

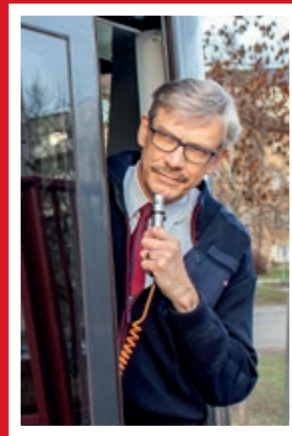


We make Sweden work

The 30th LO Congress

We make Sweden work

– introductory text to motions and statements
of opinion to LO's congress 17–20 May 2024



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Our economy

THE SWEDISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (LO) is a confederation of trade unions that organises Sweden's workers. The members of the LO affiliated unions work in construction and hospitals, in factories and shops, along roads and tracks, in mills and bakeries, in restaurants and in schools, in stadiums and hotels, in homes for the elderly and in the forest, on buses and trains. We make Sweden work every day, around the clock.

Members of LO unions gain power through our ability to work together. We are convinced that change is created through joint efforts. Alone is not strong. High trade union density, when the majority of workers in a workplace and in an industry belong to a union, makes it possible to negotiate together and strengthen the members of LO unions. Our joint confederation, LO, makes us even stronger. Together we form a collective voice, as a social partner and an influence on society. That's what gives trade union strength.

A social model that works

“It should be for Musk and his company to adapt to a Swedish model that has a record of working well, rather than for the Swedish model to adapt to Musk”. This is what the British Financial Times wrote on December 6, 2023, at the beginning of the Tesla strike. The newspaper's leader said that business leadership is not only about challenging but also recognising what works and that Tesla's CEO Elon Musk would do best in adapting to the Swedish model.

In Sweden, 9 out of 10 employees are covered by collective agreements. Collective bargaining coverage has been stable at 90 per cent in recent decades. Employees in blue collar occupations are covered by collective agreements to a greater extent than those with a managerial or academic occupation. More women than men are covered by collective agreements and Norrbotten is the county with the highest coverage among private employees.

The Swedish labour market model has proved to work well for both employees and employers. The model has contributed to Sweden's sound economic growth and ordinary wage earners have received increased real wages and greater power in the workplace.

LO is a party to this labour market model that makes Sweden work. The Swedish collective agreement model is based on equal partners negotiating wages and conditions on the labour market. Partners, with common but also different interests, negotiate compromises that everyone can live with and see the benefits of.

The social partners have also developed proposals for political solutions to problems that they see in the labour market. These proposals have then been jointly promoted by the partners in relation to politics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the partners pushed for more generous conditions for short-time employment. Other examples are foothold jobs and a better system for transition where the partners joined together to make a joint policy proposal for student finance for transition and retraining. This way of influencing policy creates predictability and long-term sustainable solutions.

The trade union is a popular movement in which members, in a different way than through the right to vote in general elections and engagement in politics, can exercise democratic influence over labour market regulations and conditions at work. A strong trade union movement makes democracy stronger and more resilient.

The Swedish model also consists of a welfare model with a universal welfare system

that is distributed according to needs and publicly funded. Globally, there is growing recognition that a shared welfare system is a pathway to a strong economy and a robust society. Good and equal quality education provides the skills and capabilities needed to take good and productive jobs.

Both the labour market and social life work better with effective universal protection in the event of illness. Society benefits from parents being able to work while they know that their children are safe and learning new things in preschool, school, and out-of-school centres. Elderly people needing help can get it from elderly care and their adult children can go to work without worrying about their parents. The welfare system strengthens everyone's ability to support themselves and control their lives. This makes both society and ordinary employees' daily lives work.

But the model is under pressure

We are one of the strongest trade union movements in the world, but we are also under pressure. The proportion of workers who are members of LO affiliated unions has decreased over a long period of time. Major societal changes affect the members of LO unions and our trade union work locally, nationally, and internationally.

A job market with precarious jobs has emerged. A large group of workers do not have full-time indefinite-term employment and thus find it difficult to make a living. In addition, new ways of organising work, such as gig or platform work, have become widespread in recent years. Precarious jobs shift the balance of power between employers and workers and have direct effects on the work environment. These workers also need to be given the opportunity to organise themselves in trade unions and be covered by collective agreements.

The universal welfare system is pressured by the cost crisis and expensive market solutions that steer away from welfare provision according to need. In recent decades, tax cuts and the development of market models have been prioritised over welfare reforms for equality. This has led to a welfare deficit in the form of a lack of resources and, in many areas, a welfare system fragmented among many actors. Public unemployment and sickness insurance schemes have deteriorated. Public trust in the welfare system has diminished.

Welfare cutbacks are one explanation of why Sweden is the country in the Western world where inequalities have increased most in recent decades. The welfare model is threatened by political forces that want a basic social security model with pared down rudimentary welfare provision, where those who can afford it pay extra to get high quality. In recent years the EU has increased its ambitions in the social field, which LO in essence welcomes, but EU institutions and politicians that do not respect the Swedish labour market model constitute a challenge for the Swedish trade union movement.

LO believes in European cooperation. An open and functioning European market is important for jobs in Swedish industry and ultimately for Swedish welfare. However, EU rules are often detailed and are based on the provision of legal rights to each individual worker. In a country like Sweden, where trade unions and employers regulate the labour market with collective agreements, it becomes a problem. In the area of welfare, EU regulations have been used as an argument for austerity and privatisation.

After decades of aggressive neoliberalism, an authoritarian wave is sweeping the world. For the first time in over two decades, the world has more authoritarian regimes than democracies. There is also a strong link between attacks on democracy and attacks on trade union rights. We see an increase in governments that deal in lies or misinformation. In Sweden, we have a government that cooperates with, and is entirely dependent on, an anti-trade union party with roots in fascism.

Groups are set against groups when instead the people of the world should join to-

gether to tackle the climate crisis. The climate transition requires a structural transformation, of the labour market and of how society is organised. Jobs will disappear or change, and new jobs will emerge. Sweden has previously managed to be at the forefront of structural transformation and, as a country, gained from it. When jobs disappeared or changed, the employee's income was protected by unemployment insurance and the employee equipped for a new job through labour market training. In today's society, with increased divides, weaker social security systems and depleted labour market training, the security needed for the climate transition to be accepted by LO union members is lacking.

The trend is worrying but can be reversed. We've done it before. The antidote is a stronger and more courageous trade union and political labour movement.

The role of LO is important

LO has played a key role in building the Swedish model, both as a social partner and as a political force. We must continue to play a key role. Together we have contributed to Sweden's transition from a poor country to one of the world's richest.

LO's task, under its Constitution, is to lead and coordinate LO's work and the work of the national unions in safeguarding the interests of workers in the labour market and in the business sector. LO is to promote societal development on the basis of political, social, and economic democracy characterised by equality and a feminist philosophy. LO must push for increased real wages and secure jobs and for a better life for Sweden's workers. The role of LO depends on the national affiliated unions yielding some of their power in favour of the collective good. Collectively, through LO, our movement can gain success in areas that a single union cannot manage alone.

A fundamental task of LO is to keep the boundaries between the affiliated national unions in good order. LO affiliates should not compete with each other for the same workers and agreement areas. Clear boundaries between the affiliated unions' agreement areas are also a prerequisite for competitive neutrality and to prevent an employer from choosing between collective agreements. At this Congress, we will adopt an updated organisation plan adapted to a changed labour market. By following the organisation plan, we can direct our energies outward towards our counterparts instead of getting stuck in internal strife. It also creates a good basis for cooperation between LO unions.

Establishing an organisation plan requires a strong trade union movement that has self-discipline and a broad understanding of the benefits of ourselves defining the boundaries of agreements and organisation. With the new organisation plan, we provide ourselves with the framework for maintaining trade union control over these issues. When we independently manage to regulate the labour market together with employers, we also become stronger as opinion-makers and requirement-setters in relation to politics and in the debate.

An important task for LO is to influence politics. The aim is to bring about changes that benefit workers and are in line with the demands of LO union members. A better life for Sweden's workers requires universal welfare, with early intervention and strong safety nets, good housing, and functioning infrastructure, but also opportunities throughout life to participate and develop civil society and voluntary associations where we live our lives. We need to invest in general education, culture, and public health.

LO influences politics through trade union-political cooperation with the Social Democrats, as well as through opinion forming and political advocacy. Trade union-political cooperation is a long-term and continuous partnership between LO and the Social Democrats. It means that, based on our common ideology, we develop and put forward new proposals on how to change and improve society.

LO also has an international mission with the aim of ensuring that workers in the

global labour market are covered by fundamental trade union rights and gain a greater share of the added value of the globalised economy.

LO needs to evolve

In order to be better at influencing important issues in the daily lives of LO union members, our movement needs to evolve. The LO affiliated unions need to organise more workers. Increased trade union density in itself benefits the trade union movement. It is also necessary to balance the power of employers and to enable LO unions to represent workers in Sweden when we negotiate and sign collective agreements. This is crucial for the continued existence of the Swedish model.

At the last Congress, the need for better cooperation between national unions within LO was discussed. The LO Executive Council has set up an inquiry called New Inter-Union promises, the NTL Inquiry, which is tasked with carrying out a review of LO's role as a social partner, coordinator of the LO affiliated unions and unifying force for the trade union part of the labour movement.

The NTL Inquiry is investigating how LO's role can be adapted to today's labour market, the parliamentary situation and LO's current structure. A new factor in today's labour market is that the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise has created both the will and the mandate to resolve important issues in negotiations at central organisation level. Today's parliamentary situation means that the traditional blocs in Swedish politics find it difficult to get their own majorities in the Riksdag. LO's assessment is that the partners need to take greater responsibility in order to achieve important structural reforms in the labour market.

The Inquiry will analyse the extent to which it is possible to regulate more parts of the labour market by means of collective agreements, such as vocational training, which is regulated between the social partners in other Nordic countries. The aim is to create more stable rules in the labour market without any abrupt political changes and to avoid rigid legislation in areas that are better suited to collective agreements. As part of the NTL Inquiry, work is also being carried out on wage policy and the possibility of using the joint strength within LO to raise the lowest levels of terms and conditions in the national trade union agreements. Collective agreements in different areas must be linked. Differentials cannot be as wide as they have become.

There are several areas where the political sphere should continue to have primary responsibility and where LO wants to influence policy to benefit LO union members and societal development towards increased social and gender equality. These include, for example, economic policy, climate policy, industrial policy and housing policy. It also concerns universal welfare and strong statutory insurance cover that is funded collectively and covers everyone.

The collective insurance policies of the LO affiliated unions should be a complement. There is a risk that the State will curtail statutory insurance schemes so that they only provide basic protection, leaving the social partners or the individual to insure individuals' income. Improvements in collective insurance are financed from the margin for pay increases and this means that the LO collective, which has a higher risk of becoming sick or unemployed, must allocate more than, for example, white collar workers need. The equalisation of risks that a universal welfare system represents is crucial to creating an equal society that functions and holds together.

LO is now holding its 30th Congress. 250 delegates will jointly decide on everything from LO's finances to international activities. There is enormous power in bringing together representatives from all the LO affiliated unions. The LO Executive Council is looking forward to good discussions, debates, and decisions.

Our remit

MATTERS CONCERNING LO'S Constitution and organisation plan, as well as concerning trade union organisation and trade union education are dealt with under agenda item 13 Our remit. These are key issues for building the trade union strength we want and that is necessary for the Swedish collective agreement model to work.

As stated in the introduction to the Congress documents, 'We make Sweden work', the model is based on equal partners who negotiate wages and conditions in the labour market. A requirement for building employee power through collective bargaining is that we succeed in fulfilling the trade union remit. Together we need to take back ownership of the narrative and vision of an equal Sweden, where workers have secure jobs, a good wage and influence over their work.

In accordance with a resolution of the last Congress, a comprehensive review of LO's organisation plan has been carried out. The LO Executive Council's proposal for a new organisation plan emphasises that the purpose and core tasks of the trade union movement are the same as they have always been. They concern regulating employees' wages and working conditions in collective agreements with employers. The basic tools for this are trade union organisation, collective bargaining, and trade union organisation for monitoring compliance with the agreements.

Together, the LO affiliated unions have recruited more than 520,000 members during the Congress period. This is, and has always been, a core task of the national affiliated unions. However, further work needs to be done in order for LO union members to learn the value of membership, the value that we together uphold collective agreements, and thus choose to stay on as union members and also become ambassadors among their co-workers.

Today's society is facing increasing challenges. Ordinary people's everyday lives change as the tasks in the workplace are divided between different employers or the number of hours on the schedule decreases. Workers get their working hours shaved and an increasingly stressed work situation when the employer keeps the workforce down through "precision staffing". A fragmented labour market is emerging where employers try to use digital platforms and so-called self-employment to avoid employer responsibility. LO and its affiliated unions must together argue for a broad concept of worker, so that everyone can benefit from the protection of collective agreements and new groups can be organised.

Our Swedish labour market model is based on the partner organisations for employees and employers being representative. For a long time we have been seeing how trade union density among workers has fallen. High trade union density is required to balance the power of employers. Trade union density not only affects our strength and the mandate we have to represent workers in Sweden, for example in collective bargaining, but also as opinion-makers and requirement setters in relation to politics and in the debate. In the long run, reduced trade union density poses a threat to the entire Swedish collective bargaining model.

Organising workers

The current climate in the labour market not only places higher demands on workers but also on LO and its affiliated unions as organisations. There is a great need for smart solutions that benefit both members and affiliated unions.

LO is tasked with supporting and strengthening its affiliated unions in their task of organising workers. Through our inter-union cooperation, we share knowledge and ex-

perience, develop common tools, and put together strategies for the future. At the same time, many local activities are carried out around Sweden, both by the LO affiliated unions, coordinated by the LO districts, or by the LO unions in the municipalities. In workplaces, in the streets or public squares there is discussion about the value of trade union membership. The information about the Swedish collective bargaining model in upper secondary schools raises curiosity and knowledge among the next generation in the labour market. Through social media campaigns and in LO's inter-union training courses, members and elected representatives at different levels are strengthened. This is part of trade union organisation.

During the Congress period, a review of the Constitution was carried out as shown in the report of the Constitution committee. Among other things, the Constitution committee has proposed amendments aimed at supporting efforts to keep track of the boundaries between the LO affiliated unions' areas of agreement and organisation.

The inquiry "New Inter-Union Promises" (NTL), which has begun a review of the forms of cooperation within LO, has also put forward proposed amendments to the LO Constitution. Among other things, the amendments aim at strengthening LO's capacity as a partner in the labour market. However, more may need to be done to develop the role of LO as a partner in the labour market and coordinator of its affiliated unions. There is therefore reason to make an ambitious analysis of LO's Constitution during the upcoming Congress period.

In the introduction to the Congress Report LO's Organisation Plan 2024, the trade unions are described as a supply-side cartel with three main tasks: to cooperate on the price of labour, to influence supply and demand and to divide the market among themselves in order to prevent competition resulting in downward price pressure. We regulate the price of labour in collective agreements with employers. To influence supply and demand, LO and its affiliated unions need to influence such things as fiscal and education policies and the regulations governing the unemployment insurance funds. LO has therefore also been active outside the labour market from the very beginning, for example through trade union-political cooperation. The organisation plan is our way of dealing with the last task; that of dividing up the labour market and preventing competition between LO affiliated unions.

Union education and school information

The trade union movement is more important than it has been for a very long time, at a time when our security and the democracy we have taken for granted are threatened. Trade union education is an important and prioritised factor in being able to fulfil the trade union remit. There is also reason to develop common interests in trade union education within the framework of the NTL Inquiry. Inter-union education will need also in the future to provide members and elected representatives with the knowledge and expertise to meet union challenges, support coordination between LO affiliated unions and create confidence in the future.

Our remit includes schooling new members and elected representatives in democracy and ideology. Through inter-union training, LO wants to encourage personal commitment. For LO, it is important that the education programmes are of high quality and therefore continues to educate and train both instructors and study organisers, and continuously reviews educational content and materials.

LO's major project Strengthened Organising – Strengthened Organisation focuses on strengthening elected representatives and members, reaching more young and foreign-born people with information, and increasing the inter-union community in municipalities, where trade union-political cooperation also has its greatest opportunity for local development. All components require inter-union cooperation.

LO's goal is for young people, already from their first job, to have a picture of what the trade union is and does. Within the framework of Strengthened Organising – Strengthened Organisation, major efforts have been made to develop and expand school information in the country's upper secondary schools.

The ambition is to start future recruitment already when presenting information at upper secondary schools by arousing interest and commitment to trade union issues. The fact that young people meet young people also shows that they have a given place in the organisations and that the trade union is for everyone. School information has several benefits, it gives the people communicating the information an opportunity to develop their skills early on, meet people, talk about union issues, and thereby grow into a role as elected representative.

Increasing the trade union density of young workers is a top priority. LO wants to continue to create space for young people in the regular structures of the trade union movement and continue to enable forums and networks where young people can meet and develop for a future as trade union leaders.

Our workplaces

AGENDA ITEM 14 deals with questions about our workplaces. The motions are about various ways to improve working conditions for LO union members. They concern fairness, power and human dignity. In many respects, these are the same questions and the same goals on which we have always worked. A good job that creates the conditions for a good life in a solidarity-based society.

One of the trade union movement's most important means of achieving these goals is to regulate conditions and wages in collective agreements with employers. In order to do this, the affiliated unions must organise and recruit members, sign agreements with employers and monitor employers' compliance with the agreement. In order to avoid trade unions competing by undercutting, the LO affiliates each have their own exclusive rights within LO to organise and sign agreements while operating as a trade union. With the exclusive right also comes an obligation to sign agreements. It is a threat to the Swedish model if there are white spots, where workers lack the protection that comes with a collective agreement.

New business models and ways of organising work such as gig or platform work have become increasingly widespread in the Swedish labour market in recent years. Despite the major challenges that this entails, these jobs and workers also need to be organised and incorporated into the collective bargaining model. If this fails, the model will not survive.

The autonomy of the partners

The partners' autonomy in labour market matters should not be taken for granted. In all material respects concerning the Swedish labour market, the partners have been given a free hand to regulate the matters that are most important to them. However, if trust in the partners is to continue, they must also deliver results for all LO's union members. In many areas of social law, the EU is now harmonising the laws of the Member States with very detailed directives and regulations. In Sweden, we have been exempted from a number of provisions on the grounds that collective agreements cover the lion's share of the labour market and that there is therefore no need for detailed regulation from Brussels. For this to continue the trade union movement must maintain high trade union density and good coverage.

LO's goal is to cover the entire labour market with collective agreements. At the same time, existing agreements must be cohesive, and the growing differences between various levels of terms and conditions that have arisen need to be addressed by raising the minimum levels. During negotiations on security and transition, it became clear that the large differences represent a major obstacle to the affiliated unions reaching agreement. Raising the minimum levels is crucial for enabling LO to achieve the long-term goals.

The battle over working hours

There have been many motions on shortened working hours. Although the issue is not new, either at LO's Congresses or in general, a renewed discussion was born in the wake of the pandemic as to where, how, and how much we work. At the same time, the pace and demands of society and working life have increased. Fewer people constantly have to do more. In addition, the recommended retirement age has increased and will continue to increase. More people will work up to older ages, even though many workers already have major difficulties in managing to continue for an entire working life. At

the same time, there are large groups in the LO-collective whose opportunities in life are severely limited by involuntary time-shaving and part-time. A fair reform of the working hours issue must address both of these problems.

In both Sweden and Europe, politicians are now pursuing the issue of working hours reduction. Many see a general reduction in working hours as a way to counteract some of the harmful effects that are otherwise difficult to address within the framework of work environment management. Others see it as a way to redistribute more of the profits generated. LO believes that it is important that the partners themselves deliver solutions to important issues in the labour market. The issue must be discussed more if LO and its affiliated unions are to jointly deliver a general reduction in working hours for all LO union members. LO and its affiliated unions need to investigate how we can solve the issue through collective bargaining.

Since the 1980s, working hours have been almost exclusively an issue managed at national union level and the role of LO has been very limited. To be successful, the work needs to be carried out jointly. In that case the affiliated unions also need to give LO the mandate and resources to pursue the issue. Previous reductions in working hours have taken place alternately between the Riksdag and the social partners. Therefore, it is important that LO's work for a general reduction in working hours in future also takes into account a statutory change as a means of achieving the goal.

Work environment in focus

There have also been many motions on the work environment. 2023 was, as we know, a dark year from a work environment point of view, where more workers have died at work than ever in modern times. The need to ensure effective health and safety work and to restore the balance of power between workers and employers has increased in recent years. During the pandemic, many work environment issues were brought to a head, and it became clear that there is a great need to regulate work environment issues in collective agreements.

The role of safety representatives has been questioned over the years from the right. LO's programme 'Decent work in a new era – a whole person, a whole working life' shows how the different parts of working life affect each other and that the balance of power between employers and employees has been further shifted. The reduced influence and precarious employment relationships have direct effects on the work environment.

It is clear that workers' influence over the work environment needs to be strengthened, along with the role of safety representatives. LO's project 'Strengthening Safety Representatives' has developed a series of measures to support the affiliated unions and their safety representatives, including through the national pilot training for trade union officials on how to conduct disputes over the obstruction of safety representatives in autumn 2023. Negotiations on a new main agreement on the work environment have also been launched with a view to restoring the balance of power between workers and employers in work environment matters.

In autumn 2021, the Government appointed an inquiry into the role of regional safety representatives in work environment management. The Inquiry concluded that the regional safety representatives play a central and significant role in work environment management. Unfortunately, nothing at all has been done about the conclusions and proposals of the Inquiry. On the contrary, the current Government has initiated a process which, to all appearances, aims to undermine and erode the role of both regional and local safety representatives in the workplace. This is a completely unacceptable policy to pursue in a Sweden that is breaking new gloomy records in the numbers of deaths at work.

As our society and our working lives are digitalised more extensively, the challenges of new technologies are also increasing. AI developments in recent years and the use of algorithms in the management and control of work have challenged our usual trade union tools and raised the need for enhanced safeguards such as stronger privacy protection. The furious pace of today's labour market, often combined with limited influence over the work situation and with increased monitoring and control, is a development in the labour market that is going in entirely the wrong direction. We need to work together to restore the balance of power so that the workers have greater influence and a more fulfilling sustainable working life where it is possible to have the stamina, the ability, and the desire to work an entire working life.

Collectively agreed insurance

An increasingly important component of working life conditions is collectively agreed insurance. The universal and jointly funded welfare system is the most effective and rational way to equalise risks between individuals and groups. However, when our public systems do not meet security needs that exist, the demand for alternative solutions increases. Private insurance is not a viable option in the area of welfare policy. A larger element of private insurance will dramatically widen the differences in welfare protection between different groups and will make it impossible for large groups to obtain adequate insurance coverage, for example in the event of sickness or unemployment.

In order for the model of complementary collective bargaining solutions in the welfare system to work, strong underlying statutory insurance cover is required, which is funded collectively and covers everyone. If the social partners are instead expected to negotiate new or improved collective bargaining solutions to a greater extent, some groups could face much worse terms and conditions than others. This is a development we are already seeing in areas where the affiliated unions have negotiated their own terms and conditions. Wage earners who benefit from such a development are those in a stronger position or with a lower risk, whose willingness to pay for the public welfare system decreases when they pay for their own insurance cover.

Such a development risks being a first step towards the State leaving it to the partners or the individual to obtain adequate insurance coverage, while the State only offers basic protection. This means that each group will have to bear its own risk and cost and that funding based on solidarity will disappear. Improvements in collective insurance are to be financed from the margin for pay increases and this means that the LO collective, which generally bears a higher risk, must allocate more of this to insurance protection than, for example, white collar workers need to.

Labour market and sustainable growth

AGENDA ITEM 15, Labour market and sustainable growth, deals with issues such as economic policy, wage policy, labour market, education, climate, industrial policy, and migration. The introduction to the Congress documents, 'We make Sweden work,' describes how LO is both a social partner and a political force. Within the issues dealt with under this agenda item, LO acts in both of these roles. LO makes policy demands and develops policy proposals. LO also develops solutions through increased co-operation between social partners.

LO's economic policy objectives are full employment, increased prosperity, and an equal distribution of economic resources. Whether you are a woman or a man, you should be able to support yourself, have good conditions at work and be able to combine work and care responsibilities. People's work is what creates economic growth and builds the welfare of our country. Unemployment must be combated with full force.

For Sweden to reach full employment, a more active fiscal policy is needed where the government can borrow for important investments. Today, Sweden has one of Europe's lowest levels of public debt. Sweden should use the public financial space that Swedish wage earners have built up in recent decades. LO believes that it is time to abolish the surplus target in favour of a framework that better responds to today's challenges and creates new and better jobs.

New jobs are also created through an active labour market policy. In recent years, LO, together with other social partners, has contributed to several important reforms. The new student finance for transition and retraining improves workers' ability to make a mid-life change of occupation. With Foothold jobs, a collective agreement model that combines work and education for a maximum of two years, the long-term unemployed and newly arrived immigrants have improved opportunities to become established in the Swedish labour market.

In the coming years, LO will test new steps to develop the role of the social partners in creating more jobs and a better transition. As described in the introduction to the congress documents, a review of LO's role as a social partner is under way, within the framework of the NTL Inquiry (New Inter-Union promises). One area that has been investigated within the NTL Inquiry is the potential for increased cooperation between the social partners on skills provision. In its statement on the education policy motions, the LO Executive Council proposes that such cooperation between the central organisations should be implemented.

LO has contributed to the establishment of a government inquiry into the conditions for collectively agreed unemployment insurance. In the responses to the motions on unemployment insurance the LO Executive Council points out that the objective of the inquiry on collectively agreed unemployment insurance is to investigate the possibility of more generous insurance that includes a larger proportion of the unemployed than is now the case, while reducing the risk of political fluctuations affecting unemployment protection. Strong unemployment insurance is an indispensable component of a functioning labour market transition policy.

Increase public investment

Sweden is an open export-oriented country with a skilled labour force and innovative companies. This favourable starting point must be used.

Being at the forefront of industrial development is a recipe for success for Sweden. A high employment rate with well-paid jobs and good working conditions requires sustainable structural transformation.

Sweden is also facing major challenges. The pandemic exposed large gaps in the social infrastructure, not least the underinvestment in elderly care. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has shown the need for increased investment in military and civil preparedness. The inflation crisis that Sweden has experienced is closely associated with soaring energy prices and shows the need for increased investment in power generation and transmission capacity. The divides in Sweden have widened considerably as capital income increases much faster than earned income. Sweden continues to be characterised by structural inequality between women and men, driven both by gender unequal capital income and earned income.

Unemployment fell significantly after the pandemic but is now rising again. The levels of unemployment that have prevailed since the 1990s crisis are incompatible with an equal society. More jobs and lower unemployment are crucial if we are to solve the growing insecurity and serious crime that has become all too evident in recent years.

But Sweden does not just need more jobs, we also need more good jobs. We need fulfilling jobs with a living wage and good working conditions and a sustainable and safe work environment.

The LO Executive Council wants to see a broad investment programme. The government needs to make substantial public investments that provide the conditions for large new private investments.

Increased loan investment is not enough. We also need an increased tax levy, not least to ensure the quality of our public welfare provision. The LO Executive Council wants to see a broad tax reform that creates a better balance between taxation of capital and labour.

Sweden has major neglected needs in several areas. One such area is housing investment. The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has found that Sweden had a shortfall of approximately 200,000 homes in 2023. LO has developed a housing policy programme with clear-cut proposals to increase construction. The government also needs to significantly increase investment in transport infrastructure. Road and rail networks need to be modernised. There is also a great need for new roads and railways to connect northern Europe.

Increased public investment can also contribute to a better balance between fiscal and monetary policy. Sweden was characterised for many years by low interest rates and an expansionary monetary policy. This low interest rate policy increased the value of shares and land. However, the impact on investment levels was more unclear. Low interest rates are not enough. Long-term ground rules and major public investment are also required to enable a substantial increase in companies' investment as a share of GDP.

With increased investment, pressure in the Swedish economy will increase, future prospects will improve, and unemployment can be driven down. Investments also create many jobs in the surrounding community in everything from retail, transport and welfare to the restaurant industry.

It is absolutely crucial to require that companies allow the authorities to verify that they are serious and play according to our ground rules. Work permits, collectively agreed wages or tax liability in Sweden, as well as inspections and strong sanctions against fraudulent and criminal employers, are not only important to protect workers' conditions and Swedish tax revenues. They are also important to give Swedish companies and workers the opportunity to compete on equal terms and thus ensure that a greater part of the wealth created in the process of new construction will benefit the Swedish economy.

Just climate transition

Many municipalities and regions face increased expenditure due to climate change. This includes the costs of prevention and securing communities from the consequences of a changing climate, as well as large investment costs in public services and infrastructure to meet a large influx of people where the new sustainable jobs are growing. Consequently, the State needs to contribute to the financing of these investments.

Electrification is necessary to enable sufficient reductions in emissions from industrial processes and transport. Investments in the expansion of energy production and grids should be complemented by energy efficiency programmes to make electricity available quickly and cheaply.

Human climate impact is mainly due to emissions caused by what we produce and how we produce goods and services. The climate transition requires a structural transformation of the labour market. The trade union movement has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the transition takes place fairly and is based on social dialogue, an adequate social safety net and an employment policy that creates jobs with good working conditions.

Better skills provision

A wise investment policy needs to be linked to an active policy on skills provision.

Sweden needs functioning skills provision that is sustainable in the long term and that reduces the high unemployment rate in Sweden. Today, Sweden has extensive labour immigration into jobs that could be filled by people who already live in our country. Today's rules for labour immigration from third countries have created an unacceptable situation in the Swedish labour market. The regulatory framework has opened the way for rogue and criminal actors to exploit labour immigrants from third countries. The result has been dumping of wages and conditions. Sweden needs mobility in the labour market and across national borders, but it must never be at the price of dumped pay and working conditions, poor work environment or people living under slave-like conditions. Everyone who works in Sweden must have the right to equal conditions for equal work. LO should always be on the employee's side, regardless of where they come from.

For several years, it has become increasingly difficult for Swedish companies to recruit labour. This is especially true in the sectors organised by the LO affiliated unions. Statistics Sweden estimates that there will be a shortage of approximately 300,000 workers with upper secondary vocational training in 2035.

Despite strong demand for labour and the severe skills shortage, at the same time we also have a high unemployment rate. Many of the causes of unemployment are structural. Among other things, many unemployed people lack the skills and experience demanded by employers. Unemployment and division in the labour market is a societal problem with significant negative consequences for individuals and for companies' development and competitiveness.

There are several reasons for the lack of skilled workers. An important explanation is that the share of pupils in national programmes taking vocational education and training has fallen from around 45 per cent in 2008 to 37 per cent in 2023. This is despite the fact that people with upper-secondary vocational training are highly in demand in the labour market, with very good job opportunities after completing their programme.

Another important underlying factor for labour shortages is the dismantling of labour market policies and the historically low number of participants in labour market training.

The poorly functioning skills provision is also due to the business sector itself. Companies themselves are far too inactive in ensuring continued supply within their indus-

tries by offering workplace-based training in various forms. In Germany, Denmark and Norway, companies have a significantly greater involvement in workplace-based training, while the trade union has a greater role in its organisation and quality assurance.

If Swedish skills provision is to be improved, the social partners need to take increased responsibility and develop new forms of collaboration within education and transition.

The wage formation model

A decisive competitive advantage for Sweden is the Swedish collective agreement model, which is based on far-reaching self-regulation of wages and conditions. Self-regulation has many important advantages. The Nordic collective bargaining models are often highlighted as exemplary in international studies in terms of economic development and competitiveness combined with both limited wage differentials and internationally high minimum wages.

Collective agreements allow the partners to adapt pay regulation to the conditions in different sectors. The union itself can monitor the conditions effectively.

The autonomous regulation of wages by the partners should not be taken for granted. A weakened European trade union movement is now increasingly pinning its hopes on the EU institutions ensuring fair working conditions in Europe through common legislation. As shown in the motion statements, the LO Executive Council sees binding legislation on pay in the EU as a serious threat to the Swedish collective agreement model. But the parties' independent regulation of wages also has internal problems. The model requires strong and representative partners and a high level of coverage of collective agreements. The declining trade union density among workers thus poses a threat.

Self-regulation of wages places high demands on the trade union to be able to control wage formation. Control requires coordination between the affiliated unions. For more than 25 years, the Industrial Agreement has helped to create a broad acceptance of the benefits of cohesive wage formation, where a standard for wage growth, often referred to as a "mark", governs wage increases throughout the labour market.

There are different views within the LO on how and by whom the wage growth standard is best set. But there is a broad consensus that a central standard has great advantages for LO-affiliated unions and wage growth in the Swedish labour market.

A central standard for wage growth is crucial to keeping pay trends consistent between different sectors. In addition, reconciliation against our competitor countries in Europe ensures that wage growth is at a level that does not undermine Sweden's competitiveness in relation to the rest of the world.

The wage growth standard also contributes to a transformational pressure on companies and industries with limited profitability. It can contribute to productivity improvements and thus contribute to increasing the economic margin for pay increases.

In many collective bargaining rounds the wage growth standard has also been necessary for setting an amount in kronor, called a knee, to benefit low-income earners within the LO coordination.

However, the wage formation model is also facing major challenges. As can be seen from several of the motions in this area, LO has had considerable difficulties in achieving success with regard to the wage distribution objectives set out in the 'Common long-term objectives 2016–2028'. Blue-collar workers as a group have lost ground over time as regards pay levels in relation to white collar workers. The gap between female and male blue-collar workers has not narrowed. There is still value discrimination where female-dominated occupations with equivalent educational requirements to male-dominated occupations are paid less.

Despite successful LO coordination around the "mark," the conditions for many oc-

occupational groups within the LO unions have been eroded. The erosion is in regard to different dimensions of employees' general terms and conditions such as time-shaving, divided shifts, and work scheduling.

The weak conditions in parts of the LO unions' agreement area are a significant problem for the occupational groups concerned, often female-dominated occupations. There is a risk of spill-over effects, even to industries that today are able to maintain fundamentally good conditions. The growing discrepancies between different areas of agreement complicate coordination within LO.

Within the framework of the NTL Inquiry, a review of the role of LO as a social partner and as coordinator of the affiliated unions is ongoing. The Inquiry's broad approach means that collective bargaining issues are linked to LO's organisation and Constitution. It focuses on LO's capacity and opportunities to both coordinate the affiliated unions and to act as a social partner.

Among other things, the Inquiry has been tasked with investigating wage standards with a view to gaining greater legitimacy across the labour market, while taking into account the normative role of the sector exposed to international competition for payroll costs. The Inquiry has shown the advantages of the current regime, but also the need for the wage growth standard to be complemented by a mechanism that maintains and strengthens the general conditions for wage earners with slightly weaker bargaining power.

In the report on the wage policy motions, the LO Executive Council proposes that ongoing work in the NTL Inquiry should be intensified through supplementary terms of reference. In the motion responses, the Executive Council also gives examples of what may be appropriate for further investigation regarding collective bargaining policy. The Executive Council also proposes that the work of the Inquiry be reported back to the LO Congress in 2028.

Welfare

THE AGENDA ITEM Welfare is about LO's work to ensure a publicly controlled and funded system of welfare of high-quality that is distributed according to needs. The motions in this area are about sickness insurance, pensions, and other social insurance, as well as publicly funded welfare and procurement.

These are issues where LO acts to influence policy. In the introduction to the Congress documents 'We make Sweden work', universal welfare is highlighted as a crucial part of the social model that makes Sweden work. The LO Executive Council believes that the political sphere should have primary responsibility for universal welfare and for strong statutory insurance cover that is funded collectively and covers everyone. The collectively agreed insurance policies of the LO affiliated unions should be a complement to strong public social security systems.

During the last Congress period, the LO Executive Council has had increased equality as a priority objective. Strengthening the welfare system is a cornerstone for greater equality. It is a matter of increasing the quality of welfare provision, including through increased staffing, increased, and indexed general government subsidies, as well as taking steps towards de-commercialised welfare provision. It is also a question of reforming sickness insurance and raising pensions.

Improve social insurance

Several motions deal with social insurance, including abolition of the qualifying period deduction and the need for security in case of illness or parental leave. The LO Executive Council considers that social insurance should provide workers with a secure livelihood during periods of income loss in different phases of life. Social insurance should also be designed to support a return to work. The model

we have built up in Sweden, where all workers' income is insured in the statutory social insurance scheme, is both economically efficient and redistributes risk.

The loss of income principle is at risk of being eroded as the ceilings in public insurance do not follow wage growth but must be raised through active political decisions. Today, there are large groups whose loss of income is not covered by social insurance. Therefore, the importance of supplementary benefits from private or collectively agreed insurance policies has increased for individuals. If this development continues, it could lead to lower risk redistribution and higher costs for groups in the labour market with particularly high risks. It is therefore important that the public insurance system is strong.

Social insurance works best for people in secure employment. Developments in the labour market with an increasing number of precarious jobs mean that there is a growing group that has less access to social insurance.

The first priority of the LO Executive Council is for everyone to have secure employment. The design of social insurance should not make it easier for employers to employ people under precarious conditions of work. At the same time, the group with precarious jobs must have reasonable social insurance coverage.

Decent health insurance

The LO Executive Council believes that everyone affected by ill health should have the right to financial security, rehabilitation and work that is adapted to their own situation. We must be able to trust that the security we have paid for, through the sick-

ness insurance contribution, is really there on the day we need it. A person who falls ill and cannot work should not be made poor.

There have been a number of positive legislative changes and increases in sickness insurance coverage levels in 2020–2022. Individuals have been given more time to complete their rehabilitation and have better opportunities to return to work in the first instance with their own employer. On-call employees have been given better protection, people close to retirement age do not have to switch to other jobs and the income ceilings have been raised. These are improvements that LO has helped to bring about, step by step. But this is not enough.

Major changes are still needed before it can be said that Sweden has reasonable and decent sickness insurance. LO believes that individuals should be fully insured in their current state of health and in relation to actual existing jobs.

This means that there should be realistic prospects of the person actually getting the job that they are assessed as being able to take. Based on age, education and where in the country the person lives. The income ceiling must be raised and linked to wage growth. The qualifying period deduction must be permanently abolished. More people with chronic and multi-year illnesses must receive financial security through sickness compensation (previously disability pension).

With the change of government in 2022 to a right-wing government with the support of the Sweden Democrats, the incremental improvements in sickness insurance that were under way came to a standstill. The proposals put forward by the new government aim rather at removing the improvements that have been made and also at further sickness insurance cutbacks. The LO Executive Council believes that an important task for LO is to show how the policies of the right-wing government affect members of the LO affiliated unions and to fight for reasonable sickness insurance.

A pension to live on

The question of pensions is addressed in several motions. Since the last Congress, LO has conducted the project 'A pension to live on' and produced the report "Stronger income protection in the pension system". The LO Executive Council supports the lifetime earnings principle, on which Sweden's pension system is based, but the analysis shows that the system needs to be improved on significant points. An increase in the pension contribution is needed. For many groups of workers, working life drains strength and health. Increased age limits in the national old-age pension must be matched by efforts to enable a longer working life. Reduced pay differentials, better physical and mental work environment conditions, more full-time contracts, fewer fixed-term contracts, and better opportunities for transition must be put in focus.

It is also important that social insurance systems are designed so that no one feels compelled to draw their old-age pension early due to illness or unemployment and thus receive a lower pension for the rest of their life. Today, unemployment and illness have a major impact on pensions. Income protection needs to be improved in situations where an individual is not able to work. Instead of basing pension on unemployment fund benefit, sickness benefit, sickness compensation and the like, as is currently the case, pension should also be based on the underlying income on which such insurance is based.

The LO Executive Council wants LO to be an active party in the fight for a pension system that ensures a good standard of living for pensioners.

To combine work and family

The welfare system should create opportunities for both women and men, regardless of class, to work and support themselves. A family policy that allows both women and men to combine work and family life strengthens society. It reduces child poverty

and social disparities. The LO groups' working life requires proactive investments in childcare even during unsocial working hours. LO's proposal on out-of-school learning centres would both support schoolchildren who need more support to complete their schooling and make it easier for their parents. Dignified publicly funded elderly care is needed to allow older people in need of assistance to live a dignified life and feel a sense of well-being. It is also needed to enable the adult children and relatives of the elderly to go to work feeling confident that their older relatives are doing well.

The design of parental insurance must not contribute to locking women into unpaid work or long periods of part-time work. It needs to be individualised. Work to promote economic gender equality needs to be strong, both within the partners' areas and in politics. The LO Executive Council believes that the work for gender equality must focus on fair gender equality, not just be aimed at those groups that can afford to live a gender equal life.

Close the welfare gap

There are motions that address how healthcare, education and social care should be organised, governed, and funded. These are crucial issues for maintaining the Swedish welfare model with tax-funded welfare services of high quality that are distributed according to needs. LO is actively working on this, based on previous decisions summarised in the LO's welfare policy programme "Secure Welfare" and on the basis of the report "The Welfare Gap", developed during the last Congress period.

Universal welfare is a successful combination of self-interest and public interest. For example, an equitable school system of high quality is good for every schoolchild at the same time as it is good for society that all children acquire the skills and abilities to be able to take up the jobs that are emerging. Welfare provision is both a prerequisite for ordinary people to live good lives and for employers to have access to workers with the right skills who can combine their paid work with caring responsibilities.

But universal welfare is under threat. Politicians have prioritised tax cuts, privatisation, and market models of welfare provision. A welfare gap has emerged between welfare resources and the needs that must be met. Governance of the welfare system is insufficient to ensure good welfare provision distributed according to needs. This leads to an unreasonably pressured work environment where welfare workers are not in a position to do a good job and live up to the expectations of a welfare system. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the shortcomings in welfare provision with painful clarity. Staff shortages, precarious employment, and difficulties in controlling commercialised welfare services in times of crisis highlighted the need to build robust systems for vital public welfare services.

Increasing work-related and welfare crime poses a threat to the welfare system. In their status report on organised crime, law enforcement authorities describe how fraud against municipalities and regions is increasing and represents an increasing share of the proceeds of crime. It is not just our public funds that are at stake – it is trust in public institutions that risks being lost. There is a need for increased control, but also a questioning of market solutions where it is easy for criminal actors to run welfare companies as a criminal tool.

If welfare provision does not meet the expectations of the population, the risk of a systemic shift away from publicly funded welfare distributed according to need to an inadequate system of basic welfare for the majority and an often tax-subsidised VIP welfare system for those who can afford to pay extra. The willingness to contribute to the common good is diminished when welfare provision does not meet the needs of the majority. One example of such a development is that the market for private health insurance is growing and creates shortcuts to care for those who have insurance.

A similar development exists in elderly care where older people are forced to rely on relatives or buy private help. This is especially true for women, both as users and relatives. There are municipalities that advise older people to buy tax-subsidised (RUT) domestic services instead of applying for home help services. That starts a downward spiral where those who buy and claim tax credit for RUT domestic services will no longer want to contribute to high-quality elderly care. This trend affects older people with lower incomes who cannot buy help privately. The LO Executive Council believes that this development must be stopped.

To guarantee welfare funding, government grants to the welfare system need to be indexed. In the 2023 report “The Welfare Gap”, LO’s researchers developed an indexing model to maintain today’s quality of welfare provision. But that is not enough.

There is already a welfare gap that needs to be closed with more resources and by rolling back cost-inflating market solutions.

The LO Executive Council believes that LO should continue to work for strengthened resources and increased staffing in the welfare system, as well as for limiting extraction of private profit and de-commercialisation of welfare provision.

Procurement

Several motions raise the important issue of procurement and that public funds should not go to companies that engage in work-related crime or that dump prices through poor wages and working conditions. The LO Executive Council, along with the proposers of the motions, believes that procurement has brought devastating consequences on large parts of the labour market. The pursuit of profit and the lowest price, as testified by many of the proposers, has led to major deteriorations in several of the affiliated unions’ agreement areas. Wage dumping, sub-standard work environments and eroded employment protection are just some of the consequences. The Swedish trade union movement must now act vigorously to stop the negative consequences of the procurement system.

As a solution to this, several motions suggest that the State should require that companies carrying out public procurement contracts be bound by collective agreements. It may be tempting to ask the State and municipalities for help in signing collective agreements. But signing collective agreements is one of the three basic tasks of the affiliated unions, alongside trade union organising and monitoring of agreements.

It is a matter of making a choice. A requirement to be bound by collective agreement for public procurement will mean State intervention in the fundamental trade union remit. The best protection to enable the affiliated unions to represent their members in the long term and to maintain good conditions in the labour market is to keep the State away from our core trade union business. At the same time, this requires us to intensify work on the fundamental trade union remit: organising, signing collective agreements, and building an appropriate organisation.

The world and the democracy

AGENDA ITEM 17, The world and democracy, is about LO's international work and about the forms of LO's political work in Sweden.

We live in a time when both democracy and the trade union movement are under threat. For decades, workers' rights have been attacked by aggressive market liberalism, internationally and in Sweden. Now, the equal value of all people is openly questioned by growing right-wing extremism. Authoritarian and right-wing nationalist forces are growing.

We know that this trend can be reversed. We've done it before. The antidote, as always, is a stronger trade union and political labour movement.

Trade union-political cooperation

Trade union-political cooperation is one of the strongest tools for LO and its affiliated unions in their efforts to safeguard the interests of workers in the labour market and in the business sector. The stated aim is to bring about changes via policy and political decisions that benefit workers and are in line with the demands of LO union members.

The basic view of the LO, the LO affiliated unions and the Social Democrats is that we want a society built on political, social, and economic democracy, characterised by social and gender equality. For us it is important to be open about wanting to join in shaping a society where the workers' perspective is properly asserted. Trade union-political cooperation means that, based on our common ideology, we develop and put forward new proposals on how to change and improve society. This is precisely what the non-socialists, together with the Sweden Democrats, are attacking.

Collaboration between LO, the LO affiliated unions and the Social Democrats is not static or given. It must constantly evolve and adapt to the changes that are taking place in working life, society, and the world and to new political demands. It requires both us and the Social Democrats to be open to dialogue, learning and renewal.

LO's international activities

As countries, businesses and people become increasingly integrated and interdependent, trade union work cannot come to a halt at national borders. LO's international operations are guided by the five-year strategy adopted by the LO Executive Council in 2021. The strategy is based on the power imbalance between labour and capital. The objective is for workers in the global labour market to be covered by fundamental trade union rights and gain a greater share of the added value of the globalised economy. This is to be achieved through global trade union work in existing formal and informal structures. The focus is on achieving a balance between labour and capital in collaboration with relevant organisations through a sustainable transition process.

A troubled world ...

Globalisation has brought people closer together and made the world richer. However, not everyone benefits. Divides between the poor and the rich have widened. The labour force is receiving an increasingly small share of the values that are created. Workers' conditions are under pressure from companies' constant pursuit of new markets, lower costs and higher profits. The majority of the world's workers are in the informal sector, where there are no formal employment relationships. Digitalisation has led to an increasing number of platform-based companies with precarious jobs. The challenges were

reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic as decades of economic development were lost. Millions of people have been thrown into unemployment, without social safety nets.

At the same time, democracy is more threatened than for a long time. For the first time in over two decades, the world has more authoritarian regimes than democracies. The global balance of power between democracies and authoritarian states is also changing. The latter account for almost half of the world's GDP and an increasing share of world trade. Trade dependency can, of course, be used, and is used, to exert political pressure. There is also a strong link between attacks on democracy and attacks on trade union rights. The latest annual report from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) shows how more and more countries violate the right of employees to join or form a trade union and that trade unionists are threatened, persecuted, imprisoned, or subjected to violence.

... but trade union work brings results

The development is, in many ways, threatening. But at the same time, there are examples of trade union work yielding results all over the world. Ahead of the football World Cup in Qatar, the Swedish and international building sector trade unions forced improvements for migrant workers. In the United States, the number of trade union members is increasing for the first time in a long time. The UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) has, after many years of trade union pressure, adopted a binding convention on everyone's right to a good work environment.

The list goes on. None of these changes have taken place automatically. They are the result of patient trade union work.

The foundation for our ability to influence working conditions and societal development, both nationally and globally, is the strength of membership. The global trade union movement is represented by the ITUC, which organises about 200 million workers in 163 countries through 332 national central organisations. The world's workforce consists of about three billion people. In order to increase our union strength, we therefore need massive efforts to increase trade union density.

For if we allow those in power to set workers against workers and weaken one country's trade unions, then in the future it can also happen to us. No chain is stronger than its weakest link. Therefore, LO and its affiliated unions actively participate in the European and international work.

A workers' Europe

LO believes in European cooperation. Sweden's membership of the EU is crucial for our security. An open and functioning European market is important for jobs in Swedish industry and ultimately for Swedish welfare.

The European trade union movement is working for a Europe of equal opportunities in the labour market, fair working conditions and social security. Workers' rights must not be subordinated to the right of companies and capital owners to free movement. A common market must not be used to impoverish working conditions or threaten the right to collective bargaining. EU rules are often detailed and are based on the granting of statutory rights to each individual worker. In a country like Sweden, where trade unions and employers regulate the labour market with collective agreements, it becomes a problem. LO will continue to defend our collective agreement model. Swedish collective agreements must apply in the Swedish labour market.

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine affects EU countries as uncertainty increases, people are forced to flee, and energy prices soar. At the same time, there is a global climate crisis. All this uncertainty undermines public trust in society and thus threatens an important foundation of democracy. It is quite possible to turn things

around and steer in the right direction. But that requires us to take wide-ranging and forceful action. EU cooperation is an important arena for change.

On 9 June, EU citizens will elect a new European Parliament. Who sits in parliament has a direct impact on the everyday lives of LO union members. This is why a political shift is needed in the EU. Right-wing policies with austerity, deregulation and widening divides must come to an end. Right-wing nationalism must be pushed back. EU institutions and politicians who do not respect the Swedish collective agreement model pose a challenge to the Swedish trade union movement. Another threat is the right-wing forces who want to undermine union rights. Strong trade union voices are required in Europe. Therefore, LO is engaged in the electoral work ahead of the European elections, including through its own trade union candidate on the Social Democrats' list.

Human rights at work

Within the ILO, LO works together with others in the international trade union movement to ensure that more countries ratify and comply with ILO core conventions on human rights at work. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Framework for Business and Human Rights are also valuable tools in this work. LO and its affiliated unions are part of the National Contact Point, NCP, whose purpose is to ensure compliance with the intentions of the Guidelines. We also participate in the work of TUAC (the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD) to develop the guidelines.

Agenda 2030 is the UN's global agenda that seeks to end poverty and hunger, realise the human rights of and decent working conditions for all, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. LO is encouraging the Swedish government to put the agenda into practice, both nationally and internationally.

Trade union development cooperation

Trade union activities are, by their very nature, anti-poverty, as they result in better economic and work-related conditions. Fundamental trade union rights, such as the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining, are therefore always at the heart of trade union development cooperation. Development projects carried out by LO and its affiliated unions must always be based on strengthening the organisations that we cooperate with.

In order to legitimise development cooperation, it is also important that LO's and its affiliated unions' individual projects have clear feedback to their members and their everyday lives. There should be a clear link between workplaces in Sweden and workplaces in the countries where projects are implemented. To achieve better efficiency and benefit from synergy effects there are strong reasons to strengthen coordination between LO and its affiliated unions' development cooperation work.

Among the first things Sweden's right-wing government, steered by the nationalist Sweden Democrats, did was to cut back international development cooperation. The one per cent target, that we should invest one hundredth of our gross national income in development assistance, was abandoned. Support to the UN's work was cut, as was support to civil society, where trade union development cooperation is included. Above all, the government has made drastic cuts in the 'information appropriation', from SEK 155 million annually to SEK 20 million. That means that a large part of the work of Union to Union and the Palme Center to spread knowledge about trade union development cooperation has disappeared.

It is crucial to find alternative funding opportunities to ensure long-term and stable trade union development cooperation. One such possibility is increased self-financing.

We make Sweden work

– that is the theme of LO's 30th ordinary congress.

We work all over the country. We work at all hours of the day, every day of the year. In factories, schools and shops. On railways, hotels and hospitals. At mills, residences and bakeries. Everywhere we work and make Sweden work.

But Sweden could work better for us. Be more equal and fairer. Therefore, LO gathers Sweden's workers and pushes for higher wages, safer jobs and better lives. Alone is never strong. It is together that our voice becomes strong, both as a party on the labor market and as an actor in society. It is union strength.

A total of 280 motions will be processed by the congress. Here are wise, brave and innovative proposals for how LO can contribute to a fair Sweden where workers can live a good life. Of course, LO must be involved in shaping the labor market and society of the future. After all, we are the ones who make Sweden work.