



Europäischer Metallgewerkschaftsbund
Fédération Européenne des Métallurgistes
European Metalworkers' Federation

History of the EMF

The key concerns

Continuity and Change

CONTENTS

1. **Introduction**
or the need for European trade unions
2. **Background:- From the Metal Committee to the European Metalworkers' Federation**
3. **The EMF from 1971 to 1994**
 - 3.1 Statutes
 - 3.2 Action Programme
 - 3.3 Development of membership
 - 3.4 Finances
 - 3.5 Secretariat and Executive Committee
 - 3.6 Committees and working parties
4. **Continuity**
Main emphasis of the work of the EMF
 - 4.1 Liaison and coordination between European metalworkers' unions
 - 4.2 Solidarity work
 - 4.3 Collective bargaining policy
 - 4.4 Multinational companies
 - 4.5 Sectors of the metalworking industry
 - 4.6 European employers' associations
 - 4.7 Institutions of the European Community
 - 4.8 Cooperation with international trade union bodies

5. Change

EMF general policy

5.1 Economic and social trends in Europe

5.2 Migrant workers

5.3 Women

5.4 Peace, disarmament and arms exports

5.5 Environmental protection and energy policy

5.6 Trade policy

5.7 New technologies

6. Outlook:-

New developments

1. Introduction

or the need for European trade unions

Sustained by ideas of international solidarity and mutual support, trade unions have aimed at international co-operation for over 100 years. In the metalworking branch the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) was founded back in 1893. The trade union movement had recognised very early on just how important international coordination was and had sought to represent the interests of working people over and beyond national frontiers. The dominant element of trade union work at that time was active support for workers' struggles and even today that remains a very important part of international trade union work.

After many divisions, setbacks but also successes in the history of international trade union work, the European trade unions were faced with new challenges in the 1950's in the light of the beginnings of European integration. This new degree of integration also required trade union cooperation in **Europe** - not in opposition to international work but as a complement to that work in order to resolve the specific problems in Europe.

With the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952, which was followed by the foundation of the Inter Trade Union Committee (Contact Office of the Miners' and Metalworkers' Free Trade Unions in the European Communities) and that of the European Economic Community in 1957 (Treaty of Rome), and the gradually increasing European and world-wide integration of the economy, trade unions also began to consider the question of Europe-wide coordination and cooperation. Two concerns prevailed in this respect:- firstly, there was the desire for peace and understanding between the peoples of Europe following National Socialism and the Second World War; and secondly, the increasingly more necessary cooperation between trade unions beyond national frontiers because of the growing internationalisation of the economy and the rise of multinational companies.

The economic and political integration of Western Europe was never contested by the unions however. On the contrary:- "From the outset, the idea of European unity was never disputed" (Bert Thierron, EMF General Secretary) and "The political will to unite Europe was paramount" ? (Günter Köpke, former EMF General Secretary).

The foundation of the European Economic Community made it necessary to set up "European trade unions" in order to create a trade union counterweight to companies operating over and beyond national borders and in order to represent the interests of working people vis-à-vis EC policy. Linked to the European trade union movement there was also the idea of trade union solidarity and understanding between peoples. The political and economic integration of Western Europe also required the unions themselves to become more European in outlook, to think and act outside of their national context. The foundation of a number of industry committees and the EMF followed the foundation of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which succeeded the European Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ECFTU), in 1973.

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2. Background

From the Metal Committee to the European Metalworkers' Federation

In the early 1960s, trade union activities at European level were virtually inexistent. Hitherto, the focal point had been workers' representation within the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) of the European Economic Community. The ESC has a consultative role in relation to EC legislation and is made up of three groups:- workers' representatives, employers' representatives and finally a group covering consumers, professional people, cooperative associations, etc. It was there that representatives of national trade unions from the six Member States of the EEC had meetings at the end of the Fifties and beginning of the Sixties. The trade union group did not only comprise representatives of national trade union confederations but also representatives of unions from different sectors of industry. Through these meetings came the realisation that it was also necessary to "Europeanise" workers' representation and the first industry committees were set up, thus bringing trade unions from specific branches of industry together at European level.

In April 1963, seven metalworkers' unions from the six Member States of the EEC set up the "European Metalworkers' Committee", later known as the Metal Committee, with a view to coordinating European-wide cooperation between the metalworkers' unions. At first, the Metal Committee was just a loose association of organisations without any proper rules or action programme; its work was heavily dependent on the persons making up the committee and was mainly informal. According to Günter Köpke, who became Secretary of the Metal Committee in 1968 and General Secretary of the EMF in 1971, European-wide trade union cooperation has progressed thanks to a group of few but far-sighted trade union leaders.

Günter Köpke has described the initial situation towards the end of the Sixties and prior to the foundation of the EMF as follows:- "Minimum staff, vague tasks, no proper structure, a very small budget and no influence on the Commission".

At that time, the Metal Committee consisted of just the Secretary and one administrative staff member. As of 1968, Günter Köpke had taken on the post of Secretary and was given the task of "putting proper structures in place". A working party was therefore set up to draw up the statutes, define voting procedures and develop a method of financing the organisation. This was not an easy job since it was a question of achieving the best possible balance between affiliated organisations of very different sizes. This explains why it was later stipulated in the EMF Statutes that all decisions required a two-thirds majority of the total votes cast, thus avoiding that EMF policy should solely be decided by one or two unions with a strong membership.

At that time, in addition to drawing up the Statutes, the first projects were set into motion, such as the "Incomes Policy" Project - the forerunner of the Collective Bargaining Committee - and the Philips Working Party, which was the first working party to deal with the multinational company issue. It is from this period that the EMF began to hold meetings for employees from the Philips group.

The seven founding unions of the Metal Committee were the following:-

CMB (Centrale des Métallurgistes de Belgique)

IGM (Industriegewerkschaft Metall)

FOM (Fédération Confédérée Force Ouvrière de la Métallurgie)

FIM-CISL (Federazione Italiana Metalmeccanici - CISL)

UILM (Unione Italiana Lavoratori Metallurgici)

LAV (Letzeburger Arbechter-Verband)

Metaal-NVV (Metaalbedrijfsbond NVV)

In 1968 they were joined by the French CFDT's metalworkers' federation, FGM-CFDT (Fédération Générale de la Métallurgie - CFDT). Finally, in June 1971, these eight organisations held a Constituent Assembly and founded the "European Metalworkers' Federation in the Community" (EMF). The EMF already represented 3.1 million members, i.e. exactly 80% of all organised workers in the metalworking industry of the Member States of the EEC.

3. The EMF from 1971 to 1994

In the twenty-odd years since its foundation the EMF has altered considerably even though the basic organisational structure remains more or less the same. The affiliation of new organisations and hence the increase in membership has necessitated the enlargement of the EMF Secretariat. Over the years, the EMF has also taken on more and more tasks and has extended its activities. Before turning to the actual content of its work, the following sections set out the principles of the EMF (its Statutes and Action Programme), the development of membership, its finances as well as the development of the Secretariat, the Executive Committee, other committees and working parties.

3.1 Statutes

The relatively loose association of European metalworkers' unions served first of all to allow them to get to know one another and find out what was the same, what was similar and what was totally different in other European countries. The Metal Committee provided a forum for exchanging information on the working and living conditions of workers employed in the metalworking industry. Over the years, "the Metal Committee rapidly developed from a mere 'letter-box' into a 'mine of information', from a loose meeting point to a well-established coordination centre and an active organisation" (Günter Köpke). It is thus only logical that this state of affairs was followed by the founding of the EMF with proper Statutes and an Action Programme.

The EMF was set up "to represent and defend the economic, social and cultural interests of metalworkers at all levels within the Community" (2nd Report on Activities, page 9) and to promote the exchange of information and experiences. Its aims are described in the Statutes as follows:- "It advocates fundamental social reforms. Its aim is the reinforcement of democracy, equal rights for workers and the promotion of economic and social progress in Europe.

It supports the enlargement of the European Community by the admission of other democratic countries." (2nd Report on Activities, page 9) The affiliates work in close cooperation in order to achieve these aims but without relinquishing their autonomy since decisions adopted within the EMF are not binding.

3.2 Action Programme

The EMF Action Programme establishes guidelines and describes its long-term aims as well as setting out the basic principles underlying EMF policy. The resolutions adopted at its General Assemblies, e.g. on European policy and safeguarding employment, or resolutions concerning specific sectors such as shipbuilding, or there again resolutions on more general topics (for example, the resolution on peace and disarmament) are required in addition to ensure that recent developments are incorporated in EMF policy. Although the text of the Action Programme remained unchanged from 1974 to 1987 and was only modified at the 6th General Assembly in order to set out the long-term EMF goals, it has been added to and brought up to date by the policy resolutions. The latter have thus enabled the EMF to usefully address topical policy issues and hence take an active part in political events.

Under the heading "Common short-term goals", the 1974 EMF Action Programme sets out the following as the emphasis of its work:- "Improvements in working and living conditions of workers through full employment, a fairer distribution of income, increases in purchasing power, social security and democratisation of the economy remain the essential goals of all trade union forces. These general goals can only be achieved if the workers themselves are united at all levels of the economy and society, at both national and European level, in strong trade union organisations, in which they show their willingness to fight.... The EMF confirms its determination to devote its efforts to the realisation of a social and democratic Europe and to eliminate existing privileges. It will fight for changes in the present capitalistic social order." (3rd Report on Activities, pp. 16

The concrete areas of activity resulting from these general goals are as follows:- "Equality in status and equality of opportunity for migrant workers in Europe", "Greater influence by workers' representatives on the European institutions", "Contacts and negotiations with European employer organisations in the metal industry", "Stronger direct action vis-à-vis the multinational corporations in Europe", "Coordination of national trade union policy of common interest", "Development of joint goals and demands of metalworker unions in future negotiations". The foundation was thus laid down for the future work of the EMF.

It is not only the prolonged validity of the Action Programme (13 years) but also the fact that only minor changes were made to it in 1987 that have ensured the continuity of the work of the EMF. Instead of calling it a 'New Action Programme', it should simply be seen as a more complete and extended programme. The current version states that "Full employment, better living and working conditions, shorter working time, increased purchasing power and a fairer distribution of incomes, socially-acceptable technological change, social protection and the democratisation of the economy remain the essential goals of the trade union movement." (7th Report on Activities, p. 11) That new elements have been taken into consideration is evident - unemployment and the related demand for shorter working time, socially-acceptable technological change, the increasingly more emphatic demand for attention to be paid to the social dimension of Community Europe, as well as "the elimination of discrimination against women, young people and migrant workers". These points demonstrate the EMF's capacity to include the problems preoccupying society in its own work.

3.3 Development of membership

The fact that the EMF has always been in favour of the enlargement of Europe and has always supported European integration is reflected in the development of its membership. It is not only the affiliation of the British, Irish and Danish metalworkers' unions in 1973, following their accession to the European Communities, but above all the affiliation of the Norwegian and Swedish metalworkers' unions the same year, that clearly demonstrate the EMF's desire to represent metalworkers throughout Europe. This is also shown by its solidarity with the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek metalworkers' unions as well as by the early affiliation of metalworkers' unions from Eastern Europe.

Going beyond the Community framework by opening up to unions from Northern Europe posed the EMF with relatively few problems since it was not felt desirable to divide the ranks of the Confederation of Nordic Trade Unions. The opening up of the EMF to Christian and Communist trade unions in the Seventies and early Eighties was however contested, although with hindsight it can be seen that the EMF acquired even greater legitimacy in doing so as it truly represents **European** metalworkers. Particular difficulties arose when it came to affiliating the Italian Communist union, the FIOM-CGIL. The procedure lasted some eighteen months and was a "pioneering move" (in the words of Günter Köpke). There was even greater conflict in the Seventies and early Eighties in respect of the French Communist CGT. The refusal to affiliate the metalworkers' federation of the CGT was based on the following grounds:- its affiliation to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), its strong nationalistic leanings, its interconnections and dependence on the French Communist Party and finally its Communist leanings in general, although the latter in itself was not a decisive factor as the EMF opened its doors fairly early on to the Italian Communists and later to the Spanish Communists.

There were a lot of ups and downs regarding the British trade unions in the metalworking sector because of the fact that they are organised on a craft basis which means that they are often small in size and have limited financial resources. Some of the British trade unions even found themselves forced to leave the EMF because they could not meet their affiliation fees. Then, in the Eighties, there came a series of mergers among the splintered British unions which were to some degree triggered off by the neo-conservative policy of the UK Government. The development of EMF membership can be seen from the following table:-

	COUNTRY	YEAR OF AFFILIATION	REMARKS
GMBE	A Austria	1991	Associate since 1989
CMB*	B Belgium*	1971	
CCMB	B Belgium	1974	
LBC-NVK	B Belgium	1992	
SETCa/BBTK	B Belgium	1993	
CNE	B Belgium	1994	
FTMH (SMUV)	CH Switzerland	1990	
FCOM (CMV)	CH Switzerland	1990	
OVIEK-SEK	CHY Cyprus	1992	
Odborovy ZVÄZ-KOVO	CZ Czech Republic	1992	

IG Metall *	D Federal Republic of Germany*	1971	
CO industri	DK Denmark	1973	Affiliation of the central organisa- tion, which then split up and then reunified
TIF	DK Denmark	1992	
IF	DK Denmark	1992	
UGT-Metal	E Spain	1983	Associate since 1975; merger with USO in 1977 to form UGT- Metal
FTM-ELA	E Spain	1983	Associate since 1975
FM/CC.00.	E Spain	1991	
FGMM-CFDT	F France*	1971	Change of name in 1984 - previously FGM-CFDT*
FEAE-CFDT	F France	1984	
FOM*	F France*	1971	
FO Défense	F France	1984	
FM/CFTC	F France	1991	

AUEW Engineering section	GB United Kingdom	1973	
AUEW Constructional section	GB United Kingdom	1973	Disaffiliated in 1978; became 'AEU' in 1986
AUEW Foundry section	GB United Kingdom	1980	Became 'AEU' in 1986
AUEW TASS section	GB United Kingdom	1976	Separated from AUEW to become TASS in 1986
AEU	GB United Kingdom	1986	Merger of different sections of AUEW; merger procedure with EETPU to form AEEU in 1992
EETPU	GB United Kingdom	1973	Merger pro- cedure with AEU to form AEEU in 1992
AEEU-AEU section	GB United Kingdom	1992	AEEU section since 1992
AEEU-EETPU section	GB United Kingdom	1992	AEEU section since 1992
APAC	GB United Kingdom	1973	Disaffiliated in 1974

N.B. See page 42, diagram showing the mergers between the British unions

National Union of Blastfurnacemen, Ore Miners, Coke Workers and Kindred Trades	GB United Kingdom	1973	Disaffiliated in 1975
National Society of Metal Mechanics	GB United Kingdom	1973	Merged in 1986 to form TASS
National Union of Sheetmetal-workers, Copper-smiths, Heating and Domestic Engineers	GB United Kingdom	1973	Merged in 1986 to form TASS
TASS	GB United Kingdom	1986	Merger of three unions
ISTC	GB United Kingdom	1973	
GMWU	GB United Kingdom	1973	Merger in 1986 to form GMB & ATU
Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers, Shipwrights, Blacksmiths and Structural Workers	GB United Kingdom	1977	Merger in 1986 to form GMB & ATU
ASTMS	GB United Kingdom	1976	Merger in 1988 to form MSF
TGWU	GB United Kingdom	1977	

UCATT	GB United Kingdom	1980	Disaffiliated in 1981
AMU	GB United Kingdom	1981	Disaffiliated in 1984
GMB&ATU	GB United Kingdom	1986	Merger between GMWU and Boilermakers section
MSF	GB United Kingdom	1988	Merger of TASS and ASTMS
POEM	GR Greece	1981	Associate since 1975
VASAS	H Hungary	1991	Associate for 6 months in 1991
FLM	I Italy*	1971	Since 1974, the FIM-CISL*, UILM-UIL* and FIOM-CGIL together form the FLM
SIPTU	IRE Ireland	1973	Merger of ITGWU and FWUI
MSI	Iceland	1993	
OGB-L	L Luxembourg*	1979	Formed in 1979; LAV* merged with other organisations in 1979 to form OGB-L
LCGB	L Luxembourg	1974	
Fellesforbundet	N Norway	1973	Organisation which replaced Jern-Metal since 1988

Handel og Kontor	N Norway	1991	
FNV	NL Netherlands*	1981	Merger of Metaal-NVV* and NKV in 1981 to form FNV
CNV	NL Netherlands	1974	
SIMA	P Portugal	1983	Associate for three months in 1983
NSZZ Solidarnosc Metal	PL Poland	1992	
Svenska Metall	S Sweden	1973	
SIF	S Sweden	1982	
Metalli	SF Finland	1991	Associate since 1977
STL	SF Finland	1992	
Insinööriliitto	SF Finland	1994	
TL	SF Finland	1992	
Odborovy ZVÄZ-KOVO	SK Slovak Republic	1992	
BIRLESİK METAL-IS	TR Turkey	1994	

* Founder members

At the beginning of 1993, the EMF represented the interests of some 7.6 million workers in the metalworking industry.

3.4 Finances

The EMF is financed by the member organisations which pay a fixed amount of affiliation fees to the EMF. Over the years this amount has been increased and adapted to prevailing conditions. Since 1975 there is a binding rule stipulating that the member organisations pay a fixed amount of affiliation fees per year and per 1,000 members.

Review of the development of affiliation fees

YEAR	AMOUNT OF FEES IN BELGIAN FRANCS PER 1,000 MEMBERS
1975	1,400
1976-1978	1,550
1979	1,650
1980/1981	1,750
1982-1985	1,900
1986/1987	2,000
1988	2,100
1989	2,200/2,300
1990-1992	3,000
Mid-1992	4,000
Since 1993	4,500

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to say that the increase in affiliation fees has provided the EMF with a constantly higher budget. On the contrary, the decline in membership of the metalworkers' unions and the decision taken by the affiliates (led by IG Metall) at the beginning of the Eighties to only pay affiliation fees on behalf of their active members - instead of also on behalf of retired members - are two factors which meant that despite the increase in the number of its affiliates and the increased requirements the EMF actually had less funds at its disposal in the Eighties.

3.5 Secretariat and Executive Committee

The Secretariat, the Executive Committee and the Bureau have also been adapted to the constantly rising number of affiliated organisations. Thus, an Assistant General Secretary was appointed for the first time in 1973, but had to be "dispensed with" again in 1985 when the EMF saw its financial means reduced for the first time because of the stagnation or even decline in the membership of the national metalworkers' trade unions. Nevertheless in 1989 it was again decided to appoint an Assistant General Secretary in order to be able to cope with the variety of tasks facing the EMF. Since 1993, the Secretariat has also had two research officers. Beginning with only one administrative staff member, the EMF now has five members of staff who are mainly responsible for translation into the three working languages of the EMF, i.e. French, English and German, as well as for accounting and administrative work.

Although the continual rise in the number of members has certainly increased the influence and strength of the EMF, it has also given rise to further problems:- even more languages, different organisational structures and different participation models. Cooperation between the European metalworkers' unions has never led to a cover-up of existing differences however; from the very beginning the EMF has always sought to safeguard the autonomy of its affiliated organisations. European claims are implemented by the member organisations at national level - although this is not always an easy undertaking.

The tasks of the policy Secretary was the object of a debate in 1978. A discussion arose at that time over the fact that the General Secretary was a member of the Supervisory Board of Philips Germany. Under the German codetermination model, trade union representatives are also members of Supervisory Boards, but this was strongly criticised by other metalworkers' unions because of the possible conflict of interests that this could lead to. (This again underlines the tremendous differences in the trade union cultures.) At the 24th Executive Committee meeting held in Brussels in April 1978 it was finally decided that offices of this kind should be discussed with the Executive Committee before they were taken up.

3.6 Committees and working parties

As in the case of the Executive Committee, Bureau and Secretariat, the growing number of members and the process of economic integration also placed new demands on the working parties and committees. Their development has been marked by two features:- on the one hand, enlargement resulting from the admission of new countries and new affiliates and, on the other hand, the incorporation of new and topical issues as well as the ever increasing number of multinational companies. Given the limited resources of the Secretariat, it is evident that some working parties have been more active than others. The degree to which working parties have developed has sometimes depended upon the persons put in charge of them, their personal stake and commitment. However, it is not only personal inclinations but also the priorities established by the EMF that are reflected here. A more detailed presentation of the work of the different committees and working parties is provided in the following section which looks at the topics that constitute the main emphasis of the work of the EMF.

4. Continuity

Main emphasis of the work of the EMF

A key feature of the EMF is the degree of continuity in its work since its foundation. A number of issues have remained on the agenda over the passing years and have simply been adapted to current developments and enlarged upon. These focal points are:- establishing links and co-ordination between metalworkers' unions in Europe, solidarity action in trade union campaigns, collective bargaining policy, establishing networks of multinational company employees, and wherever possible entering into negotiations with the management of these multinationals, the specific problems of the different sectors of the metalworking industry, efforts to establish a dialogue with European employers' associations, bringing influence to bear on the European Community institutions and cooperation with other international trade union organisations.

4.1 Liaison and coordination between European metalworkers' unions

The main aim behind the setting up of the Metal Committee in 1963 and the EMF in 1971 had been to bring together metalworkers and their unions from throughout Europe and to promote the exchange of information between them. In the beginning, it was mainly a question of getting to know one another and of finding out about the prevailing living and working conditions in other European countries. However, the Metal Committee rapidly developed from a loose association into an organisation with properly established structures, statutes and a work programme. The fact of its development into an established coordinating body and an active organisation did not however mean that the exchange of information was relegated to the background; on the contrary, it was stepped up and has taken on considerable importance especially in relation to multinational companies.

Employees of a same multinational but working in different countries thus have opportunities to get to know one another and exchange information on the different working conditions at their individual production locations and to develop joint demands. As a result, it will not be so easy to play off employees of one location against another in the future.

The exchange of information and the knowledge thus acquired of developments in other European countries, as well as the establishment of personal contacts, was and will remain a cornerstone of the EMF's work. A considerable part of the work referred to further on would actually be impossible without these links between the metalworkers and their trade unions and without this exchange of information.

4.2 Solidarity work

Another important element of the EMF's work is mutual support during collective bargaining and workers' campaigns. However, in order to carry out effective solidarity work it is essential that the EMF be properly informed by its affiliates in good time. If this is the case, the EMF is capable of taking action via its affiliates at two levels:- firstly in support of strikes concerning a particular company and secondly in support of strikes concerning a whole sector. In both cases, but chiefly where multinational companies are concerned, the EMF informs affiliates in the other countries in order to prevent possible transfers of production. Furthermore, when demonstrations are organised in one European country the EMF can arrange for participation by metalworkers from other European countries. On 26th June 1984, for example, the EMF organised a Solidarity Day with the German metalworkers in support of their campaign for the 35-hour week. In that same year, it organised a demonstration in Paris under the slogan "For employment - Stop unemployment - the 35-hour week" and took an active part in IG Metall's demonstration against lock-outs in Bonn.

Further evidence of solidarity within the EMF is clearly expressed by the support given to trade unions forced into illegality under dictatorial regimes. In the Seventies, the EMF was deeply sympathetic to the cause of the Spanish, Portuguese and Greek trade unions and provided them with as much support as possible in the form of meetings, visits and public gestures of solidarity. It provided similar support for the Polish union Solidarnosc at the beginning of the Eighties.

Mutual solidarity is frequently expressed by joint action. As early as 3rd October 1974 the EMF had organised a 'European Metalworkers' Day'. In 1978-79 four separate action days were organised to inform and increase workers' awareness of problems:- on 15th April 1978, the EMF took part in an ETUC Action Day on Full Employment; from 24th to 30th November 1979, it took an active part in the ETUC Action Week for Full Employment; on 15th December 1978, it organised its own Action Day on the Shipbuilding Industry; and on 30th May 1979 held an Action Day at the various production locations of the Philips multinational in order to inform employees of the company's plans, make them aware of specific problems at Philips (production transfers) and promote solidarity between Philips employees. From 9th to 13th June 1980, the EMF held a 'Second Information Week' with bilateral meetings in most of the Philips plants. On 7th January 1981, the British metalworkers' unions organised a demonstration in Eindhoven in protest against the closure of two Philips plants in the UK (5th Report on activities, p. 84). In 1984-5, the EMF conducted several information and solidarity campaigns in favour of shorter working time and supported the German, French, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish metalworkers' unions in their respective campaigns for shorter working time. In addition, the EMF has also taken an active part in numerous ETUC information and action campaigns, the last of which - 'For Social Europe' - took place on 4th April 1993.

4.3 Collective bargaining policy

The trade unions' traditional field of action is of course that of collective bargaining. Since its foundation the EMF therefore closely followed collective bargaining developments in each of its affiliates' countries and gradually began to put forward joint European demands. In the beginning, it was chiefly a matter of identifying the differences and similarities between the collective bargaining systems and collective agreements. Hence, in the early Seventies, efforts were made to establish a system of records covering all the collective agreements reached in the countries of its affiliates. There has been a lack of continuity regarding this project however and the records are not therefore complete or up to date. At the beginning of the Nineties, the EMF decided to make another attempt and the compiling of all the collective agreements reached in Europe will be undertaken over the next few years in Amsterdam and put on a data base.

In addition to collecting information and organising mutual support in workers' struggles, the EMF has managed over the years to arrive at joint demands in respect of collective bargaining policy. The first major economic crisis in the middle of the Seventies left the metalworkers' unions faced with the problem of continually rising unemployment; safeguarding jobs therefore became increasingly more important. Consequently, the European metalworkers' unions jointly drew up a demand for shorter working time and sought to achieve this demand simultaneously in all their countries, albeit in different ways, since it was adapted to individual national situations (weekly or annual reduction in working time, reduction in the length of working life, etc.).

4.4 Multinational companies

An increasingly more dynamic process is to be seen in the emergence of multinational companies and it follows that this area is of increasing importance in the work of the EMF. Within the EMF itself there are various working parties each dealing with a particular multinational. The first working party on a multinational company, the Philips Working Party, was set up at the time of the Metal Committee and has had many ups and downs over the years. Philips was also the first company to hold talks with the EMF. In mid-1975 the fifth round of top-level talks between the Philips management and an EMF delegation was unexpectedly cancelled by Philips, supposedly because the EMF had not kept to its original composition and had "invited" a representative from the IMF - which Philips was totally against. The EMF did not change the composition of its delegation but endeavoured in the following years to resume the discussions and come to an arrangement. Several meetings took place between a group management representative and the EMF Secretariat in 1978 and 1979, but then Philips refused to have any further consultations. A European works council has therefore never been set up.

Over the years, more and more EMF working parties on multinational companies have come into being and have chiefly devoted attention to the problem of safeguarding jobs, rationalisation measures and above all production transfers. A major EMF breakthrough and success occurred in 1985 when the EMF decided to enter into negotiations with the group Thomson Grand Public following an offer of talks from the TGP management. This established the basis for the first European works council. Others followed, like Bull, Volkswagen, Renault and Volvo. By the beginning of 1994, there were 19 European works councils in the metalworking sector alone. At Europipe GmbH there is even a 'European Supervisory Board' jointly composed of management and employee representatives.

There are a few cases where employees have taken the initiative to set up a European works council on their own, but these are neither recognised nor financed by the company managements (Digital Equipment and Gillette).

List of European works councils operating on the basis of voluntary agreements:-

Thomson CE	F		7/10/85
		Agreement	28/8/92
Bull	F		22/3/88
		Agreement	30/9/92
Pechiney	F		17/12/92
		Agreement	
Renault	F		5/4/93
		Agreement	
Thomson CSF	F		8/4/93
		Agreement	
Airbus Industrie	F		24/1/92
		French model works council for employees in France and seconded employees	
Usinor Sacilor	F/D		17/1/94
		Agreement	
Eurocopter	F/D		18/5/92
		Agreement	
Europipe - AR	D/F		31/1/91
		(Supervisory Board) Agreement	
Europipe - EBR	D/F		1993
		(EWC) Note to the AR agreement	
Volkswagen	D		(30/9/90)
		Agreement	7/2/92
Smalbach Lubeca/CCE?	D		13/11/91
		Agreement	
Grundig	D		27/8/93
		Agreement	

Merloni Elettrodomestici	I	Agreement	21/9/93
Nokia NCM	SF	Agreement	June 1993
Kone	SF	Management statement	27/5/92
Volvo	S	Agreement	25/8/93
SKF	S	Agreement	June 1994
Norsk Hydro	N	Agreement	7/9/94

The Thomson Grand Public experiment was decisive in the history of the EMF because a European precedent had thus been created and, as can be seen from the events which followed, this triggered off a dynamic trend. However, not everyone in the EMF approved this endeavour because it was breaking entirely new ground. It is clear that the fact of negotiating a separate agreement with just one company played a role in this respect, since this could, in certain circumstances, render negotiations in respect of sector-wide or even all-industry agreements more difficult.

It would not have been possible to conduct EMF activities in the multinational company field on their present scale without the generous financial assistance it has received from the EU Commission. In 1989 - in reaction to the failure of the Vredeling directive - the Commission set up a budget line to finance meetings between employees of multinational companies. The EMF has made considerable use of this budget line as can be seen from the fact that it will have organised nearly 150 meetings for some 80 different companies by 31 December 1994. Most of the voluntary agreements on European works councils existing today are the long-term result of these meetings.

Since 1980 the EMF has also endeavoured to get a Community Directive adopted governing the information and consultation rights of employees of multinational companies. The Council of Ministers finally adopted the "Directive on the establishment of a European works council or a procedure in Community-scale undertakings and Community-scale groups of undertakings for the purposes of informing and consulting employees" on 22 September 1994. Nevertheless, it may take another two years before the directive is incorporated in the national legislation of each Member State and before the companies concerned are obliged to enter into negotiations. The EMF will therefore pursue its programme with regard to multinational companies and will utilise the coming two years to organise further meetings for workers' representatives and to sign as many further voluntary agreements as possible.

4.5 Sectors of the metalworking industry

The EMF also has working parties for the individual sectors of the metalworking industry. A parallel can be established with the field of multinational companies. These working parties have remained basically the same but have been adapted in the light of current developments, i.e. priorities have shifted in accordance with developments in the metalworking industry and new working parties have been set up over the years for branches of industry gaining in importance. Starting with working parties solely for the shipbuilding and aerospace industries at the time of the EMF's foundation, new working parties were set up for the automobile industry and the data-processing industry in the middle of the Seventies and for the railway equipment industry, the heavy electro-mechanical and nuclear equipment industry as well as the telecommunications industry at the end of the Seventies. The main additions in the Eighties were the machine-tool industry and above all new information technologies and the electronics industry.

Whereas in the Seventies the emphasis was clearly placed on the crisis in the shipbuilding industry, the focus switched in the Eighties to new information and data-processing technologies and to the growing crisis in the automobile industry. It is particularly the rationalisation measures being carried out in this sector of industry that have played a major role in the work of the EMF since safeguarding employment is the overriding objective. Although more emphasis has been placed on certain sectors this does not mean that working parties for other sectors have been neglected. New centres of interest have built up because of changing developments. Hence, by the end of the Seventies, the EMF had taken the subject of new information technologies on board and adopted a "Resolution on the introduction of data-processing in firms, its effects upon employment and data protection" at its 4th General Assembly in 1980. This subject has therefore been tackled on a scale far wider than that of simply company or sector level.

4.6 European employers' associations

The chapter on 'European employers' associations' is not a very happy one given the absence of formal consultations. The 'social dialogue' is marked by its silence. The EMF's many years of efforts to establish a dialogue have not met with any encouragement on the employers' side. The appropriate partner for the EMF is the WEM (Western European Metal Trades Employers' Organisation). In the few informal contacts that have taken place, WEM has rejected negotiations of any kind and has not shown any readiness to enter into a dialogue. This is how the situation is described in the EMF's report on activities for the years 1977-1980:- "There has been increasing reluctance on the part of these employers' organisations to have serious talks or make any commitments vis-à-vis the trade union organisations. In order to justify this negative attitude, the employers fall back on their so-called lack of competence in social matters.

The main reasons for their refusal however are threefold:- the fact that the rapports de force between the unions and employers' organisations which exist at national level have not yet been developed to the same extent at European level; the fact that the European trade union organisations lack the necessary means of action; and the fear of establishing a precedent at European level, which would then snowball." (P. 110) It is hardly surprising therefore that the EMF has directed its efforts at the European institutions rather than at the European employers' organisations and has sought to obtain a policy favourable to working people through this channel.

4.7 Institutions of the European Community

A good example of continuity in the work of the EMF has been that it has sought to intervene in EC policy right from the era of the Metal Committee. It should also be noted here that "how" it has done so, "through whom and to what extent", has been adapted to developments in the process of European unification. Before the foundation of the EMF, the workers' group at the ESC was the crucial starting-point for exerting trade union influence on policy. However the increase in the Commission's importance in the Seventies led the EMF to direct its efforts towards that body. When direct elections were brought in for the European Parliament in 1979, the EMF stepped up cooperation with the Socialist Group of EP Members, traditionally close to the trade unions, with a view to bringing influence to bear on EC policy in this way. Nevertheless, it is contacts with the Commission that have remained the closest, since the Commission's right of initiative enables the EMF to attempt to influence EC policy in its early stages. This approach has proved to be successful and concrete results can be seen in particular in the draft Vredeling directive. Furthermore, the numerous contacts thus established have enabled the EMF to ensure the attendance of Commission representatives at many of its own events. It is precisely these contacts, i.e. the fact of "knowing one another", that enable the EMF to have an impact on EC policy.

It is more difficult for the EMF to bring influence to bear on decisions taken by the Council of Ministers as it has no direct contacts at this level. Here, therefore it is up to the national member organisations to bring pressure to bear on their respective governments in order that they may then pursue a policy favourable to the trade unions within the Council of Ministers.

4.8 Cooperation with international trade union organisations

From the outset, the EMF has considered cooperation with other international trade union organisations to be of the utmost importance. In this respect of course it is appropriate to particularly underline cooperation with the IMF, the International Metalworkers' Federation. This was not without problems however at the beginning of the Seventies because there was first of all the matter of deciding how to divide up tasks between the IMF and the EMF. The EMF did not want to be a regional organisation of the IMF but an independent organisation representing metalworkers in Europe. There was finally agreement that the EMF should be responsible for purely European issues and multinationals in Europe and that the IMF should deal with all issues on an international scale. Since then the two organisations have worked in close cooperation with one another and are often represented by their Secretaries in their respective working parties and delegations.

As the first European industry committee, the EMF was a member of the ETUC as from 1974 and works in close cooperation with the ETUC Secretariat and its dependent institutions, i.e. the European Trade Union Institute and the European Trade Union College, the Trade Union Technical Bureau for Health and Safety, AFETT (the European Association for Training in New Technologies) as well as the various trade union committees. The EMF plays an influential role in ETUC policy-making. Regular talks take place the two organisations take part in numerous meetings as well as organising joint action such as the many action and information campaigns of the Seventies and Eighties. It is this close cooperation that ensures that the European trade union organisations pursue a joint policy, which unquestionably reinforces their impact.

The EMF's relations with the Contact Office of the Miners' and Metalworkers' Free Trade Unions in the European Communities (in short the Inter Trade Union Committee) proved more problematic at first. The Inter Trade Union Committee had been set up in 1952 following the signing of the ECSC Treaty; it had thus come into existence well before the EMF and enjoyed more extensive rights of participation in decision-making. Cooperation was difficult not only because the ECSC and its Consultative Committee (on which the unions are also represented) had their headquarters in Luxembourg, but also because the ECSC Inter Trade Union Committee was not open to other organisations as it only represented unions from the signatory countries to the ECSC Treaty (Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Italy). In addition, membership was limited to the so-called "free" trade unions, i.e. organisations with Socialist/ Social Democrat leanings. Subsequently however, the ECSC Inter Trade Union Committee's importance began to wane given the growing integration of Europe and in 1980 the EMF made a first attempt to merge with the ECSC Inter Trade Union Committee, which was rejected. Cooperation continued despite these difficulties and the EMF finally took over the work of the ECSC Inter Trade Union Committee on 1st November 1994.

5. Change

EMF general policy areas

The fact that the EMF has constantly kept pace with developments can particularly be seen by the fact that it incorporates current affairs topics into the work of the EMF. Dealing with topical issues is a reaction to new developments just as its very foundation took place as a reaction to European economic integration. Continuity is shown in the thorough follow-up on current topics and issues, especially in relation to European policy. General EMF policy mainly concentrates on the economic and social development of Europe, migrant workers, women, peace, disarmament and arms exports, as well as environmental protection and energy policy, trade policy and the introduction of new technologies.

5.1 Economic and social developments in Europe

Since the EMF was set up in particular to provide a counterweight to ensure that economic integration and EC policy also takes workers' interests into account, it is only natural that the economic and social development of Europe has always played a major role within the EMF. The first major post-war economic crisis experienced by Western Europe in 1974 led to a shift in EMF policy so as to focus on the demand for safeguarding employment and shorter working time. As Western European societies are no longer capable of achieving full employment, the demand for employment safeguards has become a feature of all the EMF's general policy work. This is to be seen with regard to specific demands for individual sectors, such as shipbuilding and the automobile industry, as well as with regard to more general demands for "human-centred organisation of work". This has been expressed most particularly in the campaign for shorter working time undertaken by the metalworkers' unions since the middle of the Eighties and the accompanying solidarity action at EMF level.

Because of the 1974 economic crisis in particular and changes in the world of work in general, not least as a result of automation and the introduction of new information technologies, the EMF decided to draw up a list of demands concerning the humanisation of work in the mid-Seventies. They were based on the idea of adapting work to man:- "Humanisation of work can be defined in general as the adaptation of working conditions to the qualities, needs and interests of workers. However, one must avoid a situation whereby "humanisation" is restricted to new methods of increasing production and integrating the workers." (3rd Report on Activities, p. 23)

Another field of action is European social policy which the EMF has upheld vis-à-vis the European Commission. The EMF has seen its demands reflected at least in part in the directive on health and safety at the workplace and in the Social Protocol to the Maastricht Treaty. The adoption of the directive on the establishment of European works councils can also be considered as a successful outcome of European trade union policy. It nevertheless remains true that social policy is not very marked in Europe and the EMF continues its efforts to ensure that the Europe which is emerging is also a Social Europe in which working people are given proper consideration.

These demands were expressed in the Resolution on European Policy adopted by the 6th EMF General Assembly, which states, inter alia:- "The EMF nevertheless underlines that measures to develop the internal market must (...) simultaneously promote the creation of a European social dimension aimed at harmonising progress in respect of employment and working conditions and workers' social benefits, and also in respect of equal treatment and equal opportunities for women; stimulate the development of industrial policies which go beyond national frontiers, are innovative and provide a means of strengthening Western Europe's competitive position whilst safeguarding workers' interests". (7th Report on Activities, P. 21). The EMF thus works towards the progressive integration of Europe in calling for new policy areas to be tackled by the Community institutions, and hence remains true to its demand for the extension of the Commission's area of competence.

A longstanding EMF demand has been its call for an active industrial policy in order to secure a more socially-acceptable Europe. In the EMF's view the job of overcoming structural and cyclical crises must not be left up to market forces alone; it requires regulation by a higher state authority - in this case at European level. The EMF held a conference on industrial policy in April 1994 and has drawn up a detailed position paper on this subject.

5.2 Migrant workers

The specific problems surrounding immigration and frontier workers were included in the EMF's work very early on. The "Migrant Workers" working party was set up back in 1972 and constituted the first general policy working party geared to a particular group of workers. At that time, the EMF was already urging that "In principle, it must be the capital that goes to the workers and not the reverse, workers to capital." (2nd Report on Activities, p. 62) In addition, emphasis has been placed on the demand for fair wages and legal equality for migrant workers. In 1976, the EMF and IMF set up a joint "Migrant Workers' Working Party" and incorporated frontier workers, i.e. persons living in one country and working in another, as from 1978.

That the issues dealt with by this working party are still current issues can be seen from the acts of violence and discrimination against foreigners:- "Given the rise in xenophobia and racism throughout the world and the need to counter it, the IMF organised a conference on this topic in Frankfurt in 1990" (7th Report on Activities, p. 132) in which the EMF also took part. This working party has been fully supported by the two organisations, EMF and IMF, since the middle of the Seventies.

5.3 Women

For many years women's questions did not enter into the considerations of the EMF because the metalworkers' unions were held by tradition to be a man's area and there was therefore no reason for tackling discrimination against women. In fact it was only a few years ago that the EMF began to deal actively with the problem of discrimination against women. Women had certainly drawn attention to this problem from the middle of the Seventies onwards and the EMF had organised a conference on this subject in 1975 in connection with the UN's International Women's Year, yet there was refusal to set up a working party for some time on the pretext that women workers' problems did not come within the competence of the EMF and would be dealt with more appropriately by the ETUC. When the subject of discrimination against women was finally taken on board, it was restricted to those branches of industry employing a high level of women workers, such as the electronics industry for example.

By the middle of the Eighties, however, the EMF could no longer avoid dealing with this issue and it was put on the agenda. At its 6th General Assembly, the EMF adopted a "Resolution on Equal Opportunities for Women in Working Life" which included the issue of compatibility between professional and family life - for men too. The EMF also noted that women were playing an increasingly larger part in professional life although their possibilities of access to the labour market remained less favourable and their right to a job of work was contested due to the fact that they are held to be responsible for looking after the household and the family. The most decisive statement was that in which the EMF affiliates committed themselves "to support positive action programmes for women within their own ranks with a view to guaranteeing equal rights within their own organisations". (7th Report on Activities, P. 30). The foundations were thus laid for an active and necessary EMF women's policy.

5.4 Peace, disarmament and arms exports

A similar process to that concerning women's policy can be seen in the area of peace, disarmament and arms exports. The EMF only began to devote time to this subject towards the end of the Seventies/beginning of the Eighties when NATO's dual-track decision breathed new life into the peace movement in Western Europe. The first resolution on peace and disarmament was adopted by the 4th General Assembly in 1980 and has been followed by many others. As of 1983, the EMF declared its support for the limitation of arms exports - a subject which became a burning issue during the Gulf War in 1991. But the metalworkers' unions are also preoccupied by the question of safeguarding employment in the arms industry and the EMF has therefore actively taken part in the discussion over the problem of converting the arms industry to production for civil use. The EMF has had a specific "Arms industry and Arms Exports" working party since 1988. Through this working party, the EMF has established that:- "Taking a stand in favour of disarmament and against arms exports will have employment effects both as regards the armed forces and in the armaments sector. Approximately five million workers are concerned in Western Europe (...)" and it adds, "The attempts at conversion of the armaments industry are the starting-point for current trade union action (...)". (7th Report on Activities, pp 127-128)

5.5 Environmental protection and energy policy

The rise of environmental protection movements and the ever-growing concern for the protection of nature and our vital natural resources have convinced the EMF of the need to tackle this subject. The EMF has set out demands calling for the environmental standpoint to be taken into account in the industrial policy area in future. In 1987, it adopted a "Resolution on environment policy and employment" in which it called for application of the following three principles:- the principle of prevention, the "polluter pays" principle and the principle of avoidance.

In the environment policy field, the EMF has also been calling on the EC to bring in extended and binding regulations at Community level since 1980. The EMF has endeavoured to incorporate the subject of the 'Environment and Employment' in its working parties since 1986.

5.6 Trade policy

Trade policy also began to interest the EMF at the beginning of the Eighties when conflicts between Japan, the US and Western Europe began to intensify. Several of the sector working parties have looked into the question of trade relations between Western Europe and Japan. In 1982, the Executive Committee defined EMF policy as follows:- the EC must be united in its attitude towards Japan; it should not adopt protectionist measures but endeavour to co-ordinate trade policy and, where possible, obtain the opening up of the Japanese market. In the EMF view, the unions should try to influence their Japanese colleagues especially in relation to shorter working time and a more open trade policy. A meeting took place in 1982, under IMF auspices, between representatives of the Japanese unions and the EMF. Following this, the Japanese representatives declared their readiness to maintain regular contacts with the European metalworkers' unions and to bring pressure to bear on Japanese policy with a view to opening up markets and reducing working time. The EMF continues its efforts in this area by seeking to influence EC policy.

5.7 New technologies

It is in the new technologies area that the EMF has endeavoured to react to new challenges with as much flexibility as possible and has met with a fair degree of success. The EMF is evidently not opposed to the principle of introducing new technologies since it is through such investments that production locations may be safeguarded and hence employment, but it does call for a cautious and well-thought out approach especially with regard to new information technologies.

One of its main demands is that the emphasis be placed on man rather than on the machine. The introduction of new technologies has also modified work in the metalworking sector. As from the end of the Seventies, the European metalworkers' unions had issued frequent warnings about the danger with which we would be faced through the introduction of new technologies:- the destruction of jobs through rationalisation. They therefore insisted that the introduction of new technologies should be linked to plans to safeguard employment.

Since 1980 in particular, various working parties dealing with the information technology sector have been studying the impact of new technologies. The agenda of these working parties does not only include problems specific to their sector but also problems arising from the introduction of new technologies that affect society and that go beyond their own branch of industry. At its 4th General Assembly in 1980, the EMF finally adopted a "Resolution on the introduction of data-processing in firms, its effects upon employment and data protection" in which it was stated, inter alia, that "The future job prospects of workers depend upon the investments which are made today and, of all these investments, those in the data-processing field take on particular importance because they disrupt organisational and power structures within firms". (5th Report on Activities, p. 23)

In this resolution, the EMF even goes as far as calling for a right to have a say in the introduction of new information technologies in individual companies because:- "The installation of a data-processing system constitutes such an important investment with regard to the future of companies and employment that the workers and their unions must urgently demand the right of codetermination, particularly through provisions laid down in collective agreements concerning information rights and the right to object." Further on, it adds that this codetermination requires "that the bodies representing workers' interests be granted full codetermination rights in the introduction and operation of data-processing systems, that they enjoy the same monitoring and information rights as are enjoyed by the management of the firm and that the data, programmes and the purpose for which they are used be subject to codetermination". (5th Report on Activities, p. 24)

In asking that priority be given to man when new technologies are introduced rather than just taking the economic situation of a company into account, the EMF has kept to the line taken in its resolution on the "humanisation of work" adopted in the middle of the Seventies. The working parties on information technologies were at the height of their importance in the middle of the Eighties. In 1984, the Standing Committee on Employment and the EC Council of Ministers adopted a document setting out the main points of policy with regard to social adjustment and technological change that contained the trade union demands on the right to information and employment safeguards.

6. Outlook

New developments

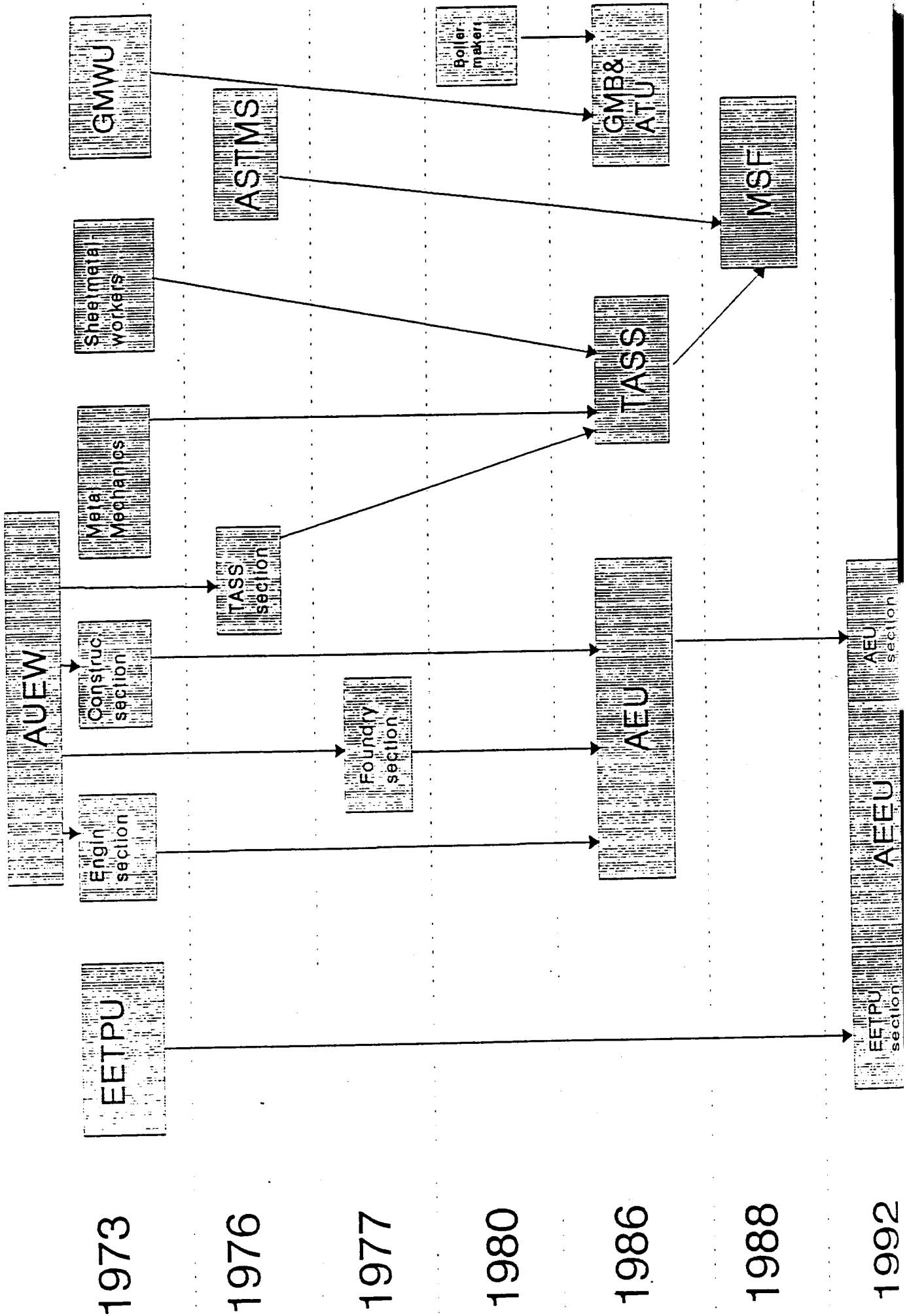
Since the Nineties, the EMF has had to come to terms with two new developments with far-reaching consequences:- firstly, the establishment of the Single European Market and the impetus for European integration that this has generated and, secondly, the overthrow of the Communist systems and the opening up of Eastern Europe. Both are fundamental changes and the way in which they are tackled will be decisive for the future of the EMF.

The establishment of the Single European Market is not without effects on the labour world for whilst companies can operate in a flexible manner in Europe there are no binding regulations governing employee/employer relations. The European trade union demand for the establishment of European works councils reflects the need to regulate industrial relations as well as economic policy at **European** level. This means in the final analysis that "collective bargaining policy must be Europeanised" (Elmar Altvater, 1993 : Gewerkschaften vor der europäischen Herausforderung (*), p. 247). The same goes for social policy. However, the European trade union demand that new policy areas be taken on board by the Community also presents them with a challenge. Hence the setting up of European works councils in over one hundred companies in the metalworking sector presupposes that the unions should also have a more European outlook and this means stepping up coordination and **jointly** putting forward and carrying through demands. The degree to which they succeed will also determine their future role in Europe.

The opening up of Eastern Europe has not presented the EMF and the European unions with an easy task either. True to its watchword "to favour the enlargement of Europe" and make progress in respect of integration, the EMF accepted four Eastern European unions into affiliation very early on, i.e. metalworkers' unions from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland.

(* The unions and the European challenge)

Despite this, the question now arises as to how the EMF should deal with further applications for affiliation given the fact that the Eastern European unions are not yet well-established and the fact that the EMF does not yet have much information about their political leanings. There is also a problem regarding the funding of participants from non-EU countries to allow them to attend EMF meetings. The Eastern European unions are not well-endowed financially and the EMF can only provide them with a limited amount of financial assistance. In the light of these problems, the earnestly desired integration of the Eastern European metalworkers' unions within the EMF will still take some time. But there again it will also set the course for the future work and role of the EMF in Europe.



1973

1976

1977

1980

1986

1988

1992

EETPU

AUEW

Engin section

Construc section

Meta Mechanics

Sheetmetal workers

GMWU

TASS section

ASTMS

Foundry section

AEU

TASS

GMB&ATU

Boiler makers

MSF

EETPU section

AEEU

AEU section