

ACT TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

A modern union needs a future-oriented "Leitbild" – a mission statement. This helps in creating and outlining a common identity. A mission describes the long-term objectives of an organisation. It only fulfils its target when it establishes positions for joint activities. It is a living and developing concept.

"We ... want to be a learning, open and participation-oriented organisation that takes up the variety inherent in its members and officials, and that plays an active role in the discussion process with the workers, the two sides of industry, the political arena and the groups within society.

... through the number of members, we want to be ready to act and remain influential in the political field. To this end, we will step up our efforts for the extension and servicing of our membership basis in the companies and on the local level.

... on the local level and in the committees, we want to integrate the specific interests of different target groups and make our union work into a forum of ideas and design for politically, culturally and socially active people.

... as a political organisation, we want to support our members with competent information and advise, through legal protection and services at the workplace and at home."

**Excerpts from: IG BCE
Leitbild, IG BCE Congress,
Hannover, 1997**

The Mining, Chemical and Energy Industrial Union



IG BCE on its way to the next millennium

IG BCE: Founded in Germany in 1997, it was created from the merger of IGBE (Mining and Energy Industrial Union), IG CPK (Chemical, Paper and Pulp and Ceramic Workers' Union) and of the Leather Workers' Union

Approximately 1,000,000 members, white-collar and blue-collar

Industry sections: mining, chemical industry, energy, crude oil and natural gas, caoutchouc, ceramics, plastics, leather, paper and pulp, environment, water, utilities and waste disposal operations


DESIGN OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

A transformation in the economy and the society



Our world is undergoing a momentous change: the transformations over the past decade were particularly demanding for Germany. One thing is quite clear: the change is gaining in dimension and speed. Political positions, economic concepts and society structures are changing just as fast. Those who want to offer competent solutions for the real challenges will need to have the right inner attitude towards change. People expect of their unions that they deal with the key political and economic topics.


It is not a simple endeavour to create jobs and social justice in a competitive economic environment. Quite to the contrary, because those who want to replace our tried-and-tested model of a social market economy by a completely free play of the market forces are still very much on the forefront. Our objective, however, is a clear one: it is the first and foremost task of the political arena, the business world and the unions to use all their resources to create jobs. From us, our members expect that we live up to this challenge.



The IG BCE will continue to be true to its line, i.e. to react to problems with a matter-of-factly solution-oriented policy instead of mere ideology. Very often, we were among the first unions that were prepared to choose an innovative approach. Many issues which at first were regarded rather suspiciously by some politicians and unionists have in the meantime become a role-model solution. This holds true for the remuneration policy, working-time agreements, initiatives to secure jobs or the agreement on part-time retirement. Ours was the union which did not only ask for changes through the political work but which also implemented the changes – and we will continue to have this kind of union.

New requirements come up every day. In order to be able to live up to them and to be fit for the future, it is not only the unions policy contents but also the organization itself which needs to undergo further development.

The necessity to transform was acknowledged by the IG BCE Congress in Hannover in autumn 1997 already. In the guidelines adopted by the delegates, the IG BCE clearly described organisational policies apart from political targets.



Future-oriented approaches in the union policy require openness and the capability to innovate within the IG BCE.


Courageous transformation processes are to bring improvements to tried-and-tested procedures, and, at the same time, new procedures are to be created. This process is one which relies on participation, i.e. it is an invitation to all members, officials and employees of the IG BCE to co-operate in shaping this modernisation with their expert knowledge and their experience.

The first important interim results are presented here.

A convincing union

More than ever, unions need to strive for having political influence and attracting workers.


The traditional links of former decades have become weaker by many factors. It is particularly with the young people, but by no means limited to this group, where values have changed. The unions have to adapt to it. In the future, we have to become more attractive for those groups of the workforce who are critical or even negative towards us.



It will continue to be our most important task to develop living and working conditions, to protect workers in the companies and to co-operate in shaping society. In order for us to stay successful under changed framework conditions, it will not be enough to simply stick to the old rules. We need to face transformations in society and develop new ways between the rightful interests of individuals and the requirements of the community. This means that we have to continue the development of ideas of a modern and solidarity community in such a way that individual demands and needs can be integrated.

The objective: be competent, attractive, close to members

The IG BCE will remain a community of interest of workers. A future worth living for and social justice are our targets. Therefore, we also see ourselves as a community sharing values and an orientation towards public welfare.



Stronger than before, workers ask for the concrete benefits which a membership in a union might offer to them. They are critical in checking our socio-political statements and ideas and our collective-bargaining successes against the backdrop of their personal situation. Therefore, concepts are attractive which include this development and which allow workers and specifically members to participate actively.


Our success and the identification with the IG BCE will depend ever stronger on the quality of the service for members and the effectiveness of the representation of their interests – be it on the job, in the collective-bargaining rounds or in the political arena. Moreover, the IG BCE has been striving to extend its range of services for some time (e.g. IG BCE service company, call centre, etc.).

We can bring about two things when we achieve to put both ideas into practise on a long-term level. Apart from the traditionally well-organised groups of workers, we could also gain members from new areas for the IG BCE.

A participation-oriented organisation

For the IG BCE, to be able to learn means to react to changes in the enterprises and in society actively, fast and in an open manner. Union work today has to operate under different conditions than only some years ago. The problems which await solving are getting more complicated, the demands of the workers towards competent union work are increasing. The results of our work are checked more critically than before as to their use for the individual, however, this work always seeks to include the common good as well.


The response to this development is clear. It is our target to find generally applicable overall regulations which will then be filled out by the local level. This way of procedure has brought a lot of success.



At the same time, going this way means that colleagues can be participating in the hands-on union work, thus taking on a stronger responsibility beyond the mere participation in decision-making bodies. In this way, we can continue to change the shape of our union and keep and extend our appeal.

Something which is good practise and tried and tested in many other areas will systematically become the basis for our

work in the future. Democratic decision-making structures in the various bodies are not being questioned by this. Much rather, they will be extended by other forms of work which will have a stronger focus on the elaboration of certain current issues. More colleagues will be integrated into our union work, sometimes also for a limited period of time. Simultaneously, expert knowledge and commitment will undergo a visible extension.



In order to channel the numerous existing ideas and approaches into a sensible concept, the IG BCE has triggered a process under the heading of GEO (joint organisational development). With the participation of as many members and union officials as possible, it is the main goal of this GEO process to have individual projects which are to come up with suggestions as to how the objective of a development of our work can be moved forward. Existing policies are to be checked, usable experience and ideas are to be made available for a broad circle, and recommendations for the modern union work are to be developed.


Movement on all levels

So far, five individual projects were started, in which our work as an union is looked at on different levels of organisation. Questions are being asked, such as: How should the future work of the districts of the IG BCE look like? The districts are the political basis of the IG BCE and the main contact point in the region.

With the two-tier service system consisting of local groups and union representatives on the shop floor (Vertrauensleutkörper), the IG BCE has an excellent system for the intensive servicing of its members who are combined into districts for political and organisational reasons. Therefore, the stage is set for a politically effective work in the regions and an optimum service offer for union officials and members alike. New target groups also have new requirements, therefore and in particular on the local level, the participation and target-group related approach just outlined has to be integrated into our work and filled with life. We do need to develop effective forms of recruitment of non-unionised workers, and, in particular, an optimum design of our information and communication work.

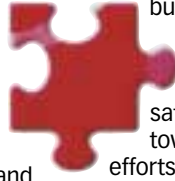
Most of all, however, trade union work does not only require professional and competent work. It also lives from the identity and the feeling of belonging together. Such an identity can only emerge in the region, the companies and the local groups. We have a good and solid basis for a self-confident and continued development.

In favour of a factual policy




Political influence and lobbying is unthinkable without the expert work in the many political areas in which our union has a say. Unions have always guaranteed an excellent expert knowledge in their professional work and in their internal organisations.

The administration headquarters and the state districts have to look into possible transformations as regards the quality of information and communication in the organisation as well as the design of our external image. Effective media work, latest communication technology, efficient organisation are only one side of the medal. The other requires qualified staff and an optimum co-ordination of political processes in order to set the right priorities in a jungle of numerous political initiatives.



Simultaneously, the administration headquarters also have to abide by what is otherwise necessary on all the other union levels. Continuous contact to the companies, to our members and officials in order to include current developments into the positioning and concept-development. Such questions are also being addressed and worked on by the GEO process.


Experts in their own right



The further development of our union towards participation-oriented work within the organisation does only make sense when this kind of approach is also selected by the companies


and by the works councils. The project called "Experts in their own right" generated many positive examples for the work of works councils and new forms of work. Now, the experience has to be used to adapt the concept and link it with union structures.

For everything to fit together



In such a large organisation as the IG BCE, co-operation, decision-making procedures and communication structures are of extreme importance in order to be successful and efficient in our work. In the GEO process, attention is to be paid to the good functioning and good course of decision-making processes, apart from new approaches in union work on the various organisation levels. In doing so, the improved means of communication can be included. One project only looks into the organisation procedures and develops proposals for improvement.

Modern management concept



It is the objective of the IG BCE to integrate the creativity, the knowledge and the commitment of its workforce even more than before into the work of the organisation. This is a management task. It was always clear to us that democratic organisational structures and personnel management do not exclude each other but that credibility is a result of the management concept. We have responsible committees and responsible workers in our organisation which have always been striving towards making optimum use of our efforts.

We support this approach with our concepts on staff discussions and agreements on targets which are to make sure that, apart from routine work, discussions focus on the development potential of the workers as well as on how to make best use of the special objectives and capabilities of individuals. In our hectic times, this is also well-suited to get a clear picture on the targets and priorities for the work of individual groups of workers and of individuals. At the moment, this concept is in its start-up phase and will take effect in the near future.

Further training – investment into the future

Knowledge is power. This recognition is gaining ever more importance. The broad range of union training we offer lives up to this understanding. Qualification is the basis for a successful work for our members, union representatives on the shop floor and union officials from the local groups. The IG BCE has come up with a training concept which offers courses in an acknowledged quality, providing a combined system of longer-term training courses, visits to academies, personnel selection criteria and a broad range of further-training issues, thus investing into the qualification of the workforce. Apart from expert knowledge, more and more importance is placed on the fact that the colleagues can also deal with modern work theories in a methodical way. This includes languages, an understanding of technology, just as social competencies and personal development. We did not simply copy the training of managerial skills, instead, and in many tedious little steps, we designed a training tailored to union work.



Strong unions through membership

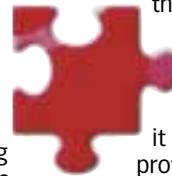
With the so-called »Offensive 2000« action, the IG BCE gave an important signal right after the Congress: in combining our forces, we wanted to reach new companies and new groups of workers who so far had been difficult to unionise. This »Offensive 2000« action did not only yield astonishing results under sometimes quite adverse conditions, it also gave us a lot of insight into the demands and desires of workers in the enterprises.



It is a good example for such a focus or the organisation for a certain limited period of time. It also contributed to the fact that the IG BCE is noticed in the companies. The strength of unions starts with the number of members affiliated. The discussions with members and non-unionised workers will remain the basis for an active union work. We want to develop a concept for a broad company-wide PR and communication campaign which subsequently to the »Offensive«, is to form the basis for the day-to-day recruitment of the IG BCE.

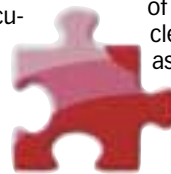
Independent and ready to act

Our IG BCE is financially and organisationally ready to act and will remain to be so. A targeted and economising use of means, however, is not only a good theory on the commercial side. It also takes into account the difficult structural changes which our sectors of industry had to undergo during the past years and which they will continue to experience. We can report an encouraging development in the increase of membership numbers – particularly with young workers. Through shedding of jobs and a lack of new employment opportunities, however, the IG BCE was also hit. The total membership numbers are decreasing. We have to come to terms with this development in a timely manner in order not to come into a situation one day where we need to embark upon radical saving concepts in order to secure our political ability to act. We had a broad discussion and a vote on our consolidation concept in our organisation. It is a demand for the entire organisation.



Consolidation

Therefore, consolidation within the IG BCE is a continuous process which leads the IG BCE to a balancing of its income and expenditure situation in a socially and politically compatible manner. We did discuss the consolidation concept in the organisation and have now started it. In doing so, we considered all options available, in particular, we wanted to keep job losses at a minimum. Through part-time retirement we can provide a continuity and avoid that important knowledge for our work is lost.



Consolidation also entails adapting our structures in some regions and checking the organisation of union work in some points. The overall consolidation looks at a medium-range timeframe and will be checked as to its effectiveness on a con-

tinuous basis, and, if necessary, enhancements will be made. For us, it is important that the consolidation does not narrow the political union work but still generates the necessary effects.



Budgeting

In order for us to support the mainstays of our political activities in a targeted manner in the future we are setting up a budgeting system at the moment which is still in its testing phase. The planned and economical use of membership dues can be done even better than before by using such a budgeting approach. Moreover, our Controlling is to see to it that the priorities of our political work as given by the resolutions of the organization, are achieved with the best possible degree of efficiency.

This approach is not a new one. In the past, it already existed in one or the other form. We did integrate it into our process of modernisation and gave it a better structure and higher degree of professionalism in order to fix a reasonable and clear internal organisation for our large union.

Modernisation through innovation

Modernisation as such is very often only a mere buzzword. For the IG BCE, modernization is no end in itself. Through innovation, it becomes a part of our daily union work. We do not want to be just fashionable or show zeitgeist, we want to have the inner courage to embark upon new paths even when they are sometimes open-ended.

A strong organisation can decide in favour of a course of modernisation. One thing is clear: Only an IG BCE which presents itself as credible, open, future-oriented and willing to act, will maintain its appeal for old and new members in the future.