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## Syndex as proactive partner of European project to implement COP21 agreements

*Following the signature of the first universal agreement to combat climate change, the EU has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in its industrial sectors by 87% by 2050. Both Syndex and ETUC are taking a proactive role in the initiative.*

### Agreement needs strengthening, say trade unions

On 12 December 2015, the first universal agreement to combat climate change was signed. While the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) regrets that its key message of “a just transition for workers” does not appear in the operational body text of the agreement, ETUC has committed to “working towards and transforming the political success of COP21 into a long-term success for the planet and for workers and the communities they belong to”.

### Brussels' project to counter greenhouse gas emissions

Following the agreement and as part of the EU roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, EU industrial sectors will have to reduce their emissions by 87% by 2050 (compared with 1990). This measure is part of the IRCP project (Industrial Regions and climate change policies: trade unions' perspectives). This project aims to take stock of trade unions' contribution to the combined process of developing industrial activity in EU regions and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy. The project shall present a series of recommendations which will go towards fuelling ETUC's political action

on industrial, energy and climate policies in line with the approach of a “just transition” for workers and their representatives.

### Syndex takes proactive stance on new EU challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Syndex has been involved since the initial discussions at the Paris conference in Le Bourget. The firm presented the ECECLI tool (a prospective study on skills and qualifications needs linked to environmental, energy and climate policies in the region of Ile-de-France) and has taken part in several conferences organised in partnership with ITUC, CFDT and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

This major challenge for European industrial sectors will require involvement from regional and local authorities. European and national public authorities shall also have a key role to play, however, the real challenges are faced by regional and local authorities, drivers of industrial policy. With this in mind, Syndex will provide support and technical assistance for the IRCP project by mobilising its European subsidiaries in Spain, Belgium, Romania and Poland. The project involves case studies and the organisation of seven regional seminars in EU Member States. These seminars shall bring together local trade union representatives and other regional stakeholders to identify best practices, obstacles and opportunities with regards to drafting regional strategies for lower carbon emissions in industry and implementing «just transition» policies.

The project will be wrapped up with a conclusive seminar on 30 June 2016 in Brussels, plus a final conference organised by ETUC on 5 October 2016.

## Editorial

*Digitalisation, development of the digital economy, 'uberisation' of work... Current events provide us with daily examples of how our economies are transforming and how work itself and the workforce is changing. The debate is not to decide whether this is a good or bad thing, but how our societies need to adapt to take account of this new reality.*

*It is important to look at these developments from a critical and attentive viewpoint. While digital transformation offers companies great opportunities for development, increased worker productivity and new ways of working, it can also be a source of job cuts and poorer working conditions, whether through work intensification, abolition of the separation between private life and work life or dehumanisation of social relationships.*

*It is hence a key topic for social dialogue - at all levels - in the years to come and employee representatives must address the issue. Syndex is actively involved and is currently conducting various studies, in particular a study for the European trade union federation IndustriAll.*

## Interview with :

### Luc Triangle



*Luc Triangle stands for IndustriALL Europe General Secretary. This European Trade Union Federation represents workers coming from industrial and manufacturing sectors such as metal, energy, chemical, steel and automotive sectors. He is currently Deputy G.S. in charge of multinational companies and a number of sectors. The Congress will be held on 7/9 June 2016 in Madrid.*

*IndustriALL Europe has 7 million members.*

*Digitalization, Juncker's investment plan, ETS, better regulation, Schengen crisis, trade issues ... where is the European Union going? Should workers still adhere to the European integration process?*

Europe and its industry are impacted by high global competition, the overcapacity at global level in a number of basic sectors, without forgetting the uncertainty created by the current Brexit discussion, the refugee crisis and the future of the European Union. Workers wonder what their future is: will they keep their job, what kind of job will it be, what will happen to social welfare state? This is also a consequence of the liberal policies conducted by the E.U.: the austerity agenda including dismantling of the social welfare state in a number of countries, created poverty and a lower trust in the European idea. We are at a crossroad and the E.U. leaders have

to choose the right way, towards a more Social Europe. Otherwise workers might stop supporting the European integration process.

*In many countries, trade unions are losing members and/or influence. Collective bargaining and the right to strike are challenged. What does your Federation do to face these situations? Are you successful?*

The austerity policies driven by the Trojka have proved destructive by denying social dialogue contribution to wealth. In Romania, for instance, company unions currently leave their federation because it lost its bargaining rights at sector level. In our Congress next June, our organization will rank member organizing and building trade union power at company and sector level as a new top priority. We will ensure that our affiliates most successful experiences benefit to others by setting up a dedicated trade union platform. We will also chose strategic targets among Multinational companies that do not have trade unions yet, particularly in Central Eastern Europe. Organizing and building trade union power : also the European federation can and will play its role.

*What will the priorities be for UNI Europa and IndustriALL Europe after the Congress? What are your personal commitments towards your affiliates for the next mandate?*

The Re-industrialization is vital for Europe's future and jobs. The European Union launched ambitious targets in its Europe 2020 agenda. But we have to go from words to actions. Restructurings are imposed on workers while investments are urgently needed; today investments are still below the level of 2008 when the financial crisis started. Europe's industry also has to stay the most innovative industry in the world. Also in this way, we can keep and create industrial jobs in Europe. All of this has to be combined with a clear view on how we will deal with the energy and climate challenges. Besides that, we will deal with important challenges and actions on social policy, our collective bargaining agenda, and clearly as well on how we will deal with multinational companies. As industriAll Europe we must have a real impact on all these topics so that our affiliates can experience that a European federation when acting together, can really make a difference.

## Syndex in Brussels and in Europe

### Reconciling Environment and Sustainability of steel production

During 2015, **Syndex** conducted a survey for the European trade union federation IndustriAll on the "Information and Consultation of Employee Representatives

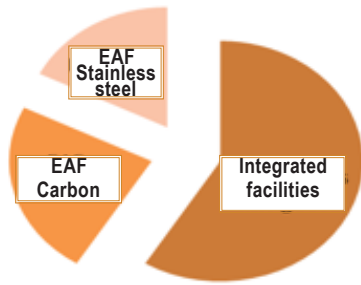
on Resource Efficiency Issues in the European Steel Industry".

Resource efficiency: use less materials

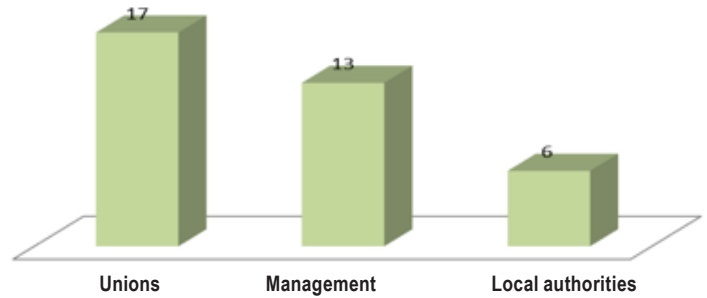
and energy to produce the same quantity and quality of steel.

**To complete the survey, 17 industrial sites in 11 countries were visited.**

### Breakdown by type of industrial site visited



### Number of interviews conducted



The study concluded on the need to change governance of investment which, in a highly capital intensive industry such as steel, comes down to determining future capacity and related jobs in terms of quantity and quality, in short **industrial sustainability**.

#### Three viewpoints

- Energy is a common topic covered by industrial policy whose consumption has always been at the heart of society's choices;
- The environment field can lead to **immeasurable assessments** that involve **economic** aspects imposed by regulations;
- Climate is close to the issue of environment but has more distanced effects, less directly identifiable and subject to a more **flexible approach** with the use of economic instruments.

To address these topics and change governance in the sector, employee representative training appears to be a key issue in helping to make these representatives full stakeholders in the environmental, energy and CO2 debate and to improve upon failing social dialogue.

To be followed through, this improvement to employee representatives' knowledge must be supported by an information and consultation process conducted in accordance with legal frameworks and/or in collective bargaining where management representatives also fully play their role.

For this to happen, clarification is required in some countries about who does what and work needs to be done on the complementarity between health and safety proceedings and social dialogue proceedings on economic matters.

Employee representatives stress the need to have a binding framework for environmental information - or for sustainable development in its broader sense - to develop an independent and reasoned opinion on these issues, in relation to the various issues that affect the company (industrial, financial, strategic and social).

#### Three recommendations

- Bring together in the same approach the health and safety of employees and of neighbouring populations:

necessary but raises the question of relations between environmental NGOs and trade union organisations;

- Allow thought and development of independent union strategies to defend general interests;
- Not be 'sandwiched' between company management defending shareholder interests and environmental NGOs claiming public interest.

### Syndex contributes to trade union debate on Europe-China negotiations

While discussions are currently being held at the World Trade Organization about China gaining market economy status and while the European Union is involved in negotiations on a trade and investment partnership with the United States, Syndex, with ETUC, has published a study on the current and little-known negotiations underway on an investment agreement between Europe and China.

From a state of play on the dynamics of investment between Europe and China, as well as company case studies on the employment and social dialogue issues at hand, the report scrutinises the fundamental imbalances between Europe and China in terms of industrial strategy, international development and social model. The study develops a series of recommendations and hopes to contribute to "an informed debate (...) on the range of issues that arise, as a basis for a European trade union campaign to defend and create decent jobs in Europe," as called for in

the Foreword by ETUC Secretary General Luca Visentini.

<https://www.etuc.org/publications/china-investment-policy-consequences-workers#.Vt6NFX3hBiz>



## Country news...

### **Belgium - Belgian trade unions in court for their pensions**

Belgian trade unions FGTB, CSC and CGSLB believe that the legal provisions increasing retirement age from 65 to 67 years old go against several constitutional rights, including the right to social security and prohibition of discrimination. To be eligible for early retirement, Belgian workers now require 42 qualifying years. Yet, the average career duration for women in Belgium is 36.6 years and 42.2 years for men. As a result, many women will not qualify for the opportunity to take early retirement.

### **United Kingdom - Conservative Party continues its attack on workers' rights**

The government's Trade Union Bill will undermine the role of unions and weaken the right to strike. The government's majority in both Houses gives the Bill a high chance of success. The Bill will allow employers to hire agency workers during a strike and oblige unions to give 14 days notice of strike action. A key, and overtly political objective of the Bill is to reduce union funding to the Labour Party, a long-standing aim of the Conservative Party. The Bill will also raise the threshold for strike action for thousands of public sector workers and ban their employers from deducting union subscriptions directly from union members' pay. Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary, said, "This Bill is an unnecessary attack on workers' rights and civil liberties that will shift the balance of power in the workplace."

### **France - A controversial proposed reform of the Labour Code**

In February, the French government announced a draft bill aiming to reform the Labour Code, drafted without prior consultation of trade unions and

employers. This draft calls for precedence of company agreements over organisation of working hours, the possibility for the employer to make unilateral decisions about working hours, a cap on industrial tribunal compensation in the event of wrongful dismissal and provisions easing economic redundancies (assessment of difficulties at company level or national level at the most, not at group level). This bill has not only sparked an outcry from all trade union organisations, but also aroused civic reactions with an online petition which has collected over one million signatures. The French government has decided to postpone examination of this reform in order to organise consultation with social partners and review the bill.

### **Romania - Protests for the Law of Social Dialogue**

The Law 62 on Social Dialogue adopted by the government in 2011 under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the business community, and without being debated in Parliament, has distorted the system of industrial relations in Romania. The main national union confederations (the National Trade Union Bloc /BNS, CNS Cartel Alfa and CNSRL Brotherhood) have demanded changes to each new government but without response until January 2016. Even if the changes are in the interest of the trade unions defining more clearly the criteria of representativeness and the withholding union dues per union member, the changes do not respond fully to their proposals. The unions threat with continues manifestations against the Ministry of Labor if further topics will not be negotiated.

### **Spain - Absolved: The hateful eight finally were not**

Getafe's Criminal Court absolved the 8 Airbus unionists for lack of evidence because of their behaviour in the 2010 general strike. The Prosecutor asked

for prison sentences of 8 years and 3 months for each of them, accusing of preventing the entry of workers to the plant and crimes of attack and injuries. It is a famous case that reveals the offensive against the right to strike involving more than 300 unionists due to the application of an obsolete article, 315.3 of the Spanish Criminal Code, which defines a very severe crime of coercion to strike. In response unions launched a campaign, still active, "Strike is not a crime", supported by left-wing political parties, to repeal an article considered undemocratic.

### **Poland - Social dialogue resumes**

In the first quarter of 2016, after almost three years of suspended activity, social dialogue institutions resumed their work in Poland with the creation of the Social Dialogue Council (Rada Dialogu Społecznego, RDS), taking over from the former Tripartite Commission boycotted since June 2013 by unions disappointed by the "lack of dialogue". The law introducing the RDS at central and regional level gives a prominent role to autonomous, bipartite dialogue and gives unions and employers the right to submit joint legislative proposals to the government.

Among the priority work RDS is to conduct is the right for independent workers or workers on assignment contracts to join a trade union, revaluation of the lowest retirement pensions, an increase to the threshold for taxable income and reform of the law for awarding public contracts.

In parallel, the Tripartite Group responsible for the social conditions of restructuring the steel industry has also resumed its work. On 9 February this year, during the Group meeting attended by S.Partner (Polish subsidiary of the Syndex group), issues were addressed regarding the generation gap in the sector caused by mass retirements and difficulties recruiting qualified young workers.

## Looking towards Europe

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