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IG BCE

## IG BCE - Traditionally Innovative

In 1997, the IG BCE (Mining, Chemical and Energy Industrial Union) was formed, merging the Chemical, Paper and Pulp and Ceramic Workers' Union, the Mining and Energy Workers' Union and the Leather Workers' Union. It is an affiliate of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) and represents workers from the sectors of mining, chemicals, energy, crude oil and natural gas, glass, caoutchouc, ceramics, leather, paper and pulp, plastics and environmental matters as well as from the water industry, utilities and the non-metallic materials' industry. The union represents a total of ca. 770.000 members. This corresponds to a unionisation of approximately 50 percent.

### Self-image

The IG BCE stands for the basic guidelines of democracy in the state, the economy and within society, and it supports the economic and social interests of workers on the basis of co-determination and co-responsibility. The central concern of the IG BCE's political work is focused on social justice, equal treatment of men and women and the protection of the environment. Being a "unity union", it is independent of any political party.

### Tasks

In regular collective bargaining negotiations, the IG BCE represents the material interests of its members and their right to good working conditions.

In doing so, the IG BCE stands for a solution-oriented and consensus-oriented policy and a fair representation of all interests. At the same time, the IG BCE knows about the strength of the organisation and the possibility to mobilise members in order to be successful when it comes to conflicts.

### Political Targets

The IG BCE wants to create and secure jobs, safeguard the welfare state, help designing Germany as an industrial location, move the industrialised society towards a sustainable development compatible with the future, further develop the sector-based bargaining system with

an openness for flexible solutions, extend the participation of workers and co-determination in the companies, and create more modern unions. It stands for a social market economy in which the IG BCE wants to participate by developing it towards a model for a unified social Europe along the lines of the IG BCE's social, economic and ecological targets.

The IG BCE wants to be an open, learning and participatory organisation. The basic targets are summarised in the IG BCE Vision which was adopted by the Congress in 1997 and confirmed and extended by the Congress 2001.

## **European Policy**

The IG BCE is a member of the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (EMCEF) of which the IG BCE Chairman Hubertus Schmoldt is President since 1996 (re-elected 2000 and 2004). The IG BCE supports the EMCEF's policy with its own contributions and initiatives in the areas of European social, industrial, energy and environmental policy just as in the co-operation work between the unions in Europe. The current priority lies with developing the Social Dialogue at the level of European sectors of industry, strengthening the European Works Councils, securing co-determination within the framework of European companies (SEs), and in initiatives for an European industrial policy that offers European locations a competitive future and aims at safeguarding present and creating new jobs.

## **International Policy**

At the international level, the IG BCE is a member of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) of which Hubertus Schmoldt is Vice-President since 1995. The IG BCE supports the ICEM's commitment to safeguard human rights and union rights all over the world as well as its endeavour to give globalisation a social dimension.

The IG BCE is also a member of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) and its European regional organisation, the European Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation.

## **International Solidarity**

The IG BCE also uses its potential to participate in international solidarity activities. Examples for this are the global agreements with the Freudenberg Group and RAG AG, in which the companies accept the core labour standards of the ILO and which also seek to develop a social dialogue at a global level. This is something which is also to be achieved by the networks of BASF unions in South America and Asia as well as of Bayer Brazil, with the IG BCE playing a leading role in creating such networks.

## **Co-operation with European Trade Unions**

Bilaterally, the IG BCE concluded co-operation agreements with the British GMB, the French Chemical and Energy Union FCE-CFDT, and the three unions representing the Italian chemical sector. Moreover, the IG BCE co-operates with other relevant unions in Western, Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe in the sectors represented by it. By holding seminars in its education centres in Germany and by using union experts, IG BCE specifically contributes towards

strengthening the representation of union interests in Central and Eastern Europe.

Together with the NGG (Trade Union of Food, Beverages, Tobacco, Hotel and Catering and Allied Workers), the ICEM, the EMCEF as well as the IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations), the IG BCE participates in a complex project to develop and promote democratic union structures in Southeast Europe.

### **World-wide trade union co-operation**

Apart from a regular exchange of experience and information with the unions in the USA and in Japan and the traditionally amicable relations with Israel's HISTADRUT, the IG BCE is in close contact with union partners in South Africa, China, Vietnam, and Brazil. Within the framework of the EU-aided project Observatório Social IG BCE participates in the research of industrial relations in the Brazil subsidiaries of three German and three Dutch companies. Also at the locations of large German chemical plants in China, IG BCE is of assistance in carrying out seminars to train union officials on the shop floor.

It is particularly in the threshold and developing countries as well as in Central and Eastern Europe that the IG BCE has a close co-operation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.



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