on fair wages for all. The Belgian trade unions are looking into the possibility of legal proceedings against the Wage Standard Act.

Luxembourg workers are under constant attack from employers on various provisions of the social dialogue and on automatic wage indexation. COVID-19 is used as a pretext in attempts to dismantle acquired rights.

In the metal and electronics industries in the Netherlands, unions have been striking for 5 months now and there is no prospect of a decent collective labour agreement yet. The Corona crisis is being abused to avoid paying a decent wage increase. This, while in the vast majority of the sector it is just going well and the expectations for the future are good.

It is the fourth collective bargaining process in a row for which long-term strikes in the sector are necessary. Instead of making the industries attractive through modern industrial relations, employers want to go back in time, do not want to pay a decent wage, and they are forcing employees to take action for just normal agreements.

The examples of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg show that free negotiations and strong social dialogue structures can be attacked and become under pressure all over Europe.

Free wage bargaining is a fundamental right! Fair wage bargaining is the basis for a stable society and a strong economy.

We ask industriAll Europe to continue to defend at European level the right to free and independent collective bargaining and to continue to call for the safeguarding and strengthening of social dialogue structures.

We count on your solidarity!

**BUILDING A  
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