



IFMETALL

International trade unionism



Contents

International trade union cooperation – a growing need	3
Opening economies – democratic development	4
Social dumping	5
International framework agreements	6
Trade union cooperation for stability and economic development	9
International trade union structure	10
General	10
Multinational groups	10
The Nordic countries	11
Europe and the European Union	12
The world	14
Development cooperation	17
SWHAP	18
Information and public opinion	19
IF Metall’s international activities	20
For local and global justice	20
Useful links	24

Cover picture: A Vietnamese trade unionist and Marie Nilsson, who works in the chemical industry for Borealis AB and is a member of the executive of IF Metall.

Photo: Marie Nilsson page 1, Roger Lundberg pages 4 & 25, Mats Wingborg pages 6, 15 & 21, Christian Andersson page 7, Birgit Birgersson-Brorsson page 8, Trollhättans Tidning page 12, Marie Ullnert page 17, Annette Lack pages 18 & 22.

Illustration: Bo Persson pages 20 & 28.



International trade union cooperation – a growing need

The global labour market is undergoing dramatic changes. The revolution in electronics and increasingly effective transport combined with more open borders and the de-regulation of the credit and financial markets have led to increasing trade. There has been continuous development of the EU, which today includes several new member states. In China and India new market oriented economic policies are resulting in rapid industrialisation.

The number of industrial workers in the world has risen rapidly. As borders open, multinational companies are offered greater chances of moving and relocating production in different parts of the world. With their global strategies these companies influence conditions for employees in many countries.

Swedish industrial companies have been established in many countries for a long time, but now more and more companies are looking further afield. Several Swedish companies also use suppliers from different parts of the world. This applies in particular to consumer goods, such as the production of clothing, shoes and toys. At the same time foreign companies are increasing their investments in Sweden.

Opening economies – democratic development

The opening of economies in eastern Asia has led to economic growth that has raised millions of people from the poverty level. In several countries this increasing openness has gone hand in hand with the triumph of democracy.

A more open world makes new demands of the trade union organisations. More and more often coordination is demanded with the trade unions in the rest of the world. The borders between local, national, European and global issues are no longer as distinct.



A more just world is also compatible with a more sustainable world. At Morpic the art of storing wind power and solar energy is being developed.

Social dumping

The globalised economy is creating possibilities while at the same time it requires a social safety net for workers who are forced to adjust to it. Increasing trade and global production also means that it is important for countries to compete on equal terms. When countries attempt to make themselves more attractive to foreign companies by failing to respect trade union rights or through discrimination, the use of child labour or inferior working conditions, social dumping is the result. This is why both international and national regulations are required to put pressure on countries and companies to respect fundamental trade union and human rights.

It has become more and more common for companies to threaten to move jobs if their employees refuse to accept worse working conditions and wages. If trade union organisations begin to compete by underbidding each other, the result will be a downward spiral that leads to the dumping of working conditions. What is needed instead is trade union coordination across borders.

International framework agreements

Since the end of the 1980s international framework agreements have been signed by trade union organisations and multinational companies. These agreements are rapidly growing in number. At the beginning of 2008 there were 60 international framework agreements that had been signed. The contents of the agreements vary. On the whole they are based on the ILO core conventions and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) guidelines for multinational companies. In addition they often include regulations on working conditions, working hours, a living wage, etc.

Many companies have adopted their own codes of conduct unilaterally. International framework agreements are, however, more binding. If a company does not live up to its undertakings in an international framework agreement, the natural response is for the trade unions to take action at a global group level. For the Swedish trade union movement, international framework agreements are important instruments in their international trade union strategy.

International framework agreements

In the foreseeable future collective agreements are going to be signed at a national level but they need to be supported by international framework agreements between international trade union organisations and multinational companies. Even when there are international framework agreements, trade union activities are still, however, the responsibility of locally elected trade union representatives in the different companies in a group. The process of negotiating a framework agreement can be coordinated in the international trade union organisations.

Labour market legislation is, on the whole, a national concern but EU regulations have acquired greater significance. At the global level there are now the conventions that have been adopted by the ILO (International Labour Organisation). According to the ILO's core conventions employees have the right to form unions and to sign collective agreements. In addition, discrimination, slavery and child labour are forbidden.

Children should be children - not workers.



The ILO conventions

The ILO is the United Nations specialist body for labour market issues. The main aim is to reduce social differences in communities and improve conditions for employees all over the world. The most important method to attain this goal is to establish specific international regulations, the ILO's conventions and recommendations.

The ILO differs from the other UN bodies in being a tripartite body that consists of the governments of the member states as well as representatives of both employees and employers. All three groups have voting rights at meetings at which decisions are made.

Some of the ILO conventions have the special status of core conventions for human rights, which means that all the countries that are members of the UN are obliged to respect them. The rights affirmed by this group of eight core conventions include the right to organise (Convention 87) and the right to sign collective agreements (Convention 98).

The OECD and the right to organise trade unions

The OECD is an association of 30 countries. In June 2000 the OECD adopted guidelines for multinational companies. One section deals with terms of employment and it begins as follows:

“Enterprises should, within the framework of applicable law, regulations and prevailing labour relations and employment practices:

a) Respect the right of their employees to be represented by trade unions / .../ and engage in constructive negotiations, either individually or through employers’ associations, with such representatives with a view to reaching agreements on employment conditions.”

The OECD guidelines apply to all companies with head offices in one of the member countries. The OECD is therefore able to criticise the operations of a company outside the borders of its member countries. Every OECD country has to set up what is called a national contact centre, often a tripartite body, to deal with complaints. IF Metall is represented in the Swedish national contact centre.

China is not a member of the OECD and only the state-controlled trade union organisation is allowed there. IF Metall’s representatives at group level in companies with Swedish links arrange contacts and exchanges with industrial workers in China.





Organising their members is the fundamental task of the trade unions – irrespective of whether they are working locally, nationally or globally. Per Svensson a member of the IF Metall branch at Svenska Bil AB took part in a recruitment campaign during a visit to the USA.

Trade union cooperation for stability and economic development

The basic task of trade union organisations is to improve conditions for employees. But strong trade union organisations and collective agreements also help to create stability and a long term economic approach.

The World Bank study in 2003 entitled *Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining – Economic Effects in a Global Setting* showed that strong trade union organisations and collective agreements do not have any negative impact on a company's investments, productivity and exports.

Its other conclusions included:

- Wages are generally higher in sectors with high union density and where there are collective agreements than in those where the trade unions and agreements are weak.
- Union density and collective agreements help to even out income differences and to reduce the gap between men's and women's wages.
- In many countries, such as Germany, Japan, Mexico and South Africa, women in particular have benefited from high union density.
- High union density reduces the amount of temporary employment.
- High union density and centralised collective agreements lead to greater social equality, lower unemployment – and also to fewer strikes.

International trade union structure

General

IF Metall organises workers in industrial sectors such as engineering, car manufacture, mining, iron and steel, chemicals, plastics, oil, glass, quarries, building materials, pharmaceuticals, textiles, garment production, laundries, etc. At the international level, IF Metall cooperates with other unions in these industrial sectors. Locally elected officials and union employees in IF Metall occupy about 150 posts on the boards of the international trade union movement and their working groups.

Multinational groups

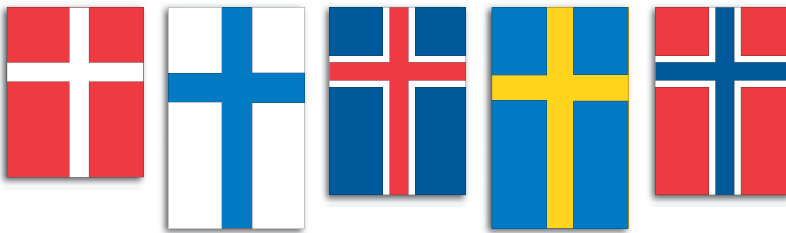
Trade union activities in groups are an important concern for IF Metall. When groups operate internationally cross-border trade union cooperation is needed.

In 1994 the EU issued the European Works Council (EWC) Directive. Companies with employees in several EU

member states (totalling at least 1,000 and with at least 150 in the state with the second largest number) were required to establish works councils of this kind. This requirement applies even if the employees or trade unions in the company had not explicitly requested the establishment of an EWC. In Sweden the employee representatives in the EWC are appointed by the trade unions, but this is not always the case in other countries. Sometimes there are no local branches and then the representatives are elected by the employees.



A number of major Swedish companies operate all over the world. Some of them have global works councils. The one with the longest history is the global works council in SKF. Unlike European works councils, companies are not required to establish global works councils. IF Metall considers, however, that this should also be requirement. When capital is being globalised the rights of employees must follow suit.



The Nordic countries

IF Metall is one of the 22 unions affiliated to Industrianställda i Norden, IN. Altogether IN represents 1.2 million industrial workers in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Even though the forms of agreement in the five Nordic countries differ, the idea of collective bargaining and the well-developed welfare state is shared by all of them. For this reason IF Metall is working to establish Nordic coordination and a shared approach to European and international trade union activities. In this way IF Metall wants to increase the chance of gaining support for different issues in Europe and all over the world.

Nordic projects are being carried out in partnership in other countries. The aim is to spread information about the Nordic approach to agreements and social models, as well as knowledge about the workings of democratic trade union organisations. IN's main task is to coordinate and enhance commitment to a shared Nordic approach on bargaining and industrial policy, environmental issues and further training.

Europe and the European Union

The EU is in many ways the most important transnational platform for trade union cooperation and an important arena for IF Metall. One reason is that the social partners, employers and employees, play an important role in the EU legislative process.

The trade unions have always had a strong position in European cooperation. European trade union cooperation is intended to strengthen the position of employees in the European common market. Just as the local trade unions in Sweden merged and formed federations, today the European trade unions have to work together to combat social dumping.



German car workers from Opel in Rüsselsheim visiting Saab in Trollhättan.



The right to individual training to acquire new skills is the first joint European trade union bargaining point that IF Metall and the other unions affiliated to the EMF have agreed on. The next development will hopefully be five days of training for every employee, an annual training plan and certification.



IF Metall is a member of a number of European federations.

- EMF (the European Metalworkers' Federation) with 6.5 million members.
- EMCEF (European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers Federation) with 2.5 members.
- ETUF:TCL (European Trade Union Federation of Textiles, Clothing and Leather) with just over 1 million members.

The European federations coordinate the work of the trade unions in their respective sectors on bargaining and industrial policy, European works councils, the social dialogue (discussions between the employers and employees, the social partners), skill enhancement, restructuring etc. The EMF has played an important role in the changes in General Motors, for instance by establishing rules for trade union coordination.

The European federations to which IF Metall is affiliated undertake organised lobbying activities through European trade union networks in which trade union demands can be coordinated to influence the wording of EU labour market directives and regulations.

IF Metall works actively to influence the EU. This takes the form of involvement in Sweden's EU policies as well as working with public opinion to influence the EU institutions.

The three European federations and LO in Sweden also enable IF Metall to influence the ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. And the inter-union cooperation that has been developed with other Swedish unions affiliated to LO offers yet another channel for influence in the EU.

One central issue for IF Metall is to ensure that the EU actively supports industry in Europe, for instance by investing in skills and training.

The world

The international trade union organisations are federations of similar trade unions all over the world. IF Metall belongs to several international trade union organisations:

- IMF (the International Metalworkers' Federation) which has 25 million members.
- ICEM (the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions) which has 20 million members.
- ITGLWF (International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation) which has 10 million members.



This Chinese textile worker is one of more than 50 million working in an export processing zone (EPZ). There are more than 3,000 of these zones in the world. Long working hours and low wages are the norm. Often no trade union rights are allowed either.

It is the international trade union organisations that monitor developments in global sectors and coordinate trade union demands addressed to the WTO (World Trade Organisation), the ILO, the OECD and other international bodies.

One important task for the international trade union organisations is to sign international framework agreements with multinational companies. These framework agreements contain undertakings to respect trade union rights. In addition, many of them also include regulations on working conditions and decent wages. Several of the international framework agreements also apply to the company's suppliers. In 2008 there were 60 international framework agreements.

A number of these have been signed with Swedish multinationals such as SKF, Ikea, Skanska, H&M and SCA.

Through the three global trade union federations and via LO, IF Metall also participates in the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation), which is an umbrella organisation for national trade union federations all over the world. Its main resources are its ability to carry on a dialogue with international organisations and governments, the exchange of information and influence on public opinion. For many years the ITUC has been working with the various UN organs. In recent years it has also actively lobbied the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and also succeeded in establishing a dialogue with the two organisations.

Japhet Moyo, Secretary General of the Metalworker's union in Zimbabwe and Tyrone Hansson, IF Metall branch president at Eka Chemicals in Sweden. From different parts of the world but with the same trade union mandate: "We in the trade union movement have to fight for our everyday rights."

Development cooperation

IF Metall cooperates extensively with trade unions in other countries on development. This cooperation can be organised directly (bilaterally) by the union, regional or local branches with trade union organisations abroad. It can also be organised through the international trade union organisations (multilaterally) to which the union is affiliated. The aim of the projects is to strengthen the trade union movement in the world around us, in particular local trade union activities in workplaces. Most projects also include gender equality and hiv/aids.



SWHAP

In southern Africa hiv/aids is most widespread in the 15-49 age group – people of working age. The disease is to a very great extent an issue for the workplace. It affects both individual workers and their companies, as well as society as a whole.

For this reason IF Metall and companies in the International Council of Swedish Industry (NIR) have organised a joint project called the Swedish Workplace HIV/ Aids Programme, SWHAP. In 2008 this provided more than 45,000 people in seven countries with information, training and treatment.

The trade union and management at Autoliv in South Africa are a good example of how SWHAP works.



Development cooperation is mainly funded by SIDA and applications and reports are coordinated by the LO-TCO Aid Committee and the Olof Palme International Centre.

Information and public opinion

IF Metall works extensively with information and public opinion. In addition IF Metall is taking part in the Rena Kläder (Pure Clothes) network which is acting to improve conditions in the global garment industry. IF Metall is also a participant in Global Respect, a campaign for trade union rights and global justice, which also operates as a study circle on the Internet (see the list of links).

IF Metall has produced a number of brochures on international trade union activities and published articles in Info. You can find out more at www.ifmetall.se.



IF Metall's international activities

For local and global justice

In many parts of the world trade union rights are being violated. In some countries independent trade union organisations are prohibited. In others the authorities look the other way when active trade unionists are harassed and dismissed. Over much of the world there are free trade areas or export processing zones from which the trade unions are excluded.

IF Metall believes that development of the economy and welfare must be based on the wishes of individuals and democratic influence. Globalisation has to be grounded in democracy and human rights, not on widening gaps between people and countries.

IF Metall's international actions therefore stress:

- **Trade union strength locally and globally**

All the employees in the world must have the right to establish trade unions, bargain and sign agreements. IF Metall wants its work to result in an international trade union movement that is stronger and global.

Starka tillsammans





Trade union contacts in a group help to raise union density. IF Metall's branches at Atlas Copco in Sweden have developed cooperation with the trade union organisation at Atlas Copco in the Indian city of Pune.



The right to join a trade union, to bargain and to sign agreements must be human rights enjoyed by all who work.

- **More global knowledge in our own organisation**

Successful international trade union action is based on effective and vigorous local trade union activities. IF Metall's international action is therefore based on extending knowledge and raising awareness at home.

- **International framework agreements between trade unions and multinational companies**

The working conditions for employees of multinational companies have to be enhanced through international framework agreements. These agreements should also cover people working for suppliers.

- **The right to international sympathy action**

Global recognition of the right to take international sympathy action would enable trade unions in Sweden and other countries to act in support of employees who have been subjected to violation of their human rights in the workplace, wherever this may occur.

- **Promotion of trade union and human rights in all forms of development aid**

International aid from Sweden and the EU must be conditional on trade union and human rights in the labour market.

- **Influencing trade union and human rights in the labour market**

IF Metall is in favour of free trade, but not trade that is free from rights. Therefore IF Metall believes that the EU should include demands of this kind in the trade agreements it negotiates with other countries and that the WTO should include a social clause in its regulations on free trade. IF Metall wants all international bodies to advocate these rights more explicitly as well as greater authority for the operations and powers of the ILO.

Useful links

www.ifmetall.se

IF Metall – Industrifacket Metall

www.emf-fem.org

European Metalworkers' Federation

www.emcef.org

European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation

www.etuf-tcl.org

European Trade Union Federation: Textiles, Clothing and Leather

www.etuc.org

European Trade Union Confederation, ETUC

www.europaportalen.se

Europa portal – a portal for news about Europe

www.icem.org

International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions, ICEM



A link in a chain produced by Ramnäs Steelworks in Bergslagen in northern Sweden - a globally recognised trademark.

www.imfmetal.org

International Metalworkers' Federation

www.itglwf.org

International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation

www.ituc-csi.org

International Trade Union Confederation

www.lo.se

Landsorganisationen, LO
(The Swedish Trade Union Confederation)

www.lotcobistand.org

LO-TCO Biståndsämnd
(LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union
Development Co-operation)

www.nfs.net

Nordiska Fackliga Samorganisationen, NFS
(Council of Nordic Trade Unions)

www.nordic-in.org

Industrianställda i Norden
(Nordic-IN)

www.palmecenter.se

The Olof Palme International Center

www.renaker.org

Rena Kläder

www.studiecirkel.com

Global Respect

www.swhap.org

Swedish Workplace Hiv/Aids Programme



“Globalisation is a fact and we believe that fundamentally it is positive. It has enabled us to produce and sell more. But if globalisation is to be just, trade union rights and the right to reach collective agreements must be respected.”

Statement by IF Metall Congress



IFMETALL

Olof Palmes gata 11
105 52 Stockholm, Sweden
Telephone: +46 (0)8-786 80 00
www.ifmetall.se