**Document for adoption by the Executive Committee on 16 & 17 May 2019**

**Agenda Item VII. Building Trade Union Power**

**Issue/Context**

At the Congress of industriAll Europe in June 2016, affiliates committed to placing ‘Building Trade Union Power’ (BTUP) as one of the priorities on our European agenda. We understand membership policy as a core principle for a strong trade union movement. Building trade union power is a universal and transversal task, where success depends on how well it is mainstreamed through structures and activities. The members of industriAll Europe’s BTUP task force agree that self-empowerment of workers and active members lead by national unions is needed to increase membership and to (re-)build trade union power. The document outlines the four work blocks identified for successful implementation of the priority and describes the actions taken in 2019 – 2020 related to each work block.

**Recommendation for decision**

The Executive Committee is invited to formally adopt the document mentioned above.

**Building Trade Union Power (BTUP):**

**Report on activities and next steps 2019 – 2020**

**Background: Building Trade Union Power, Our Priority!**

At the Congress of industriAll Europe in June 2016, affiliates committed to placing ‘Building Trade Union Power’ (BTUP) as one of the priorities on our European agenda. Trade unions draw their strength and collective power from the membership they represent. Gaining more and active members is a priority to which the European federation can also contribute. The main focus has to stay at the national and the local level in the hands of the national affiliates. But taking into account the reach of multinational companies throughout their supply chains, transnational support and solidarity is needed. Therefore, industriAll Europe is contributing to building trade union power in several ways:

* Mainstreaming BTUP in all our activities by making organising an overarching and transversal priority;
* Taking initiatives on transnational company level organising which are identified through our sectoral and company policy work;
* Strategically supporting affiliates in organising weakly unionised sectors, with a European dimension.
* Creating a platform for exchange of best practices on organising;
* Assisting in training and capacity building to strengthen national trade union structures and skills and capacity to organise and deliver results.

1. **Actions taken by industriAll Europe between 2016 and 2018**

After the Congress, a BTUP task force was set up, and the first elements of working areas and actions were identified. They can be divided into four blocks:

**Block 1: Cross-organisational level approach**

* 2016-2017 in South-East Europe: project in cooperation with EFFAT on strengthening the capacity of trade unions to deal with industrial policy;
* September 2017 in Berlin: Transnational conference "United and Stronger Together: Transnational Worker Participation – Building Stronger Unions” with 150 participants from 20 countries;
* 2017-2018: participation in ETUC’s Pay Rise Campaign;
* November 2017: BTUP workshop on “Exchanging best practices on organising” with presence of major affiliates;
* 2016-2018 collective bargaining project: successful bargaining requires a strong organising base, a strategic approach, sustainable structure and mobilising skills;
* End 2018: decision to recruit a Strategic Organiser.

**Block 2: Company-level approach**

* 2017-2018: transnational organising at company level – preparation and collection of fact sheets on potential target companies in cooperation with the Company Policy Committee;
* January 2018: Workshop on “Company policy and European Works Councils as an instrument for organising and building trade union power”;
* 2018: cooperation and success in organising within companies: Safran (FR-CZ), Sandvik (SE-CZ).

**Block 3: Sectoral level approach**

* January 2018: Kick-off of the 2-year project co-financed by the European Commission on “Strengthening industrial relations and improving wages in South-East European garment and footwear industries”

**Block 4: Target group level approach**

* 2018: Youth Working Group and White-Collar Working Group welcomed the BTUP priority and decided to include it in their respective work plans.

**2. Activities in 2019 and beyond**

After these preliminary steps, the BTUP priority is being further developed around the four building blocks:

**Block 1: Cross-organisational level**

We understand building trade union power as a universal and transversal priority, where success depends on how well it is mainstreamed throughout structures and activities. It therefore requires the implementation of membership policy as a core principle. This allows to direct union activities considering their contribution to retaining members and recruiting new members. With more and active members, trade unions will (re-)gain influence on workplace level, on sectoral level and politically. We believe prioritising membership policy will help trade unions to increase influence. For that, industriAll Europe offers to contribute to the implementation of a systematic, professional membership recruitment and retention policy. This will be developed on demand and in close cooperation with the respective affiliates.

1. industriAll Europe will continue to mainstream BTUP and organising throughout our organisation, by including the membership focus of organising in all our policy fields.
2. industriAll Europe will support affiliates to develop organising policies, including when there is an expressed willingness to change focus from representing union model to organising union model.
3. industriAll Europe will continue to learn from affiliates how they organise. Based on existing experiences, we will introduce concepts that promote transformations and distribute sets of successful methods and best practices.

This work will include, among others, the following actions:

* Consultation and advice: we will work together with interested affiliates on strategies and action plans, taking into account their different situations and identified needs;
* Training: We will assist in training and capacity building activities for affiliates that decide to develop towards organising trade unions. This can take place at national or bilateral level, such as a training seminar organised in March 2019 for executive committee members of the Chemical Workers Union VDSZ (HU) together with IGBCE (D);
* Mutual learning: We will support affiliates in bilateral learning and training activities;
* Publication: We will publish a manual, conceptionally following the four blocks, presenting best practices of our affiliates on organising methodology and techniques.

**Block 2: Company level**

Building trade union power through organising is a bottoms-up approach and therefore very much based on action at workplace level. However, affiliates have an important role to play to promote self-empowerment and activation of workers by providing concepts, strategic research, techniques and resources. Strategically embedded company-based transnational partnerships strengthen industrial workers’ interests in Europe and beyond. As a European organisation we focus on transnational companies, but we also encourage our affiliates to set their own operational priorities.

We value the role of the European Works Councils (EWC). They can provide significant support to organising non-unionised companies and increasing union density in weakly unionised enterprises. Trade union members of EWCs have an insight into their companies, business plans, locations, labour-management relations and working conditions. EWCs can contribute by uncovering blind spots, showing solidarity with workers who are in collective conflict with the employer, playing the role of "mentor" and supporter in organising campaigns.

Therefore, our work in company level action will include the following:

1. industriAll Europe will provide affiliates with support in developing and implementing concepts, strategic research and methodologies for organising and self-empowerment and activation of workers.
2. industriAll Europe will encourage affiliates to cooperate in partnership initiatives for organising transnational companies.
3. industriAll Europe will motivate European Works Councils to support organising non-unionised sites and increasing density in weakly unionised locations.

This work is already underway, for instance in the following areas:

* Sensibilisation: In a training session for EWC members and coordinators in January 2019, we debated their role and opportunities in strengthening trade unions in transnational companies and asked them to develop concrete action plans. We will continue to support them in following up on such plans and offering cooperation on consultation and additional training. In cooperation with the Company Policy Committee, guidelines for EWC members on their role in organising will be developed.
* Initiating transnational organising initiatives: As of February 2019, we are supporting cooperation between IF Metall (SE) and industriAll-BNS (RO) to win union recognition at Autoliv Romania employing 11.000 workers at five plants. There are several other cases in progress (e.g. Safran, Alfa Laval).
* Strengthening international solidarity: In March 2019, the Chemical Workers Union VDSZ (HU) won an 18.5% wage increase after a strike of 1,700 workers, with strong support from industriAll Europe, IndustriALL Global Union, and several affiliates from other countries. The union used the conflict to score a big increase in membership thanks to its determined action and cross-border solidarity.

**Block 3: Sectoral level**

Collective bargaining power has been dramatically weakened in many European countries by changes in legislation introduced by governments especially during the financial crisis. Fundamental changes in the economy due to new forms of work, corporate structures, digitalisation and automation pose further challenges to trade union power. IndustriAll Europe believes that strengthening and rebuilding collective bargaining at sectoral level is more important than ever. Successful bargaining requires a strongly unionised workforce, as legal frameworks for collective bargaining and extension of sectoral agreements have proven their vulnerability.

Therefore, our action at sectoral level will include the following:

1. industriAll Europe will launch discussions at sector Networks to identify strategically important sectors to be targeted in future sectoral organising campaigns. The aerospace sector Network already decided on BTUP as a priority, and in June 2019 a detailed action plan will be discussed. Discussions at other sector Networks will follow.
2. industriAll Europe´s campaign for more and better collective agreements provides affiliates with a variety of materials. This overarching campaign will highlight the benefits of good collective bargaining. It will also reach out young people and precarious workers. The campaign will thus also be closely linked to unionising.
3. industriAll Europe encourages affiliates to prioritise potential sectoral collective bargaining campaigns and will support them with cross-border coordination of initiatives.

A pilot action in this area has been industriAll Europe’s EU-funded project 2018-19 on “Strengthening industrial relations and improving wages in South-East European garment and footwear industries”, carried out in close cooperation with IndustriALL Global Union. A preliminary mapping revealed that there were over 600,000 textile cluster workers in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. Average wages in many countries are 200-400 euros per month and working hours are long. Unionisation rates are low at 3-16%. There are few local level collective agreements and the only sectoral collective agreements exist in North Macedonia. The informal sector is big. Several major brands including Inditex, ASOS, Benetton, H&M, C&A, Esprit and Hugo Boss are sourcing from these countries.

The expected results of the project and action in the coming years are:

* More union members through organising;
* Bigger and stronger unions, capable of serving members;
* Rebuilding collective bargaining at national level;
* Increased number and quality of CBAs at company level;
* Trained union representatives, capable of organizing, bargaining and solving problems;
* Strengthened interaction with governments;
* Improved image of the industry to ensure future workforce;
* Path towards living wages – build mechanisms: brand cooperation, minimum wage increases, CBAs.

In November 2018-March 2019 a series of national seminars were carried out. With the participation of national union leaders and 120 local union representatives, the seminars focused on training on organising and the use of GFAs to organise workers. Separate sessions were dedicated to an exchange with industry/employer associations, key suppliers, brands, governments, universities and NGOs on how to ensure sustainability and growth of the industry with sufficient skilled workforce, sectoral collective agreements and functioning labour-management relations. The stakeholders received information on GFAs and on the principles of the ACT living wage initiative between leading brands and IndustriALL Global Union.

The follow-up to the six national seminars is underway:

* Organising plans are prepared in all countries, defining target factories and regions, based on a detailed mapping of plant locations and brand presence in each country;
* More training on organising skills and local organisers on the ground are clearly needed;
* Leading GFA brands H&M, Inditex, ASOS and Esprit have confirmed their cooperation, more brand contacts to follow with Benetton, C&A and others;
* Western European affiliates have promised their support: Austria, Sweden, Spain, Germany;
* Employer/industry associations have made positive comments on to rebuild sectoral collective bargaining, but active follow-up and creative solutions are needed;
* Keep the momentum of minimum wage increases to offer basic protection, however suppliers and employer associations complain about the reluctance of brands to pay more to enable living wages;
* Patience will be required: problems lie deep, profound changes will take years and constant support also after the final project conference in November 2019.

**Block 4: Target group level**

Unionising target groups such as young workers, workers with precarious employment contracts and White-Collar workers poses different challenges for organising and requires specific approaches. We are therefore taking the following steps:

* Unionising students and young workers: BTUP is part of the action plan of the Youth Working Group. IndustriAll Europe will provide training for youth leaders in September 2019 in cooperation with ETUI on organising principles, as well as on initiatives and best practices to organise young workers. Concrete action plans will be developed with the support of industriAll Europe.
* Unionising White-Collar workers: BTUP became part of the action plan of White-Collar Working Group. The working group will design a survey to better understand the needs of White-Collar workers aiming at developing a tailored action plan on organising, including targeting students and trainees, and tailored services.

**3. Next steps**

The identified four building blocks will be the backbone of industriAll Europe’s BTUP work over the next 12-18 months. The recruitment of a Strategic Organiser for industriAll Europe is a step forward and allows us to work on this priority in a more systematic way. The Think Tank that recently started its operation will evaluate the work done so far. The congress in May 2020 will be a good occasion to further direct the next steps for industriAll Europe on building trade union power.

All in all, industriAll Europe will continue to mainstream BTUP and support developing strategic and active membership policies. This is indispensable for regaining bargaining power and putting workers first in the workplace and in society. Our justified demands for better wages and fair working conditions in times of fundamental changes of the industry will be only be heard when we are able to challenge our counterparts with the support of an organised and activated membership.

A key to success will be the participation of all affiliates of industriAll Europe in this endeavour. Building trade union power through organising is our common goal. Doing it together across national borders is an expression of concrete solidarity among industrial workers and their unions in Europe.