



**NORDENS FACKLIGA SAMORGANISATION  
POHJOLAN AMMATILLINEN YHTEISJÄRJESTÖ  
COUNCIL OF NORDIC TRADE UNIONS**

## **ECONOMICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE WORKING LIFE**

### **THE FUTURE DECLARATION OF THE NORDIC TRADE UNIONS**

Adopted in conjunction with the Nordic Trade Union Congress in Ålesund, Norway  
On September 19, 2012

#### **Future threats to the welfare society**

The world continues to live with the impacts of the financial crisis, including high levels of debt and unemployment, increased income inequality and social unrest. Many people are suffering, and more and more countries are finding it difficult to live up to their citizens' expectations, especially since the onset of the financial crisis. In the Nordic region we are experiencing the consequences of the turmoil in the world economy. Here, too, high levels of unemployment are threatening social stability and our welfare systems are under pressure from the consequences of the crisis.

At the same time, the global environment and climate are also under pressure from increasing emissions and ruthless exploitation of natural resources. Climate change and environmental problems challenge our notions about and hopes for continued growth and welfare. Future economic growth and development must take place in symbiosis with nature, and take greater advantage than in the past of the business and development potential of environmental technology.

The intertwined challenges we face require new ways of thinking. It is the task of the politicians, the social partners and all the other stakeholders in society to do what we can to transform these challenges to opportunities. We can do this by being future-oriented and dynamic, and by working together to adapt our societies, making them economically, socially and ecologically sustainable.

The Nordic trade unions can play a key role in developing a sustainable, and value-creating working life based on both know-how and solidarity. Future solutions in society must be characterized by a combination of robust resistance and an inherent ability to restore, develop and renew – referred to as resilience.

For these reasons, and with sustainability as our lodestar, the NFS will continue to work to reinforce and anchor the Nordic labour market and collective bargaining model. We will work for full employment, job security, continuous enhancement of skills in working life, and improvements in the work environment, reduced environmental impact, increased resource efficiency, trade union rights and other human rights, as well as fair distribution at national and international levels.

#### **A sustainable Nordic labour market and social model**

- The Nordic model is our most important tool for achieving the objectives of economic, social and ecological development, growth and welfare.

- The cornerstones of the Nordic labour market model are our adaptable labour markets based on well-functioning collectively bargained agreements, autonomous social partners and a high level of education.
- Active labour market policies, high levels of trade union affiliation, extensive coverage of collectively bargained agreements and constructive collaboration among the social partners are all essential prerequisites to stability, industrial peace and necessary structural transformation of the labour market.
- Collectively bargained agreements have led to real wage increases, as well as security and predictability for both employees and employers. This has resulted in high legitimacy of and confidence in the Nordic model, which enjoys strong popular support, based on core values such as equal opportunities, social development, solidarity, equality between women and men, and financial security.
- A strong public sector is needed in order to make the required societal investments in life-long learning, education, research, sustainable infrastructure, care of children and the elderly, as well as universal welfare systems. All of these together provide the fundamental conditions for the business community and thus the prerequisites for high levels of employment and productivity, as well as sustainable development and growth.
- The combination of strong welfare systems, flexible labour market models based on negotiation, and increasingly green enterprises and economic activities will strengthen the competitiveness of the Nordic countries.
- Collectively bargained agreements are the trade unions' instrument to develop social sustainability, achieved by defending health and safety at work.

### **Sustainable economic growth**

- Economic growth must be rooted in social responsibility, value creation and green transition.
- The rules of politics must be formulated so that what is economically viable for society as a whole is also beneficial to private individuals and enterprises.
- Sound, open competition is important to promote effectiveness and value-creation, but it must always go hand in hand with global respect for trade union rights, as well as other human rights. Constructive collaboration and social investments in education and sustainable infrastructure are equally important.
- The trade unions play a major role in promoting economically sustainable development, by negotiating well-balanced collectively bargained agreements, which result in good conditions for workers, enterprises and the overall economy.
- When such agreements include further training and incentives for employees to continuously increase their professional knowledge and skills, this also benefits employers and the overall economy.

- Globalization improves opportunities to participate in the growing world trade, and also encourages international competition and continuously increasing demands on enterprises to maintain their competitiveness through research, development and innovation.
- Labour force mobility provides new opportunities for people to contribute to development and innovation, while it also requires better instruments to combat social dumping and the informal economy.
- The crisis has proven the shortcomings of both free market solutions and financial system regulations. This highlights the need for an adequate regulation of the financial systems at national, European and global levels.

### **Sustainable ecological development**

- The Nordic region needs profitable companies, well-functioning organizations, an inclusive society, strong trade unions, robust welfare systems, healthy ecosystems, and nations that work together, all of which will ensure a sustainable development.
- In international negotiations it has so far been difficult to achieve binding agreements concerning reductions of greenhouse gas emissions and other measures to deal with climate change. We therefore need to ensure stronger public opinion to urge our governments to implement the necessary measures. Trade unions can play an important role in achieving it.
- The role of the social partners in determining how to integrate the dimension of ecological sustainability into the development of society today needs to be researched and further developed. The social partners should strive to achieve emission reductions and greater effectiveness and efficiency in the utilization of energy and other natural resources, which would benefit enterprises, individuals and the ecosystem.
- Environmental damage and climate change impact ecosystems and thereby also human health and people's ability to earn a living.
- The growing environmental and resource problems require a green transition, which will also provide new business and job opportunities for those providing sustainable solutions.

### **The Nordic trade unions hereby commit to continue working for:**

- Sustainable working life by developing the social, economic and ecological dimensions of this sustainability;
- Improved prerequisites for the maintenance, anchoring and further development of the Nordic model of collective bargaining;
- Remaining continuously relevant and developmental as trade unions, enabling the maintenance of a high degree of union membership;
- Social sustainability, with welfare systems that support people as they adapt to inevitable societal changes;
- Universal respect for trade union rights and other human rights, which are cornerstones of social sustainability;
- Economic sustainability with enterprises, organizations, workplaces and financial systems that can withstand strain and rebound after the shocks we seem to be experiencing with increasing frequency;
- Ecological sustainability with resilient ecosystems that can provide us with renewable natural resources and well-functioning ecosystem services;
- Respect at EU level for the Nordic labour market model and ILO conventions;
- Striving to find solutions and strategies to ensure that employees and enterprises work under the same conditions on our labour markets;
- Active labour market policies and collectively bargained agreements for more, better, and greener jobs;
- Opportunities for more people to participate in good work through the creation of an inclusive labour market and inclusive working life;
- Equal opportunities and integration in working life;
- Full employment, job security and special measures to combat youth unemployment;
- More worker participation so employees are able to influence their own work environments to a larger extent;
- Improvement of the everyday work of our members, by striving to achieve better conditions for those who have precarious or stressful employment situations;
- Work life in which it is possible to reconcile employment, family life and private life by, for example, increasing working time flexibility, which employees need from time to time in their working lives.